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REFERENCES

Shane Alcobia-Murphy, Richard Kirkland (eds), *The Poetry of Medbh McGuckian*, Cork, Cork University Press, 2010, 262 p., ISBN 978-1-85918-465-3

- 1 In *The Poetry of Medbh McGuckian*, Shane Alcobia-Murphy and Richard Kirkland assemble eleven articles, covering diverse aspects of McGuckian's poetic work. In his introduction to the collection, Alcobia-Murphy claims that her *œuvre* tends to be overlooked by literary critics. He sees the reason for the insufficient attention devoted to McGuckian's poetry in the "obliquity" of her poems. Commonly described as obscure and cryptic, McGuckian's poetry has frequently given rise to heavy criticism. Alcobia-Murphy states that the book follows the aim of rescuing McGuckian from "obscurity" by shedding a new light on her work. The opening chapter by Michaela Schrage-Früh concentrates on the poet's first four collections. Schrage-Früh convincingly discards the statements made by those critics, who qualify McGuckian's work as apolitical. She argues that in her early poetry, McGuckian interweaves private and public realms by considering the violence of the Troubles through the lens of the female body. Furthermore, the poet uses elaborate images taken from nature and the domestic sphere in order to explore her own national identity through references to stereotypical tropes and myth.
- 2 In the following chapter, Catriona Clutterbuck focuses on the same collections as Schrage-Früh but touches upon the question of self-definition of the female artist. Investigating the topic of female poetic agency, Clutterbuck dwells on psychoanalytical theory developed by Julia Kristeva and demonstrates how McGuckian's early poems generate self-reflexive versions of private life. She argues that the poet's texts generate an alternative form of logic, based at the same time on conventional logic and anti-logic, which gives rise to a "creative renegotiation of meaning" between the reader and the author. In chapter three, Helen Blakeman establishes an unusual connection

between McGuckian and Stéphane Mallarmé. Through a comparative reading of Symbolist texts by Mallarmé and poems by McGuckian, Blakeman shows how both poets exploit the possibilities of language, using word-play and sound-play as poetic strategies. She states that in Mallarmé's and McGuckian's poetry the symbols employed challenge traditional forms of meaning, while simultaneously creating subtle links between disparate concepts in order to provoke a reassessment of language. Referring to Heidegger and Levinas, Elin Holmsten explores McGuckian's desire to revitalise language. She claims that the poet's rejection of "restrictive modes of writing" allows a disruption of language, which renders encounters with "otherness" possible.

- 3 Scott Brewster concentrates on one of the key tropes in McGuckian's poetry, which is "the house". According to Brewster, in McGuckian's work "the house" is initially conceived as a place, which at the same time takes on the form of a shelter and a trap where the speaker struggles for privacy. Gradually, he argues, the "house" turns into a site, in which the meeting with "the other" becomes achievable. In the following chapter, Connor Carville deals with the collection *Had I a Thousand Lives* and examines the presence and significance of names and naming in McGuckian's poetry. In this context, he studies the rationale behind commemorative practices employed by the poet, touching upon the criticism uttered in many of the poems regarding the ideology of commemoration within Irish nationalism. Carville's contribution is followed by Alcobia-Murphy's article, in which he deals with McGuckian's poetics in terms of gender. Presenting close-readings of several works, he reveals a number of hidden intertexts. Once uncovered, Alcobia-Murphy argues, these intertexts force the reader to reflect on the role of art in times of violence and the ethics of poetic composition. Richard Kirkland refers to Deleuze's theory and argues that while McGuckian's work seems to refuse communication, each text is characterised by its directness of address to a non-identified "you". According to Kirkland, even if the texts appear "obscure" to the reader as they refuse hegemonic communicational models and reject rigid standards. Thus, McGuckian's poems become characterised by a perpetual process of change and evolution.
- 4 In the ninth chapter, Borbála Faragó investigates McGuckian's muses which appear in her poetic work in the shape of women, men, angels or readers. Faragó states that they simultaneously embody the pre-Platonic and the post-romantic figure of the muse. Leontia Flynn challenges Alcobia-Murphy's approach of tracking down the source texts, forming the basis of McGuckian's poems. Flynn argues that an intertextual approach is not necessarily the best and only way to study McGuckian's poetry. This very interesting and multifaceted compilation of articles is followed by an illuminating interview with McGuckian, in which the editors interrogate the poet about very diverse aspects of her poetic writing. The book closes with an afterword by Clair Willis, which sums up the different dimensions of McGuckian's work. Thanks to its diversity, *The Poetry of Medbh McGuckian* gives innovative insight into the poet's writing and offers a variety of original interpretative approaches. This well written and well structured study can doubtlessly be considered as a valuable contribution to the study of McGuckian's poetry.