Aguisíní

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1882>

DOI: 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.1882

ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Caen

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2010

Number of pages: 170-171

ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

Clíona Ní Ríordáin, « *Aguisíní* », *Études irlandaises* [Online], 35-1 | 2010, Online since 30 September 2010, connection on 21 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/1882> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.1882>

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REFERENCES

Seán Ó Tuama, *Aguisíní*, BAC, Coiscéim, 2008, 125 p., 15 €

- 1 *Aguisíní*, published by Coiscéim and the Institute for Irish Studies in NUIG, brings together occasional prose writing by the late Seán Ó Tuama. The eight articles include autobiographical material, critical essays, and uncollected lectures produced by Ó Tuama over almost half a century, from 1953 to 1998. This handsomely produced book, illustrated by a variety of photographs and colour illustrations, is introduced by Louis de Paor who worked to prepare this book with Ó Tuama in the years before he died.
- 2 Ó Tuama's first text, "Cainteoir Dúchais Gaeilge ó Bhlackpool, Cork", introduces in its title the apparent contradiction: a boy from the northside of Cork city, who grew up with Gaeltacht Irish in his ear, "Gaeilge ghlan Mhúscraí" (11), unaware before the age of seven that Irish was not spoken by all the people in the land. He describes in detail how, little by little, the city swallowed him up and how, in doing so, Ó Tuama acquired the "patois" of the northsiders, "cosmhuintir Chorcaí" (12) which was, he claims, his second native tongue. The pen picture that Ó Tuama draws of Cork city in the thirties and forties is vivid and enchanting, animated by characters like the hurler "Fox Collins" and by a glimpse of Aloys Fleischmann and Joan Denise Moriarty dancing the Siege of Ennis in the Imperial Hotel.
- 3 Other texts give us an insight into Ó Tuama the renowned scholar, the lecture on the poetry of Máirtín Ó Direáin, the critical notes on modern Irish prose, the detailed analysis of the Quatrains of Pádraigín Haicéad. There are also suggestions of Ó Tuama the lucid language activist, both in his autobiographical reflections and in the text entitled "The Irish Language: A View from the Nineties". This short essay should be required reading for all who are interested in the fate of the language. Ó Tuama outlines the genuine but rather simplistic approach adopted by the State in the 1920's. He alludes to the reaction against the "fairly stringent methods" (17) employed to re-

establish the language and pinpoints the “unilateral death-blow” (19) dealt by two coalition governments in the early seventies and eighties. In the light of his final impassioned paragraph, it would be interesting to hear his views on the recently mooted “20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language”.

- 4 The volume is greatly enhanced by the short extracts from Ó Tuama’s own creative work. Original poems, poems translated from the Spanish, extracts from his plays serve to remind us of what a true renaissance man Ó Tuama was. This book serves as both a tribute and an introduction to his work.