

the cause of the play's artistic failure in the dramatist's lack of direct experience of, and interest in, the Great War, criticisms so ludicrous as to suggest less a solely artistic objection than a cultural animus that may have subsided by the time *The silver tassie* was staged by the Abbey in 1935. In any case, Arrington's argument requires her to imply that Yeats's artistic integrity in 1928 was superseded seven years later by less edifying considerations. For one of her major theses is that the Abbey directors' public defiance of any threat to muzzle was due not merely to artistic principle but also to a desire to court controversy for gain ('protest was profitable') and thus the very censorship they appeared to defy. Bringing O'Casey back to the Abbey in 1935 is one of her cases in point. There is a possible problem here, too, that is not entirely solved. Since she has also shown the directorate to have been political trimmers and on occasions self-censoring subsidy-seekers, Arrington comes close to self-contradiction, though her distinction between public posture and private performance may prevent it.

Perhaps Yeats closed the gap between posture upstage and performance backstage when in his *Spectator* article, he confessed: 'There are irresponsible moments when I hope that the Bill will pass in its present form, or be amended by the Republicans, as some foretell, into a still more drastic form, and force all men of intellect, who mean to spend their lives here, into a common understanding.' This was the laureate of end-games writing, the poet who thirsted for accusation. His perversity, before the advent of government censorship, was mirrored after the event by those Irish writers who relished the drama of censorship (at least in prospect) and the honorific that being banned ironically bestowed.

Arrington's highly-readable monograph may not be exactly the triumph of 'historical myth-busting when it comes to the Colossus of W. B. Yeats' that she claims in a terminal rhetorical flourish, but it has drawn freshly on archives to cross-examine energetically the great culture-giver's own rhetoric and proves beyond reasonable doubt that Irish cultural reality, as usual, was messy, complicated and deceptive.

JOHN WILSON FOSTER

*School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University, Belfast*

HIS GRACE IS DISPLEASED: SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHN CHARLES MCQUAID. Edited by Clara Cullen and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh. Pp 280. Dublin: Merrion. 2013. €19.99.

As a procession of priests and altar-boys led by John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin (1940–72), augustly passed them in Dublin's Pro-Cathedral, Gilbert Laithwaite, the then British Ambassador, remarked to Noël Browne, the then minister for Health in the Inter-Party Government, 1948–51: 'What an impressive figure, Noël: would he not make a notable addition to the distinguished company of the Spanish Inquisitors?' (Noël Browne, *Against the tide* (1986), p. 151.) The recent historical reputation of McQuaid has been dominated by John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: ruler of Catholic Ireland* (1999), which to put it mildly, presented the case for the prosecution. Cooney presented a picture of an antediluvian, conservative reactionary, hell-bent on righting the errors of the modern world. He, in this version, held both spiritual and temporal power in Ireland, bending the Catholic hierarchy, the Irish state and many of its associational organisations to his will. In the Cooney account, McQuaid co-wrote the 1937 Constitution and the attempt to introduce a form of universal health care (the 'Mother and Child' scheme) foundered due to his opposition in 1951. He had an unhealthy obsession with the mixing of sexes, opposed ecumenism and, most salaciously, he was a paedophile. (This last allegation was based on the thinnest of hearsay evidence.) However, it is arguable that the Cooney version, for all of its prosecutorial zeal, does contain a good deal of elemental truths about McQuaid. Other historians have tended to differ on exactly how much power McQuaid wielded. Ronan Fanning has argued that he set his stamp on

Catholic Ireland because, 'due to the civic cowardice of our leaders', large tracts of what was the state's responsibility was surrendered to McQuaid (*Sunday Independent*, 5 Dec. 1999). As others, such as Dermot Keogh have noted, the historical context of Ireland, at the time, is much more important than any one individual. McQuaid was very much a product of his times. Moreover, the main political players, with very few exceptions, shared a broadly similar mentality on what was the preserve, respectively, of church and state. Social liberalisation in Ireland, it is arguable, flowed from Vatican II, and did not grow organically.

The total number of boxes, generated by McQuaid, held in the Dublin Diocesan Archive is over eight hundred, which must be one of the largest collections of significant private papers held in Ireland. Indeed, such is its size, much remains to be catalogued. It is without doubt an essential collection for understanding a mid-century Ireland, which has, for the most part, ebbed away, though traces remain. Therefore, any selection, even of the catalogued material, must necessarily only scratch the surface and endeavor to give a flavour of the man and his material, rather than provide the full portrait. The documents in *His Grace is displeased*, illustrate six aspects of McQuaid's interests: the 1937 Constitution, education, medicine, republicans, post-Vatican II ecumenism and censorship. In the main it is a judicious selection of documents from the McQuaid archive that provides insight into these issues.

However, the book has significant weakness: this is a selection from a single archive. Consequently, much of McQuaid's missives unless a carbon copy was kept, are in the hands of others. Presumably, those to private citizens are inaccessible or probably long destroyed. Certainly, letters in his own hand are not here. One of the weaknesses of the book is the lack of material from other archival sources. By example, ninety-two documents are printed in the chapter on censorship (pp 201–66), but only thirty-one are McQuaid's views. Of course, they provide additional insights into censorship in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, but McQuaid seems to have been more aloof from this issue than legend would suggest. However, the material from the public and his respondents is very interesting and provides a rich seam of evidence that McQuaid was hardly the only reactionary in mid-twentieth-century Ireland.

The documentary material relating to the 1937 Constitution in McQuaid's papers remains confusing and ambiguous, as the authors note, and their selection in the first chapter is unlikely to clear the fog. This is mainly because the original correspondence is not dated, meaning it is impossible to know when McQuaid's interventions were made. De Valera kept the covering letters for many of these documents but appears to have returned the memorandums published here to McQuaid. Certainly after January 1937, the Catholic social teaching elements of the constitutional drafts greatly increased. However, it is arguable that this was done because it suited de Valera's own purposes, which was to eviscerate the more liberal provisions of the 1922 Constitution. The 1922 Constitution's wordings made the passing of certain laws, restricting rights, such as assembly, free speech and women's employment rights, problematic. This was an important matter as judicial review was going to be a major part of the new constitutional dispensation. Catholic social teaching provided the ability to restrict those rights and also configure them in a Catholic populist manner that was likely to attract electoral support. Also, much of McQuaid's advice, mainly preserved in de Valera's papers at University College Dublin and not used here, on directive social principles, the drafting of the special position clause of the Catholic Church and on trade union rights, were not taken up. De Valera appears to have used McQuaid, only when it suited him.

The historical contextualisation offered by the editors is far too brief. Yes, there is a lot to be said for letting the documents speak for themselves, but the short introductions and endnotes to each chapter might leave someone, without a detailed knowledge of McQuaid and the Irish Catholic Church at mid-century, floundering. Also, catalogue information for each individual piece is not given in the text. Instead the reader is left with a general endnote describing where the correspondence for each section is located and very short

biographical information about the correspondents. A short introduction to each document, with much more explanatory and biographical information, or the use of detailed footnotes would have greatly improved the utility of the book. Nonetheless, as an insight into McQuaid and the mindset of his correspondents, it is a satisfactory place to begin.

ROBERT MCNAMARA

*School of English and History, University of Ulster*

COERCIVE CONFINEMENT IN IRELAND: PATIENTS, PRISONERS AND PENITENTS. Edited by Eoin O'Sullivan and Ian O'Donnell. Pp 288. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2012. £60.

In 1946, Father Edward Flanagan, the founder of Boys Town in Nebraska, delivered a shocking indictment of the prison and juvenile justice systems in Ireland. His call for 'an impartial group of investigators' (pp 21–2) to probe these institutions and report back without fear or favour was not well-received in mid-twentieth-century Ireland. His remarks united the political system, government and opposition, along with the Roman Catholic Church to face down his criticism and resist calls for reform. Flanagan's encounter with the church–state alliance in 1940s Ireland merely scratches the surface of what became known about the various branches of coercive confinement in Ireland, many of which are described in this work.

Eoin O'Sullivan and Ian O'Donnell have assembled a significant collection of documents uncovering a lost, forgotten and not unknown history of coercive confinement in post-Independence Ireland. These documents explain the ways in which different categories of Irish citizens were detained, many for what were deemed moral rather than criminal transgressions. These groups are examined in three sections: patients, paupers and unmarried mothers; prisoners; troubled and troublesome children. Each chapter reproduces a contemporaneous document commentating or reporting on an aspect of detention within that section.

The first three chapters present documents rooted in the early to mid-1920s and all were written by Roman Catholic priests. All three examined the 'problem' of unmarried mothers and those who cared for them. The writing and tone from these three priests has much in common; all employed language of moral control and all equate being a good person with being a good Catholic, or vice versa. The first line of Humbert MacInerney's chapter on the subject is chillingly prophetic when he declared, 'here in Ireland we are too tolerant of abuses' (p. 59). By the end of the same chapter, however, one cannot help but wonder what the true source of his concern was. Was it for the welfare of the mother or the abundance of 'proselytising agencies' (p. 61)?

In the opening chapter of the second section on prisoners, the law professor and barrister, Edward Fahy, described how the progressive stage system, an influential post-Famine era penal initiative pioneered by Walter Crofton, was alive and well in 1940s Ireland where prisoners had 'too much time' for 'brooding and mental stagnation' (p. 124). Chapter thirteen, 'I did penal servitude' had a considerable impact when it was published in 1945. This extract not only serves to offer some vivid physical descriptions of life in an Irish prison but also to emphasise the rejection of the prisoners' voice. Even when that voice expressed articulate and educated thoughts, the political classes closed ranks and refused to listen.

The third section deals with troubled and troublesome children including an extract from one of the most brilliant and undiluted accounts of life in an Irish industrial school. Peter Tyrrell's *Founded on fear* (later edited and published as a full memoir by Diarmaid Whelan) opens with the hellish vision of a Christian Brother running riot and beating boys