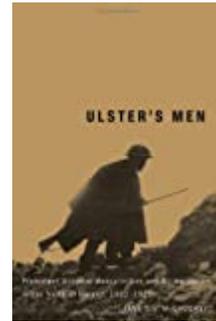




Jane G. V. McGaughey. *Ulster's Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarization in the North of Ireland, 1912-1923.* Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012. xvi + 256 pp. \$95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7735-3972-3.



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Understanding Ulster's Men

While historians of modern Ireland have developed an impressive range of sophisticated readings of political culture, the functioning of gender in the public sphere remains little understood. Jane McGaughey's book goes some way towards closing this lacuna, providing an important, fresh perspective on a familiar period in Irish history. This book engages in a gendered analysis of men in Ulster and Northern Ireland, from the Home Rule crisis of 1912 to the Troubles of the early 1920s. Exploring the representation of Ulster Protestant Unionist masculinities in the public sphere, in speeches, pamphlets, and newspapers, McGaughey argues that a "hegemonic masculinity" emerged during this period through increasingly militarized cultures of "heroism, defence, fraternalism, and punishment" (p. 6). Understanding these Ulster men and their masculinities helps us to more clearly see how sectarian structures of power emerged in the new Northern Ireland state.

Ulster's Men follows a broadly chronological structure, leading the reader through the process by which militarization came to play a key role in the construc-

tion of Ulster Protestant Unionist masculinities. The first section of the book examines the period from the Home Rule crisis in 1912 through to the outbreak of the Great War. In chapter 1, McGaughey explores how masculinity was constructed in Ulster in the wake of the crisis over the third Home Rule bill and in the build-up to war. The role of key figures such as Edward Carson, the political stance of churches, and the heightened significance of fraternal associations (especially the Orange Order) are examined. These factors, according to McGaughey, created a homosocial world during the Home Rule crisis, which placed "an increased emphasis on the relationship between manliness, militarization and a martial lifestyle" (p. 25). Chapter 2 shifts discussion to the role played in the construction of Ulster Protestant masculinities by the signing of the anti-Home Rule Solemn League and Covenant in September 1912 and the emergence of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force in January 1913. Through his coordination of the Covenant, Carson is portrayed as securing his position as the "masculine ideal of Unionist resistance in Ulster" (p. 43) and McGaughey ar-

gues that the gendered nature of the Covenant (together with the Women's Declaration) helped to further harden Ulster masculinities. McGaughey then draws on a range of source material to reflect on how the emergence of the UVF created a 'public militaristic agenda' (p. 60), mixing political and religious concerns over Home Rule with a range of masculine archetypes, which stressed Ulster men's roles as warriors, defenders of the Protestant community, and religious martyrs. The final chapter in this first section examines the nature of Ulster manliness during 1914, when the religious, political, and militaristic aspects of Ulster masculinity were now supplemented by the prospect of civil war in Ireland. Focusing on the UVF's gun-running and the Curragh 'mutiny', McGaughey establishes how the enduring image of the spring and summer of 1914 came to be the 'Ulsterman with a gun' (p. 82). McGaughey pays particular attention to the figure of Fred Crawford, one of the key organizers of the Larne, Bangor, and Donaghadee gun-runnings, and how he came to embody an Ulster martyrdom that was overtly masculine.

The second section of *Ulster's Men* argues that the Great War was the most important event in the construction of masculinities in the province, creating a 'new sense of military manhood' (p. 87). In particular, McGaughey focuses on the 36th (Ulster) Division's 'sacrifice' at the Battle of the Somme, which created a sense of 'blood debt' that would secure the future of the Union and the empire. The Unionist warrior at the Somme became, then, the most significant image of Ulster masculinity that would inform subsequent Ulster politics and identity. Following the Somme, chapter 5 analyzes relations between the Ulster and Irish divisions at the front and makes the important point that, despite their obvious antagonisms, there was some fraternizing between these 'rival masculinities' (p. 110). Focusing on Irish nationalist soldiers such as Tom Kettle and Willie Redmond, McGaughey highlights the possibility of military friendship, especially among the officer class, which transcended sectarian politics and created 'episodes of brotherhood' (p. 132). Any notions of improved Nationalist-Unionist relations were soon scuppered in postwar Ulster. In the final section of *Ulster's Men*, McGaughey analyzes how Ulster Unionist Protestant masculinities became embedded in the emerging Northern Ireland state. Chapter 6 examines the immediate postwar period in which,

McGaughey argues, the power of Protestant masculinities was enhanced by legislation and the development of further paramilitary organizations and all-male societies. The book's final chapter is one of the most interesting, analyzing the role of masculinity in the Troubles following the creation of the Northern Ireland state. Through the Belfast Parliament, legislation (such as the Special Powers Act 1922), the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and a yet more prominent role for the Orange Order, the perception grew among Northern Nationalists that they were living in an 'Orange State.' McGaughey's discussion of the institutionalization of flogging as a judicial punishment is particularly fascinating, throwing light on the gendered nature of the state's architectures and technologies of punishment. This period constituted, in the view of McGaughey, a 'crisis of masculine identity' (p. 188) among the Northern Nationalist community. While this is a persuasive argument, McGaughey's analysis could have been sharpened further by consideration of the psychological effects felt by Northern Nationalists in the light of the Boundary Commission, and the hope its foundation held out to them about the possibility of revisions to the border between Northern Ireland and the Free State. Clearly, the marginalization of Catholic nationalists in Northern Ireland was in process, but some of the mentalities discerned by McGaughey in this earlier period were arguably not fully apparent until after this boundary was finally settled at the end of 1925.[1]

By the mid-1920s, there were very few images of Northern Nationalists in the public sphere in Northern Ireland. The Protestant Unionist masculinities examined by McGaughey had become dominant, and events such as the Belfast riots in 1935 demonstrated both the persistence of these identities and the traction they held in a society in which sectarian violence was more commonplace. This is an important book, and McGaughey's novel approach will be useful to historians interested in the later development of Northern Ireland and the emergence of another period of the Troubles in the late 1960s.

Note

[1]. N. C. Abbott, 'The Irish Boundary Commission and the Nationalist Press' (MA thesis: University of Bristol, 2008).

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