This is, thus, in many ways a stimulating but irritating book. Its first conclusion that 1916 can only be understood in an international context and displayed affinities with political and cultural movements abroad is not entirely new but certainly correct. His second conclusion, however, that upholding the Proclamation after 1916 entrenched right-radical ideology, is not convincing and certainly not proven by this book, which could do with a serious methodological overhaul possibly by including a look at transfer studies. MacAtasney's book is lacking in analysis while McCormack analyses too freely. Both, however, suffer under a certain bias. It would be good if historians of the revolutionary period could find a happy medium.

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INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS: A HISTORY. Edited by Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter. Pp xvi, 216. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2012. €45.

What can historians hope to learn from a collection of essays about a single newspaper title? Those interested in political history might want to hear something about the news and comments that paper published about particular stories and issues. On its own, however, that would be a rather impoverished set of expectations. Those seeking a deeper understanding of the underlying structures of politics and power, and the role of newspapers in forming, shaping and disrupting those structures, would want to hear about behind-the-scenes interactions among politicians, civil servants and newspapermen. They would also want to learn something of the role of the newspaper in framing the terms of political debate and setting the parameters for normal and acceptable political discourse, and to find out whether the newspaper discharged these functions in a consistent way over time. Historians of the political role of the press might also want to learn of the commercial side of the paper's operations: accounts of the cut-and-thrust of circulation battles with rivals, of the underlying health of the paper as a business, would certainly be of some interest, but would need to be accompanied by a sense of how the business interests of the newspaper influenced and shaped its political role, consciously or otherwise. Meanwhile, social historians might want to know something of the newspaper's staff, with their diverse backgrounds and work practices and their common rituals and prejudices. Social historians would probably also seek an understanding of the role of the newspaper in shaping the social order of which it was a part, of how it reflected but also reordered divisions of region, class, gender and ethnicity, of how it actively constructed (rather than simply commented on) the imagined identities of its readership. Cultural historians might share many of the same interests, and also seek to discern some of the discordant voices that found their echo in the newspaper's pages. Cultural historians might want a 'history from below', something for which newspapers can sometimes (if not always) provide us with excellent source material.

Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter seek to do some of these things in their edited collection of essays on the history of the *Irish Independent*. The focus is largely on the political realm, and many of the contributors to the collection focus on telling us what the newspaper's journalists and editors said about key issues in Irish national politics. This fits into a broader tradition of writing newspaper history as the story of the intersection of journalism and high politics, and into a particular Irish tradition of writing newspaper history as part of the narrative of the nationalist project. The book thus contains several richly-detailed accounts of the role of the *Independent* in Irish national and nationalist politics from the late-nineteenth to the late-twentieth century, with the emphasis on what the paper said, what its proprietors and editors did or thought, and how they interacted with influential Irish politicians. Aoife Whelan's essay takes us into a consideration of the

Irish language as it was used in the pages of the paper: a different type of nationalist politics, but nationalist politics nonetheless.

Many of the politically-focused essays in the collection draw on the biographical tradition that has been another powerful influence on newspaper historians for a century or more. This is explicit in essays on editors and proprietors, and particularly in the book's collective assessment of the role of two capitalists, William Martin Murphy and Tony O'Reilly, in setting the paper's commercial orientation. Padraig Yeates's essay gives us a sense of the role of Murphy, if not of the *Independent*, in shaping social conflict in Lockout-era Dublin. Colum Kenny meanwhile breaks away from the volume's obsession with politics, and uses biography to take us further into the business side of the *Independent*, focusing on the paper's pioneering advertising manager. This gets us closer to a sense of how the *Independent* actually worked, in an increasingly commercialised world, and of how its senior executives were integrated into Ireland's slowly-developing business elite. Gavin Ellis, covering a later period, shows how O'Reilly linked the *Independent* into a transnational business empire. In *Flat Earth News* (London, 2008), Nick Davies laments what happened to journalism when newspapers were taken over by 'grocers' who made profits by stripping away the resources necessary for serious investigative journalism: there are echoes of this gloomy story in Ellis's account.

In terms of social history, John Horgan paints an evocative picture of how the paper functioned as an institution in the 1960s and early 1970s, sketching in some of the commercial context along the way. Ida Milne gives us another welcome break from national politics, and uses oral history to provide one of the freshest contributions in the collection, a rare glimpse of what was happening below the executive 'fourth floor' of Independent House.

Traditionally, historians have sought to show how newspapers held up a mirror to their times. *Independent Newspapers: a history* does this admirably, particularly when it comes to national politics. There is room for further work, exploring how Irish newspapers like the *Independent* were also active agents in political, social, cultural and economic life, shaping twentieth-century Ireland as well as simply reporting on it.

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Sligo: the Irish Revolution, 1912–1923. By Michael Farry. Pp 192, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2012. €45 hardback. €17.50 paperback.

Michael Farry's *Sligo: the Irish Revolution, 1912–1923* is the first of a new series, edited by Daithí Ó Corráin and Mary Ann Lyons, which aims to produce a local study of this tumultuous decade (and a year) for each of Ireland's thirty-two counties. This is certainly a bold and ambitious undertaking, though the basic concept of the series itself is not particularly imaginative. Since the publication of David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish life, 1913–1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* in 1977, the county study has become one of the most popular forms of historical writing on the revolutionary period amongst both academic and non-academic authors. The value of the micro-historical approach is readily recognised, and it is works of this nature that have generated some of the key debates concerning the conflict in the past two decades. The real significance of the series, therefore, is not so much in the innovation of its approach. Rather, it is in its attempt to bring a degree of uniformity to an emerging body of research that can vary considerably in terms of quality, periodisation and focus; in the words of the editors, to bring together this 'fresh scholarship within a single coherent, overarching interpretative framework'. The series also promises to generate local studies of the revolution in many areas that have not yet received coverage, such as six-county Ulster.