Keeping Faith with the Past in Gaelic Prose 1940-1951

Clíona Ní Ríordáin

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/2243>

DOI: 10.4000/etudesirlandaises.2243

ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Caen

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2011

Number of pages: 193

ISBN: 978-2-7535-1348-8

ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

Clíona Ní Ríordáin, « *Keeping Faith with the Past in Gaelic Prose 1940-1951* », *Études irlandaises* [Online], 36-1 | 2011, Online since 30 June 2011, connection on 21 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/2243> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.2243>

This text was automatically generated on 21 September 2020.

Études irlandaises est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Partage dans les Mêmes Conditions 4.0 International.

Keeping Faith with the Past in Gaelic Prose 1940-1951

Clíona Ní Ríordáin

REFERENCES

Philip O'Leary, *Keeping Faith with the Past in Gaelic Prose 1940-1951*, Dublin, UCD Press, 2010, ISBN 978-1-906359-27-0

- 1 Philip O'Leary's previous volumes, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival 1881-1921* (1994) and *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State 1922-1939* (2004), shed light on prose writing in Irish during the revival and its immediate aftermath. His new volume focuses on the following decade in a nine-chapter book which addresses the increasing disillusion of Irish language writers. Each chapter is organized thematically, addressing such issues as authenticity, ruralism, and earlier Irish literature, amongst others. Of particular interest are the chapters devoted to the writing about the past in Irish. Chapter five evokes the period from prehistory to 1700. This period was vital ideologically, as it represented the "pristine Gaelic nature and its putative glory" (179). O'Leary highlights the errors of writers who based their work on texts like *Lebor Gabhála Érenn*, confusing history and mythology and failing to recognise the pseudo-historical nature of their sources. Nonetheless, he recognises the invaluable contribution of people like Liam S Gógan and Gustav Lechmacher, who, in a number of articles, addressed the vacuum of history writing in the ancient history of Ireland.
- 2 O'Leary also looks at the way this period was represented in creative work during the period, examining drama and novel forms alike. Chapter Six, which covers writing about the past from 1700 to 1923, illustrates how much this period captured the attention of historians and creative writers alike. O'Leary examines the writing devoted to the period surrounding the 1798 rebellion and point outs that, despite attempts to provide objective accounts, the stories and histories frequently portrayed a sectarian version of events. Chapter seven studies local and international history written in Irish

and offers a fascinating insight into a largely ignored facet of Irish writing. The writing on the work of the revivalists themselves (their activities as *timirí*, the early Irish language colleges) is as O'Leary says a "treasure-trove" for anyone interested in the socio-cultural history of Ireland in the early twentieth century.

- 3 However it is in the final chapter of the book, which deals with the work of Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Brian Ó Nualláin, that O'Leary's work is at its most stimulating and vivid, setting the work of those two masters against some of their more pedestrian contemporaries.
- 4 The volume contains an extensive critical apparatus, with nearly 100 pages of notes in double columns, and an impressive list of primary sources. It is beautifully produced and includes a bookmark to allow ease of movement between notes and text. It is clearly a work designed for the scholar rather than for the general reader.