

as young as six years old for no apparent reason. Tyrrell's writing is significant not only because it spells out the horrors of Letterfrack but also because it is vivid in its descriptions of life among the boys, their treatment of 'pets', and the hierarchies that existed. It is telling that Tyrrell had the courage to point out some of the few positives that he encountered in his life at the school.

It is a mark of his engagement with the issues of this book that the work of the journalist Michael Viney is reproduced no less than three times. The third of these extracts explored 'the dismal world of Daingean' reformatory school in 1966. Viney stated that while some recommended reforms did take place in the previous three decades, many did not and so change was inadequate. Many of his criticisms were laid at the door of government, from whom funding for the schools was poor and often late. Daingean, he claimed, was 'a world of overriding shabbiness and decrepitude' (p. 225).

In the preface to this book, O'Sullivan and O'Donnell appear almost apologetic for the fact that some readers might take issue with the overall selection of documents they have reproduced here. No apology is necessary. Among the many strengths of this book is that the authors have allowed the documents to speak for themselves apart from a necessary introduction to each one. Their analysis of the collection is saved for the insightful and typically well-informed introductory and concluding chapters. This book eloquently traces the heavy dependence on institutional punishment and 'care' by those charged with or self-appointed in the field of criminal justice and moral policing in twentieth-century Ireland. The book is strongly recommended for scholars, students or anybody concerned with understanding at first-hand, some of the thinking that under-pinned the many layers of institutional detention to which the Irish state was firmly wedded.

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IRELAND IN THE NEWSREELS. By Ciara Chambers. Pp 314. Illus. Dublin & Portland, Oreg.: Irish Academic Press. 2012. €22.95/£19.95.

*Ireland in the newsreels* is a survey of international newsreel coverage of political events in Ireland from the 1900s to the 1950s. It is a descriptive and thoroughly researched work evincing its author's diligent viewing of thousands of newsreel items with particular focus on the reporting upon significant historical moments. Ciara Chambers's most compelling analytical premise is that these newsreels reflect the gradual entrenchment of partition within a representational frame beyond factual documentation of the circumstances. It must be borne in mind, as Chambers reminds us, that newsreels as a form were not exactly like other forms of journalism in their time. Generally produced weeks or months after the events they were concerned with, newsreels idiomatically editorialised and framed their stories in the light of subsequent developments around the events themselves. As such it is possible, and arguably necessary, to examine any particular newsreel with an eye for the representational conventions that make them more clearly interpretations rather than documents of history.

Chambers begins with some contextual introduction to the evolution of newsreels as a form in early twentieth-century cinema. She then proceeds to chart how twentieth-century Irish history was presented in newsreels produced primarily outside of the island of Ireland, beginning with the Home Rule debate and proceeding through the global and the local repercussions of the world wars. Irish Independence is a significant frame throughout this entire period, and Chambers focuses particularly on the ways in which first rebel, then taoiseach, then president, Éamon de Valera, was featured throughout the period as a literal spokesperson for Ireland's view of itself, a view increasingly defined by political autonomy and cultural separateness.

Because the bulk of the films examined originate outside the island of Ireland (and comparatively few were indigenously produced anyway), the perspective on Irish history presented by these newsreels is one tending towards a dramatic simplification of the struggle for national identity. Chambers recounts this with close readings of the images and audio content, noting the editorial slant that the latter frequently put upon the former. As such the ever-more obvious thematic and narrative role played by partition and 'The Irish Question' (and the 'characters' that represented the sides) is clearly a structuring convention to make the story digestible for an international audience. As such these films did not on the whole contribute to meaningful political discourse or even public engagement with Irish events even in their time, a question that makes the historical project of the book itself slightly problematic.

Chambers notes that the issue of how the public responded to or viewed such newsreels is a difficult one to overcome. In Film Studies the field of reception studies is fraught with ethical and practical difficulties, and in the end a great deal of supposition supported by astute theoretical framing is required to make very tentative arguments. The reason this matters is that in examining the content of newsreels, the greatest value in terms of history is not in their 'record' of what they saw, but how we can place these representations within emerging media-based discourse in the postmodern age. Though this book acknowledges this problem, it does not overcome it. The author does not have the time to delve into theoretical and methodological questions informing the analysis of newsreels as media objects, and is therefore forced to remain at quite a descriptive level in reading their content.

It is actually difficult to see what the ideal readership for the book might be. It seems to fall short of disciplinary specificity. Its heavy emphasis on descriptive detail is of some reference value but its lack of deeper and more comprehensive historical sources leave it a bit undernourished as an historical work. Though it references academic history, it does not engage in developed debate with an historiographic frame. Meanwhile the absence of an evolved and nuanced academic perspective on the representational boundary lines between 'genre', 'form', and 'medium' in terms of documentary studies make its aesthetic arguments more rhetorical than intellectual, which weakens its value as a Film Studies text.

Credit is certainly due and acknowledgement given to the level and depth of primary research involved, but in many ways the book seems a missed opportunity to rigorously interrogate this immensely complex form of representation and its relationship with negotiated images of political and social identity in historical (and historiographic) context. Readers will nonetheless find in its pages a very thorough description of newsreels on a variety of topics pertaining to early to mid twentieth-century Ireland, which is in itself a significant contribution to research in Irish studies.

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POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN IRELAND 1922–2010: A CROOKED HARP? By Elaine Byrne. Pp xiii, 273. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2012. £15.99.

'Corruption has played no small part in determining the course of Irish history. ... The consequence of the blatant bribery by agents of the British King which procured the Act of Union, 1801, was the robbery of native Irish legislative independence until 1922. The quid pro quo of the £10,000 political donation by ... Cecil Rhodes to ... Charles Stewart Parnell in 1888, ultimately found expression in the settlement of the Irish question in 1920 with the retention of Irish MPs at the Northern Ireland Parliament' [p. 3].

Despite a title that refers to the years 1922–2010, and some references to Irish history pre-1922, the primary focus of this book is on contemporary Ireland. Byrne draws an