of Love successfully recasts the infamous relationship between Evelyn and Godolphin, as well as presenting a rich and intriguing study of spiritual friendship and Restoration marriage.


A broadly published scholar on religious beliefs and the material literary culture of early-modern Ireland, Dr. Raymond Gillespie (Senior Lecturer, Department of Modern History, National University of Ireland, Maynooth) now has given Irish Studies an important, if modestly slim, new work on arguably the premier bookman of seventeenth-century Ireland: Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713). An English cleric from Hannington, Wiltshire, Marsh became Provost of Trinity College Dublin, founder of Marsh’s Library in Dublin, Archbishop of Dublin, and Archbishop of Armagh. The legacy of Narcissus Marsh and his valuable contributions to Irish education and book culture are preserved today, in large part, by the faithful Keeper of Marsh’s Library, Muriel McCarthy, who herself has written superbly on the history and holdings of Marsh’s Library, a unique eighteenth-century building to which she has given the best of her time and talents (All Graduates and Gentlemen: Marsh’s Library [Dublin, 1980]). McCarthy’s remarkable dedication, generosity, and knowledge have won her the affection and respect of scholars worldwide; they know that Marsh’s Library is a major centre of seventeenth-century studies.

Gillespie’s newest offering is an old-spelling, modern edition of the Reverend Marsh’s recollections and diary (1690-1696). The autograph manuscript of the diary has not survived or has yet to
be “found” and attributed; thus, Gillespie’s copy text is a mid-eighteenth-century transcript of the document preserved in Marsh’s Library, Dublin (MS Z2.2.3).

As recently noted in the important collection, Judaeo-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century: A Celebration of the Library of Narcissus Marsh, edited by Allison P. Coudert, Sarah Hutton, Richard H. Popkin, and Gordon Weiner (1999), Marsh was not only an important seventeenth-century English cleric who, albeit reluctantly, was drawn into volatile issues of his time, but he also was an eclectic book-collector whose extensive personal library is a newly-recovered locus of intersecting Judaeo-Christian traditions in early-modern Ireland. While most historians associate Marsh with the great Dublin library which he founded in 1701, and whose tercentenary was celebrated in 2001, Gillespie’s edition of Marsh’s memoir offers a view of the private man, a man of frightening dreams, a man for whom political and social affairs were but an annoying distraction from his chief interests: reading and scholarship. In assembling his portrait of Marsh, Gillespie looks not to second-hand historical or social documents relating to Marsh, nor to contemporary chat about this rather odd if controversial cleric; he looks rather to the man’s own words in a highly personal written record which discloses something of the private man behind the public persona.

An alumnus of Magdalen College, Oxford, Marsh was an ardent royalist who had a successful career in the Church of England. His natural enemies, as Marsh himself reminds us in his journal, were Roman Catholicism and Louis XIV; Marsh prayed, for example, that “God might put a hook through the nostrils of that [French] Leviathan.” In 1677, with the benefaction of John Fell, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, Marsh was appointed Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; and in 1683, Marsh became Bishop of Ferns and Leighlin. Shortly thereafter, Marsh became Archbishop of Dublin and thereafter of Armagh. Marsh was an ambivalent public figure, bored and impatient with his official, public duties. He resented the tiresome “multitude of impertinent Visits a Provost
is obliged to” and his characteristic distaste for public engagement won him the ridicule of his most illustrious contemporary in high Church politics, Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, a vigorous public man who courted, indeed flourished in, public notoriety. Swift detested Marsh, whom he considered a victim of sentimental pietism and personal cowardice.

While as Provost at Trinity College, Marsh found Irish university students thoroughly unvarnished and haphazardly educated; and to that end, he overhauled the entire university curriculum and also encouraged serious study of Irish language and literature. He moreover supplemented the university library with his own books (and personal funds), and by 1693 Marsh had laid plans for the great library—Ireland's first public library—which bears his name.

Towards the end of his long career, Marsh decided to set out a written record of his activities; he maintained this memoir of jottings for a full six years (1690-1696). The spiritual autobiography, journal, and diary were popular forms at this time, of course; and so we observe Marsh taking spiritual stock in these pages and expressing gratitude to God for many blessings over the course of his career as both clergyman and academic administrator. But Marsh also finds ways to distinguish his subjective commentary from the usual run of pious platitudes. The diary, for example, positions Marsh as something more than a cleric: it unfolds his serious commitment to study and research. A product of the Enlightenment, with an abiding respect for exploration and ‘the new Reason’, Marsh mentions various papers he submitted to the newly-formed Royal Society. A capable player of string instruments, especially the lute, Marsh wrote papers on such specialized (modern) subjects as acoustics.

But the most riveting feature of Marsh's personal jottings is his valuable (pre-Freudian) self-portraiture in which he provides readers with a glimpse of his personal demons. Several disturbing dreams are reconstructed in his memoirs which comment valuably on the cleric’s unresolved anxieties. Marsh dreams, for example, of
journeying to heaven; of observing others journeying to hell; of being identified and greeted by his contemporaries as a Papist cleric; and of trawling about the dark corridors of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Each of these recollected dream images is not taken lightly or humorously by Marsh, but rather are a source of continuing tension.

In view of the pre-eminence of Marsh in Irish literary culture and in Book History, Gillespie’s representation of Marsh’s recollections and diary deserved a far grander and more imposing edition, and certainly a cloth one. While Gillespie’s treatment of this important seventeenth-century text will be appreciated by non-specialists, it is not likely to elicit praise by students of Book History and textual studies, who may wish that Gillespie and his publisher would have arrived at a more responsible editorial decision with regard to the memoir’s presentation: namely, facing page facsimiles, a format which would not have been prohibitively expensive and one which would have given readers of all preparations and backgrounds a tremendously important, if essential, view of the character and “look” of Gillespie’s eighteenth-century copy text in its original script and formatting. The conspicuous omission of even one specimen page from the edition’s copy text is troubling, if not editorially irresponsible. In all fairness to Gillespie’s rigorous scholarship in other books, we must conclude that this rather glaring omission was the result of certain policies and considerations well beyond Gillespie’s control. (And if the case, he would have done well to have placed his work with another house or series.)

The editorial apparatus of the edition is generally sound, but hither and yon a bit thin. Gillespie’s thirteen-page Introduction is admirable in its contextualization of the memoir and its author; the edition’s front matter includes an informative, if brief, note on the edition’s eighteenth-century copy text; the edition’s six-page Index is thorough and reliable; and the notes are consistently helpful. The Bibliography, however, is much too brief and it is also incomplete in its omission of the important 1999 collection of essays on Marsh’s library, mentioned above, as well as perhaps some of
Marsh’s specialized papers for the Royal Society and even an old classic on Marsh and his contemporaries by Newport J. D. White (Dublin, 1927). Finally, the credit on the volume’s back cover for the edition’s handsome cover image is incomplete as it fails to identify Marsh’s portraitist.

In due course, a large-scale biography of Narcissus Marsh will doubtless be written, owing to the valuable spadework of McCarthy, Gillespie, and others. What we presently have in their collective good efforts is a solid, working foundation.


If we compare the political map of Asia in 1500 with a map of the same territory three-hundred years later, the most striking difference will appear in the northern part of the continent. The rule of the Russian Tsars, not reaching far beyond the Ob River in the east and beyond the Oka River in the southeast, spreads over the next three centuries to areas touching on the Chinese border and the coasts of the Pacific Ocean. It is the growth of the Russia’s expansion to these territories, along with its mechanisms, that Michael Khodarkovsky analyzes in his work *Russia’s Steppe Frontier*.

After reading the book and looking at its title, I am convinced that it is ‘steppe’ and next ‘frontier’ that are the most important notions in this undertaking. Rather than follow on the paths of earlier historians, who wrote on the Russian expansion before him, Khodarkovsky sets out first to discuss the steppe people living on the Empire’s frontiers and beyond. Only later does he concentrate on the expansion itself. The nomadic tribes, in majority Muslim and organized in loose and changing confederations, faced a well-organized, strong, and Christian Muscovite state. But those peoples