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Well we remember the old pleasure of picking up a volume of *Archipelago*. This magazine or journal or annual anthology - descriptions vary, quite fittingly - was a sturdy affair with an admirable habit of publishing poets such as Douglas Dunn, Seamus Heaney and Alice Oswald, not to mention the *TLS*'s former poetry editor Mick Imlah, as well as plenty of prose by Tim Dee, Alexandra Harris, Robert Macfarlane, Katherine Rundell et al. Those who admire such productions might say that it was one of the most notable in this line to come out of Oxford since *Areté*; only *Archipelago* was less spiritually landlocked. Its “pre-occupations”, as its editor Andrew McNeillie put it in his initial call to arms, were landscape, “documentary and remembrance”, “wildness and wet” and a whole host of other matters to be found “at the margins” of this “unnameable constellation of islands on the Eastern Atlantic coast”.

Archipelago: A reader (Lilliput Press, €25/£22), edited by Nicholas Allen and Fiona Stafford, is a hefty reminder of everything that was good about what McNeillie & co produced over the magazine's twelve editions. Mark Cocker in a “wooded fen” finding consolation in a “dazzle of commas” (red admirals). Joe Smith and Rose Ferraby reporting from “the fastest-eroding coastline in Europe” (Holderness, on the east of the East Riding of Yorkshire). Douglas Dunn in the “big library of tree-poetry”. A word from Les Murray here, and Angela Leighton there - and the distinctive illustrative contributions of Norman Ackroyd and McNeillie's daughter Gail.

McNeillie himself contributes an essay telling the whole story as he sees it - good reading for anybody thinking of launching a similar project of their own. The painting reproduced here is also from McNeillie's hand; it depicts a scene observed, surely, from life, off the legendary coast of Connemara.

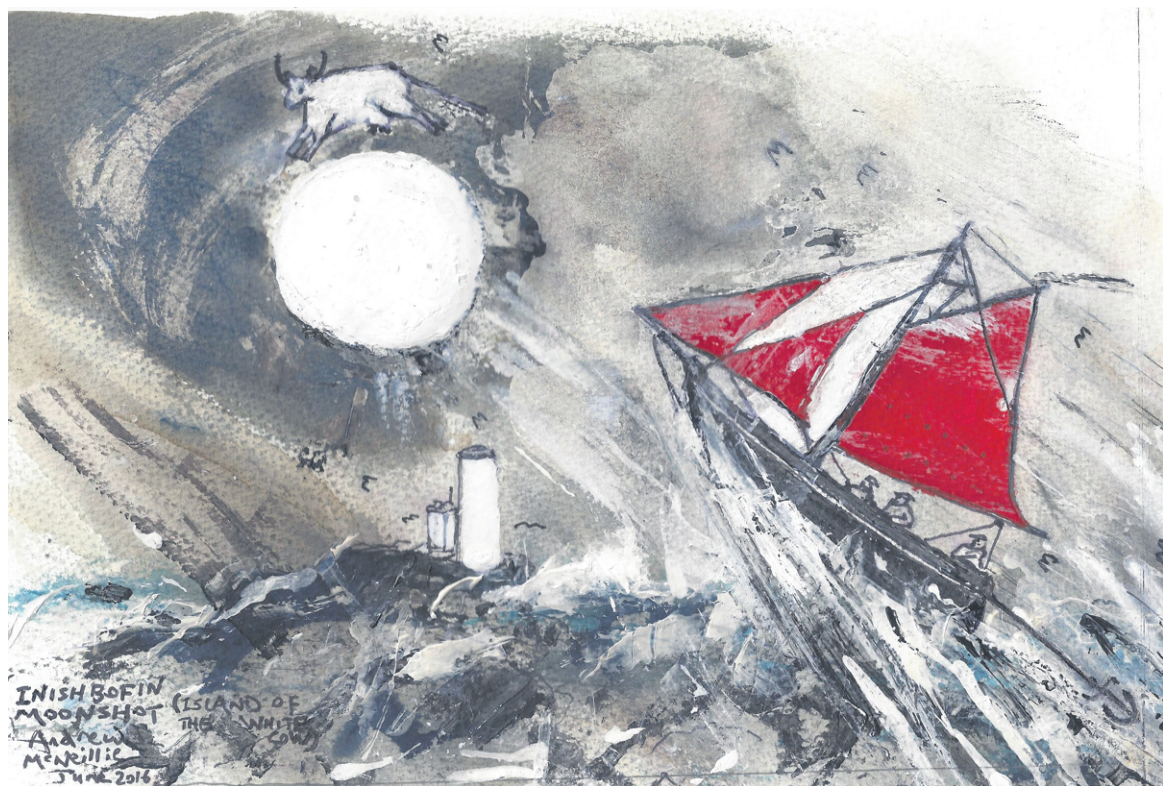
A different kind of Ireland is represented by the Oscar Wilde Society, whose excellent journal *The Wildean* most recently distracted us with a long essay, by Rob Marland, on the subject of Wilde's hairstyle. (In short: those famous collar-length locks did not last long; and what replaced them was a trim that Wilde claimed was

based on that of a bust of Nero in the Louvre, but probably wasn't).

Now those readers who wish to test their way with the bona fide Wildean inflection may do so via the third Wilde Wit competition, organized by the Wilde Society in conjunction with those two witty magazines, the *Oldie* and the *Chap*. The challenge: “write your own Wilde witticism, which can be wise or funny, profound or paradoxical”. The prizes: signed copies of *Oscar Wilde: A man for our times*, the Bonhams catalogue of Jeremy Mason's Wilde collection (“full of Wildean rarities!”) and publication in both the society's newsletter, *Intentions*, and the *Oldie*. The deadline: December 15. Further details may be found on the society's website. Past winners include “I am frequently misquoted - often accurately” and “An insult from the right person can be quite as agreeable as any compliment” (both by Darcy Alexander Corsophine). We wish we had said that. But we will, dear reader, we will.

The *Times* referred to the Taliban last month as “medievalist barbarians”. A couple of weeks later, Kathleen Stock - formerly a philosophy professor in the University of Sussex - could describe the sustained hostility aimed at her by students who do not share her views on gender as a “medieval experience”. The *OED* admits that colloquial use of “medieval”, which is of long standing. That increasingly common deployment of the term “medievalist” as a denigratory adjective, however, seems to be a modern invention. Maybe it will make the dictionary one day - as a sign of our collective inability to, as they say, “own” whatever we dislike about our own age, rather than foist it onto another.

Not so conspicuous in the media are the achievements of those scholars known as medievalists, such as the eminent Derek Pearsall, who died on October 14, at the age of ninety. Formerly Gurney Professor of English at Harvard University and a co-founder of the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York, Pearsall published his first scholarly article in 1955; after many a publication, on all manner of medieval subjects, his last book, a *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of John Gower's 'Confessio Amantis'*, co-written with Linne R. Mooney, appeared barely weeks ago. Amid his occasional contributions to the *TLS*, perhaps the one that would most stir up interest among medievalists of all stripes would be Pearsall's essay about the appropriation of Chaucer as a component in the construction of a “xenophobic national consciousness” (January 12, 2007). That appropriation was the work, Pearsall explains, of that famously barbarous age known as the nineteenth century.



It is November. We are loath to be looking ahead now to the authorial anniversaries of 2022 - but we are forced to acknowledge that the centenary of James Joyce's *Ulysses* will be upon us, on February 2, before you can say “*Sylvia Beach*”. We invite those who are struggling to contain their excitement at this prospect to indulge in a reading of *Molly's Tapestry* by John McGreal (Troubador, £10). This reworking of Joyce's “Penelope” chapter belongs to a series of volumes “investigating the dialectic of the mark, word and

image”, and elevating “marks of punctuation to the level of an aesthetic object”. As in:

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      ; ! ? < ^ < - < >
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How elevated mere punctuation marks can be. From Eastern Mennonite University, in Harrisonburg, Virginia, meanwhile, comes Kirsten Beachy's response to John Blazina's poem on the comma splice (September 3). It is titled, of course, “This Is Just To Say”:

I have edited
the comma
that was in
your essay

and which
you were probably
hoping
was jaunty

Forgive me
my semicolon
so right
and so sterile

M. C.

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