

conditions and commemorative culture. In Jeremy Dibble's chapter on composer Michele Esposito, historians will recognise and benefit from the experience of working around sources that have disappeared altogether.

*Documents of Irish music history in the long nineteenth century* has much to commend it both to historians and music scholars. Those interested in specific musical subjects during the period will find at least one chapter of interest, while those concerned with non-musical topics in the history of culture, economics, politics, philanthropy and social conditions can also expect to find new and valuable lines of enquiry.

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IRISH READING SOCIETIES AND CIRCULATING LIBRARIES FOUNDED BEFORE 1825: USEFUL KNOWLEDGE AND AGREEABLE ENTERTAINMENT. By K. A. Manley. Pp 248. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2018. €58.50.

In recent years a number of publications have appeared that have served to shed light, from a variety of angles, on the history of the book in Ireland. One thinks, of course, of volumes three, four and five of the *Oxford history of the Irish book* (2006–2011), though mention might also be made of Raymond Gillespie's *Reading Ireland* (Manchester, 2005) and, more recently, of Toby Barnard's *Brought to book: print in Ireland, 1680–1784* (Dublin, 2017) and Elizabethanne Boran's collection, *Book collecting in Ireland and Britain, 1650–1850* (Dublin, 2018). K. A. Manley's volume is a welcome addition to this corpus, though its focus is slightly more precise. As the title indicates, Manley is principally concerned not with books themselves, but with the institutions that provided readers with access to them – reading societies and circulating libraries. It should be noted at the outset, however, that the volume ranges more widely than its title might at first suggest, offering insights on the types of reading material that circulated in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and of the wider significance – social, cultural and, invariably, political – of its circulation.

Reading societies do, to be sure, receive their due attention. The Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge and the Dublin Library Society, prominent instances of this form of library, in which 'a group of people bought shares in a collection of books', are discussed (p. 12). So, too, are the smaller workers' book clubs and reading societies of late eighteenth-century Ulster (societies that are reasonably well-known to scholars of the 1790s, as a consequence of the authorities' suspicion and, in some instances, violent suppression of them), and Manley also sheds light on the somewhat lesser-known reading societies, catering for both the working and middle classes, that were established in the early nineteenth century. Likewise, two chapters are devoted to circulating libraries – commercial enterprises, often established by booksellers, that were generally confined to Ireland's larger urban centres. Libraries of this sort were present in Dublin and, to a lesser extent, Belfast by the second half of the eighteenth century, but became increasingly common in the early nineteenth century.

One of the particular strengths of *Irish reading societies and circulating libraries* is its author's careful utilisation of newspaper advertisements (little other evidence having survived) to chart this growth, though the volume is no dry-as-dust exercise in institutional or business history. Its account of the development of these differing types of libraries is enlivened by discussion of the controversies that exercised their members and, in the case of circulating libraries, by cameos of those who used and managed them. Thus, we encounter the remarkable Luke White, a Belfast pedlar, turned bookseller, who was said, when he died, to be Ireland's wealthiest man; the young William Carleton, who read scandalous books in the circulating library owned Mrs Richardson of Dublin's Francis Street; and Edward McGowran, also of Dublin, who appears in Patrick Kennedy's *Legends of Mount Leinster*

(1855) as M'Gaurin, a long-suffering bookseller/library owner, buffeted by the competing demands of his customers and creditors.

Leaving aside such colourful illustrative material, it should also be stressed that the volume looks beyond circulating libraries and reading societies narrowly defined, and discusses a variety of additional library types, including 'private' libraries, 'dividing' libraries (from which books were sold, following a period of circulation), libraries carried by military regiments and the libraries established by religious organisations and mechanics' institutes. For Manley, the arrival of these latter institutions on the scene in the mid-1820s marks something of an end point, for although related to subscription libraries, mechanics' institutes were broader in scope, and their libraries were not their 'prime focus' (p. 10), though his concluding chapter looks forward, briefly charting the fate of subscription libraries in the later nineteenth century.

What emerges from all of this is a clear sense that a varied, if somewhat unevenly distributed, network of libraries developed in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland – a network that facilitated access to both 'improving' literature and to novels, and that was particularly dense in Dublin (in the form of circulating libraries) and in the Presbyterian heartland of Counties Antrim and Down (in the form of reading societies).

It need scarcely be stated that this will be of particular interest to readers working on library and book history. But what of those whose interests lie elsewhere? Here mention might be made of Manley's concluding 'List of libraries', detailing all of the 'private subscription libraries, commercial circulating libraries, reading societies, and dividing book clubs known to have been established in Ireland before 1825' (p. 197). This will serve as a useful resource for urban and local historians, seeking evidence of associational culture and intellectual life.

More broadly, Manley's account of the spread of circulating libraries may prove to be of interest to social historians, insofar as it illustrates the commercialisation of leisure and offers a sidelight on middle-class recreational practices, and his detailed account of Ulster's libraries and book clubs during the 1790s will be of interest to scholars of that troubled decade who have, as he remarks, 'increasingly recognized' their significance (p. 9). Moreover, while Manley goes on to suggest that the 1790s constitute 'one of the few occasions when library history has collided with national history', his volume offers further intriguing examples of such collision (p. 9). Discussing circulating libraries in the early nineteenth century, for example, he notes that one consequence of the Act of Union was the application of British copyright law to Ireland, as a result of which Irish reprinting of British books collapsed and the 'imports of books printed in London quadrupled' (p. 75).

Similarly, cultural and political intersection can be seen in the Dublin Library Society's 'newspaper wars' (p. 102). In 1814, the society's members objected to continued subscription to *The Sun*, on seemingly political grounds, and nine years later, in 1823, the society voted against taking the 'virulently anti-Catholic' *Dublin Evening Mail* (p. 103). That Daniel O'Connell was numbered among the members opposing the *Mail* neatly illustrates both the overlaps that exist between 'national' and 'library' history, and the wider significance of this broad-ranging and carefully researched volume, which is attentive not just to libraries and reading societies, but to the contexts in which they were established and utilised.

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THE IRISH PRESBYTERIAN MIND: CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY, EVANGELICAL EXPERIENCE AND MODERN CRITICISM, 1830–1930. By Andrew R. Holmes. Pp 279. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018. £65.

Andrew Holmes's deeply learned and important study takes as its central theme the spiritual and intellectual constitution of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in the century between Catholic emancipation and the Davey trial. On the basis that (unlike the Church of Scotland) there was relative unity and unanimity within the church in this period, Dr