

not predictably shaped by emerging group alliances and shared grievances; rather, the process was ‘fluid, contingent and undetermined ... due in part to the constant interpretation and reinterpretation of events by group participants’ (p. 234).

Group participation is crucial for Kane, and that explains the importance which she attaches to newspapers. She identifies newspaper reading as a ritualised event in which readers are drawn into discursive struggle. In her study, she takes thirteen newspapers and examines at least a thousand accounts of Land War events and speeches. (Over one-third of the pages in the book contain quite lengthy, indented quotations from these sources.) It is odd, however, that a work which lays such emphasis on the role of newspapers in disseminating versions of Irish identity should provide no estimates of the newspapers’ circulation figures. Yet Kane clearly appreciates the importance of circulation, noting at one point the role of the national daily *Freeman’s Journal* in reporting, ‘across the country’, a speech by Michael Davitt at the first mass land meeting in County Leitrim in December 1879 (p. 107).

More seriously, there are problems with Kane’s methodology. Not only is symbolism at times derived from text where it might not exist, but, beyond that, she can only imagine – albeit an informed imagining – how readers of newspapers interpreted and processed reported events and the ‘embedded’ narratives and symbolism in the texts. That is not to deny the role of the press in politicisation, or the appetite at that time for communication through the printed word. Nor indeed can we deny the deliberate uses of symbolism and imagery; Philip Bull’s work on the land movement, *Land, politics and nationalism* (1996) highlighted the depiction of ‘land as a metaphor for the nation’. However, the speculative nature of the methodology in Kane’s study is problematic.

Some less serious issues with the book are also worth noting. The general contextual discussion of developments during the land campaign, which are now well-established, is at times laboured and repetitive. And some basic errors stand out: Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon were not ‘Protestant nationalists’ (p. 36); the Irish Republic was not ‘established’ in 1921 (p. 227); and the nationalist community in late nineteenth-century Ireland did not constitute the ‘Irish people’, as is claimed on a number of occasions.

Multidisciplinary approaches to Irish history can be productive and mutually enriching. Unfortunately, however, this work does not significantly advance our understanding of the Land War, or indeed its mass participants.

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LAND, POPULAR POLITICS AND AGRARIAN VIOLENCE IN IRELAND. THE CASE OF COUNTY KERRY, 1872–86. By Donnacha Seán Lucey. Pp xiv, 270. Dublin: University College Dublin Press. 2011. €28 paperback.

With no official branches till the autumn of 1880, the Irish National Land League was something of a latecomer in County Kerry. The organisation spread quickly, however, as did agrarian violence. By the winter of 1880–1, Kerry held the highest rate of outrages in Ireland after Galway and Mayo. Since the Great Famine, evictions and landlordism in Kerry had been central to perceptions of misgovernment in the country as a whole, and developments there during the Land War often became the focus of national politics. The county was also the backyard of Timothy Harrington, prominent Land Leaguer and later principal secretary of the National League, though a figure that has been neglected by historians. When the Land League came to a close in 1882, agrarian agitation diminished, but soon revived and, by the mid-1880s, the county was the ‘most politically active and agitated region in the country’ (p. 6). There are numerous reasons, then, for a study of agrarian politics in Kerry and there is no doubt that Lucey’s book is a welcome addition to the historiography of nineteenth-century Ireland.

The local framework complements existing regional investigations of Mayo (Donald Jordan, *Land and popular politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War* (1994)), Laois (J. W. H. Carter, *The Land War and its leaders in Queen's County, 1879–82* (1994)) and Kildare (Thomas Nelson, *The Land War in County Kildare* (1985)), and numerous essays by Gerard Moran. Lucey concentrates on the 'local and grassroots level' (p. 4) to explore the dynamics of land agitation and organisational tensions, an approach that echoes Peter Hart's study of the War of Independence and Fergus Campbell's work on Galway. The book begins with the emergence of home rule politics in Kerry during the 1870s and proceeds to investigate the effects of agricultural depression, the collapse of the credit system and the outbreak of anti-landlordism. Focusing on the objectives and social composition of the Land League, Lucey describes how it appealed to differing and sometimes contradictory interests, with home rulers, Fenians and Moonlighters often pulling in different directions. The investigation of the National League demonstrates how the years between the Land War and the first Home Rule Bill were crucial ones for the formation of nationalist identities. Parnell's attempts to channel Land League supporters into a constitutional movement exposed a rift between national and local objectives. The 'overriding concern of the local branches of the National League remained agrarian' and disconnected from home rule politics (p. 164). By 1886, however, the National League was consolidated and radical Fenians and Moonlighters were purged from its ranks.

Within the agrarian leagues, 'various groups and interests existed together in a complex juxtaposition' (p. 92), and the principles of 'unwritten law' were far removed from 'the reality of agrarian capitalism' (p. 71). Conflicting interests were exposed in disputes brought to the Land League courts. These courts were effectively ended by widespread arrests in early 1881, but had they continued the local movement would surely have fragmented that year. Coercion brought militants to the fore and intensified conflict, and the author maps a course through the existing studies of agrarian violence, carefully evaluating the relevance of national frameworks for the local context. Clark's 'challenging collectivity' thesis (Samuel Clark, *Social origins of the Irish Land War* (1979)) holds limited relevance in Kerry, but J. J. Lee's (*The modernisation of Irish society, 1848–1918* (1973)) observations on the limited prospects facing young males in the county are elaborated and extended to the National League. The approaches of David Fitzpatrick and A. C. Murray are found the most applicable. Agrarian violence frequently entailed 'family squabbles' (p. 77) and 'personal vendettas' (p. 169) between competitors for land, and was not characterised by 'any particular class interests' or radical aims of property redistribution (p. 198). At the same time, violence was about something more than competition, and the author acknowledges that there were 'powerful social forces surrounding Moonlighting and radical agrarian activity' (p. 194), which held a visceral appeal in rural communities.

Official statistics and parliamentary inquiries, often presented in mundane ways, are employed with ingenuity here, and the author constructs a fresh and multifaceted picture of Kerry in the 1880s. Yet the approach 'from below' (p. 114) raises wider conceptual issues that challenge all studies of nineteenth-century Ireland, in that the extensive parliamentary material, statistical returns and constabulary reports were written from the state's 'top-down' perspective and often shaped by short-term policy-making concerns. Local newspapers such as the *Kerry Sentinel* provide a counter-weight to some degree, yet the Harrington brothers were successful politicians, an elite in their own milieu. Lucey confronts these issues with painstaking analysis of cases presented before the National League courts, the objectives of outrages, and the breakdown of resolutions passed by different branches, and by combining membership lists with census data to build a social profile of activists (p. 160). The analysis stops, somewhat abruptly, with the 1886 Home Rule Bill and not the Plan of Campaign, leaving the reader curious as to how agrarian violence played out over the next few years (though we are told that outrages diminished substantially). But this is a minor gripe with what is an excellent

debut, the significance and relevance of which will extend far beyond the county framework.

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‘SOLITARY AND WILD’: FREDERICK MACNEICE AND THE SALVATION OF IRELAND. By David Fitzpatrick. Pp vii, 427, illus. Dublin: The Lilliput Press. 2012. €40.

John Frederick MacNeice (1866–1942) is perhaps best remembered as the father of the poet, Louis. Yet in parts of the north, where he made his home for much of his life and where he made his name, MacNeice père always enjoyed a reputation of some remarkable significance.

It is a reputation David Fitzpatrick addresses in *‘Solitary and wild’*, situating MacNeice’s life in the context of his upbringing and his commitment to the low-church evangelical wing of the Church of Ireland. MacNeice was the son of Irish Church Mission (I.C.M.) parents and that experience shaped his own attitudes and allowed others, Louis included, to craft a back story for the man who was rector of Carrickfergus for many of the tumultuous years around the home rule and partition debates, and then Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore in the early years of Northern Ireland. That back story, Fitzpatrick demonstrates, ignored much of MacNeice’s experiences as a young man in Dublin, at Trinity College Dublin, and his early work in working-class Protestant areas of Belfast.

It was Covenant Day, 28 September 1912, that helped make MacNeice’s reputation when he concluded his sermon with the observation that he could not and would not sign a document that was political rather than religious. Yet this was not a stance without context, and it is the contexts that have often been lost in the retelling. *‘Solitary and wild’* focuses on two of those contexts, MacNeice’s continuing commitment to one aspect of the I.C.M. philosophy in particular – temperance and related civic virtues – and the role of the Orange Order in MacNeice’s career until relatively late.

The two contexts intertwined. The would-be congregants MacNeice sought to reach were as likely as not connected to the Orange Order. And herein lies perhaps the greatest weakness of Fitzpatrick’s book: this is not a book about the Orange Order, yet it requires more awareness on the part of its reader about the Order’s social complexities than is likely usually to be the case.

MacNeice identified the Orange Order as a fraternal body often untroubled by any particular political agenda beyond the general maintenance of the religious status quo, a status quo which in towns such as Carrickfergus and the Protestant neighbourhoods of Belfast was only occasionally perceived to be under threat. Fitzpatrick identifies the lodges with which MacNeice was most closely associated, and they were all temperance lodges. MacNeice’s interest was consistently in the social fabric his affiliation could foster. His connections were dedicated to advancing his concept of how a Christian society should function, about which he would become increasingly plainspoken after the middle of the 1920s, taking a stance in line with such luminaries as William Temple, Archbishop of York. In Ireland, he would seem to have shared many attitudes with John Bernard, Archbishop of Dublin, who had been one of his lecturers at Trinity College Dublin. Bernard is an instructive comparison, for, like MacNeice, his unionism was both genuinely an expression of his sympathies and also a means to preserving an all-Ireland political entity within which the Church of Ireland could exercise a national testimony.

MacNeice adapted to the failure of politics after 1916 to provide any framework for a peaceful all-Ireland solution by adopting an increasingly quietist outlook while ever more