

of special category status in 1976, who have been largely neglected. He details the imprisonment of loyalists. He observes that less attention has been paid to prison staff during the conflict. Along with those who were killed, the impact of the protests on staff possibly led to approximately fifty taking their own lives. His account of the ambiguities in the post-hunger strike Maze when segregation was again achieved in 1982 makes for thought-provoking reading for scholars of prison life.

McConville's forensic analysis of specific events and certain actors in the penal, political and social struggles is intermingled with perspectives and opinions, no doubt developed after studying his subjects over a prolonged period. He is no admirer of 'campaigning priests', in particular Fathers Denis Faul and Raymond Murray. In one of their pamphlets they 'took a broadly pro-inmate account' and both 'wrote from a Nationalist perspective' (p. 375). Sister Sarah Clarke, who was resolute in her support of innocent Irish prisoners in British jails and provided pastoral support to all Irish prisoners, was a 'committed Nationalist from her youth'. She went a step further; her 'associations in England were on the left, including the future Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn' (p. 508, note 153). Father Piaras Ó Dúill, a Capuchin priest, was chair of the National H-block/Armagh Committee in the early 1980s. His fellow clergy may be interested to learn that he was a member of an 'order with some indications of pastoral sympathy and sacramental lenity towards armed Republicans' (p. 750). The appointment of Tomás Ó Fiaich as Catholic archbishop of Armagh and primate of All Ireland in 1977 (and cardinal two years later) particularly irks McConville. Cahal Daly was overlooked for the appointment which 'would prove to be a misjudgement, rectified only thirteen years later, when the most violent and demanding phase of the Troubles had largely passed' (p. 787). Ó Fiaich, 'whose concern for prisoners arose as much from the political as from the pastoral' (p. 788), is described as the 'troublesome cardinal' (p. 790) who had 'strong Nationalist views' (p. 792). This critical eye is not exercised with the same alacrity when writing about other actors in this story, their backgrounds and political subjectivities, in particular those involved in British and unionist administrations.

Overall, Seán McConville has written a trilogy which makes a significant contribution to the literature on Irish political prisoners. His books are meticulously researched, wide-ranging and a forensic consideration of their subjects. The final volume, along with the previous two, stand out as a towering study that will be an indispensable read, and an essential resource for future students of Irish penal, social and political history.

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GAY AND LESBIAN ACTIVISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND, 1973–93. By Patrick McDonagh. Pp 219. London: Bloomsbury Academic. 2022. £76.50.

Gay and lesbian activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973–93 is a lucid, persuasive and timely book that provides a variegated and compendious rendition of the enterprises of gay and lesbian individuals and organisations in Ireland in the years preceding the decriminalisation of male homosexuality. Written after the equal marriage referendum in 2015, McDonagh sets out to decode Ireland's transformation from a predominantly Catholic society to a 'beacon of equality and liberty to the rest of the world' in the words of Leo Varadkar, the nation's first openly gay taoiseach and cabinet minister. In this effort McDonagh's account is situated within a broader scholarly assessment of clerical power, gender and sexuality in Ireland, pioneered by Tom Inglis, Diarmaid Ferriter and more recently by Diane Urquhart and Lindsey Earner-Byrne. Nevertheless, LGBT histories of Ireland have struggled for legitimacy until the last decade, and those that have tentatively examined the nation's queer past have been chiefly preoccupied with typically male 'pioneering politicians', whilst

this narrative is centred on urban areas like Dublin, replicating many of the inadequacies of the British and European record.

McDonagh reorientates the narrative of homosexual law reform to yield a longer and broader history of gay rights activism in the Republic of Ireland. This study avails of activist collections across the island including the Irish Queer Archive, the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association archive and the Cork LGBT archive, alongside the personal papers of campaigners such as David Norris and the records of national and provincial newspapers. McDonagh has likewise embraced the testimonies contained in Edmund Lynch's oral history archive to capture the life stories and emotions underlying political activity, such as that of Theresa Blanche, born in Dublin in 1957 where there was 'nowhere to come out to', and activist Tonie Walsh, who grew up in Clonmel, County Tipperary, and later described 'my teenage years were quite fraught with anxiety — especially as I came face-to-face with dealing with my sexual identity' (pp 9–10). *Gay and lesbian activism in the Republic of Ireland* is thematically structured and commences by anatomising the early years of the Irish Gay Rights Movement, which began as a cross-border enterprise with an agenda integrating other forms of sexual oppression such as abortion and contraception.

McDonagh vividly renders this period of coffee meetings, Saturday night discos and cheese and wine receptions, which also saw the inauguration of Tel-A-Friend, the telephone service that reached out to isolated homosexuals living in rural Ireland, for whom this Dublin scene was inaccessible. The second chapter charts a more visible gay scene in the 1980s, with the inception of the Hirschfield Centre, which, according to the president of the National Gay Federation (N.G.F.), emboldened gay men and lesbian women to 'go back out to the world that bit more confident and that bit more aware of what they are' (p. 44). McDonagh skilfully considers the gendered tensions of this decade as the eighth amendment referendum in 1983 imperilled a pragmatic coalition between the Liberation for Irish Lesbians and N.G.F., as the latter eschewed the Women's Right to Choose Campaign in an effort to preserve an oft-tentative credibility.

Perhaps the most illuminating chapter concerns provincial activism in Cork and Galway through which McDonagh forcefully contests assumptions of rural benightedness where gay rights activism was concerned. In fact, the leftist Cork Gay Collective and Galway Gay Collective are presented on approximate terms to their Dublin counterparts, forming alliances and crucial sites of socialisation and politicisation in even less favourable circumstances. The remainder of the book delineates the ample partnerships between gay and lesbian activists and other organisations, including trade unions, universities, the political class, and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties. These collaborators inspired new arguments that mobilised Ireland's international reputation and membership of the European Economic Community to query the nation's relative belatedness when it came to homosexual rights and law reform.

The penultimate chapter profiles Gay Health Action's response to the AIDS epidemic, crediting this body's prompt intercession with defending the gay community from reproach and counteracting a broader culture of ignorance surrounding sexual health. McDonagh concludes by discussing the legal changes of the 1990s which he positions as a direct accomplishment of the activist community. He convincingly asserts that this attainment was a product of multiple transnational entanglements as international and continental influences provided a framework for legal change and a source of solidarity and inspiration. Visibility is another prevalent theme, as the author narrates changing Irish estimations of homosexuality by a community that portrayed themselves as orthodox Irish citizens to reverse stereotypes of nonconformity, sickness and inauspiciousness. This is a decidedly more balanced history of homosexuality in Ireland that revises an absorption with legal persecution and social prejudice to comprehend stories of fun, pleasure and acceptance. Although McDonagh's account is consciously deficient in bisexual, transgender and diaspora experiences, his exemplary approach imparts an excellent template for further research into Ireland's LGBTQ+ past.

Overall, McDonagh succeeds in his ambition of espousing an understanding of the legal, cultural and social advances of the late twentieth century that 'were not fought for and

achieved by one gay man, not fought simply through the courts and not fought only in Dublin' (p. 160) and in cogently demonstrating that the contribution of gay and lesbian activists and individuals ought to be fully accredited by the wider history of modern Ireland. This book is a commendable first step in the right direction.

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