

*Irish Times 21/1/23*

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Orpen at War  
By Patricia O'Reilly  
Liffey Press, €22.95

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William Orpen was appointed official British war artist and went to France in 1917 to capture a visual record of the conflict. Blending fact and fiction, Patricia O'Reilly skilfully combines Orpen's French experiences with flashbacks to his Dublin childhood, art school, early loves, courtship of his wife and other aspects of his life, especially his philandering. Shocked at the conditions the ordinary soldiers had to endure, he sought to convey their experiences and celebrate their heroism, and came to despise the decisions of the authorities, secure behind their comfortable desks. Illustrated with many of his war works, the novel provides valuable insight into Orpen and his world.

**BRIAN MAYE**