

ing of the London show. The lengthy account of the development of the moving panorama in Ireland is arguably the chapter's strongest section, but for some reason there is relatively little here concerning post-1860 panoramic shows. Following the third chapter, which deals with pubs, fairs, tableaux vivants, legitimate and variety theatres under a broad rubric concerning 'entertainment venues of surveillance and control' (164), the final chapter turns its attention to moving picture exhibition until 1909 – a date chosen because it coincides with the establishment of the first permanent cinema in Dublin. In fact, the preceding chapters, which are openly concerned with what the authors call 'proto-cinematic experiences' (12), sometimes feel like a prelude to the film material (and to the second volume by the authors) – and this chapter is effective in tracing out some of the continuities at work in the new century. The account of British imperialism in Irish screening practices picks up once again on the political associations of the magic lantern addressed earlier, and the description of the large 'town hall' film shows that took place from 1897 to 1909 at Dublin's Rotunda, which had for decades been a premier location for panoramic shows, is perhaps the highlight of the book, making a powerful case for the significance of these high-capacity, high-status venues from almost the first years of film exhibition.

These last pages of the book eloquently demonstrate the transformative significance that detailed study of individual venues might have, especially when informed by accounts drawn from the local and national presses. The preceding pages, which provide a broad array of references to other important venues, exhibitors, and entrepreneurs, especially in Dublin, will remain a helpful resource for future scholars, especially those interested in tracking the exhibitors and audiences of visual media across this long national history.

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**Film exhibition and distribution in Ireland, 1909–2010**, by Kevin Rockett with Emer Rockett, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2011, 652 pp., €60 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-846-82316-9

Kevin Rockett has been one of Ireland's leading film scholars since the 1980s, and is particularly well known for both the narrative histories and the catalogues that have provided a firm point of departure for the work on Irish cinema of many other researchers. Notable among his several previous books are his monumental 1996 *Irish Filmography: Fiction Films 1896–1996* – a 750-page catalogue of Irish and Irish-related films from around the world that is now available in an expanded online database – and his 2004 *Irish Film Censorship: A Cultural Journey from Silent Cinema to Internet Pornography*, a narrative account based on the records of the Irish films censors. In their size and scope, Rockett's books aim for comprehensive coverage of topics relating to Irish cinema. Working on this book with his wife

Emer Rockett, he turns his attention to film exhibition and distribution in Ireland since 1909, approaching these by providing both narrative and catalogue. It is the companion volume to the Rocketts' *Magic Lantern, Panorama and Moving Picture Shows in Ireland, 1786–1909*, reviewed elsewhere in these pages. The first book is conceived as a necessary filling in of gaps in the literature on pre-cinematic projected and moving pictures in Ireland, a wanted precursor to an account of film exhibition and distribution that this book takes up. This division of the project as a whole makes sense – not least in the fact that it splits a potentially unwieldy work of over 1000 pages into two relatively manageable, albeit still large, books. Beyond the physical limitations of book size, however, the division also reflects the different emphases of the two books, the first dealing with a number of visual attractions from multiple perspectives, and the second focusing on the business of cinema.

For most readers of this journal whose primary focus is on early visual culture, the first chapter on early and silent cinema is likely to be of most interest. This takes up the first of the book's nine chapters and the relevant parts of the cinema catalogue that constitutes chapter 9. Before turning to a more detailed discussion of these, I will give a brief outline of the book as a whole. It is organized into three main parts that contain different kinds of materials. The first part (15–228) contains five chapters examining commercial cinema exhibition and distribution from 1909 to 2010. The second part (229–365) consists of chapters 6–8, which explore different aspects of 'alternative film practices' from the 1920s on. 'Alternative' here means two things. In the first of these chapters, it means the exhibition of foreign-language, independently produced and other minority-interest films by art-house venues, film societies and festivals. In the other two chapters of this part, 'alternative' means the Irish Catholic Church's multifarious dealings with cinema before and after it established the National Film Institute. The third part (366–454) is largely taken up with chapter 9's catalogue of cinemas and public venues that screened films, but it also offers an appendix of cinema statistics compiled into 13 tables (455–480) and a short 'Coda' reflecting on cinema after the Irish economic collapse of the late 2000s (480–481). The notes are confined to the back matter, where they take up a whopping 125 pages (482–607). A select bibliography and two indices – a general one and one dedicated to cinema locations – complete the book. It is illustrated by almost 100 images, many of which have not been published before.

Although literature on exhibition and distribution continues to grow, these crucial aspects of the film business remain under-represented in film studies; and a new and substantial book on the subject should be welcomed – particularly one focusing on a small national cinema such as Ireland's, which has been so little explored from this perspective. Most books on Irish cinema have focused on film production and employed a methodology dominated by textual analysis. Several scholars have felt that such an approach is particularly flawed in a country with little film production but a healthy cinema-going culture. Largely avoiding discussion of films or cinema buildings as such, the Rocketts certainly provide a corrective to this approach. Concentrating on Irish film exhibition and distribution as businesses, they offer an abundance of contextual detail on the Irish cinema industry. Their book will be a valuable resource for scholars working on Irish cinema – particularly those who have interests in such issues as the evolution of cinema ownership and management, local and national government regulation, and the church's attempts to control entertainment.

Despite these laudable features, the book has certain limitations. The authors intend that the book should offer a new perspective on 'issues around nationhood and the struggle for Irish self-determination, Ireland's relative marginal status, government policy, and internal and international economics, including taxation and funding' (14). However, it is debatable to what extent some of these topics are successfully pursued. The doubt arises in part because the authors provide merely a two-page introduction to the book as a whole, and it is mainly concerned with subjects other than the orientation of the reader. Chapters and even parts of the book lack individual introductions and conclusions, a fact – allied to the book's daunting size – that is likely to deter all but specialists. The latter, however, are likely to be disappointed by the lack of methodological discussion and engagement with studies of local exhibition in other parts of the world.

The first chapter epitomizes the strengths and weakness of the book as a whole. Covering the period from 1909–29, it begins – without preamble – with a discussion of the Volta, the Dublin picture house opened by the writer James Joyce and his Triestine partners, and ends with the coming of sound. This periodization is logical, but three points are worth noting. First, work disagreeing with the description of the Volta as 'Ireland's first full-time cinema' (15) is not referenced – an early indication that although the notes are extensive, they should be treated as selective rather than authoritative. Second, the discussion of the coming of sound seems remarkably brief, with little sense of it as a pivotal moment in Irish exhibition. Third, if nationhood and the struggle for self-determination are particularly important, it is unclear why the chapter division does not reflect this by ending in the early 1920s with the foundation of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The body of the chapter presents interesting discussions of such topics as cinema fires, the struggle for Sunday opening, and the experience of cinema-going – although a more consistent focus on audiences would have been welcome. The limited coverage of cinemas outside Dublin and Belfast is ameliorated to some extent by the cinema catalogue, which is quite informative, even though it relies too often on the British *Kinematograph Year Book* at the expense of the more reliable local newspapers. Indeed, the limited grasp of sources outside the cities can be seen in the description of the financial records of the Horgan Picture House in Youghal, Co. Cork, as the only such records available for the period (63), a statement that overlooks the documents relating to the Picture House, Cogry, Doagh, Co. Antrim, held by the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. Hopefully, the catalogue will soon be made available online, where it can more easily be amended and expanded.

Despite such quibbles, this is undoubtedly an important book for scholars with an interest in Irish cinema and those engaged in comparative work on regional film distribution and exhibition.

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