

of the Treaty of 1921 and details on Gonne's work for the anti-Treaty cause in the Civil War. However, in this section we are then given an unexplained reference to her earlier work for Desmond FitzGerald and Erskine Childers in the Dáil's Department of Publicity between 1919 and 1921. Following on from a description of her work on the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War the narrative then goes back to June 1922, before the outbreak of war, and Gonne accepting a mission from FitzGerald, then a senior minister in the provisional government of the Irish Free State. Specifically, Gonne agreed to go to Paris to publicise the plight of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Again, no context is given; why, if she was so viciously anti-Treaty, did she agree to work with FitzGerald, when he was already a hate figure on the anti-Treaty side?

It seems a pity that this incident in particular was not investigated more thoroughly as more details could reveal much about Gonne. Gonne appears to have been deeply entrenched in her views but also seems to have been willing to work and associate, throughout her life, with people of different political persuasions. FitzGerald in 1922 seems to have been a case in point. This book explores the themes of Gonne's life and the absence of a detailed discussion of her personal life and cultural output works well in this context, but this should not be at the expense of clarity. It should be borne in mind that this book series is intended for a general readership, who may not be entirely familiar with the course of events. Some readers might be forgiven for thinking that FitzGerald was a leading figure on the anti-Treaty side.

Mary McAuliffe's biography of Margaret Skinnider contains substantiated, detailed and authoritative prose, and is complemented by a detailed bibliography, clear footnotes and the addition of an excellent series of photos. McAuliffe, a lecturer in gender studies at University College Dublin who specialises in Irish women's and gender history, provides a well-rounded biography and analysis of Skinnider. Skinnider's remarkable life involved revolutionary suffragist agitation, socialist activism, involvement in revolutionary violence, and transnational propaganda, in addition to being a significant organiser for the anti-Treaty I.R.A. followed by a long career in teaching and in trade union activism.

McAuliffe's scholarship is generous and constantly cites the work of other historians and is never too narrowly focused on Skinnider, providing details on the organisations and other individuals with whom she collaborated. Indeed, following on from the 1916 Rising the book is almost as much a biography of Skinnider's partner, Nora O'Keeffe. The book is also the product of painstaking primary research and analysis together with the effective use of the most recently made available sources on Irish revolutionary history. One of the strengths of the book is the broadness of its scope through fascinating coverage of Skinnider's early involvement in physical force suffragist action in her native Glasgow before the First World War, through to a detailed exploration of her work with the Irish National Teachers' Organisation from the 1930s to the 1950s.

McAuliffe highlights how female activists did much to revolutionise gender norms, noting that through wearing men's clothes in both conflict and espionage Skinnider subverted traditional gender stereotypes by adopting the role of the soldier which was seen as an exclusively male occupation. She shows how female activists subverted norms but also exploited stereotypes. Skinnider was a courier between rebel positions during the Easter Rising, and McAuliffe shows that Skinnider understood that she could carry out such a role as British soldiers and police simply would not have believed that a woman could be involved in the Rising, let alone be entrusted with crucial messages.

The book crucially demonstrates that Skinnider's revolution did not finish in 1923 and throughout her post-revolutionary years she sought to improve the place of women in Irish life, the rights of workers and of her students. Skinnider's nationalism or republicanism were driven by a desire to improve the welfare of the people of Ireland and was never too dogmatic, though she did join Clann na Poblachta in the 1950s. McAuliffe mentions the important work of Dr Brigid Lyons as the first doctor in the Free State army, which leads to one final point. This reviewer cannot help but notice that all of the figures from the revolutionary period covered in this series took the anti-Treaty side. Surely a pro-Treaty figure like Lyons, who made an enormous contribution to medicine in Ireland, deserves a biography in this series. This could also be

extended to other figures in Irish history who have made distinct and original contributions to Irish life but who are perhaps now underacknowledged; Owen Sheehy Skeffington, who we meet as a young man in this volume, is case in point.

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THOMAS EARLS FITZGERALD

ERNEST BLYTHE IN ULSTER: THE MAKING OF A DOUBLE AGENT? By David Fitzpatrick. Pp 275. Cork: Cork University Press. 2018. €39.

In *Ernest Blythe in Ulster: the making of a double agent?* — the penultimate book of his prolific career — the late David Fitzpatrick displays all the qualities that made him a remarkable historian. He ferrets out information about Blythe (1889–1975) too easily overlooked by generations of researchers; he offers a close discussion of the social structures of communities in Ulster in which Blythe grew up and in which he lived as a young adult; and he presents the case that Blythe might simultaneously have been a member of two diametrically opposed bodies, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) and the Orange Order. It was this last element that gave the book its interrogative title and that added piquancy to the life story of a man known to many for his work as the penurious (and menacing) minister for finance in the Cumann na nGaedheal governments of the 1920s, a fascist activist alongside Eoin O’Duffy in the 1930s and in support of Ailtirí na hAiséighre in the 1940s, and long-time managing director of the Abbey Theatre.

In his preface, Fitzpatrick notes that Blythe’s life was deserving of a full biography, but that the more modest aim of this work was to ‘subvert Blythe’s own version of his revolutionary education up to 1913’, which implied a singular direction when, in reality, his actions demonstrated the ‘astonishing duplicity, even multiplicity, of [his] conduct’ (p. viii). To make his case, the author draws heavily upon newspapers, Blythe’s published Irish-language memoirs and unpublished personal papers, Bureau of Military History witness statements, the registers of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland and the records of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. It is likely that only Fitzpatrick could have made the specific connections that he did because of his long career researching both the revolutionary nationalist tradition and the Orange Order.

The book’s prologue — ‘Initiations’ — presents the central paradox of the work, Blythe’s initiation as a member of the Orange Order in 1910, just three years after his joining the I.R.B. Fitzpatrick then offers a brief but illuminating discussion of Blythe’s strong farming and mixed Episcopal and Presbyterian family background in south-west Antrim, before turning to the middle portion of the book, subtitled ‘Disguises’. Built on the idea that Blythe rarely, if ever, allowed others to know his true mind, the author unearthed a series of poses (pseudonymous columns in newspapers, play acting in local companies and roles adopted in secret society work) through which Blythe apparently became a sort of orange-green pimpernel, learning the true minds of the men and women who would support the Ulster covenant while also considering how to radicalise the nationalists of Ireland. His real intentions in the early 1910s were, apparently, only decipherable after carefully reconstructing the contradictions between Blythe’s published memoirs and public life on the one hand, and his private papers and contemporaneous materials on the other.

At the heart of the study is the brief period in Blythe’s life (1909–13) when he worked as a reporter and columnist for the *North Down Herald* in Bangor and Newtownards, as well as a contributor to other papers including the *Ulster Guardian*, while simultaneously writing for the I.R.B. organ *Irish Freedom*. During those years, Fitzpatrick contends, his various personae argued multiple positions, some of which echoed through the decades in his later opinions about revolutionary action, partition and the logic of fascistic thought (if not outright racialised fascism). Such an argument is typical of Fitzpatrick at his most audacious, developing far-reaching conclusions based on deep reading of his sources and textual comparison. But there is a danger in this as well. For instance, readers must accept that Blythe was both ‘Purple Star’ in the *Ulster Guardian* and ‘The Old Town Clock’ in the *North Down*