

FOMIN, Maxim, and Séamus MAC MATHÚNA, in collaboration with John SHAW & Críostóir MAC CÁRTHAIGH, assisted by Séamus MAC FLOINN: *Stories of the sea. Maritime memorates of Ireland & Scotland*. Berlin: curach bhán publications, 2016. xi, 84 pp., ISBN 978-3-942002-16-5. 19.90 €.

This slim but utterly charming volume brings together a collection of maritime ‘memorates’ (i.e. personal recollections) from Ireland and Scotland whose chronology spans the period from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s, and which geographically range from the south coast of Ireland to the northern tip of the Outer Hebrides. The thematic focus of the collection lies on extraordinary and arguably ‘supernatural’ personal experiences made on the sea and its shores, and it pursues this topic in both English and Gaelic storytelling; the latter is represented by examples in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic. In total, the volume brings together thirty-one narratives, fifteen from Ireland and sixteen from Scotland. These stories encompass both material that had previously already appeared in print, often in places which may be difficult to access, and texts that constitute original publications of archival material. Gaelic texts are presented in both their original language (which generally has been normalised, though the editors made a point of preserving dialectal forms they judged to be of potential intrinsic interest) and in an English translation. The narratives are accompanied by an appendix containing notes on topics such as motifs and tale-types as defined by a selection of current folkloristic motif- and tale-type catalogues, informants, collectors/recorders, and dates of collection/recording.

Presenting some of the material of the three-year research project “Stories of the sea: a typological study of maritime memorates in Modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic folklore traditions” (www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/storiesofthesea), the book is an enchanting little introduction to an important part of the narrative heritage of Ireland and Scotland. The themes of these stories are as diverse as ‘fairy’ boats, visions presaging drownings, life-threatening fairy rabbits (one wonders whether Monty Python knew this one when they made their film about the Holy Grail), crocodiles in Dublin, magical islands, sea-horses and sea-cattle, emigration to Canada, the Titanic, mermaids, visions of bountiful catches of herring, or seals throwing stones at human fishermen on their lunch break. To add to the intrinsic delightfulness of the stories, the book is lavishly illustrated with a large number of period photographs as well as photographic documents relating to the process of collecting and archiving the folkloric material. In between stories, it is also liberally scattered with line drawings of windroses, lighthouses, ships, seagulls, and sea-lions. (Are there sea-lions in Ireland or Scotland?) It is most regrettable that according to the publisher’s webpage, the volume was (temporarily) out of print at the point when the review copy was received by ZcP. This makes one wonder whether *curach bhán publications* has

the capabilities to market this book adequately. What the editors have achieved with this volume certainly would have deserved better.

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