



Tar Éis a Bháis

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REFERENCES

Máiréad Ní Loinsigh (eag), *Tar Éis a Bháis—Aistí ar Sheán Ó Ríordáin*, Indreabhán, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2008, 122 p., ISBN 978-1-905560-31-8

- 1 This volume brings together a series of lectures given on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta to celebrate the life and work of the Irish language poet Seán Ó Ríordáin (1916-77). Along with a stimulating analysis, by Stiofáin Ó Cadhla, on the Rabelaisian nature of Ó Ríordáin's work and his relationship with *Béaloideas*, and a detailed study of Ó Ríordáin's best loved poem, "Cúl an Tí", by Pádraigín Riggs, *Tar Éis a Bháis* is remarkable for the personal recollections of Seán Ó Ríordáin recorded within its pages. Máirtín Ó Murchú recalls the debates with Ó Ríordáin, the civil servant, as to the colour of the grey minivan Ó Murchú owned: was it to be categorised as "liath" or "glas"? The linguistic spectrum of the colour grey clashed with the translation lists available in the Motor Taxation Office and the civil servant declared that "liath" it was to be. He describes the lunches they ate together in the functional Five Star restaurant on Oliver Plunkett Street and the ecumenical debates that raged on the topic of Vatican II. The Five Star also figures in the account of Ó Ríordáin given by Gearóid Ó Cruaíaoich in an essay entitled "Aithne, an ea? N'fheadar". After a disquisition on the nature of the word "aithne" in modern Irish, Ó Cruaíaoich categorises the seven ways he knew or failed to know Ó Ríordáin. Ó Cruaíaoich's account includes his first non-encounter with Ó Ríordáin in the Motor Tax office in 1958, Ó Ríordáin's absence at Ó Cruaíaoich's wedding and a very moving account of his funeral. Ó Cruaíaoich also points to the neglect that followed the erection of a plaque on the wall of Ó Ríordáin's house in Iniscarra, comparing the dark weeds that have taken hold of the house to the dark tentacles that the poet fought in both body and soul throughout his life.
- 2 Seán Ó Coileáin, the author of Ó Ríordáin's biography, gives an interesting account of Ó Ríordáin's relationship with Seán Ó Tuama and the peculiar position that arose from his

being a poet/critic in Irish Department in UCC. If both Ó Tuama and Ó Ríordáin were speaking in two different rooms on the poetry of Ó Ríordáin whose account of the poems would be right?

- 3 Several authors make reference to the controversy that erupted with regard to the quality of Ó Ríordáin's Irish following Máire Mhac an tSaoi's review of *Eireaball Spideoige*. Seán Ua Súilleabháin parses the genealogy of "na Ríordánaigh Bhreaca" and, having evoked it, stakes the counter claim that the "sean-Ghaelainn" that Ó Ríordáin heard in the Muskerry Gaeltacht was a match for anything spoken in Dún Chaoin. Through the use of the metaphor of a coat worn inside out Liam P Ó Murchú examines the particular use of the Irish language in Ó Ríordáin's poems; he devotes space to Ó Ríordáin's invention "go ríordánóinn" and sees in it a link to the verbal dexterity of Dáibhí Ó Bruadair.
- 4 Alan Titley's polemical article "An Teanga Eile – Leath Leis" examines the nature of Ó Ríordáin's relationship with the English language. He also reiterates his claim that literature in Irish language cannot be seen in a post-colonial light as it is a language that has survived colonialism: "Litríocht í litríocht na Gaeilge nár ghéill" (64). In what follows, Titley examines the whole relationship between Irish language literature and translation through the multiple English language versions of some of Ó Ríordáin's poems. Titley's discussion of the translation of the opening verse of Ó Ríordáin's masterful "Adhlacadh mo Mháthair" illustrates that, for all Ó Ríordáin's supposed closeness and subordination to the English language, three English language poets still had great difficulty in carrying over the "ríordánachas" of the poem into English. Titley composes a frieze of the lines of poetry that remain with us, as a testament to the way in which Ó Ríordáin enriched the Irish language. They are reason enough for us to embrace the language today and to join with An Suibhneach Meann, in his prefatory poem, in wishing long life to Ó Ríordáin's art.