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***Bone and Marrow / Cnámh agus Smior: An Anthology of Irish Poetry from Medieval to Modern*, Brian Ó Conchubhair, Samuel K. Fisher (eds.), Winston-Salem, Wake Forest University Press, 2022, 968 p.**

*Bone and Marrow / Cnámh agus Smior* is a weighty anthology: reaching nearly 1,000 pages, it spans around 1,500 years of poetry in the Irish language, presented in Irish with poetic translations on facing pages. It starts, therefore, with one of Irish poetry's most famous cats, "Pangur Bán" ("white Pangur"), described by a scholar-monk in the margins in a 9<sup>th</sup>-century continental manuscript. The anthology ends neatly (or perhaps somewhat patly) with a new confrontation of poet and cat by Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh (1984-).

In its all-embracing ambition and its exclusive focus on Irish (*Gaeilge*), it is, as far as I know, the only anthology of its kind. The decision of the Wake Forest University Press to commission and publish the volume, is therefore to be welcomed. It is surely a positive sign for Irish Studies in America and elsewhere; at the moment of writing, the volume was sold out on the Wake Forest website.

But what's all this about "bone and marrow"? Surely not Yeats's "foul rag and bone shop of the heart"? The editors take their title from the writings of the historian (and poet) Seathrún Céitinn / Geoffrey Keating (c. 1569-c. 1644), who contended that, in Ireland, "the bone and marrow of history are to be found in poems" (p. 23). The chief editors, Fisher and Ó Conchubhair, follow his lead and contend that the anthology represents the best of poetry in Irish, as well as an essential source and guide to historical change in Ireland.

This double focus speaks no doubt to the anthology's principal audience. *Bone and Marrow / Cnámh agus Smior* is the perfect textbook for a survey course, with extensive historical introductions to each chronological period, substantial headnotes, internal references across centuries to similar thematic treatments, and, where relevant, mention of musical versions and even YouTube links (bilingual versions, not direct translations, of this apparatus, are provided). This tailoring for a student audience is not in itself cause for complaint; they have to sell the thing.

The non-specialist may wonder sometimes, however, how the historical focus affected choices made, and to what extent poems not convenient for Irish literature / civilisation courses were left out. For example, "Early medieval Irish poetry (c. 600-1200)" comes across differently here from the imagistic, contemplative nature poetry the general reader may be familiar with from older anthologies. In general, the "bone and marrow" conceit may be said to make more sense for the earlier periods, like those devoted to "The bard and his world (1250-1600)", "Poetic response to plantations (1609)", and the vision poetry (*aislingí*) of Jacobitism. The editors of those sections provide necessary historical context to the poems, perhaps at times at the cost of sharing with readers a more literary appreciation. The political-historical focus seems a less easy fit with the selections from the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The editors of those sections in any case emphasise, I think correctly, the poetic tendencies and qualities of their selections.

I would not want these questions to be taken for carping, however. The book contains a wealth of poetry and careful scholarship casting light on it. We are familiar with the names of Colmille and Cú Chulainn, we know the term “bard”, but where else can we easily access the original texts? English texts on Ireland from the period of conquest and plantation are readily available. It is enriching to have the voices and cultures of Irish poets accessible to students and teachers in bilingual form. It is enlightening to have the European literary context, from Cicero to Erasmus and John Donne, in order to appreciate Giolla Brighde Ó hEódhasa’s “*A sgríbhíonn luigheas tar lear*” (“O letter that makes its way over the main”).

A particular revelation for this reader was the section on “Nineteenth-century song poetry”. It is also the first section that features a significant number of female poets, whose presence increases again in the following sections. The corpus includes some songs edited for the first time here, others known from recordings by well-known contemporary singers. The annotation here is particularly valuable, pointing out interpretative differences, such as a homosexual reading of the aptly-named Seán Aerach Ó Seanacháin’s “*An Buachaill Caol Dubh*” (“My Dark Slender Boy”) that a casual listener may easily miss, or the continuing place of certain songs in the life of the nation. No-one who has heard it could forget the interview with Nuala O’Faolain mentioned, nor Albert Fry’s version of Séamus Ó Grianna’s “*Tráthnóna Beag Aréir*” (“At Twilight Last Night”).

Readers in English and French have been well-served in recent years with bilingual anthologies of contemporary Irish poetry. Here is the chance, to spin a different metaphor, to dive into the wellspring and swim up (Yeats again) “the living stream”.

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**Nathalie Sebbane, *Memorialising the Magdalene Laundries: From Story to History*, Oxford, P. Lang, 2021, 318 p.**

Nathalie Sebbane’s *Memorialising the Magdalene Laundries: From Story to History* is a timely and significant publication for several reasons. Firstly, Sebbane is a French academic using French theory, holocaust studies and memory studies (p. 11-13) to examine a very current and topical issue in Ireland, bringing a new methodological framework to the scholarship. Secondly, even since this book has been published, the history and present of the Magdalene Laundries and other similarly punitive institutions have occupied increasing public discourse in Ireland and internationally. Finally, the topics of memorialisation and commemoration remain contentious, and this book can certainly add to the discussion of both.

Sebbane begins the book by tracing the history of the Magdalene Laundries from a media story influenced by the lived experience of survivors / victims to more recently a prominent area of concern and research for historians, social scientists, and Irish society more generally. She points at times to the question