

the sections of the book dealing with the impact of the Dublin groups on the subsequent development of ballet in Ireland. She is said to have derived her concept of Irish ballet from the Dublin groups (pp 70, 112), to have copied their ballets 'to a large extent without accrediting the original choreographers' (pp 148, 150), and to have facilitated their being forgotten so as to enhance her own reputation (pp 147, 149). The evidence offered for these charges are the mere titles of ballets, and one extract from a programme note. The charges do not withstand scrutiny.

The history of ballet in Ireland during this period has yet to be written. However, the task will have been made much easier by the study of thirty-six years of ballet in Dublin undertaken by Victoria O'Brien.

RUTH FLEISCHMANN

IN SEARCH OF THE PROMISED LAND: THE POLITICS OF POST-WAR IRELAND. By Gary Murphy. Pp 325, illus. Cork: Mercier Press. 2009. €29.99.

Gary Murphy's study of the 'search for the promised land of economic fulfilment' in post-war Ireland (essentially the so-called long 1950s from the end of the Second World War up to the early 1960s) is one of those books that mirrors the period during which it was written as well as the period of history that it describes. Surely the author felt a strong sense of *déjà vu* writing in late 2008 about the dire economic conditions of 1950s Ireland and the various efforts of those with contrasting political and economic ideologies to solve them?

The stated aim of the book is 'to show how Irish isolationism in the late 1940s and 1950s has been overstated and misunderstood, and how the factors that have shaped the success of modern Ireland can be traced back to the period between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1960s' (p. 18). The opening chapter paints a familiar picture of post-war Ireland at the outset – high emigration, significant political change with the formation of the first inter-party government and the crippling conservatism of the Department of Finance–Central Bank nexus. The role of Marshall Aid in ending Ireland's international isolation (a strong theme throughout the book) is highlighted: Marshall Aid allowed 'Ireland to rejoin the community of Western European states ... It ended the country's diplomatic isolation after the end of the Second World War' (p. 71). This chapter also introduces bodies that figure strongly throughout – state agencies (such as the Industrial Development Authority and *Córas Tráchtála*), trade unions and government departments as well as individual politicians and civil servants. The book is very important in highlighting the influential role of what would now be called social partners in the quest for economic progress, foreshadowing the partnership process of the late twentieth century. In some ways the sub-title of this book is a misnomer; those looking for a narrative account of political events in post-war Ireland will be disappointed. It is more the story of policy than of politics and illustrates well how economic, fiscal and foreign policy intertwined in these years and were aimed at the one goal of progress.

There are some fascinating studies of individual politicians also. The discussion of Patrick McGilligan's term as minister for finance in the first inter-party government (chapter 2) and his tentative embrace of Keynesianism is particularly enlightening and illustrates how little has been written about this very influential yet somewhat anonymous figure. Unsurprisingly, Seán Lemass, about whom Murphy has written elsewhere, emerges as one of the most forward-looking policy makers: 'He more than any other politician of the period recognised that conditions in Ireland were driving young men and women out of the country, and his various policy suggestions during the 1940s and 1950s attempted to explicitly address this' (p. 304).

Good use is made of oral history. This is all the more important as a glance at the list of interviewees includes some very significant figures from the period who have since passed away, including Tom Barrington and Paddy Lynch. In addition very good use is made of state papers and private political collections. The bibliography is poorly typeset in places, with no line spacing to divide three repositories, so it is difficult to differentiate the collections in the National Archives of Ireland, Great Britain and the U.S.A. Another quibble about the use of sources is the over-use of long quotations; there are few pages in this book that do not have at least one quotation of four or five lines if not more. Rather than simply letting the sources speak for themselves, this book would be an easier read if these were integrated more into the narrative.

This is a very valuable work of contemporary history, and an important addition to a growing body of scholarship on later twentieth-century Irish political history that includes the work of Bernadette Whelan on the Marshall Plan, Eithne McDermott on Clann na Poblachta and David McCullough on the first inter-party government as well as political biographies of Taoiseach John A. Costello (also by McCullough), Seán MacEntee (Tom Feeney), Seán Lemass, Noël Browne (both by John Horgan) and James Dillon (Maurice Manning). All of these works show how rich the source material is but also how much work remains to be done in contemporary Irish history that can easily keep graduate students occupied for years to come. The overall message that emerges from this book is that when a country is well-served by its politicians, when they provide good leadership and initiate important policies, they can achieve success and progress. Hopefully the Republic of Ireland will be as well-served by its policy-makers today as it was sixty years ago.

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'INSUBORDINATE IRISH': TRAVELLERS IN THE TEXT. By Michael Ó hAodha. Pp xi, 228. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2011. £60.

This work is very similar to the author's previous book titled *Irish Travellers: representation and realities* (Liffey Press, 2006) and published under the name of Michael Hayes. The focus is an analysis of 'texts' produced by the Irish Folklore Commission, particularly the responses to its 1952 Tinker Questionnaire, and folktales with Traveller-related themes also gathered by its collectors. Given that the material found in the Tinker Questionnaire has been analysed by other scholars, the potential for new insights would appear to lie in the analyses of the folktales. The back cover of this book suggests that it draws 'primarily on little-explored Irish language sources' – and indeed some of the Gaelic material gathered by the Irish Folklore Commission is translated here – but how Ó hAodha's own contributions augment the work of folklorist Pádraig Ó Héalaí (to whom he is 'much indebted' (p. 104)), remains unclear.

Given the apparent significance of the Gaelic texts for his book, moreover, it is surprising that Ó hAodha offers no discussion of how Gaelic discourses/perspectives regarding Travellers may have diverged from those of English speakers. The Gaelic and English examples provided to us in *Insubordinate Irish* do not appear to differ substantially from each other, but the reader is not given any indication of whether this conclusion is warranted.

Much of the book involves lengthy digressions into (often dated) theoretical, historical and/or comparative topics that offer limited new insight to the topic of Irish Travellers in text or otherwise. The most consistently invoked theoretical frameworks of poststructuralism and postcolonialism are not well developed or consistently applied to the Folklore Commission material.