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Yeats's At The Hawk's Well, directed by Hiroshi Sugimoto, The Paris Opéra Ballet at the Palais Garnier, September-October, 2019

A Japanese revisioning of the earliest of Yeats's *Four Plays for Dancers*, where he shaped what he had learned of the art and artistry of Noh theatre from Ezra Pound and Ernst Fenellosa to match his private dramaturgical imperatives, held much promise. Most of the directorial team and two of the performers were Japanese artists established in their own right, while Sugimoto is renowned as a photographer with a particular interest in recording either remote, bleak landscapes or abandoned, dilapidated theatres, caught between living and dying yet still potent as liminal spaces. His is a sensitivity akin to Yeats's in this particular respect and resonant too of Celtic belief systems. From a first glimpse of the stage setting, such a liminal space confronted the audience. The traditional format of the Noh stage with its walkway or entrance path (*hashigakari*) leading to a square stage of untreated maple wood were there but subtly altered: where in the Noh theatre the walkway leads from the dressing room to the audience's left at a slight diagonal to the playing space, here the walkway advanced towards the audience from the back of the Garnier stage at the foot of a vast cyclorama to a playing space now positioned as a central forestage, the bright but spectral colouring of walkway and stage contrasting with the gleaming black flooring to either side of these Japanese elements. There were neither pine trees nor a gravel pavement surrounding the stage as in the Noh theatre: instead only the skeletal-seeming fundamentals of the prototype. Appropriately for Yeats's play, which starts with his Chorus calling to mind a journey through desolate rocks "the salt sea wind has swept bare", the stage picture evoked a journey to an abandoned site.

Traditional music and a group onstage of Noh musicians were replaced with an electronic score by Ryoji Ikeda that pulsed and echoed, suggestive of an ethereal world that could turn threatening or downright aggressive at times but was always eerily devoid of human agency. Gone too were the traditional backing of a permanent chorus and the permanent setting of a wooden wall with painted pine tree, instead the cyclorama was flooded with a luminescence, its height often bisected with a thin horizon-like line suggestive of a distant sea or far-reaching valley or plain. This computerised scenography linked precise-

ly to the music was devised by Sugimoto himself. Yeats by 1916 when he composed *At The Hawk's Well* had nothing but scorn for realistic scenery in the theatre, which he found bogus in its impact and distracting from the actors' performances. He devised theories of staging that eschewed all modes of realism and sought extremes of simplicity through stylisation: theatre he firmly believed should work as directly as possible on its audiences' imaginations. Sugimoto was exploring levels of stylisation made possible by current developments in digitisation way beyond anything Yeats might have envisaged, but the result was wholly in sympathy with Yeats's ambitions and, though electronic in its modes of realisation, found a remarkable dynamism in its pared-down, abstract power.

Sugimoto's biggest challenge came from working with a cast of dancers (the production had been commissioned by the Ballet de l'Opéra National de Paris), which required him to jettison Yeats's poetic dialogue and find a scenario and language of movement that would convey its import. He largely kept to Yeats's own narrative line but worked some notable variations on it in the confrontations of the three characters. The Old Man and the Young Man (Cuchulain) were dressed identically in silver trunks, boots and an encompassing cloak with a stiffly angular, padded collar that enabled the Old Man in particular when turning away from the audience to seem as if suddenly transformed into a rock or ancient tree-form. Both cloaks were quickly discarded to reveal almost identical near-naked body-lines and physiques. Neither man wore a mask or sported mask-like make-up; instead they each had long straight silver hair, hanging to the waist. The only distinguishing features between them were that the Old Man wore an equally long silver beard and his whole ensemble had a dull tarnished effect, where Cuchulain's by contrast positively gleamed bright, as if the silver were newly minted. In the programme the Old Man was given a new potential identity in being named "The Shadow" and at all points in their meeting he seemed to represent Cuchulain's *doppelgänger*, a possibly feared projection of an older self with whom the hero needed to wrestle: it was as if he embodied the ordinary, natural end to a life, which Cuchulain wished to transcend¹.

The bare forestage was in consequence a psychological space of self-determination; there was no well, no Guardian; and no transformation of woman into hawk. She was denominated "the Hawk-Woman" from the first and her startling arrival (in stark silhouette against a red cyclorama) presented her as a challenge, a trial to be negotiated in the hero's quest. Her costuming (like the men's, the work of Rick Owens) was spectacular: a fiery red leotard and wide red wings extending well beyond the reach of the dancer's arms (not angelic in formation, but seemingly rolls of textured metal that under stage lighting looked like molten lava). Again, there was no mask (nor hood, such as Dulac devised for Michio Ito in 1916), instead the presence of a hawk-like being was conveyed by the superb carriage of the dancer's head and make-up that emphasized her eyes, which have such a hypnotic influence on Cuchulain in Yeats's text. The wings were quickly shed and the dangerous quality of this strange being was sustained by the slicing, flashing movement of the dancer's arms and hands, and the frequent whip-lash movement of her legs, often shot out to full extension with the foot raised above shoulder-height and as suddenly retracted. One wonders whether in his preparation for his staging, Sugimoto studied Ninette de Valois' account of how she shaped the dance sequence when she herself performed the role at Yeats's invitation at the

¹ As is the custom with most large-scale dance companies today, two alternating casts shared the run of performances. In the first cast, The Young Man was danced by Hugo Marchand, the Old Man by Alessio Carbone, the Hawk-Woman by Ludmila Pagliero, and the Noh actor was Tetsunojo Kanze. For the second cast, Axel Magliano and Audric Bezar danced Young and Old Man respectively, Amandine Albisson appeared as the Hawk-Woman and Kisho Umewaka was the Noh actor. The reviewer saw the second cast on 11 October 2019.

Abbey Theatre Dublin in 1933. She devised three distinct phases to give her performance variety and a narrative development: “an evocation of brooding power, through suggestive seduction [of Cuchulain] to the violent ecstasy of a wild bird”. Certainly intimations of the first two states were to be found in the choreography for Cuchulain and the Hawk-Woman with her wheeling over his back or sliding in a variety of positions down his arm. Strangely the dance ended in a curiously perfunctory way with no seeming resolution, as he simply walked offstage and she, with wings replaced, was carried aloft in the opposite direction by two men of the chorus.

Were we to suppose that the play had been reconceived for the dance as a series of challenges to the Young Man’s status as hero? Neither of these first two sequences with the Old Man and the Hawk-Woman had worked any significant change in Cuchulain’s presentation of himself beyond a growing stature that was certainly present in his confident, almost imperious walk offstage from the Hawk-Woman. This idea of the dance as a sequence of challenges was further supported by a final encounter, the most surprising of them all, as a figure in traditional Noh costume and mask advanced through the chorus, dressed for the conventional role of ancient, hieratic being, slow-moving and almost uniformly white in appearance. Reaching the forestage he confronted a seated Cuchulain and with deeply resonating tones voiced what seemed like a translated version of the Old Man’s anguished account of his life, wasted in a quest that has amounted to nothing, a longing for immortality endlessly frustrated in the search. The Noh actor began to move with ritual pacing to left and right while wielding a knotted staff of wood, which appeared to grow ever heavier. At the climax of the dance with an effortful gesture he raised the staff in both hands above his head, only for it to descend forcefully across his shoulders like a yoke: a potent image of defeat. Drawing on his failing strength, he tossed the staff at Cuchulain’s feet; the hero leaned forward to seize it and the two men sustained a prolonged pose, eye-to-eye. Slowly the Noh actor turned and retreated back up the walkway and in time Cuchulain rose, holding the staff, and followed him out, his eyes fixed constantly on the figure before him.

This was not Yeats’s scenario with Cuchulain rejecting the lure of immortality, preferring a place in legend, folklore and art. Instead Sugimoto presented a Young Man who through experience grew to accept the burden of humanity with its frailties and disappointments. This is one way of interpreting the ending of this staging. But much depends on how one interprets that entrance into the action of the figure from Noh, who had all the trappings of a celestial being. Was the taking of the staff perhaps to be interpreted as an emblem of Cuchulain’s acceptance of his destiny, whatever it might bring, releasing him from the psychological urge to control his future? Yeats’s plays often end in uncertainty, a deliberate lack of closure, leaving spectators instead weighing possibilities of interpretation. This production followed that pattern.

Sugimoto’s staging pursued and in large measure embraced its own particular integrity, always defining Yeats’s relation to the project as source, or as the programme neatly defined it: “Création d’après William Butler Yeats”. The one disappointment, given the venue, was the lack of a consistent quality in the choreography. Most of the directorial team were Japanese; and one cannot but wonder why Sugimoto did not choose to deploy a Japanese choreographer (either versed in traditional Noh dance or trained in Butoh or some other form of relevant dance language) rather than Alessio Silvestrin, who proved sadly lacking in the requisite inventive range or skill. The work devised with the three principals was adequate to carry required effects and mood, but the juxtaposition of an experienced Noh performer alongside Silvestrin’s performers quickly emphasized the latter’s want of originality or discipline. Presumably out of a need to deploy members of the corps de ballet of the Opéra, Yeats’s chorus of Three Musicians were replaced with a corps of twelve dancers who had extended passages of dancing at the opening of the piece before the entry of the Old Man and again between the departure of the Hawk-Woman and the entry of Noh dancer. In his programme notes

Sugimoto writes of the chorus as elevated, celestial beings (far different from Yeats's Musicians who are representatives of common humanity, shocked by the action they witness). This is in line with Sugimoto's concept of the dance-play as happening on the borders between reality and the transcendental, but Silvestrin did not match that conception. *Celestial* is a difficult term to interpret in dance, but it is certainly not an excuse for a busy modernist pursuit of intricate steps for their own sake devoid of logic, atmosphere and, consequently, meaning. There was a lot of lifting, leaning, twirling, leaping, swooning, raising of arms and pointing of toes in extended positions (all effortlessly executed) but it was just incidental, background work in a style one associates with the dance accompanying pop songs (acceptable in itself, but in this context quite out of keeping with the rest of the performance). It did not induce any sense of the celestial, being irritating and potentially destructive of the mood meticulously created by the principals and Sugimoto's direction. Even the climactic dance for Cuchulain and the Hawk-Woman was predictable in its gestures, poses and lifts.

Ironically the Yeats shared a double bill with a performance of *Blake Works I* by William Forsythe, Silvestrin's one-time mentor, which demonstrated precisely what might have been offered in *At The Hawk's Well*. Here was modern choreography at its finest: liquid, fluent, disciplined, pursuing its own logic with insight and dedication and finding subtleties of meaning within the medium of dance. One sequence, the third of the seven songs, "Colour in Anything" explored in movement a relationship teetering on the brink of dysfunction through a whole gamut of gestures and body-postures expressive of yearning and parting. This was precisely the idiom through which to define the conflict between seduction and repulsion that lies at the heart of the encounter between Cuchulain and the Hawk-Woman. What an opportunity lost! Who chose a choreographer so out of sympathy with Sugimoto's scheme? Overall Sugimoto's was a valuable experiment in bringing one of Yeats's plays close to his dominant inspiration. Even where the production disappointed, it demonstrated what might have been achieved, since the central encounter with the three principal dancers and the Noh actor was undeniably gripping, dominating memory in the way that Yeats hoped his plays in performance would affect his audiences. Would it be unkind to suggest that in future revivals the corps de ballet be completely cut, since they contribute little of intrinsic merit? This would certainly strengthen the organic shape and progress of the piece as a work for four performers. The result would be more properly Yeatsian too.

Richard Allen Cave

Flann O'Brien, *The Collected Letters of Flann O'Brien*, edited by Maebh Long, Dublin, Dalkey Archive Press, 2018, pp. 672. £18.50 (Paperback). ISBN 9781628971835.

Recently characterised as the third member of the trinity of Irish Modernists, with James Joyce as the Father, Samuel Beckett as the Son and Brian O'Nolan as the Holy Ghost, readers may question what is appropriate when referring to this major influence on Modernist and Postmodernist fiction; Brian O'Nolan, Flann O'Brien or Myles na gCopaleen? For readers unfamiliar with O'Nolan's life and career, a brief overview may be useful and Maebh Long offers, with stunning brevity, an overview, yet she is careful not to make this collection another biography of O'Nolan. Long remarks:

This collection of letters is neither revealing biography nor controlled autobiography but the presentation of a life in and of letters that does not so much lift the veil as show the veils in the processes of their weaving. (xii)

On the opening pages of this book, Long begins with a lengthy quotation from Niall Montgomery's 1956 *Unpublished Biography of Brian O'Nolan*, which concludes with the lines:

Normally quiet, formal, a lover of music, fresh air, the urban scene, Brian Nolan is unquestionably the most brilliant Irish writer, the most promising, the strangest. (xi)

Montgomery's biographical sketch of O'Nolan is an apt beginning to this expertly edited volume of letters as it not only foregrounds the highs and lows, the accomplishments and the disappointments within his life, but it provides readers with an insight into his three public personas; the civil servant, the novelist, and the satirical columnist. Given this trinity of personas, readers will be unsurprised to find each are present throughout this collection; a collection that is joyously received for its rich and nuanced portrait of the multi-faceted O'Nolan that benefits from Long's decision to not conceal or hide O'Nolan's "eccentricities and irregularities [...] impishness, anxiety, affection, bravado, and irritability" (xvi).

Long's introduction offers an excellent and elegant summary of the letters contained within, as well as three subheadings which contextualise the rationale for the structure of the collection. In "Selection" Long admits that some letters are "lying forgotten in someone's attic", (xx) and are missing. In a similar vein, she offers clear and concise reasoning for her exclusions of materials such as short notes, memoranda and when multiple copies of a letter were given; furthermore, Long admits to omitting many of O'Nolan's surviving professional correspondence as a civil servant. Yet the inclusions Long has made provide illuminating details relating to the mode and style of writing O'Nolan employed while in the office. Under the heading of "Presentation", Long carefully outlines the standardisation of dates, locations and addresses, and the treatment of textual errors. For example, she notes, "O'Nolan increasingly makes typos, requiring the editor's [...] but he also tangles this issue with his penchant for puns". Finally, the section on "Annotation" details the criteria for the volume's extensive editorial footnotes. Many of these notes contain thorough information about the specific correspondence on the page above, as well as explaining initials, abbreviations or foreign words.

The letters are divided into years and broad chronological sections; "1934-1939", "1940-1947", "1950-1959", "1960-1963" and "1964-1966". What may surprise many readers is that letters from 1960-1966 are divided into two sections of their own, however, as readers progress through these letters it becomes apparent that the last six years of O'Nolan's life were the most comic and tragic. Accompanying these letters are numerous biographical outlines of those mentioned in the letters. Many of these correspondents are culturally and historically specific, some are relatively obscure while others will be familiar to even the most passing reader. For example, there are letters to and from Hilton Edwards, Hugh Leonard, Niall Sheridan, Timothy O'Keeffe, Patience Ross, A.M. Heath William Saroyan, Niall Montgomery, Thomas de Vere White, Denis Devlin, Sean O'Casey and James Plunkett, to name a few. Much of the pleasure of reading these letters come from seeing O'Nolan's different persona at work. Notably, in a letter dated 6 January 1939, O'Nolan writes to Longmans: "I have returned to you under a separate cover a marked proof of 'At Swim Two Bird'. I have made no changes of any importance, I think the omission of all quotation marks is an improvement. I suggest the name FLANN O'BRIEN as a suitable pen-name" (23). Additionally, on 15 January 1939, O'Nolan, again writing to Longmans, states: "I am extremely sorry if I appear to be nervous and shilly-shallying in connection with my book but I am afraid the title 'At Swim Two Birds' must be changed, likewise 'Flann O'Brien'. I have long had a hobby of provoking dog-fights in the newspaper here on any topic from literature to vivisection and I have been using 'Flann O'Brien' as a pen-name for some time" (29). Here,

O’Nolan demonstrates a sense of pragmatism when dealing with Longmans rather than overly brandishing his authorial egotism. Likewise, reading an early letter to Montgomery’s father also suggests a translation of James Stephens’s *The Crock of Gold* (1912) into Irish, an idea that Long’s footnote suggests may have influenced *The Third Policeman*, is illuminating and provides not only hints has the literary merit of these letters but suggests more work into their own epistolaric significance is to be done. Among the gems within this collection are a series of letters written in Irish, particularly those O’Nolan signed as B. O Nullain or Brian Ó Nuallian. Although O’Nolan was a native Irish speaker, and as such finding such letters are unsurprising, two letters, one dated 29 May / Bealtaine, 1943 and 25 August / Lunasa, 1956, he employed this variant of his name. Most notably, these letters relate to an incident following his own research into the cataloging in the National Library of Ireland, and upon finding a connection between the pseudonym Flan O’Brien and Brian O’Nuallain he wished to deny its validity; thus demonstrating his taste for expressing his contradictory nature.

Despite the positive aspects of this collection, some very minor quibbles detract somewhat from the otherwise exceptional volume. For instance, there is little to no consideration of O’Nolan’s letters from the perspective of epistolary theory. Instead, Long’s introduction and notes focus on the cultural, historical and literary connections that can be derived from the contents of the letters. Equally, while the notes provided by Long as exceptional in their detail, they can be somewhat distracting at times and overwhelming in their sheer number. These issues aside, this collection offers scholars a series of substantial points from which to expand and further consider O’Nolan life and works, and it is a valuable resource that will be a staple of Irish studies, as well as epistolary studies, for decades to come.

Robert Finnigan

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, *Twelve Thousand Days. A Memoir of Love and Loss*, Belfast, The Blackstaff Press, 2018, pp. 219. £ 9.99. ISBN 978-1-78073-173-5.

You can count your life in years, in months, in weeks, in days, in fragments, in John Donne’s “rags of time”, in moments of happiness and sorrow, in trips and holidays, in work experiences and amounts of money, in disappointments and in success. Numbers are there and each number is a meaningful marker in the flowing of days. Yet the twelve thousand days in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne’s latest book, *Twelve Thousand Days. A Memoir of Love and Loss* – recently shortlisted for the Michel Déon Prize for Non-Fiction, a Royal Irish Academy award –, are much more than a list of days, as here Ní Dhuibhne reconstructs life spent with her late husband, Professor Bo Almquist, as well as the dramatic and traumatic context of his death. All these “rags of time”, amount to twelve thousand days recounted and relived in a moving and sensitive account interlacing more recent events with episodes in a more distant past.

Twelve Thousand Days is a memoir, a genre more fluid than autobiography, yet the dividing line is blurred. Like autobiography, memoir is a narrative about the author’s life, without the strict chronology and the detailed focus of the former, as it relies more on the subjective, emotional and intimate insight of the writer’s past. A memoir moves freely in time, it can begin at any given time and place, emotions and emotional truths are its priority, therefore past and present interweave and coexist.

This is what happens in Ní Dhuibhne’s *Twelve Thousand Days*, whose journey into the past provides an emotional path into a lifetime of love as well as into the dark world of be-

reavement. Interestingly, the organizational structure of the book resembles the Writer's typical way of writing and working with texts in her long career as a novelist and short-story writer. Each chapter has a double title, or rather the real title provided by day number – “Day 2” or “Day 11,998” – is followed by a caption that anticipates the content and raises expectations in the reader. In her memoir *Ní Dhuibhne* devotes each chapter to a specific day and to specific episodes, alternating events in the distant past with events in more recent times. Likewise, alternating stretches of past and present in narrative *Ní Dhuibhne* reproduces the frequent narrative and stylistic strategy to be found in her stories, which generally open in the present tense and on a present situation to break up into alternating stretches of past and present. Bo Almquist's final, shocking days are juxtaposed to the early phases of their love story, in the same way as in her stories *Ní Dhuibhne* juxtaposes an old legend and its modern counterpart. The book is thus a form of continuity as it resembles a collection of short stories whose characters recur from story to story.

The first chapter is entitled “Day One: Arctic Explorers” and sheds light on Bo Almquist's “wide range of colourful expressions in the form of proverbs and quotations” (3). The reference to Arctic explorers recurs again in the book often to emphasize the first-person narrator's emotional and practical incapacity (“Far from being an Arctic explorer, I was a coward”, 87; “an Arctic explorer would have been better prepared”, 124). The expression recalls Erling Kagge's *Philosophy for Polar Explorers*, where Kagge writes: “One of the things I have learned as an explorer is that, every so often along the journey, you have to stop and recalibrate, to take stock of unexpected events or changes in the weather. This book is a recalibration of sorts” (xix).

Also *Twelve Thousand Days* is a recalibration of sorts, which can be read at different levels. Its focus is on the life of two people that met and recognised themselves and each other as complementary. The chapter entitled “Before Our Day” describes a summer week in Dunquin where Bo Almquist supervised a few students' doctoral work. It closes with a strong image of affinity that would soon transform mutual respect and admiration into love. “I caught a glimpse of him, behind the veil [...] We were members of the club of the X-ray eyes, the club of the people who can see into the human heart. [...] We were on the same emotional wavelength” (48).

The memoir is an insight into Irish university life of the 1970s, the activity of the Department of Folklore at UCD and into the jobs at the National Library, but also into the life and modes of the time, such as the lack of telephone connections, and the social context that expected young girls to conform. “There were unspoken rules, in the air around you, that you understood although they were never articulated. Don't go too far. Even where hair is concerned” (60). Dating a considerably older man was unthinkable and a source of disapproval, marrying him even more so.

The episode of “Day 2. ‘Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments’” with its direct quotation from Shakespeare's “Sonnet 116” marks the first date of the couple and the tormenting hesitations of the narrator, going up and down Booterstown Avenue, conscious of “society imposing its norms” (62) and of the courage to defy conventions. The series of short verbless occasionally one-paragraph sentences give immediacy to the evocation of anxiety: “So many taboos, in 1978” (63), “The voice of the censor. Under the surface, checking and balancing” (64). The continuous repetition of the year, 1978, interlaces with and emphasizes the unwritten rules and the “pressure to fit in” (65), until the final decision is taken and a significant inversion in sentence structure underlines the spontaneous action made: “Up the avenue I walked” (66). In its shortness the lyric sentence sheds light on the turning point, the determination to defy conventions and take up her own life, in spite of the unwritten rules and the unspoken orders to conform. Beginning the sentence with the preposition “Up”, *Ní*

Dhuibhne highlights the decision that would change her life, as well as the conscious challenge and the awareness of the difficulties of a new start.

Ní Dhuibhne's use of simile is striking and this stylistic choice recurs in the memoir. In the episode mentioned above, she uses similes related to animals to express her hesitation: "Then I stopped in my tracks like horse who senses an evil presence", immediately followed by a one-paragraph single sentence: "Like rabbit caught in the headlights" (61) where the headlights suggest the spotlight scrutinizing behaviour. The restaurant where the couple have dinner on their first date is "A big grey stone building without windows, forbidding on the outside, like a fortress", soon followed by the metaphor of "a cave" (67). The apparently oppressive environment is actually a form a protection of the necessary secrecy of the relationship, which the reader follows in its development and in the privacy of the use of language, a real idiolect: "Who else spoke our language? Our mixture of languages, Irish and English and Swedish and German and French? Sometimes all in the same paragraph" (173).

The language of loss looms largely already in the early part of the memoir. In the chapter "Before Our Day. Behind the scenes at the National Library" Ní Dhuibhne recollects the difficulties she met with getting used to her job, remembering the Assistant Keeper's words "The first two years are the hardest". In the one-paragraph single sentence that follows, the devastation of loss is anticipated: "It's what they say about widowhood" (25). Likewise, the break up of her former boyfriend Oliver interlaces with and anticipates the bereavement, "I felt like that in the hour after Bo died" (58).

Bo's death was the result of a short illness that appeared as a minor medical problem, soon to develop with tragic consequences. The flashbacks dealing with health issues and with hospital scenes tick the time of disaster approaching far too fast. The sore toe that led to a wrong diagnosis marks the beginning of the end, and sharp criticism of the Irish Health Service is embedded in the series of mistakes and thoughtless lack of care and assistance. The letter carefully written by the family doctor is stuck into an ambulance porter's pocket and ignored; in a shocking image Bo is made to walk to the ambulance – "It reminded me of Jesus walking up Calvary" (102); the necessity of rehydration clashes with the delay of a drip and its malfunction; a doctor makes a diagnosis consulting the wrong case file; the hospital does not have a dialysis machine. These and similar mistakes are presented in an accumulation of false steps, at some stage this is called "a tragic farce" (172), and the attempt to move Bo to a different hospital is emphasized in the subtitle of chapter "Wednesday. Day 11,997" significantly called 'Trying to escape'.

If *Twelve Thousand Days* is in a way a very private insight made public, its second part, simply named "Part Two", made of about thirty pages, is even more so, as it deals with the aftermath of Bo's death both practically and emotionally. Here Ní Dhuibhne exposes herself in all her sorrow and fragility following the bereavement. Consistently with the organizational pattern of the book, "Part Two" is divided into four very personal sections, each with an appropriate title.

Starting with and quoting from the books about grief and grieving from which she found comfort, "Afterword" reflects on the various stages of grief, and painfully retraces the decisions to be taken about funeral and cremation, the support of family, friends and neighbours, the suggestion of a post-mortem, the tears that accompanied her for weeks and months, the sense of guilt for her own mistakes, the effort to go on and survive, the list of new activities to pursue, the help of a counsellor. The Author involves the reader in this particularly delicate phase with a very effective and moving use of similes to convey her numbness. "I was like a blown-up plastic doll, empty inside. Or transparent, like a ghost" (190); "I felt as if I was made of paper, moving through the rooms like a shadow" (193). Interestingly, the stylistic choice of comparing herself to paper anticipates the loss of interest in writing, again marked by simile: "My interest in writing fiction vanished completely [...] the creation of fiction seemed trivial, like a pointless child's game" (201).

Paper is also implicitly present in the second section, “Dreams”, in which Ní Dhuibhne reports some of the dreams she had taken notes of in her diary, also pointing out precise dates. The act of translating oneiric images into words, to give organization and structure to dreams in a way replaces fiction writing at a time in which this was impossible and the process of dreaming someone you have lost is also part of the grieving and healing process.

Section three provocatively creates expectations in the title, “Our father goes early to bed, for he is an old man”, which are immediately subverted. Rather than the childish description of a father who is not the same age as the others, the focus is on the adjective “old”. Earlier on in the memoir Ní Dhuibhne had reflected on this, and she returns to the obsessive idea: “once you pass eighty you belong to the category ‘old’, the subtext of which can be ‘dispensable’” (210). This chapter is also a shocking revelation the landslide of medical and administrative mistakes that led to Bo’s death, and the feeling of anger and guilt at what becomes consciously clear in retrospection.

“Hidden Pictures from the Middles Ages” is the last section of the memoir. It describes Ní Dhuibhne cycling to Visby on the island of Gotland to visit its medieval church in the summer of 2015, an experience that is a form of reconciliation and rebirth. A stylistic choice is remarkable in this respect, because though it opens in the past with the use of simple past and past perfect verb forms, it is mostly narrated in the present tense. This creates a double effect, highlighting the permanence of memories and a perspective on the future and on survival.

Interestingly, Ní Dhuibhne’s memoir is in a way anticipated by a much shorter text published in 2001 in the volume edited by Anne Macdona *From Newman to New Woman. UCD Women Remember*. The purpose of the collection was to celebrate the centenary of the UCD Women Graduates’ Association; it is a book of memories and Ní Dhuibhne contributed with the account of her first university days, the development of her interest in “pure English” and the course on “The Folktale and Medieval Literature” offered by the recently arrived Swedish Professor Bo Almquist. This, she says, is “the most important intellectual and personal choice of my life” (178). Only at the end of the piece does Ní Dhuibhne hint at the personal side of her choice: “In 1982 I married Bo Almquist and so I have maintained an involvement with the college” (179), thus creating a circular pattern with the Brontean title “Reader, I Married Him” (175).

In a way, *Twelve Thousand Days* closes a full circle Ní Dhuibhne started with the 2001 short essay, and her memoir is the first book written after her husband’s death. “Bo and I were people of the word” (172), and memories put into words keep the dead alive. Notably, her husband’s last gift was a gift of words, his translation of *Bornholms Saga* into Swedish, dedicated to her “in memory of our holiday on Bornholm” (170). The memoir is another gift of words, and with them a gift of life.

Giovanna Tallone

William Wall, *Suzy Suzy*, New Island Books DAC-Head of Zeus Ltd, Stillorgan-London, 2019, pp. 297. £ 18.99. ISBN 9781788545501.

William Wall’s, *Suzy Suzy*, starts with a declaration of war against Suzy’s mam: “Someone will kill my mother. It could be me. There’s something wrong with me I know, but I see my dad thinking about it too. Only my brother loves her...” (1).

What immediately captures the reader, apart from the use of slang, swear words, juvenile jargon, are Suzy’s initial developing thoughts. Especially the first chapters express just one idea as in short texts or tweets.

Vivid images and conflicting microcosms succeed one another in a fast rhythm before the reader realises the tragic depth of Suzy's uneasiness. "Idk" and "ffs" dot her diary pages together with her overly critical view of the surrounding world. Her mum appears uninterested and demanding, addicted to foodie programmes like *Master Chef* and *The Great British Bake Off*. Her dad revolves around "making money", a pure capitalist who doesn't give a damn about his tenants and feels hurt and defeated when missing a good deal. Her bro swings between putting up with her yearning for attention and companionship and totally refusing her.

While reading the novel you keep wondering where her uneasiness will lead her to. It is a struggle between resilience and the tug of death. Will she be able to resist the nihilistic appeal? Will she manage to undo, unweave the poisoned net that threatens to trap her? Will she succeed in getting away with the game of appearing evil and actually doing harm?

Both children, Suzy and Tony, end up cutting themselves to feel pain, to punish themselves and their inability to cope with "the end of the world", with the hypocrisy and serious misconduct of their family.

Her father's failed real estate bid for Ballyshane, against the Englishman, who finally buys it, hovers over the text. Suzy's father's anger conditions the family's life and choices to the point where Suzy agrees to go on a punitive expedition against the British owners of Ballyshane. With Serena, her pyromaniac friend they set fire to a plastic bin. Their "feat" ends up in a tragicomic performance, the would-be offended Bowles, the owners of the place, watch as audience their useless attempt at incinerating the bin.

The adjective disenchanted might immediately define Suzy; disenchanted has a wide range of nuances of meaning: discontented, realistic, disillusioned, knowing which would suit her, but she is not an utopist, a wishful thinker, dreamer, she is rather dissatisfied and frustrated. This adjective addresses Suzy's inner fragility, but she doesn't wear it fully as in the end she is neither cynical nor insensitive.

As a typical teenager, she has gone through the obsession of hating her family: "I can't stand to be in the same room as my mam, my dad is more or less a waste of space and my brother is weird" (57) to a later acceptance of them. As when her father "kidnapped" her to escape from the Revenue, to hide away, she felt cheated, but nevertheless, she still sympathized with him as desperate and miserable.

She definitely belongs to a dysfunctional family, she admits it herself and proves her addiction to Google by googling "dysfunctional" to learn about its characteristics. She discovers: "I have twelve of the fifteen signs" and then goes on, obsessively, wondering: "do people in families like mine ever kill each other? Like my dad could kill my brother. He hates him. I could kill my mam. My dad could kill my mam" (108-109).

It happens that usually, members of dysfunctional families tend either to withhold or not verbalize their feelings, wants, likes and dislikes with each other and Suzy experiences this all the time, particularly when Tony tries to commit suicide with his mam's car and leaves no brake marks! This is her comment: "My brother is a maniac. But I don't think it's what he did. Like I should ask him, but we don't talk a lot. Nobody in my family talks. We are secret agents" (116). Suzy starts cutting herself after her bro's failed suicide. Her declaration: "We're living in this dead inside where nothing moves except us" (122) introduces her body violation, under the shower, her inflicting pain by slashing her flesh.

The liquid, viscous society through which she drags herself is inhabited by weird friends with whom she experiences Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. She focuses on death, inspired by cruelly morbid videos on YouTube. She either imagines it: "Serena would make a beautiful corpse. I can even see her in a coffin [...]" (70) or views ways to electrocute her mam in the shower (139).

With this unbearable, heavy burden she goes on a journey of self-discovery from adolescence to adulthood.

Like Roddy Doyle, William Wall, as a teacher, had a privileged point of view to observe and analyse the disillusioned reality, cynical feel of his students' uneasy dysfunctional families. Their Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, their indifference to tragic situations, their unaffectionate attitudes, their anesthetized feelings, their inability to cope with lack of love, their unsuccessful relationships, their sense of incivility and disrespect of law, their porn kinks dramatically converge in Suzy's world.

Suzy becomes the litmus test voicing William Wall's concerns about the decline of global society in particular Irish and British. And it is noticeable that Suzy refers to a poem written by William Wall himself – "Like we did that 'Ghost Estate' poem in Fifth" (155) – which highlighted the result of the Celtic Tiger crash leaving a large number of housing estates, funded by consumer credit, unbuilt or in disrepair (William Wall, *Ghost Estate*, Ennistymon, Salmon Poetry, 2011). Wall's political commitment goes through his macro-text, emphasizing the "gutted public services, racism, xenophobia, the privatization of National Health System, the undermining of workers' and women's rights, the anti/pro/abortion referendum"; his ideals are openly declared on his blog: *The Ice Moon*, where he defines himself "an interested observer of British politics hoping for the return to a form of Social Democracy" ("Thoughts on Corbyn and Brexit", 12 January 2019, <<http://www.williamwall.net/The-Ice-Moon/Entries/2019/1/thoughts-on-corbyn-and-brexite.html>>) and we inevitably find them surfacing through *Suzy Suzy*.

Even the Church with its pervading power is nailed down through Suzy's vitriolic, syllogistic, well-reasoned approach: "According to Miss Leahy religion is all about meaning. But get this: God created the world out of chaos, then he created man [...] then he had the Jews faffing about trying to find the Promised Land which turns out to be Palestine which is an excuse to kill Palestinians [...]" (64). In the text, it is revealed that Serena's mother, even though she is not religious, voted against abortion, Serena's father, Willy The Right To Life, whose hands were blessed by the Pope, delivered leaflets featuring dead foetuses.

The language used by the author is a perfect pastiche of Urban youngster language, coloured by its informal approach with common usage and popular culture. The male mind of the mature author is reflected in the attitudes and language of a girl, showing adult, powerful critical thinking. William Wall's careful linguistic choices are sharply emphasized through typographical elements, which underline what is dead-important to the protagonist; she often uses capitalization sometimes taking it to the extreme of using it for each letter: "The house IS FULL OF FUCKING SECRETS" (53), or using it only in the initial letter of a word: "the Extinction Of Planet Earth aka Armageddon" (64). The narration flows freely with hilarious satirical attacks or ironical touches, dealing with the tragic abyss of reality with lightness. As soon as the reader grasps the meaning of the initial glossary it is a non-stop-very-rewarding journey through Suzy's ups and downs.

But, in conclusion, let's go back to the first line: William Wall's *Suzy Suzy*, starts with a declaration of war against Suzy's mam: "Someone will kill my mother. It could be me" which, connects with the reverse declaration of war that another writer from Cork, Cónal Creedon made in his novel *Passion Play* (Poolbeg, Dublin 1999), when the protagonist, Pluto wonders about his mother's suicide: "[Why didn't they tell me a lie?] Tell me she died saving a beautiful white swan [...]" (1).

Conci Mazzullo

Frank McGuinness, *The Wedding Breakfast*, The Gallery Press, Oldcastle, 2019, pp. 77. €11.95. ISBN 978-1133-769-0.

Publication of a new collection of Frank McGuinness's poems is an exciting prospect, and *The Wedding Breakfast* is certainly cause for celebration, as it is by far his finest volume to date, illustrating all the memorable aspects of his style with remarkable clarity. To describe the poems as challenging is not to imply that they are *difficult* in the pejorative meaning of that epithet. Far from it: poems that flaunt their difficulty tend to alienate or frustrate even the focused and knowledgeable reader; the challenges of McGuinness's poetry compel attention and a deepening awareness through the exquisite verbal precision, the subtle but purposeful rhythms, the integrity with which the themes are defined. The artistry conspires to entice the reader to engage with each poem, to want to re-read it, and to uncover layers of meaning. No poem is ever predictable in its development, relation to genre, or traditional cultural expectations. We engage rather with a process of discovery: these are poems written for a reader with an enquiring mind by a poet with a resolutely enquiring mind, intent on sharing the search not simply presenting conclusions.

But one would be wrong to suppose the poetry overly cerebral, as one gnomic line expresses it so eloquently: "Body is mind's architecture of bone" (56). The questing is not purely intellectual; it embraces the emotional, social, moral, political, cultural and physical. Even the getting to a potential goal is not reductive: several of the poems interestingly repeat phrases or whole lines from a poem's opening ("in my end is my beginning"): we are returned to where we began but know the significance of that beginning with an expanding insight so the repetitions have a fresh originality. But experience in these poems does not bring just closure, rather there is an opening out to new possibilities, new tangents to explore, new perspectives. In "Trains" (11), for example, a chance experience of seeing a red-haired man lead a child along the aisle of a train expands into private musing that maybe touches on autobiographical memory of paternal care and sparks an awareness of lost opportunities to play the fatherly role ("that could be me") before returning to the words of the opening lines, as if answering an unstated question about why such chance moments can trigger a wealth of subtle emotional patterns that will ensure the experience is etched deep into the psyche. There is a hint of Wordsworth here, but the setting is wholly urban.

A recurring technique involves subtle layering, as in "Lucrezia Borgia" (62, and translated here), which addresses the nature of a woman whose identity is so drowned with historical fact, myth, lurid fantasy, or wild supposition that she eludes understanding for all her fame. McGuinness's poem offers four images that have resonated in his memory; they are spread over just four lines. No attempt is made to define Lucrezia or her particular significance for McGuinness, rather the poem respects her mystery as evoked through the meticulous juxtapositioning of these four powerful symbolic moments in her lifetime. An identity hovers in these sharp crystalline pictures that are at once immediate yet distanced, because there is no seeming connection between them: here is knowing and not knowing. The approach leaves the reader's imagination in a state of alert attention, to *wonder* while resisting the urge to judge. The poem, despite its brevity, frees Lucrezia Borgia from the burden of history with its wrong kinds of knowing.

Similarly, a celebration of the life of Paul Léon offers no precise details of why Irish literature and culture is indebted to a man murdered in a concentration camp in Silesia in 1942. Instead we are given three potent images conjuring pictures of Léon's presence in James Joyce's life: the novelist's working table; the joking claim, "A man I know swallowed a dictionary" (14); and

the careful assembling of precious manuscript into “nineteen manila envelopes”. Implicit in the writing is a rejoicing in the man’s expansiveness, forbearance, wit and loyal sense of duty; but statement would have brought only flat recognition, where those images tease at one’s powers of understanding, inviting the reader’s mind to play with richness of implication, the better to sense the richness of the man’s individuality.

In like fashion, a sonnet, “Yukio Ninagawa, Director” (65) eschews direct reference to the theatre director’s international celebrity or even any consideration of his impressive catalogue of productions of chiefly classical western plays. The spiritual dimension of Ninagawa’s life and work is what excites McGuinness’s inspiration: his chosen images evoke a playful building and rebuilding of temple-like structures from “flotsam and jetsam”, making something splendid out of something banal (the pursuit of much theatre); the daring in his creativity to rival the gods of his culture; the splendour of his appearance and his gentlemanly temperament; the indomitability and relentlessness of his private quest, envisaged as practising to “make perfect the music of spheres”. The focus throughout is on the wealth of being that Ninagawa brings to his artistry, the inner assurance (evoked by the measured pentameters that underscore the progress of the poem where all but the opening line comprise a single sentence), the control and deliberation. *Achievements* in worldly terms appear virtually immaterial by comparison.

Creative juxtaposition as a technique is pursued by McGuinness in this collection through the gamut of its possibilities, often to pose and question cross-cultural challenges. “Machou Picchu” (45) starts with a strange musing:

Some say it could be located in Kerry,
waiting to be found, lurking near Dunquin...

and proceeds wittily to contemplate two civilisations, two geographical locations, two cultures with distinct religious convictions that permeate social practice. The result is both disturbing and illuminating in equal measure, markedly so, given the refusal to offer easy elisions or quick solutions to the puzzle that opening line poses. There is no better demonstration of the scruple, delicacy, steely honesty that are the hallmarks of this poet’s enquiring mind. A similar technique appears to be at work in the several “translations” or poems “after” such writers as Lorca or Villon (and in poems inspired by paintings by Géricault or Breugel the elder). “Chanson”, for example, takes Villon’s lyric mourning the passing of time and the process of human ageing and re-defines the elegiac mood of the original into a meditation on the arid and stultifying consequences in later life of denying one’s sexual orientation. The heterosexual ambience of Villon’s poem, present always at the fringes of the reader’s awareness, sits in balance with the homosexual context this version depicts with its sad, gray conclusion:

Whose cock now do they prick tease but their own?
Who’ll tell them beauty weathers into stone? (37)

This reaching-across a cultural divide spanning centuries says a great deal about the changing moral barriers and restrictions that different societies choose to impose on writers, but it also exposes commonalities of experience and feeling: the allowed perspective on to that subject-matter is what has changed, is continually changing. In both these poems (and the others indirectly referred to above), it is the reader who must draw conclusions, either pushing for certainties or resting in irresolution, content to hold oppositions in balance. Again, as we read, we are caught between knowing and not-knowing.

To hold such a fine balance requires intellectual courage and great technical delicacy. These qualities are particularly in evidence in the poems that focus on gay experience. “The Wedding Breakfast” (18-19) celebrates a marriage but one decidedly outside the norm, even though with great good humour the ceremony embraces much of what would comprise a traditional heterosexual wedding. The comedy and absurdity of the situation are allowed (one groom recovering from heart surgery “wore the best of black pyjamas”, the bridesmaid was a nurse from Hong Kong, while the heart-surgeon “did the honours” and the champagne reception featured Lucozade), but none of this is at the expense of the seriousness or genuine feeling occasioned by the event:

we went on a bender in Belfast City
 pledging our vows in that hospital ward,
 risking the lives of our immortal souls,
 the revels of fertile love between men,
 enraptured in the Royal Victoria,
 surviving heart surgery, sacred as gold.

McGuinness’s gift is for continually shifting the perspective on his subject, allowing for a multiplicity of responses, but in this case, since the subject is autobiographical, never deviating from owning his heart’s truth.

“Kites” (74 and translated here) achieves a like complexity by hinting at, while never precisely defining (except perhaps through the title), an underlying conceit that draws on falconry. This image is expanded to gesture at ideas of fidelity and freedom; the wildness of natural impulses; the enduring confidence and trust that come with a forty-year long relationship; the delight in the physicality of that relationship that only mortality can bring to an end. Nothing in the poem intimates this is inspired by a gay relationship; the experience could as readily be felt by a partner in a heterosexual relationship, the traditional focus of such love poetry; and so the poem is both personal and potentially generalised in its non-specificity, private but widely human in its resonances. All this is achieved within the briefest of poems comprising eight relaxed lines that keep pace seemingly with a single wandering thought. What McGuinness frequently accomplishes throughout this volume is like a metaphysical conceit in the seventeenth-century manner, but one where the terms of reference are neither precise nor vague but are secret: they are, as it were, deliberately withheld by the poet to be intimated through allusion, the better to place the reader at the heart of the intricate experience McGuinness is seeking to evoke. This is poetry that profoundly honours the reader’s intelligence and sensibility.

Richard Allen Cave

Caoimhín De Barra, *Gaeilge: A Radical Revolution*, Dublin, Currach Press, 2019, pp. 272. € 14.99. ISBN 978-1-78218-907-7.

The future of the Irish language is a perennial topic in Irish cultural and political discourse. Caoimhín De Barra’s latest book, *Gaeilge: A Radical Revolution*, offers a nuanced and provocative take on this issue. De Barra states early on that there are two key questions to consider regarding the Irish language: whether it is worth reviving, and whether it is possible to revive it. He makes clear that his book will focus on the latter, which he feels is largely overlooked

in contemporary debate. *Gaeilge: A Radical Revolution* is, in sum, a detailed study of how the revival of the Irish language might be achieved.

In addition to his focus on the achievability (rather than the desirability) of an Irish-language revival, De Barra further clarifies the parameters of his discussion in two ways. He firstly makes clear that he will concentrate on the state of Irish within the Republic of Ireland. Although he acknowledges efforts being made to promote Irish both in Northern Ireland and abroad, the bulk of his analysis deals with the 26 counties. Secondly, he draws an important distinction between the Irish language (the topic of his book) and the Gaeltacht (the geographical regions in which Irish is the vernacular). These are often conflated in popular discourse, but De Barra is quick to highlight that they are two separate objects of inquiry. Gaeltacht communities face unique economic challenges, for instance, which are outside the remit of his study.

In the book's introduction, De Barra examines the kind of rhetoric commonly used by journalists and politicians when discussing the Irish language. He demonstrates the ways in which proponents of Irish are often cast as irrational zealots, and how Irish revivalism is even compared to Nazism or Islamic fundamentalism by some critics. These tactics, he argues, are an attempt to portray one side of the debate as rational and ideologically neutral, in order to avoid engaging with contrasting opinions. The introduction highlights just how fraught the topic in question is, and provides helpful context for us to evaluate the author's own arguments.

In Chapter One, De Barra writes about his experience of teaching himself Irish as an adult, having done poorly in the subject throughout the majority of his school years. This brief personal history provides some interesting practical insights into second-language acquisition, such as the observation that short periods of regular study are more effective than infrequent marathon efforts. Following this discussion, he turns his attention to the history of Irish in Ireland. Chapter Two traces the key events which led to English replacing Irish as the predominant language of Ireland, including the Norman invasion of 1169, the Cromwellian conquest in the 17th century, and the Great Famine in the 1840s. It also highlights some of the early attempts made to revive the Irish language, beginning at the turn of the 20th century. This cursory overview would serve as a good introduction for someone unfamiliar with the subject.

In Chapter Three, De Barra assesses the current state of the Irish language in Ireland. He points out that arriving at a clear conclusion on this issue is no easy task. Terms like 'fluency' or 'native speaker' are often ill-defined, and can be used in ways that are not politically neutral. He presents results from several surveys on the number of Irish speakers in Ireland, and shows that these vary considerably, due to the different measurements they use. Furthermore, he contends that a reliance on speakers' self-assessment is problematic, as people are likely to have different interpretations of their ability. As a whole, the chapter suggests the importance of precision in debates on language issues, while also arguing convincingly that we should see fluency as a spectrum, rather than a simple binary (you either speak Irish or you don't).

Any debate on the role of the Irish language in Irish society will sooner or later bring up the question of education. It is often taken for granted that Irish is taught badly in both primary and secondary schools, yet De Barra questions this trope in Chapter Four of his book. His main argument is that people have wildly unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved through formal education, given the obvious constraints in place (such as the number of hours dedicated to Irish in the curriculum). He shows that Irish is not taught badly, when compared either to other school subjects in Ireland, or to the success of language teaching in other countries.

Chapters Five and Six deal, respectively, with the hatred many citizens feel towards Irish, and the widely accepted view that English is vital to Ireland's economic and cultural success. De Barra firstly identifies a number of factors which contribute to a widespread contempt for

Irish. He primarily sees it as part of the nation's colonial legacy. As evidenced by the numerous sources he cites, the denigration of Gaelic culture was a key facet of British colonisation, and it is unsurprising that this would have impacted the way Irish people themselves came to view their native language. However, he maintains that the hatred of Irish also stems from a sense of linguistic superiority shared by English speakers the world over, as well as an identity crisis regarding what it means to be Irish. Mirroring the hatred of Irish, writes De Barra, is the widespread perception among Irish citizens that the English language provides great benefits to the nation of Ireland. He argues that having an English-speaking population is in fact a mixed blessing, and that critics tend to exaggerate its importance for the Irish economy.

Perhaps the most enjoyable section of the book is Chapter Seven, in which De Barra addresses seven of the most prevalent myths about the Irish language, and dismantles them with incisive wit. As he has done elsewhere in this work, he demonstrates that misrepresentation, misinformation and downright lying are commonplace in discussions about Irish. Most importantly, he shows that the Irish government does not spend nearly as much money on promoting the language as is often claimed.

In Chapter Eight, De Barra adds an interesting dimension to his analysis of Irish revivalism, as he considers historical attempts to promote or revive various other languages. The languages he examines are Welsh, Urdu, French, Catalan, Bahasa Indonesia and Hebrew. There is much that can be learned from these case studies and applied to the Irish context, and they also provide evidence, in some instances, that largescale linguistic revival is possible.

In both Chapter Nine and the short Conclusion, the author outlines in detail his own vision of how Irish could successfully be revived. He recognises that language revival is an ambiguous concept, sometimes used by proponents of the Irish language without any clear indication of what it represents. What he himself proposes, in speaking of an Irish-language revival, is the development of a bilingual society in which Irish and English would both have prominence, and in which anyone who wanted to develop Irish fluency would be able to do so. Though he considers a number of moderate steps Ireland could take to promote bilingualism, the core of his proposal is, as the book's title suggests, a radical one. De Barra believes that the only way to guarantee a revival would be to make Irish the sole language through which the Irish government functions. He envisions an Ireland in which Irish, over the span of a few decades, would become the working language of the entire civil service. This would place the language at the heart of society, and would create an economic and practical incentive for people to learn it. The author admits that such a radical restructuring of Irish society would be very difficult to accomplish. Nevertheless, he contends that these drastic measures are not beyond the realm of possibility, given that surveys suggest a large portion of the population would like Ireland to be bilingual. Whatever one thinks of De Barra's proposal, he must be commended for acknowledging that profound changes are needed if Irish is to undergo a revival in any meaningful sense of the word.

The most obvious criticism of *Gaeilge: A Radical Revolution* is that it contains more typographical errors than one would expect for a book of its length, in addition to a number of poor syntactical choices. These could perhaps have been avoided had the manuscript fallen into the hands of a more keen-eyed editor prior to publication. Ultimately, however, they do little to detract from the work's merit. De Barra's book is a well-researched, entertaining contribution to its field, and one which would appeal to general reader and specialist alike.

Peter Weakliam

Cristina Bravo Lozano, *Spain and the Irish Mission, 1609-1707*, New York, Routledge, 2018, pp. 310. £ 105. ISBN 978-1138636767.

This new book represents an outstanding and valuable contribution to the field of early-modern Irish history and more broadly to the relations between Ireland and Spain. Based on an impressive and extended archival research in different European repositories, the author examines the complex process through which the Spanish monarchy supported the return of the Irish missionaries to Ireland to fight against the spread of Protestantism. Structured on eight chapters which cover the period from the early decades of the seventeenth century until the first decades of the eighteenth century, the book tracks and identifies the causes which brought the Spanish monarchy to develop a sophisticated confessional strategy to support Irish Catholicism.

The first chapter serves to introduce the complex and risky context in which the Irish Catholics lived during the early decades of the seventeenth century. The author unveils the roots of system of patronage and how this was the outcome of a lengthy and troubled process in which the Irish clerics petitioned both the Spanish king and the pope to support the structure of the impoverished Catholic church in Ireland. The second chapter brings the reader into the detail of the mechanism of the Spanish patronage by explaining the key actors and institutions behind it and how these were interconnected in order to provide financial assistance to the returning clerics.

The third chapter gets into more details as it describes the changing nature of the royal patronage and how this was not only a mere financial help. Indeed, the author demonstrates that this process also involved all the network of the Irish colleges established in the Iberian Peninsula and in Spanish Flanders. By highlighting the role played by these institutions, Bravo Lozano allows us to understand the complexity and the ramification of the patronage system. This chapter also explains how the Cromwellian conquest had a detrimental effect on this system which, during the 1650s, was forced to support the Irish clerics in exile through the grant of pensions.

In the fourth chapter the author explores the impact of the Restoration on the system of the Irish mission which became increasingly structured and formalized with a steady increase in the number of missionaries applying for the viatica. It also assesses the impact of the political events in England and Ireland on the patronage. The fifth chapter considers the last turbulent of the Stuart monarchy and how and whether the Glorious Revolution affected the activity of the Irish missionaries. The sixth chapter explores how the dramatic shift from the Stuart dynasty to the Hanover brought seminal changes amid the Irish missionaries, and more broadly amid the Irish Catholic community. The seventh chapter is a logical follow-up of the preceding chapter as it investigates how the Spanish monarchy reacted to the implementation of the anti-Catholic laws in Ireland by providing more and more support to the returning missionaries. The last chapter explores how and to which extent the rise of the Bourbon dynasty, in the early eighteenth century, on the Spanish throne continued the patronage system developed at the onset of the seventeenth century.

By focusing on the viatica – the sum granted to the returning missionaries – Bravo Lozano has unveiled how and to which extent the Spanish court sought to use the Irish clergy as a political means, and how this form of support would influence the Anglo-Spanish relations. By tracking the names of the Irish clerics who asked to have the viatica, the author fulfils a two-fold aim: from one side she reconstructs the milieu of the Irish clerics who resided in Spain; on other side she demonstrates how and to which extent these Irishmen had developed a thick network with the lay and religious authorities, both locally and internationally. The examination of this

clerical network reveals not only the key figures behind it, but it also permits to understand the perils, the financial problems, as well as the “baroque” bureaucracy of the Spanish monarchy.

The book also investigates the sharp contrasts which existed between the regular and the secular clergy, but also the violent disputes of the Irish bishops in order to be appointed to the most relevant dioceses of the island. Another merit of the author is to have fitted the development of this patronage’s system within the broader political and religious context of the changing relations which linked the Monarquía hispánica to the Stuart monarchy. The rich appendix at the end of the book helps the reader to identify who and how many were the Irish clerics who, from the late 1610s, petitioned to be granted the viaticum in order to return to the Irish mission.

In conclusion this is a well-researched and organized book which will provide a major advancement to the field of the Irish-Spanish relations during the early-modern period. The fact that the book has been published in the new and prestigious Routledge Studies in Renaissance and Early Modern World is a further witness of the high scholarly contribution made by this young historian.

Matteo Binasco

Luca Bellocchio, *I sicari della pace. L'Irlanda del Nord e lo spettro di una nuova guerra civile*, Milano, Meltemi editore, 2019, pp. 168. € 15,00. ISBN 9788883539886.

Il cinefilo (e geopolitico accademico) Luca Bellocchio, che già aveva dato alle stampe nel 2006 per lo stesso editore *Irlanda del Nord. Un conflitto etnico nel cuore dell'Europa*, riprende il filo della sua contestualizzazione geopolitica del conflitto in Irlanda in questo nuovo volume di piacevole e arguta lettura. L'opera è composta da una introduzione, da due capitoli e dalla conclusione.

La disamina degli aspetti geopolitici del conflitto in Irlanda, dalla Prima guerra mondiale al processo di pace, contenuta soprattutto nel primo capitolo, è forse la parte più fondata sui fatti, più stimolante e meno speculativa del volume. Il quadro geopolitico che spinse il governo britannico alla Partizione del 1920-21, che divideva lo Stato Libero (poi Éire, poi Repubblica irlandese) dall'Irlanda del Nord che rimaneva parte del Regno Unito, spesso non viene considerato dalla storiografia, più concentrata sulle dinamiche interne alle isole britanniche. Così come, riguardo alla riapertura del conflitto nel Nord alla fine degli anni Sessanta del Novecento, con la conseguente fine dell'autogoverno unionista e il ristabilimento del dominio diretto del governo di Londra sulle Sei Contee, il più delle volte non viene sottolineata dai commentatori la presenza incombente della Guerra fredda come fattore determinante. La pervicacia inglese nel combattere una guerra contro-insurrezionale in Irlanda negli anni Settanta e Ottanta, invece di avviare un processo di ‘decolonizzazione’ e di ritiro, era infatti motivata anche dal timore che nel contesto del gioco globale a somma zero il blocco sovietico potesse usare l'Irlanda nazionalista contro la NATO e contro il Regno Unito. Allo stesso modo la caduta del muro di Berlino e la dissoluzione dell'Unione Sovietica, con l'incontrastata egemonia unipolare degli Stati Uniti (e dei suoi più stretti alleati della ‘Anglosfera’ al seguito, come sottolinea il Bellocchio), fu il quadro che permise e spinse il processo di pace negli anni Novanta fino agli accordi di Belfast del venerdì santo del 1998.

Ma l'autore nel resto del suo volume insiste su due presupposti (o tesi a priori), dei quali cerca di dimostrare – in modo invero poco convincente, anche se sempre molto leggibile – la realtà. Il primo, ad avviso di Bellocchio, è il completo fallimento delle strutture politiche basate sul consociativismo o power sharing istituite dagli accordi del 1998 o Good Friday Agreement

(GFA), accordi perfezionati e sviluppati in seguito dal cosiddetto accordo di St. Andrew del 2006. Il secondo è l'inevitabilità del ritorno alla guerra nell'Irlanda del Nord, data la presenza di cinque elementi oggettivi (i "sicari della pace" del titolo), ultimo dei quali la Brexit, che renderebbero in prospettiva impossibile la continuazione della presente situazione di sostanziale assenza di conflitto armato. Forse il tempo della pubblicazione, l'ottobre scorso, è stato infelice, dal momento che gli eventi dei quattro mesi successivi hanno vieppiù smentito la realtà dei due presupposti di Bellocchio.

L'autore insiste molto, quale riprova del fallimento delle strutture create dagli accordi di pace, sul fatto che l'Esecutivo (il governo autonomo consociativo) dell'Irlanda del Nord istituito dal GFA, formato la prima volta con considerevole ritardo nel dicembre 1999, si sia dissolto ben cinque volte tra il febbraio del 2000 e il gennaio del 2017; e insiste in particolare sull'ultima sospensione, la più lunga, conclusasi con la ripresa delle attività dell'Esecutivo nel gennaio 2020, ma ancora in corso al tempo della sua pubblicazione. Certo, le due comunità che polarizzano le sei contee dell'Irlanda del Nord, quella unionista (in maggioranza protestante) e quella nazionalista (in maggioranza cattolica) non si amano molto dopo una guerra durata quasi trent'anni, e in generale non si sentono di fare parte di una stessa società, e non si riconoscono negli stessi simboli e negli stessi valori, avendo aspirazioni irreconciliabili. E certo lo smantellamento degli arsenali delle rispettive organizzazioni clandestine armate (il decommissioning) non viene creduto reale, se compiuto dagli avversari, dagli uni e dagli altri. Ma proprio per questo il consociativismo imposto dagli accordi del 1998 è la maggiore e migliore garanzia contro la ripresa del conflitto armato. Il Bellocchio dimentica che tra il 1946 e i primi anni Ottanta, nel contesto della Guerra fredda, vi era un Stato strategicamente rilevante, e irrimediabilmente diviso tra sostenitori della NATO e sostenitori del Patto di Varsavia. Anche lì la Costituzione prevedeva di fatto un consociativismo imposto, quale garanzia contro la guerra civile. I maggiori partiti e sindacati schierati sui due opposti fronti disponevano di apparati paramilitari armati (certo formalmente illegali e clandestini) composti da milioni di persone, quale deterrente a qualsiasi rottura degli accordi da parte degli avversari. Una costruzione politica chiaramente diretta ad impedire lo scoppio della guerra civile, che per più di un quarantennio realizzò con successo il suo scopo. Mi riferisco, naturalmente, alla (prima?) Repubblica italiana. La farraginosità, la complicazione, l'apparente inefficienza di un sistema politico di consociativismo imposto, in cui non si possono fare passare leggi rilevanti se non con il consenso degli avversari e con estenuanti trattative, sono il prezzo da pagare per permettere a una società irrimediabilmente divisa di essere governata e di essere politicamente rappresentata evitando di pagare un prezzo molto maggiore, la guerra civile. E ciò vale anche per l'Irlanda del Nord.

Per Bellocchio i cinque "sicari della pace" in Irlanda sarebbero: 1) la "ingiustizia geopolitica" della Partizione del 1920-21, che non ovviò alla compresenza nel nord-est dell'isola di "due identità nazionali contrapposte"; 2) il "neo-imperialismo illuminato" condiviso da Stati Uniti e Regno Unito, che avrebbe imposto dall'esterno e dall'alto, con gli accordi del 1998, la democrazia consociativa alle Sei Contee; 3) di nuovo, gli stessi accordi del 1998 o GFA, che crearono delle "meccaniche istituzionali" come si è detto consociative, includenti il diritto di veto da parte della minoranza, e numerosi organismi burocratici e istituti per la composizione dei conflitti, oltre alla compartecipazione di Regno Unito e Repubblica irlandese quali garanti esterni, meccaniche che secondo Bellocchio non potrebbero funzionare (anche se lo fanno già, e da più di un ventennio); 4) la "ferita narcisistica" che rende incolmabile l'abisso tra le due comunità, le quali vivono vite separate; 5) la Brexit, che correttamente l'autore ritiene non essere così influente, a dispetto dei commentatori e propagandisti remainer e pro-UE che dipingevano la ripresa della guerra in Irlanda come prima, inevitabile conseguenza di una Brexit senza accordo.

Per inciso, è vero che dal referendum britannico del 2016 i partiti nazionalisti irlandesi (in primis il Sinn Féin, ma anche i due altri principali partiti della Repubblica, Fine Gael e Fianna Fáil) si erano dichiarati contro la Brexit, cercando di usare il suo spauracchio (e lo spauracchio di un 'hard border' tra le due parti dell'isola) come leva contro gli unionisti del Democratic Unionist Party, che almeno a parole avevano sposato la stessa Brexit; ma è anche vero che gli sviluppi occorsi dopo la pubblicazione del volume hanno dissipato questi fantasmi. Lo spauracchio di un 'hard border' tra le due parti dell'Irlanda (proibito dal GFA del 1998, e comunque mai esistito dalla Partizione in poi, se non sul piano della sicurezza nelle fasi più accese del conflitto) era infatti frutto del fallito accordo per l'uscita dalla UE proposto da Theresa May, in cui i negoziatori della UE erano riusciti a infilare il cosiddetto back stop, ossia l'attribuzione alla Commissione UE del potere di mantenere o fare finire l'attuale condizione economica, in termine di dazi, commercio e transito di merci, dell'Irlanda del Nord, allineata in questi settori con la Repubblica e con la UE. Ma tale improvvido tentativo della UE di entrare a gamba tesa in una questione su cui non aveva diritti, e già regolata da accordi internazionali, è stato stroncato dall'accordo per l'uscita dalla UE di Boris Johnson, che priva la UE di ogni pretesa al riguardo, e stabilisce che solo l'organo rappresentativo dei cittadini delle Sei Contee, l'Assemblea dell'Irlanda del Nord, ha il potere – tramite le sue regole consociative – di modificare l'assetto doganale, commerciale ed economico dell'Irlanda del Nord (seguendo in questo e la lettera, e la sostanza degli accordi di pace del 1998). Dal momento che l'Assemblea opera per l'appunto sulla base del power sharing è perciò assai improbabile, nel futuro prevedibile, che essa decida di distaccare la 'Provincia' dalle regole di mercato irlandesi (e di conseguenza UE) per farla uniformare a quelle del Regno Unito. Il nazionalismo irlandese (e in particolare il Sinn Féin) è riuscito a fare leva sugli interessi di una parte crescente del business già unionista che però oggi intende mantenere lo status quo economico, usando il voto tattico alle elezioni britanniche del 12 dicembre 2019 per fare perdere due seggi su dieci al Democratic Unionist Party e per eleggere tre tra nazionalisti moderati del Social Democratic and Labour Party, unionisti moderati dell'Ulster Unionist Party e, secondo la definizione ('designazione') prevista dal GFA, 'altri', cioè un deputato dell'Alliance Party: tutti remainer. Il confine doganale 'duro' è quindi scomparso dai radar, non è più un babau credibile. E la prosecuzione della integrazione economica e doganale tra Irlanda del Nord e Repubblica irlandese tenderà ovviamente, sul medio e lungo periodo, a favorire la riunificazione politica dell'isola verde, sanando il primo dei "sicari della pace" di Bellocchio, la "ingiustizia politica" costituita dalla Partizione. Non che il governo britannico ne sia molto preoccupato: il governo della Brexit, la quale sarà prevedibilmente senza accordo, non ha particolari motivi per amare gli unionisti intransigenti del D.U.P., che avevano fatto perdere la maggioranza a Boris Johnson in una votazione decisiva, e che ora sono irrilevanti nel parlamento di Londra. E di fronte al progetto della Brexit, la rinnovata indipendenza di una potenza già imperiale, oggi il mantenere il nord-est dell'Irlanda – pesantemente sussidiato dal Tesoro britannico, e abitato da meno di due milioni di persone – entro il Regno Unito è cosa del tutto irrilevante. Quanto agli accordi di pace del 1998 il Bellocchio insiste sulla base del realismo geopolitico che riscontra l'inesistenza pratica del "diritto internazionale" dopo la fine dell'URSS (ma alquanto bizzarramente in questo caso), che il Regno Unito potrebbe decidere di annullarli quando gli pare: anche vero, ma perché dovrebbe farlo? A quanto riportano le gazzette, la Commissione UE sembra invece non avere accettato di buon cuore questi sviluppi: dopo avere dichiarato chiuse le frontiere esterne dell'Unione a causa della pandemia, avrebbe ingiunto al governo della Repubblica irlandese di bloccare il confine con l'Irlanda del Nord, ora confine esterno della UE, pena procedura d'infrazione. La risposta del governo irlandese non è stata resa nota, forse perché – qualora vi sia stata – non era pubblicabile ...

“La guerra civile si materializzerà Brexit o non Brexit”, sostiene Bellocchio, “perché [la società] nordirlandese resta una società malata” (133). Ma quale società non lo è? E, allora, guerra civile sempre e dappertutto?

Nell’ultima parte del secondo capitolo e nella conclusione l’autore (che a dispetto del suo forse giusto rifiuto di modelli politologici e di disciplina delle relazioni internazionali in base al realismo geopolitico qui ricade invece nella modellistica) illustra quattro possibili modelli di soluzione per il problema irlandese. Il primo sarebbe il ritorno totale al governo diretto di Londra, annullando ogni autonomia locale dell’Irlanda del Nord (e questo di sicuro farebbe realizzare la dubbia profezia del Bellocchio riguardo alla ‘inevitabile’ ripresa della guerra). Il secondo riguarda la possibilità in un prossimo futuro di un referendum, come sancito dal GFA del 1998, per la riunificazione dell’Irlanda: e lo stesso autore prevede che questo sia il più probabile (senza o con guerra conseguente, non si sa). Il terzo (“indiscutibilmente poco plausibile”, come ammette Bellocchio) è la “Ri-Partizione della Partizione”, ritagliando le Sei Contee con trasferimenti (o pulizia etnica) in modo da creare una zona abitata solo da unionisti, che continuerebbe a fare parte del Regno Unito, mentre il resto si riunirebbe alla Repubblica. Cosa a quanto si dice presente a un certo punto nelle fantasie di Margaret Thatcher. Il quarto modello sarebbe una Irlanda del Nord come Stato indipendente e dal Regno Unito, e dalla Repubblica irlandese, modello che il Bellocchio ritiene il migliore, in quanto permetterebbe, almeno sulla carta, una presa di responsabilità da parte delle due comunità, unionista e nazionalista, e una rifondazione delle loro fondamenta culturali e simboliche. Bisogna dire che la U.D.I., ovvero Unilateral [o Ulster] Declaration of Independence, era negli anni Settanta uno degli obbiettivi di cui parlavano i paramilitari lealisti impegnati nel conflitto, ma sulla base, ovviamente, della analoga UDI della colonia inglese della Rhodesia nel 1965 ...

Dando un giudizio sommario, il testo di Luca Bellocchio è comunque interessante. Intanto è scritto da qualcuno che ha comunque studiato l’argomento, cosa che in Italia non sempre accade. Poi stimola la riflessione, anche se lo si confuta.

Come nota finale, mentre dei refusi è meglio non occuparsi (‘chi è senza peccato’, eccetera...), vi sono un paio di inesattezze che sarebbe stato meglio evitare. Secondo la nota 38 a pagina 43 il Sinn Féin sarebbe un “partito fondato nel 1970 in Irlanda del Nord”. Riferendosi evidentemente l’autore al Sinn Féin Provisional, esso era la quinta fase o incarnazione di un partito fondato nel lontano 1905; e venne fondato sì nel 1970, ma a Dublino, non nel nord, e avendo come base l’intera isola. Due o tre volte il Bellocchio menziona poi il referendum scozzese del 2014 come se fosse stato un referendum sull’indipendenza, come hanno fatto i pennivendoli: invece si trattava di un referendum per l’abrogazione (Repeal) dell’Act of Union del 1707. Se fosse passato – ma il 55% degli elettori scozzesi votarono ‘No’ – avrebbe solo ricreato il Regno di Scozia quale era stato dal 1603 al 1707, con Elisabetta II regina. Non una Scozia indipendente.

Carlo Maria Pellizzi

Edward Burke, *An Army of Tribes: British Army Cohesion, Deviancy and Murder in Northern Ireland*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 2018, pp. xvi+374. £ 19.95. ISBN 978-1786941039.

British troops arrived in Northern Ireland in August 1969 to provide “military aid to the civil power” after rioting in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, and several provincial towns. By 1972, more than 22,000 British soldiers were deployed across the north. Operation Banner, as it became known, endured for thirty-eight years. Edward Burke’s extensively-researched book

considers the internal dynamics of the British Army in Northern Ireland. Eschewing simplistic demonisation or defence of British troops, Burke assesses “the divergent motivations, experiences and emotions” (vii) of the Scots Guards and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders during 1971 and 1972, the bloodiest phase of the conflict.

An army of tribes bears the hallmarks of an academic thesis, drawing heavily upon the author’s thirty-six interviews with ex-soldiers and scrutinising unit log-books, regimental magazines, and unpublished diary excerpts. Burke skilfully incorporates close reading of these primary sources with critical analysis of the agency of two regiments in Northern Ireland. The parameters of the study are designed to provide detailed insights into soldiers’ “orientation, loyalties, rationale, confusion, motivation and fears during a period of profound tactical confusion” (5).

In 1971 and 1972, the 1st Battalion Scots Guards suffered fifty-five casualties including five dead, and the 1st Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders suffered eight fatalities (16). An army of tribes is sensitive both to the challenges confronting embattled British soldiers, and how the Army alienated Catholic communities through acts of political tactlessness, like cratering border roads, as well as more extreme violence. In turn, with a broadly “pejorative” view of the local population pervading local brigade headquarters” (117), commanders were “often slow” (11) to investigate complaints about soldiers’ conduct. Yet hostility towards northern Catholics was not uniform: many Argylls hailed from “red Clydeside” and tended more towards non-sectarian ideas than to bigoted impulse (108).

The emerging picture is that of a British military machine experiencing strategic confusion and a degree of internal dysfunction. The Scots Guards’ training in desert conditions in the late 1960s contrasted sharply from their imminent deployment in the streets and fields of Northern Ireland (50). At the outset, the Army’s role to support the civil power in the north drew ‘heavily on the British colonial experience’ (66).

Rotating battalions did not share with one another important information about local political dynamics. Senior officers “often failed to recognise patterns of behaviour that caused serious damage to community relations” (344) and soldiers in small units could, in turn, become “too exclusively loyal” to their immediate colleagues (339). Among soldiers, a potent combination of fear, hatred, confusion, and trauma could combine to dangerous effect. Senior officers, meanwhile, struggled to contain the ‘offensive spirit’ among their charges.

Burke is equally mindful of disagreements between Army and government. Releasing internees and circumscribing Army discretion over arrests, Secretary of State Willie Whitelaw provoked the ire of soldiers on the ground (97). Yet despite the official position, these regiments were not entirely beholden to orders from above: Burke notes soldiers’ “border incursions” into the Republic of Ireland as evidence of a “degree of autonomy” in practice (145, 344-345).

An army of tribes also draws out micro-tensions within the military. Soldiers brought from Aden a tendency to divide infantry regiments between so-called “players” and “crap-hats”: the former were typically well-versed in colonial counterinsurgency, for example the Parachute Regiments and Royal Green Jackets, and prepared to bend or break rules; the latter were less immediately aggressive and were often derided by peers for their more staid approach (203).

Mindful that “personalised micro-wars within a wider campaign develop their own local grammar” (13), Burke accentuates the importance of locality in the Northern Ireland conflict. The author depicts in great detail the south Fermanagh area, where “grievance and violence [...] were extremely intimate, with complicated, often highly localised, motives” (17). Company commanders refracted orders from above through their own “personality” (128), with wide-ranging consequences for those who lived and worked around them.

Burke's fourth and final chapter, "Murder", is a 100-page tour de force of historical reconstruction. His review of the 'pitchfork killings' of October 1972 – two former members of the Argyll and Sutherland Rangers were later sentenced to life for the murder of two Catholic farmers – is attuned to the finely-balanced societal politics of this rural border region. This case-study highlighted the degree of autonomy among soldiers in this early period of Operation Banner. The Provisional IRA (PIRA) had killed Robin Bell, a local member of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), the previous day. The Argylls "were ready to accept [...] without question" the UDR's classification of Michael Naan as a "known" member of the PIRA in the area (275). In fact, Naan was a civil rights activist, but never a PIRA volunteer.

In a thoughtful and measured work, lapses are rare. Burke is unusually blithe in his assertion that PIRA bombings of 'economic targets' in the early 1970s were "a euphemism for a general campaign of sectarian attacks against local Protestant interests" (263). Such a pronouncement elides a wider literature which continues to debate the hotly-contested question of sectarianism in republicanism. On occasion, the minutiae of individuals' subsequent lives after 1972 slightly disrupt the prose.

Conversely, in a study concerned primarily with the heterogeneity and subjectivity of British soldiering in Northern Ireland, some of Burke's allusions to Fermanagh's activist networks leave the reader wondering about how civil rights and republicanism interacted in the county and beyond (292). Such reflections are testament chiefly to this book's thought-provoking quality and its author's forensic eye for detail.

Overall, *An army of tribes* is a meticulously-researched and highly readable discussion of two regiments' experiences of Operation Banner's early phases. It commands attention for analysts of the conflict and the British Army, and for social movement theorists concerned with protest cycles more broadly. It will also be of acute interest to regimental historians and readers interested in County Fermanagh's particular political dynamics. With a subject matter whose complexities and sensitivities demand nuance and balance, Burke brings both qualities in abundance.

Jack Hepworth

