pp. 159–237) is an excellent example of how this should be done. He skillfully pieces together the background and biography of Murtaí, a smuggler from the Béarra Peninsula and former colonel in Lord Clare’s regiment of Wild Geese, culminating in his death after a gun-battle on the night of 4 May 1764. Breatnach presents editions of two elegies (pp. 183–88; pp. 200–204) on Murtaí Og from the MS tradition. The editions are accompanied by critical apparatus, textual notes, and a discussion of questions of authorship, textual traditions, and metre. A third elegy (pp. 212–13) drawn from the oral tradition and attributed to Murtaí’s lieutenant, Domnall Ó Conaill, is also printed, together with notes on the various versions of the text and consideration of the tune to which it was sung.

It is further argued in the foreword that: is gní do stáirí na líríocht an bhlaes eorúilte a thagaird don oídhreacht litreachta i gcéitinn, agus é a mhíneas ina chaitheacht mar chuíomhnaí maíos ar ealaín, saol litreachta, agus pearsa na chumadóire ‘it is the business of the literary historian to consider the edited text with reference to the literary heritage in general, and to assess it in terms of its quality as a memorial of the art, intellectual life and character of the composer’ (p. vii). All of the essays in Breatnach’s book demonstrate how this theory can be put into practice.

Táin Bó Cuailnge is an exemplary exposition of the riches of Irish literary tradition. My only reservation about this work is that chapters 1 and 2 may arguably have been enhanced by concluding summaries. As against this, the theories of the author are consistently sustained by clearly presented textual evidence drawn from the medieval to modern periods, and that evidence is subjected to meticulous analysis. Padraic Breatnach’s book is a work of innovative and exciting scholarship which offers a most convincing insight into the continuity and richness of Irish literary tradition.

University of Ulster
Magee College, Derry

PETER SMITH

ANNA BLOCH—ROZMEJ

The book under review is unfortunately nothing less than a travesty. It is an insult to Celtic studies and linguistics in general and to the study of Irish in particular. Anna Bloch—Rozmej (henceforth AB) purports to investigate, within the framework of Government Phonology, the internal structure and external relations of the sounds of Connemara Irish with particular emphasis on the vowels. The best section is AB’s discussion of the anomalous behaviour of in initial clusters, a particularly important topic in Government Phonology. The semi-independent status of in (initial) clusters in many languages is incorporated within Government Phonology; Irish provides further evidence of this semi-independence in the non-lentition and, to a lesser extent, the non-palatalisation of in such clusters.

AB’s analysis is found lacking in all essential aspects, casting serious doubt on her knowledge of (Connemara) Irish and linguistic theory. Most previous descriptive and theoretical work is ignored. This combination of double ignorance can only lead to a trail of woes. The remainder of this review will point out some of the most blatant blunders.

The dialect is nowhere geographically defined nor are sources for Connemara Irish listed. Data are given within the work itself from Ros Mac (LFRM) and west, central and east Cois Pharragá (e.g. ICF, LII). Phonetic transcriptions and glosses are inaccurate to a discomforting extent, e.g. teine [tín] ‘rigidity’ is certainly not taken from GCF, ICF or LLI. The Foilróir Póidé is used for information on pronunciation rather than, for example, the readily available dialect monographs of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. There are also some strange coinings, e.g. sean [si:n] ‘[Fainster] seanbhíon ‘white-headed’ presumably for seanbhair.

Chapter 1 briefly introduces the theory of Government Phonology and argues for a certain syllabic structure in Connemara Irish. The choice of evidence for syncopating words (p. 38) is most unfortunate and raises alarm bells which ring from here on to the end of the book. All three pairs of examples are faulty in one way or another: neither of the pair ciordal – ciordnach is found in descriptions of traditional Connemara dialect; nor is the latter of the pair ampar – amparraí attested. Furthermore the initial vowel i is not i but u; this error being all the more surprising since the initial vowel of amparraí, given correctly as u, is the subject of a misleading discussion on p. 122. The syncopated token in the pair ampar – amparraí is not attested for Connemara Irish. Unsynchronised amparraí, however, occurs in GCF (in AB’s bibliography) and in FFG for Monlaeth (not in AB’s bibliography). Similarly, the related (unsynchronised) amparthair can be found in LFRM (in AB’s bibliography) s. v. amparthair. To add to this error the actual Connemara form amparraí is wrongly presented as the Munster realisation. Despite such inaccuracies, attested examples of syncope in all dialects are of course myriad, e.g. amparraí – amparrai; so that some of AB’s conclusions based on syncope held within Government Phonology. Examples of the opposite phenomenon, non-syncope, are also myriad: in GCF § 494 alone, as well as amparraí, witness ciordar – ciordarach, fátaí – fátaíach, miótaí – miótaiche, tuisceair – tuisceach, not to mention abartach, etc. Be that as it may, non-syncope is ignored by AB

despite having important implications for her proposal for two (or three) schwas in Irish. Raymond Hickey\(^5\), who demonstrates the inextricable link between syncope and epenthesis, will serve here as an example of both a highly relevant article and topic not found in AB's discussion.

The next major twist in the clamped\(^{\text{pare}}\) trail will serve as an example of one of AB's major weaknesses: her over-reliance on insufficient data. Based on the two irregular genitives *doiris* (Munster rather than Connomara pronunciation given because AB's colleague, Cyran (1994)\(^6\), is the source, thus ignoring GCF) and *solís* (ignoring regular alternate *solais* in GCF), which have syncopated plurals *doirse* and *solise*, AB comes to 'the obvious conclusion' that in roots which have syncope, \(C_1VC_2V_{1-2}C_{2-3}V_{3-4}\) in the unsyncopated form when \(C_2\) is palatalised so too will \(C_3\). This preposterous result predicts genitives such as: *clampr* - *clíomhpr*; *focal* - *focail*; nominative *fiacail* would have to be emended to *fiaicil* (or, depending on which version of \(e\) one takes to be underlying (p. 159) *fiaicil*, *ionpair* to *inípair*.

The example of *asail* illustrates another of AB's major 'theoretical' weaknesses: her argumentation is often of the kind 'if something is unknown (at least to AB) then it does not exist, and so therefore prevented by the phonological structure of Irish'. No syncopated form of *asail* is known, she argues, therefore its schwa is non-syncopating, since this type of non-syncopating schwa prevents palatalisation of \(C_2\) its plural and genitive is predicted as attested *asail* (not *asaili*). On this logic 'given cap all has a syncopated form asiple one would still expect genitive and plural *caipill*, and given asail has a rare plural form aispile, apparently unknown to AB, we once more expect *asaili*. Based on only two further examples, both erroneous and irrelevant, e. g. the comparative of *ie* is given as *‘toxa for ‘toxa teola (shouldn't deacair really be *‘deacair’), the reverse process is also claimed, i.e. (with syncopating words) the unsyncopated form will velarise \(C_2\) when \(C_2\) is velarised. To add to the confusion then, given leicceann - leicenn, this version of Irish has the base-form of either *leicceann or *leicenn, but not the real leicinn, and *cruicenn or *cruicenn for cruicceann.

The clamped\(^{\text{pare}}\) trail takes a further crotcheting illustrative of other unforgivable weaknesses in this work: superficial grasp of data and use of sources aimed at learners and more general users rather than serious academics. On purely surface distributional criteria there is only one schwa phoneme in Connomara Irish, all tokens of unstressed \(i\) in ICF are in complementary distribution with \(a\). LIT's transcriptions of the unstressed vowel in *mitla* as \(i\) and in *airn* as \(a\) are given canonical status by AB. The fact that ICF transcribes both as \(i\) is ignored. The length of argumentation based on this pre-theoretical \(i\) - \(a\) distribution, which is contentious, is ex-


\(^7\) See 'A minor Irish isogloss' Studio Celtica 14—5: 223—8; Ó Dechhairghe, C. 1980.

\(^8\) 'On the dialect of the Inishkea islanders' Studio Celtica 2: 196—201; Skræret, R. A. Q. 1967.

In his foreword (pp. 11–16) Heinrich Becker relates how his interest in the folklore of Ireland was awakened by Seamas Ó Duilearga's lectures in Germany in 1935. Becker, then a lecturer in the English Department at Marburg University, had already gained a doctorate in folklore and written a book on the traditions and lore of the Elbe-boatmen. He came to Ireland in 1938 and enrolled as a postgraduate student in Irish at University College, Galway, where he also taught German. In May 1939 he began collecting folklore in Ros an Mhíl, Connemara. The editor remained in Ireland during the war and was made to feel at home there.

The remainder of the Réamhbrí is concerned with the material presented in the book. Becker notes that there is a long tradition of lore concerning the shore and sea-weed stretching back to early Irish law and literature. The editor regards the stories recounted in Im Béal na Forraige as ciptice shásaithe 'social documents' which give us léargas grinn féin-n each 'a perceptive and truthful insight' (p. 14) into the danger and toll (p. 16) associated with the kind of life which prevailed on the Atlantic coasts of Europe until about the middle of this century. The tales have a didactic purpose: Bhrí ceacht le faghlainn ag éisteoirí na scéalta féin as scéalta den chuid náisiúntacht is cuí agus is ionadair an chraolaí sinnd iad i n-àiseachtaí. Chuir an fhágais an-áiríteachtaí i bhfeidhm leis na gcuid is mó na scéaltaí (p. 14). There was a lesson to be learned by the listeners to those stories from the stories themselves and they heard them being told frequently. They put them [the listeners] on their guard about the danger associated with the sea-shore and the sea.' Becker concludes his Bhrí with a description of his modus operandi and his editorial policy.

One of the most outstanding pieces in this book is the Réamhscéal, a contribution by Joe Ó Domhaill of Inis Oírr entitled An Scéalacht sa tSeanchaimh 'Storytelling in Olden Times' (pp. 17–26). O Domhaill draws a vivid picture of the background to the art of story-telling, and gives a superb account of the dramatis personae involved in this particular art-form. Stories concerning Fionn and the Fianna were told as well as tales of journeys and quests to the Otherworld. O Domhaill's piece is fascinating and is enlivened throughout by the kind of comments which the listeners used to make concerning the performance of the scéalchaitheoir. The value of Heinrich Becker's book lies not only in the beauty of these stories as oral literature, nor in the insight which they give us into the boundlessness of the human imagination, but also in their function as a source of inspiration to those who heard them in their struggle for survival against material deprivation, physical hardship and cultural marginalisation.

As Joe Ó Domhaill tells us of the Fianna:

Bhrí na fiar sin, bhi sibh in ann mhíthn mhóra a dhéanamh, fualain le haois phian ó na goirtaíse ar aol itu' fluithidh is in na bhuaithe a bhíodh an cnoc le gaisceadh uis bhíodh amháin i n-oghaidh agus séi leis an rud a mhíthn a chuir an fhágais i bhfeidhm go mba mháthair leis na goirtaíse a scéalaithe i n-siúl (pp. 22–30) "Those men, they were able to do great deeds, to suffer any pain from the wounds which they used to receive in the rounds (of combat) which they were wont to have with the warriors who..."