

Marvell simultaneously holds up the mower's language for ironic scrutiny, subtly distancing himself from the mower's persona. Jaekel's reading delineates the poem's contrasting tones, yet the Bakhtinian relationship between them could be explicated more precisely.

Two essays mark the interplay of religion and literature during this period. Noting that the sermon was "the preeminent literary genre in earlier seventeenth-century England" (140), P. G. Stanwood offers a survey of the historiography of sermon studies, calling for further research into the ways in which "the rhetorical tradition" (146) affected this literary form. Fault lines can also stem from difficulties in defining colliding forces, as Kate Narveson demonstrates in attempting to understand the nature of seventeenth-century religious experience. She urges that we must confront the emotional *affect* of genuine religious conviction while recalling that we can only respond "to the way theological discourses of the period provided the terms in which the experience was understood" (129). Taken all in all, this collection demonstrates sound scholarship, cogent argument, and an openness to critical debate which speak well of the health of seventeenth-century studies.

Alan J. Fletcher. *Drama and the Performing Arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland: A Repertory of Sources and Documents from the Earliest Times Until c. 1642*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001. xii + 624 pp. + 5 illus. \$160.00. Review by KAY J. BLALOCK, ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT MERAMEC.

A significant and illuminating compilation of sources, documents, and scholarly commentary, *Drama and the Performing Arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland* offers the reader a taste of pre-eighteenth-century Ireland. With the flair of a gourmet chef, scholar Alan J. Fletcher creates and serves delectable appetizers as well as a banquet of substantial fare upon which one can feast. From the banqueting hall of Tara, through the households of Ireland's gentry

(Boyle, Butler, Devereux, Fitzwilliam, Perrot, Sidney), to the civil and ecclesiastical record repositories from Achonry (co. Sligo) to Youghal (co. Cork), Fletcher gathers the ingredients for this one-volume arrangement of instructive literature, described by the author as an “Irish complement” to the Records of Early English Drama series (REED).

Fletcher begins this outstanding scholarly work, for which he won the Beatrice White Award in 2001, by providing a historical context for the sources and documents included in the repertory. He ends the introduction (Chapter One) by suggesting that the collection of documents, though specifically connected to drama and performance art, “will also open perspectives upon aspects of the historical context . . . which are unavailable in sources more traditionally consulted by historians” (5). To this introduction, the author adds, in Chapter Two, commentary on major trends in drama and performance with a focus on the Gaelic tradition along with English reaction and contributions. In the third chapter, Fletcher provides an explanation of editorial procedures, including organization of the work and qualifications for included material; this work models REED, though some dissimilarities do occur. The remainder of the work, Chapters Five through Seven (Records, Appendices, and post-1642 Documents) as well as the Notes (translations of the non-English material), provides the substance for what could be described as a hearty fare indeed.

In an oral culture, words have the ability to heal or to wound, and a strong theme in Irish literature is the power found in speech. Voices of the most revered storytellers had magic. Writes Fletcher, “early Gaelic society was a shame culture: public satirical destruction of a person’s reputation was an institutionalized practice and something greatly to be feared” (11). This legacy from the poets of early legends could not be destroyed by the introduction of Christianity. Even the lives of the saints, in their telling, carried a mythic quality. For example, in the “excerpts from the *bethada* [‘Lives’] of the Irish Saints” (6.10) in the *Life of St Ciarán* (454-

455) one reads (in translation), “a satirist, that is . . . one who scars someone by cheek” (496). Today, we may use the phrase as a slap-in-the-face, though the consequences would be far less severe.

Another danger, at least for the English, existed. “In the sixteenth century . . . Gaelic performing artists were cast by the English as agents provocateurs par excellence, and this not was unjustifiable,” writes Fletcher. And, he continues, “loyalties could be doffed and exchanged for the price of a meal” (15). At the same time, public displays of political dissatisfaction are presented as a form of performing art. Several reports can be found among the Irish State Papers in the Public Record Office in London describing the vandalism of a statue by Sir Brian O’Rourke and his men. According to one document:

. . . O reworcke found an Image of a [tall] tall woman and wroate vpon the brest thereof Queene Elizabeth which don he rayld at it with most spitefull wordes, and all his galloglasses stroake it in all the partes with their weapons, and afterward fastened a halter about the necke of the Image and dragd it at his horse tayle *etc.* (438).

The other documents in Sir Brian O’Rourke’s “trayterous pagent” (6.3) support the above statement. Not all performing artists were designated as such, neither O’Rourke nor his men were entertainers in the true sense, though they could easily be classified “agents provocateurs.” The repertory also includes other writings following this vein, such as the writings of Barnaby Rich, who is described by Fletcher as “a prolific pamphleteer of robust opinions” (439). Excerpts from two of his works, *A Catholicke Conference* and *The Irish Hvbbvb* are found in Appendix 6.4, while other works identified as his are located in Chapter Five’s records as well.

Less secular concerns exist with the Gaelic versions (6.16) of three biblical stories. Of special interest is the story of Herodias’s daughter, who performed before King Herod. Evidently the standard medieval version failed to live up to the descriptive narrative found in the Bible. Only the medieval Gaelic aptly and adequately could do so.

Though the narratives, found mainly in Chapter Six (the Appendices), prove the most entertaining, the information found elsewhere in the *Repertory* offers material of equal scholarly value. The seating arrangements for the legendary banquet hall of Tara, found in the *Tech Midchúarda*, (2.1 and 6.12-6.14), give the reader a look into the social role played by and the social hierarchy of entertainers such as the fool, or buffoon (*drúth*), the contortionist (*réim*), the juggler, trickster, or acrobat (*clesammach*), storyteller (*scélaige*), “reciter of lore” (*senchaid*) and other “functionaries of early Irish society,” according to Fletcher, “who in discharging their occupation might practice an art of public performance” (9).

Other items of interest and note can be found throughout Fletcher’s work. If the use of blackface brings to mind American minstrel shows, the twelfth-century tale the “Intoxication of the Ulstermen” (*Mesa Ulad*) could prove highly enlightening. In translation it reads: “One man among them had a close-cropped, black and bristly head of hair; the eyes in his head were big, bulging and pure white. He had a smooth and black face like an Ethiopian. . . .” (594). Additionally, the household records of the Irish gentry (5.5) provide evidence of the importance of their patronage for drama and the performing arts. Fletcher notes the condition of manuscripts and other documents as he provides an annotated catalog of major holdings and their locations. The *Leabhar na h-Uidhre* (*the Book of the Dun Cow*) [Royal Irish Academy], recognized, at least since the fifteenth century as “the oldest surviving manuscript entirely in Irish,” contains miscellaneous items that include “the Ulster sagas of the legendary hero Cu Chulainn and the earliest version of the Irish national epic, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (the ‘Cattle Raid of Cúalngé’)” (52-53).

All-in-all, Alan J. Fletcher’s tremendous attention to detail and scholarship as evidenced in *Drama and the Performing Arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland* contribute a much needed and invaluable addition to literary and historical resources available for the study of Ireland.