



The Fields Of Athenry: A Journey Through Irish History

James Charles Roy

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In *The Fields of Athenry*, James Charles Roy leads us through the Irish past and present with the central theme of his own personal experience with the renovation of a run-down castle -- really a crumbled tower -- that he purchased more than thirty years ago. Moyode Castle, located near the County Galway market town of Athenry, was built in the sixteenth century by the Dolphins, an Irish-speaking family directly descended from French-speaking Norman adventurers who had invaded Ireland four centuries earlier. This old tower house and the rich agricultural lands it guards has witnessed every strand of Irish history, from the heroic exploits of Celtic warriors long celebrated by Yeats and Lady Gregory, through the Easter Rising of 1916 when IRA insurgents used the building as a lookout. It stands today as a powerful, timeless symbol of the tumultuous ebb and flow of fortune, both good and bad, that characterizes Irish history. Roy weaves his personal story of the purchase and renovation of Moyode into a wide ranging historical conversation, leading us to a topic of real interest to Ireland today and our sense of history more broadly: the historical nostalgia we attach to Ireland and the fact that our romantic image flies directly in the face of development and boom times in the "Celtic Tiger" of the twenty-first century. Few know, for example, that today Ireland produces and ships more software abroad than any other country in the world with the exception of the United States, though we all know the story of Angela's Ashes. With this theme in mind, Roy leads us to question what attracts us -- or perhaps more aptly him -- to the rubble of a castle from Irish days long past.

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