

Chapter 1 : The Midnight Court and Other Poems by Frank O'Connor

The Midnight Court and Other Poems has 7 ratings and 4 reviews. A bawdy and boisterous poem of Ireland, translated by one of its most distinguished liter.

The Midnight Court peterkinvara T It has gone on to tour with more than performances throughout Ireland. It is off to California in September of As true today as when it was first written centuries ago, timeless, taking a swipe at celibacy and political corruption.. The scandal of Bishop Casey hit the headlines while the production was still in rehearsal so the timing seemed predestined. The poet falls asleep and dreams he has been put on trial by the women in his life. It is a very gutsy piece, bawdy in parts without being offensive. The story line carries the audience along, with loads of humour, earthy lyrics, and a very feminine message considering the poem and music were written by two men. This is an Aisling poem; a dream poem but unlike any other. This is no Eire in the guise of fair young maidens come to redress political oppression but an ugly bailiff whose main concern is sex. It is not England who is the oppressor but the men of Ireland who are not up to the job. A potent musical adaptation presents this classic 18th century Irish poem in a contemporary setting. A litany of sexual scenarios sung in styles veering from traditional to calypso. The psychosexual demons were no longer at bay but rampant and fully recognized. The music a light mix of Celtic blues with an encompassing palette for pastiche. The original of Brian Merriman has had several translators, though the version of this production by David Marcus speeds along delightfully. Cheeky, bawdy and occasionally touching by turns. A range of instruments adds to the variety, including more citterns than this reviewer has heard employed together or rather consecutively in quite some time. The company is owed thanks for bringing this neglected classic to new and wider audiences. Demarco European Art Foundation. The pleasure out of bed came courtesy mainly of Sean Tyrrell. Tyrrell is as irreverent as Merryman is with social mores and together they take us through a delicious litany of sexual scenarios sung in styles that veer from calypso to gospel, from Thin Lizzy to Clannad.

An eighteenth-century masterpiece widely recognized as the greatest comic poem in Irish literature, The Midnight Court is a hilarious and insightful take on the battle of the sexes. In the court of a fairy queen, the men and women of Ireland air their grievances with one another.

Brian Merriman lived and worked in County Clare in the mid-to-late s. Apparently he was a Math teacher. And we hold you in contempt. It also lampooned the celibacy of priests. Pretty serious target practice there. Although the topic is a serious one especially for the horny women begging to get laid , the tone of it is a rollick. As though sexual pleasure for women is not one of the most important topics in the world, or as though because Brian Merriman was a man he can have nothing of use to say about women. Female sexual pleasure, separate from procreation, is still seen as so threatening that it must be managed and corralled. There is still a lot of work to be done. It was written in the late s. Translation from the Irish, a native language, into English, the language of the conqueror, is challenging on all sorts of levels, political, cultural, and â€” as Heaney points out below â€” gender-wise as well. The poem is a battle cry of women to get satisfaction, to be loved and touched and pleased as is their due. An erasure of a certain kind of voice, there in the original. These are all extremely Irish concerns, but they affect us all. All in all, a fascinating topic. How dare you deny us your cock, in other words. Her work does get translated into English, from time to time, but not everything gets translated, and so she has paid a price in prestige, wider recognition because of that. She is willing to pay that price. Hearing her read it in Irish was a supreme pleasure, but the translations that are out there of her volumes of poetry are good enough to get the feel of what she is up to. I recommend The Water Horse , in particular. I wrote about the book here , and you can see one of her poems there, both in Irish and in English translation. And we could further argue that in more recent times its importance has shifted: This shifting and salubrious relationship between the poem and its world can be illustrated by looking very briefly at its reception and interoperation at three different moments over the last hundred years. It was as if he were anxious not to find the poet guilty of some form of un-Irish activity. But he fudged the issue, presumably because it would have been an embarrassment for a propagandist of the new self-Gaelicizing Irish Free State to discover in the older Gaelic literature too gleeful an endorsement of anti-clerical attitudes and too robust a promulgation of the basic desirability of promiscuous sexual behavior. The poem still stands in danger of being accused for different reasons under the terms of a new feminist consensus. He was surely something of a progressive when it came to the representation of women. He gave them bodies and brains and let them speak as if they lived by them. He revised and implicitly criticized the ailing genre by burlesquing its idealized, victimized maiden in the figure of the beam-limbed bailiff; and he gave to the other young flesh-and-blood speirbhean in the witness box a transfusion of emotional and rhetorical energy long denied to women by poets who had preceded him. Still, the fact that the poem is now probably read more in English translations than in the original Irish has by no means lessened the impression of machismo which surrounds it in the mind of the general reader. In an introduction to the first edition of this version, he admits that there are qualities in the Irish which his own English, for better or worse, had tended to coarsen: There is nothing remarkable about it â€” no extravagance of imagery or language which you can translate; it is a pure classical beauty of vowels and consonants which you either hear or do not hear.

Chapter 3 : The Midnight Court by Brian Merriman, translated by Noel Fahy

A bawdy and boisterous poem of Ireland, translated by one of its most distinguished literary sons. As a teacher and translator of Irish verse, Frank O'Connor brought to the world's attention many fine poems from his native land, few as enduring and none as controversial as Brian Merriman's The Midnight Court.

He obliges with an "Irish prayer about a Welsh king": The Irish language is not the only cloak of obscurity surrounding Merriman. Little is known of his life. He was born in County Clare in about 1686, worked as a teacher of mathematics, and died in 1744. Like Merriman, who appears to have been conversant with Goldsmith, Swift and Savage, Carson knows all about moving between tongues, Irish having been, strictly speaking, his first language. In the aisling tradition the poet is granted a vision of Ireland as a woman, who incites him to defend her honour and prophesies the restoration of the Stuart line and bardic privilege. A fairy court has convened to hear the grievances of the women of Ireland, and his accuser decides to drag the poet off to attend. Men are busy fighting wars, and when they do remember to marry they do so at a scandalously advanced age, while all around them comely maidens are wasting and pining by the village crossroads. My cheeks need no blusher or powder or puff - The skin I was born with is still fair enough; My hands and my throat, my fingers, my breast - Each bit of my body competes with the rest. Next to speak is a "dirty old josser", with a predictable catalogue of grievances of his own. His accuser is on the make, he counters, exploiting her wiles to haul herself out of the gutter, and interested in marriage only for the respectability it lends to the illegitimate child she has foisted on him. At this point the poem takes an unexpected turn as the old man stands up for bastards, praising their hardiness and condemning the hypocrisy of the clergy. Could this be, as some have speculated, because Merriman was the natural son of a priest? Answering back, the aggrieved young wife would tend to agree: What jewel alive could endure such a fate, Without going as grey as her doddering mate, Who rarely, if ever, was struck by the wish To determine her sex, whether boy, flesh or fish? As flaccid and bony beside her he lay - Huffy and surly, with no urge to play. She throws herself on the mercy of the fairy court, whose ruling calls for all unmarried men of 21 to be stripped and flayed. Thus far the poet has covered unnoticed, but his tormentor insists on punishment for the "man who is Merry by nature and name! Luckily for the poet this is the moment he wakes up: His fellow Free State puritan Eamon de Valera was a big fan, though, memorising the whole poem in Lincoln jail shortly before he escaped, dressed as a woman. More recently, Seamus Heaney translated sections from the poem in his book *The Midnight Verdict*, in a thinly veiled reply to the scandal of female absences from *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. But Merriman makes an uneasy kind of feminist, and after the sex wars over the Irish constitutional battlegrounds of divorce, contraception and homosexuality in the 80s and 90s, Irish feminists have more to worry about these days than how useless their men are in the sack. The alphabet soup of earlier Carson books such as *First Language* serves him well here with the alliterative riffing of the Gaelic metre "befuddled and boozed in a bibulous Babel".

Chapter 4 : The Midnight Court [Twas my custom to stroll] by Brian Merriman - Poems | calendrierdelascie

Get this from a library! Midnight court, and other poems. [Brian Merriman; Frank O'Connor] -- A bawdy and boisterous poem of Ireland, translated by one of its most distinguished literary sons As a teacher and translator of Irish verse, Frank O'Connor brought to the world's attention many fine.

Shortly after his birth, his mother married a stonemason who was working on the walls of the Deerpark estate in Ennistymon. He was a teacher of mathematics and is known to have taught the hedge school nearby in the townland of Kilclaren. He married around and had two daughters. In , the Royal Dublin Society awarded him two prizes for his flax crop. Around he moved to County Limerick , where he ran a school until his death. He is buried in Fiacla graveyard. In the opening section of the poem, a hideous female giant appears to the poet and drags him kicking and screaming to the court of Queen Aoibheal of the Fairies. On the way to the ruined monastery at Moinmoy , the messenger explains that the Queen, disgusted by the twin corruptions of Anglo-Irish landlords and English Law , has taken the dispensing of justice upon herself. There follows a traditional court case under the Brehon law form of a three-part debate. In the first part, a young woman calls on Aoibheal declares her case against the young men of Ireland for their refusal to marry. She complains that, despite increasingly desperate attempts to capture a husband via intensive flirtation at hurling matches, wakes , and pattern days , the young men insist on ignoring her in favour of late marriages to much older women. The young woman further bewails the contempt with which she is treated by the married women of the village. She is answered by an old man who first denounces the wanton promiscuity of young women in general, suggesting that the young woman who spoke before was conceived by a Tinker under a cart. He vividly describes the infidelity of his own young wife. He declares his humiliation at finding her already pregnant on their wedding night and the gossip which has surrounded the "premature" birth of "his" son ever since. He disgustedly attacks the dissolute lifestyles of young women in general. Then, however, he declares that there is nothing wrong with his illegitimate children and denounces marriage as "out of date. She mocks his inability to fulfill his marital duties with his young wife, saying that she was a homeless beggar who married him to avoid starvation. She vividly argues that if his wife has taken a lover, she well deserves one. She then calls for the abolition of priestly celibacy , alleging that priests would otherwise make wonderful husbands and fathers. In the meantime, however, she will keep trying to attract an older man in hopes that her unmarried humiliation will finally end. She advises them to equally target the romantically indifferent, homosexuals, and unmarried skirt chasers who boast of the number of notches on their belts. Aoibheal tells them to be careful, however, not to leave any man unable to father children. She also states that abolishing priestly celibacy is beyond her mandate and counsels patience. She declares that he must be the first man to suffer the consequences of the new marriage law. As a crowd of infuriated women prepares to flog him into a quivering bowl of jelly, he awakens to find it was all a terrible nightmare. Influence and legacy[edit] A statue of Merriman at Ennistymon The language of the poem is essentially the everyday Munster Irish of the time, the vernacular of Clare. Brendan Behan is believed to have written an unpublished version, since lost. Although it has not been made available for purchase, Cumann Merriman has posted excerpts on their website. For added contrast, the same passages are also reproduced from a modern dramatic reading of the poem. The memorial is a large stone quarried from a hill overlooking the lake, and the opening lines are carved on it in Irish. The people who attended the ceremony were almost all from the local district, and were eager to point out the exact corner of the nearby field where the poet had run his hedge school , and the spot on the lough shore where he had fallen asleep and had his vision. Later that evening, for example, in a marquee a couple of miles down the road, we attended a performance by the Druid Theatre Company from Galway in which the poem was given a dramatic presentation with all the boost and blast-off that song and music and topical allusion could provide. Again, hundreds of local people were in the tent, shouting and taking sides like a football crowd, as the old man and the young woman battled it out and the president of the court gave her judgement. The psychosexual demons were no longer at bay but rampant and fully recognised, so that the audience, at the end of the performance, came away from the experience every bit as accused and absolved as the poet himself at the end of his poem.

Chapter 5 : Brian Merriman 1 Poetry Irish culture and customs - World Cultures European

*An eighteenth-century masterpiece widely recognized as the greatest comic poem in Irish literature, *The Midnight Court *is a hilarious and insightful take on the battle of the sexes. In the court of a fairy queen, the men and women of Ireland air their grievances with one another.*

Chapter 6 : the midnight court | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

A bawdy and boisterous poem of Ireland, translated by one of its most distinguished literary sons As a teacher and translator of Irish verse, Frank O'Connor brought to the world's attention many fine poems from his native land, few as enduring as Brian Merriman's The Midnight Court.

Chapter 7 : Brian Merriman | Open Library

The Midnight Court The traditional practice is to divide The Midnight Court into four parts. However, most commentators recognize that the poem naturally divides into five an opening, a closing and a three-part debate in between.

Chapter 8 : Brian Merriman - Wikipedia

The Midnight Court by Brian Merriman and translated by Noel Fahy. Part One: The Prologue The poet sets out alone on a summer morning and encounters a fearsome vision woman.

Chapter 9 : The Midnight Court | Sean Tyrrell

Merriman is known for his poem "Círt an Mhácan Oiche," published in English as The Midnight Court (M. Fridberg,). Many notable poets, including Seamus Heaney and Ciaran Carson, have published partial or complete translations of The Midnight Court, which is written in the form of an aisling, or vision poem. Merriman died in Limick City in July of