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La crise ? Quelle crise ?

A Formative Decade: Ireland in the 1920s

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célibataires ne faisait que renforcer les inquiétudes des hiérarchies religieuses, catholiques et protestantes.

Cet ouvrage offre un éclairage très pertinent sur la politisation du corps féminin et les discours sur la sexualité. En abordant de nouvelles problématiques et en utilisant de nouvelles sources, il remet en question une lecture de l'histoire nationale qui a passé sous silence les expériences des femmes et leur exploration d'une sexualité marginalisée. Il s'inscrit dans une mouvance historique qui tend à rendre aux femmes leur place à part entière dans le discours national.

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Mel FARRELL, Jason KNIRCK, Ciara MEEHAN (eds), *A Formative Decade: Ireland in the 1920s*, Sallins, Irish Academic Press, 2015, XII + 257 p., ISBN 978 0 7165 3281 1.

This collection of ten essays seeks to shed new light on the politics and political culture of the first decade of independent Ireland, from 1922 to 1932, and it makes an excellent companion to the 1999 collection of essays, *Ireland in the 1930s*. As pointed out by the editors in their introduction, the historiography of Irish politics in the 1920s concentrates overwhelmingly on the War of Independence (1919-1921) and the Civil War (1922-1923), leaving much terrain unexplored. While this volume does not claim to be comprehensive, it certainly succeeds in making an original and revitalising contribution to a much neglected area of study.

The volume is notable for the diversity of topics covered and for the number of essays which address gaps in the historiography. The opening chapter by Ciara Meehan takes a sample of election posters, in order to examine the nature of Irish political discourse during the decade. This chapter is richly illustrated with six posters from Cumann na nGaedheal, the party which governed the Irish Free State during the 1920s. Although it is a pity that none of Fianna Fáil's posters are reproduced. Meehan argues that while Cumann na nGaedheal's posters grew more creative as the decade progressed, their concentration on attacking Fianna Fáil betrayed the party's desperation as the electoral threat from Fianna Fáil grew. The posters are visually arresting and they reinforce Meehan's point that they were conversation starters in a way that modern election posters, with their uniform headshots of candidates, utterly fail to achieve. New ground is also covered in essays on the Farmers' Party, the work of the Irish Senate, the politicisation of

the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme by Cumann na nGaedheal and the tensions between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland surrounding the centenary celebration of Catholic emancipation in 1929 and the 1500th anniversary of St. Patrick's arrival in Ireland in 1932. Moreover, Justin Dolan Stover's contribution traces the shifting discourse on loyalty during the Irish revolution and the early years of the Free State.

The volume also offers new perspectives on existing topics, such as the 1923 Land Act, the origins of Fianna Fáil and the treatment of the Catholic minority by the Northern Ireland state. Significantly, Mel Farrell's re-evaluation of Cumann na nGaedheal demonstrates that from its inception the party regarded itself as a cross-class "national party". He also challenges the idea that by absorbing the remnants of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Cumann na nGaedheal became a reincarnation of John Redmond's party. Farrell points out that both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil attracted former Home Rulers and that in their structures and methods both parties were influenced by previous nationalist movements. Overall, this volume makes an important contribution to our understanding of Irish politics in the 1920s and it will stimulate further research into the early decades of Irish independence.

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Stephen ENNISS, *After the Titanic: A Life of Derek Mahon*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 2014. xx + 329 p. ISBN 978 0 7171 6441 7.

If the essence of drama is conflict, then the life of Derek Mahon as presented to us by Stephen Ennis has indeed been a dramatic one. In this reading, there scarcely seems to have been a conflict in which Mahon has not been a protagonist: conflict with his Belfast upbringing, conflict with employers, conflict with women, conflict with friends, conflict with writer's block, conflict with publishers, conflict with alcohol, even conflict with conflict where Mahon opts for *non serviam* on the Northern Irish Troubles. But if this is a story of ἀγωνία, it is not told by a Homer. Ennis appears to have compiled his tale from index cards, some full, others only containing a phrase, as he tries to reconstruct Mahon from the recollections of his contemporaries and the manuscript material that as Emory University's Librarian, he acquired for that institution before moving on to become Director of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas – Austin, self-described as "a place of unlimited discovery".