

scholarly discussion of the main themes. He is alert to the difficulties associated with oral testimony collected long after the event and recognises how memory can be affected by the passing of time (p. 8). Perhaps the author could have devoted more space to this issue but, notwithstanding this, he makes a persuasive case that the memories of those who remain long after an event are an important resource.

It is likely that somewhere between sixty and eighty thousand men and women volunteered for service during the war. An estimated nine thousand died in the conflict and 780 decorations were awarded to individuals from independent Ireland, including eight Victoria Crosses. It is probable that most of these volunteers did not return to Ireland at the end of the war but Kelly cites evidence that twelve thousand did so. He suggests that they were not entirely welcome and notes a widespread indifference to their wartime experience within Southern Ireland. This insularity would have been reinforced by de Valera's belief that the Irish state was threatened right up to the end of the war (p. 93), by incidents such as the Trinity riots and the sharp radio exchanges between de Valera and Churchill. The defence of neutrality by Irish nationalists made it difficult to incorporate the volunteers into 'the nationalist paradigm' as Kelly puts it persuasively (p.126). These volunteers were briefly used as pawns in the Irish government's propaganda campaign in support of neutrality at the end of the war but were then quickly forgotten by successive governments.

What the author also shows is how those who did return to Ireland faced lack of employment, financial difficulties and, in some cases, health and psychological problems. Britain provided considerable resources for its ex-servicemen and extended them to those who were resident in Ireland after the war. Most remarkably, as a result of an innovative agreement between Britain and Ireland, over six thousand ex-servicemen and women received unemployment benefits from the British exchequer. If the figures for those who returned at the end of the war are accurate, then some fifty per cent faced considerable personal challenges within independent Ireland. According to Kelly, Irish volunteers constituted a distinctive sub-culture in post-war Ireland as a consequence of their shared experience of a war which linked them to veterans in many parts of the world (p. 186).

Despite this, the volunteers remain an enigma. We still do not have a full explanation of why so many Irish citizens chose to fight for another state. The easy answer is that they were mercenaries, imperialists or west Britons. These interpretations may contain some nuggets of truth but are too narrowly constructed around rigid notions of nationality to be persuasive. Kelly's study suggests that the factors motivating the volunteers were complex and multi-faceted, though he emphasises family tradition, the search for adventure and financial considerations. It is possible to over-emphasise any one of these explanations but, in addition, it is necessary to employ notions of diverse identities and cosmopolitan loyalty to achieve a better understanding of this group of Irish citizens. This study also confirms what other writers have concluded: that most of the volunteers did not see a contradiction between supporting Ireland's neutral stance during the war and their own decision to participate in the war. For them, it appears that fighting for Ireland entailed fighting for Britain on this occasion.

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ASKING ANGELA MACNAMARA. AN INTIMATE HISTORY OF IRISH LIVES. By Paul Ryan. Pp 228. Dublin: Irish Academic Press. 2012. €60 hardback; €24.95 paperback.

Between 1963 and 1980 Angela Macnamara wrote an advice column in the *Sunday Press* that was noted for its emphasis on Catholic values. Macnamara was an early advocate of sex education but otherwise lacked either qualifications or obvious experience. Her

authorities were papal encyclicals, Catholic advice literature and a smattering of psychiatric and psychological texts. As Ryan points out, Macnamara was not a clichéd traditionalist but expressed a mixture of Catholic social theory and more liberal approaches to sexuality and intimacy.

Macnamara's column is a valuable source. Her correspondents were ordinary people seeking to reconcile new social, familial and personal pressures with familiar concepts of right and wrong. Their letters offer an opportunity to explore individual responses to social, economic, technological and theological change during a transformational period. Here are the adolescents negotiating courtship; the unmarried mothers; the newlyweds with controlling in-laws; the women whose husbands demand sex but offer no affection; the beaten wives and adolescent daughters and sons.

Ryan explores the column in chapters dealing with dating, marriage, childrearing and homosexuality. He argues, drawing from a range of studies of twentieth-century advice literature, that Macnamara's correspondents fall into a pattern identified by Cas Wouters whereby during the 1960s and 1970s 'an informalization occurred in the rules of social conduct, leading to an emancipation of the emotional life of individuals, specifically in matters of sexuality' (p. 11).

This analysis is convincing. Appalling though the predicaments faced by many of Macnamara's correspondents were, it would be facile to regard them as further illustrations of Irish sexual exceptionalism. By 1980 Macnamara had become old-fashioned but this was largely because sexual attitudes changed rapidly during the 1970s. It is salutary for Irish historians to be reminded of how recently sexual liberation and the quest for emotional fulfilment became legitimate pursuits in the rest of the western world.

However, this is a problematic text. The cover suggests that the author uses both letters published by Macnamara and 'interviews with her male readership'. The dual approach works in the chapter on homosexuality where Ryan is able to demonstrate change over time from traditional to post-Vatican II Catholic influences, to psychiatric, to liberationist models; to position Macnamara within these; and to make telling use of his interviews. While her advice – invariably reassurance that the correspondent was probably not gay and that, if he was, he might yet attain a measure of happiness through chastity and counselling – strikes the modern reader as unhelpful, some of Ryan's interviewees remember Macnamara's column as 'a forum reducing their isolation' through, as one put it, its stories 'of ordinary Dublin lads, carpenters, bus drivers, whatever, who happened to be gay' (p. 175).

Elsewhere, however, *Asking Angela Macnamara* gives the impression of being an amalgam of two unrelated research projects, a study of an advice column in historical context and a life-history study of Irish masculinity. Either project is potentially valuable but the advisability of combining them is questionable. Firstly, given that the majority of Macnamara's correspondents appear to have been female, the absence of interviews with women is inexplicable. Secondly, while the methodology behind the interviews is fleetingly described in a footnote (p. 26), no details are provided and the relationship between column and interviews is not always apparent.

Further, Macnamara's attitudes are under-analysed. Ryan notes of her response to one desperate woman that 'the belief that anti-depressants, prayer and praising the husband that was beating her would improve this woman's situation was dangerously naïve' (p. 97). 'Dangerously naïve' is a phrase that might be more broadly applied to Macnamara – not only in her toleration of domestic violence but in her insistence that girls were ultimately responsible for male sexual behaviour. The subject of child sex abuse is skirted over. According to Macnamara, 'it wasn't written about in those days so I did not have to deal with it' (p. 149). This ambiguous statement surely warrants more investigation. Less seriously, some of her views were contradictory to the point of being risible, again demanding further analysis. She insisted that new husbands should gently initiate their brides into sex but expected them to do so without any previous sexual experience. She assured young men that masturbation was natural but 'must be controlled and disciplined'

(p. 146). While the image of 'controlled and disciplined' masturbation as an aspect of Christian life is delicious, presumably she intended to advocate abstinence.

Undoubtedly Macnamara articulated a sexual code that was prevalent if confused. However, an opportunity to interrogate that code, particularly from a gender perspective, appears to have been missed here. There are other difficulties: the material suffers from disorganisation; there is a somewhat cavalier attitude to footnoting and occasionally to accuracy (Archbishop McQuaid did not ban books despite the claim on p. 16); and a good proof-reader would have prevented infelicities such as a reference to the Bishop of 'Cork and Emily' (p. 71). In short, the author would have benefitted from greater editorial guidance than he apparently received.

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BELFAST AND DERRY IN REVOLT: A NEW HISTORY OF THE START OF THE TROUBLES. By Simon Prince and Geoffrey Warner. Pp xv, 271. Dublin: Irish Academic Press. 2012. €60 hardback; €24.95 paperback.

Although the origins of Northern Ireland's Troubles are familiar to most with an interest in recent Irish history, Prince and Warner's new study of Derry and Belfast's spiral into conflict from 1968 to 1970 offers a fresh look at this narrative in a novel and compelling way. Through the examination of the two urban case studies – Derry and Belfast – the authors interweave a narrative that is local rather than regional/national, which in turn gives them space to explore in greater detail the process by which the mode of political conduct changed in these years of escalating public confrontation. As a result of the focus on Derry and Belfast, the work still manages to deal with most of the important events associated with the time; from the origin of the civil rights movement in Derry, and the 5 October 1968 march, to Belfast's Divis Street riots, the battle of the Bogside, the burning of Bombay Street and the defence of St Matthew's church. Events 'between the streets' are also given ample room for exploration through Prince and Warner's approach.

What sets this book apart, therefore, is the level of depth that these parallel local studies have been able to achieve; adding colour and shade by denoting the networks of alliances, overlaps in allegiances and role of individuals and groups so often overlooked or left undifferentiated from the crowd. People like Claude Wilton ('Vote for Claude the Catholic Prod') or the 'mammies' of Springtown Camp were locally important but played no part in the politics of Northern Ireland as a whole and have rarely been included in the existing narratives despite their influence on the civil rights movement in Derry. Similarly, Warner's dissection of what has so often been prosaically described as the 'Protestant mob' into its component parts explains more clearly than ever before the logic and tactics adopted by such groups in the summer of 1969.

By retaining a local focus, this work brings to light sources that are genuinely innovative in contemporary Irish history. The chronicles of the Clonard Monastery and the parish of St Matthew's, for example, offer detailed views from fresh angles that provide real insight into the local and political story the authors present.

However, this book is not without its problems. Although the two authors clearly have a singular vision as to what the work should be about, the more forensic style of Warner does not always complement the more theoretically-nuanced approach of Prince. Though collaborative works on Northern Ireland are not new, seldom is one able to discern so clearly the two voices of the joint authors.

The lack of a comprehensive bibliography is symptomatic of perhaps the work's only substantial flaw. Writing a 'new history' surely admits the presence of previous efforts, but