



Yvonne Galligan, Eilís Ward and Rick Wilford (eds). *Contesting Politics: Women in Ireland, North and South*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8133-3417-9.

With *Contesting Politics: Women in Ireland, North and South* Galligan, Ward, and Wilford provide a set of rich, informative and nuanced accounts of the participation of women in political arenas in that area. One of the major strengths of the book is the broad variety of political settings in which the presence, activities and absence of women are studied. The first chapter on feminism, politics, and postmodernism (by Carmel Roulston) sets the tone of the book emphasizing the differences among women's political experiences. Three chapters are on public policy and analyze: the treatment of women in the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland (by Alpha Connelly); the definition of gender roles in state policy regarding family law, employment, welfare, sexuality and reproduction in the Republic of Ireland since the Second World War (by Eileen Connolly); and the influence of the European Union (EU) on public policies that define the status of women in Ireland, North and South (by Frances Gardiner).

Six chapters study the participation of women in formal political settings and processes in the Republic and Northern Ireland including: parliament, local government, the European Parliament, and public appointments (by Yvonne Galligan and Rick Wilford); political parties (by Galligan and Wilford); nominated boards (by Deirdre Heenan and Anne Marie Gray); and institutions established with the mandate of enhancing women's positions (by Evelyn Mahon and Valerie Morgan). The chapter by Frada Donoghue and Paula Devine examines political attitudes regarding party affiliation, moral issues (abortion and divorce), defense, and the EU.

Women's political mobilization outside formal political settings is also studied. One chapter deals with women's networks in the Republic of Ireland (by Órla O'Donovan and Eilís Ward), and another chapter studies women's working for peace in Northern Ireland (by Bronagh Hinds). In addition, two historical chapters analyze women's activities in Parliament in the Republic of Ireland between 1923 and 1937 (by Mary Clancy), and women's roles in Nationalism in Ulster from the late eighteenth century until the partition of Ireland (by Margaret Ward).

The book illustrates the variety of perspectives from which the political role of women in Ireland may (and must) be studied, among others: feminist theory; political science; history; law and sociology. On the other hand, the book shows that scholars need to study women in Ireland in order to understand broader political events, such as the peace negotiations and agreements, or the Constitutional settlement in the 1920s. This applies to all political scientists and not only to those interested in gender.

In my view, the book has two shortcomings. It is more a compilation of articles than an edited volume. The introductory chapter is too short (two and a half pages). There is no concluding chapter. The editors do not tell the readers:

why the book is composed of the fourteen chapters included in it and not by other articles; what are the general question/s about women and politics that the chapters address with the help of the Irish case; what are the main findings of the chapters when they are read together and in relation to each other; and what are the lines for future research suggested by the chapters.

On the other hand, scholars who are not specialists in Ireland but interested in gender and politics (myself, for instance) may find some chapters not so inspiring, because these are very descriptive. These descriptive chapters do not raise general questions that they try to answer with the help of the Irish case. Therefore, in some chapters one notices a lost opportunity to have addressed some issues relevant to many other parts of the world, for instance, about women and nationalism. Not much is said in some parts of the book regarding this topic, aside from the obvious proposition that when nationalist matters receive so much attention, there is only small room for gender demands. Finally, readers may wonder (as I do) why the book does not contain chapters on types of women's political mobilization that many feminists usually do not celebrate, such as the participation in pro-life movements.

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