

Mark O'Brien and Felix M. Larkin, eds. *Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Writing Against the Grain*

Mark O'Brien and Felix M. Larkin, eds. [*Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Writing Against the Grain*](#). Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014. 240 p. ISBN: 9781846825248. £47.38 (hardback).

This book is a selection of essays on Irish periodicals and magazines in twentieth-century Ireland, and it is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the public sphere in this country. The introduction makes the point that "there is no genuine freedom of expression in the public sphere unless a wide variety of outlets is available to accommodate those with something to say" (9). Any collection of this type is bound to be selective, and one of the most admirable things about this book is the very clear statement of aims set out in the introduction by the editors Mark O'Brien and Felix Larkin when they remark that it "lays no claim to be a definitive selection of the 'best' or 'most important' Irish periodicals of the Twentieth Century; it is merely a representative selection with a clear focus on the journalistic rather than on the literary or cultural aspects of the titles under review" (11).

The only word with which I would take issue here is the adverb "merely," which does not do justice to this most enjoyable and informative collection. Chronologically structured, the book begins with Colum Kenny's revealing and comprehensive study of the editorships undertaken by the very busy Arthur Griffith (*The United Irishman*, *Sinn Féin*, *Óire Ireland*, *Scissors and Paste*, *Nationality*, and *Young Ireland: Óire Ág*) straddling the years 1899-1919. It concludes nearly 100 years later with Kevin Rafter's near contemporary study of the place of *Magill* in the Irish public sphere from 1977 to 1990. Rafter devotes a subsection to each of the editors "Vincent Browne, Colm Óibín, Fintan O'Toole, Brian Trench, and John Waters" all of whom have been significant presences in shaping the Irish mindset. While capturing both the importance of the magazine and the sense of excitement that it could generate, his essay notes the many journalists who worked there: "it was a teaching hospital for young journalists" (228).

Journals of the Gaelic and Celtic revival "An Claidheamh Soluis and *Fáinne an Lae*" feature along with more political ones like James Connolly's *The Worker*, D. P. Moran's *The Leader*, and the proto-feminist *Irish Citizen*, a journal "small in size but large in heart and hopes" (62). The line of opinion-forming work is traced from *The Irish Bulletin*, *The Irish Statesman*, and *Dublin Opinion*, through *The Bell*, *Hibernia*, and *Hot Press*. The *Capuchin Annual* and *The Furrow* trace more religious concerns.

The scholarship and information given are of a very high quality, but it is the readability and the connections made between these eclectic texts and their contexts that make the chapters both informative and enjoyable. One leaves this book with a different sense of what was happening in Ireland at this time, as the journalistic perspective embodied in these magazines and journals shines through these essays. There is very much a sense of being caught in the present of each period, and this makes the book valuable to the academic and general reader.

To close this review I would return to the book's introduction. The editors note that a connecting

strand of these journals is the factor that, by â€œproviding an outlet for those writing against the grain of mainstream Irish society,â€• they â€œmade freedom of expression a reality in Irelandâ€• (10). For this alone, they are worthy of study, and this book does that theme full justice.

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