

effectively dribbled to an end by 1890, little of substance had been achieved. So this turned out to be a rather feeble campaign, despite the exaggerated claims made by its initiators and also the predictable fears of some people in response to the damaging bombs.

Whelehan addresses his story in good detail. But I felt that his sharp analysis could have been further enriched had the book engaged with the literature on nationalism as such: its nature and causes and dynamics and contours. Even impressive books on Irish nationalism such as this one still tend, regrettably, to be written in apparent innocence of work on the wider phenomenon of which this Irish version forms such a vivid part. To reflect on bombers elsewhere is helpful. To explain the deeper dynamics and processes of nationalism itself, and to relate the Irish dynamiters to that understanding, would have made the study even more hard-hitting; it would also have made it of potential interest to a much wider audience.

Yet there is much that thoughtful readers can take from this Irish narrative. Indeed, given the regrettable amnesia evident in so much post-9/11 reflection on terrorism and political violence, it is valuable to have such a detailed analysis of one small but telling episode in urban violence in Irish history. For many themes familiar in later periods and in numerous other settings can be detected in this book. We see conspirators engaged in the ultimately futile killing of civilians, while their own ranks are deeply penetrated by state agents and spies ('In the 1880s, Irish organisations were riddled with secret agents' (p. 136)); we witness international fund-raising for violent campaigns, and also the terroristic pursuit of revenge through retaliatory violence; there is the bloodstained grabbing through violence of international media attention; readers hear of counter-productively harsh treatment of some prisoners by the state, as well as the expansion of police powers in response to anti-state violence; there are decisively low levels of public sympathy for the attacks, and considerable public panic sometimes generated by them; political enemies engage in caricatures and stereotypes of one another; and the political hopes of the faction-ridden bombers prove to have been illusory, as they are shown to have exaggerated the power of their violence to achieve desired outcomes. It is a resonant story.

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TOM CLARKE: LIFE, LIBERTY, REVOLUTION. By Gerard MacAtasney. Pp xvi, 306. Sallins, Portland: Merrion. 2013. €16.15.

DUBLIN 1916: THE FRENCH CONNECTION. By W. J. McCormack. Pp 248. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. 2012. €23.99.

In the rising tide of publications on the revolutionary period in Ireland the two books under review here are largely unique in subject matter and approach. Surprisingly, the book by Gerard MacAtasney is the first biography of Tom Clarke (arguably the most influential figure in the 1916 Rising) since the hagiographical attempt by the Frenchman Louis Leroux in 1936, and although the international context of the Rising has received increasing attention, Bill McCormack's work is the first comprehensive attempt to put the thinking of the 1916 leaders in a longer term international perspective.

MacAtasney's biography of Clarke which aims 'to understand the man as he was' consists of a 100-page biography and almost 200 pages of personal letters written by Clarke between 1893 and 1916. The nature of the available sources and probably also the personality of Clarke himself make it nevertheless exceedingly difficult to get close to the man. The biographical sketch remains largely factual and descriptive while the letters are not particularly revealing. The first available letter is written from prison where Clarke

was then in his tenth year of serving a life sentence for his involvement in a bombing campaign in England. By far most of these letters are to his wife Kathleen Daly-Clarke and are generally of a mundane nature. Although there is the odd statement which shows he sincerely loved his wife, Clarke comes across as a very practical and relatively unemotional man. He could be quite scathing about the rest of his family, describing his mother as 'simple minded and guileless as a child', while the more political letters reveal virtually nothing about his motivation or his activities. He was apparently neither a great thinker nor an ideologue. What he seems to have done best was bringing people together and organising activities in conjunction with leading men in the physical force movement in Ireland and the U.S.A., but even about this there is very little concrete evidence in the letters. Coming up to the Rising there are a few more concrete reference to events and people, but even then Patrick Pearse is only mentioned once in passing.

The letters do show Clarke's commitment to violent action. In this he seems to have been heavily influenced by the Fenian, John Daly, who visited Clarke's hometown of Dungannon when Clarke was young and initiated him into the I.R.B. Daly remained very central in Clarke's life. They always stayed in touch, Daly financially supported Clarke in many ventures, and Clarke married Daly's niece. MacAtasney claims Clarke had an unselfish motivation for his lifelong involvement in revolutionary politics and 'considered the struggle for Irish independence to be above personal glory or petty politicking'. In my mind what the letters do reveal is that revenge feelings stemming from Clarke's imprisonment were a strong motivating force, particularly in the few references to emotional outbursts, notably in response to the fact most shops in Dublin closed for the funeral of Edward VII in 1910, to the treatment of women and children by the police during the Dublin lockout, to the introduction of Redmond's nominees into the Irish Volunteers and Bulmer Hobson's role in that, and following the surrender in 1916 when he burst out crying.

Unfortunately MacAtasney makes few such attempts to get into the mind of Clarke. Although the material is indeed limited, something more could have been done here. There are for instance many interesting parallels between Clarke and Pearse's background. Both their fathers were Protestants who gave up their religion for their Catholic wife. Both were inspired by Irish history at an early age and both became teaching assistants in the school they were taught in. There are also indications the two influenced each other in their thinking, as there are parallels in their ideas about the likelihood a conservative government would suspend Home Rule and the natural martial spirit of the Irish. Instead of exploring such avenues however there are long diversions into the campaign outside prison for Clarke's release, and general descriptions of prison life.

A more creative and critical use of the sources would also have been helpful. On many occasions MacAtasney simply copies the unreferenced work by Leroux and a statement by Clarke's childhood friend, William Kelly. This leads him for instance to uncritically accept that the authorities offered Clarke early release from prison and a job in the civil service if he would give evidence against Charles Parnell. The author also fails to use police records, witness statements or contemporary newspapers to verify alleged events such as an attack on the police in which Clarke is claimed to have been involved early on or discussions at his trial. Such use of other sources would have strengthened his analysis. Here MacAtasney's admiration for Clarke shows through as he is critical of evidence supporting the British side, for instance regarding the treatment of prisoners. In a wider sense more use could have been made of the existing literature and source material. All this limits the scope of the book. It is very useful in collecting what is known and said about Clarke, but it offers few answers to the many questions raised by the presented material, most importantly why or how Clarke gained such a central role in the rising.

What the book on Clarke misses in fresh analysis and daring vistas, is available in abundance in the work on 1916 by the literary historian Bill McCormack. He sees the Easter Rising as a foundation myth for modern Ireland, which he argues was, by its very nature, never criticised or altered. In this book he wants to critically analyse the myth by

investigating the origins of the rising and its impact. In ten chapters dealing with the proclamation, foreign connections of various kinds, the association with Catholicism, commemoration and the 1939 British campaign of the I.R.A., he focuses in particular on the influence of right-wing French Catholic nationalism on the proclamation, and on the connections between the rising and right-wing German thinking after 1916.

The book is written in a very lively style, with many vivid evocative descriptions and inventive comparisons, like 'some modern foundation myths, like some classic foundation garments, draw attention to what lies behind', which make the book a pleasure to read. Despite this and the fact McCormack unearths many interesting details there are various problems with this book. Despite its liveliness, the writing-style makes the book less accessible to readers who might not be familiar with terms like 'ego-Christ-ology' or 'Shandyan digression' or fail to understand unexplained references to people and literary inventions. More problematic is his methodology. The free association or stream of consciousness technique, which McCormack employs here, is not really suitable for historical investigation. In one page he can jump from Ulysses to Cuchulainn and then to loyalism and 1916. This becomes somewhat questionable when he uses these loose associations to prove connections. One wonders what it tells us that in 1899 Douglas Hyde wrote about Saint Patrick's uneasiness over the ancient Fenian warriors and that he later resided in Phoenix Park where modern Fenians had murdered the chief secretary in the 1880s? And how significant is it that a French writer visited Dublin in 1881, or that someone with a French connection met Plunkett in a school? There is no attempt made to offset these happenings against left-wing French visits, or to show what the outcome or significance was of chance meetings.

McCormack claims to study a cultural milieu, but I wonder if one can write such a history through a study of literary magazines. Is it enough to show that French writers littered the pages of *The Irish Review* or that there were German advertisements in Irish journals? I would have liked to at least been told what percentage these constituted of all articles and advertisements. It would also have been useful for some exploration of the actual link between articles published in Irish journals and the ideas and actions of historical figures beyond a coexistence in time. Similar questions can be raised over almost every statement the book makes about connections and influences. Apart from a methodology that seems essentially based on conjecture, the actual analysis is at times also debatable. How can one, for instance, conclude solely from the use of the term 'children of Ireland' in the Proclamation that the signatories were not intent on giving up power to a democratically elected body after independence had been achieved even though that is explicitly stated in the Proclamation? His interpretation of the reference in the Proclamation to the Irish people having taken up arms six times in the last 300 years is also quite eccentric. Despite Pearse's admiration for Thomas Davis and other Young Irelanders, McCormack excludes without reason 1848 and the Nine Years War but, despite the use of the past tense in the Proclamation, includes 1916 itself as well as 1641 and 1688–91.

A final problematic aspect of this book is the way the author creates a direct link between 1916 and Nazi Germany. The fact that some 1916 veterans cooperated with Nazi Germany in the late 1930s is central in this. Further support for this supposition is evidenced by the fact the German exchange student at U.C.D. in 1937–8, Hans Franzen, worked on Irish constitutional law since 1919. McCormack uses this to create a connection between how Hitler came to power in 1933 to the way Sinn Féin came to power in 1916–19, despite the absence of empirical evidence for this link except for the brief cooperation during the aborted 1939 I.R.A. campaign. This becomes a bit incredulous if an I.R.A. document written in the late 1930s in which social reform in the vein of Connolly and Larkin is called for, is used to assert that the I.R.A. was fascist. This tenuous assertion can only be explained if there is an underlying agenda in the book to place the I.R.A. among extreme right-wing movements. To his credit McCormack is not shy about this as he clearly nails his political colours to the mast in his introduction in which he discusses his anti-militarist and anti-republican outlook.

This is, thus, in many ways a stimulating but irritating book. Its first conclusion that 1916 can only be understood in an international context and displayed affinities with political and cultural movements abroad is not entirely new but certainly correct. His second conclusion, however, that upholding the Proclamation after 1916 entrenched right-radical ideology, is not convincing and certainly not proven by this book, which could do with a serious methodological overhaul possibly by including a look at transfer studies. MacAtasney's book is lacking in analysis while McCormack analyses too freely. Both, however, suffer under a certain bias. It would be good if historians of the revolutionary period could find a happy medium.

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INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS: A HISTORY. Edited by Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter. Pp xvi, 216. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2012. €45.

What can historians hope to learn from a collection of essays about a single newspaper title? Those interested in political history might want to hear something about the news and comments that paper published about particular stories and issues. On its own, however, that would be a rather impoverished set of expectations. Those seeking a deeper understanding of the underlying structures of politics and power, and the role of newspapers in forming, shaping and disrupting those structures, would want to hear about behind-the-scenes interactions among politicians, civil servants and newspapermen. They would also want to learn something of the role of the newspaper in framing the terms of political debate and setting the parameters for normal and acceptable political discourse, and to find out whether the newspaper discharged these functions in a consistent way over time. Historians of the political role of the press might also want to learn of the commercial side of the paper's operations: accounts of the cut-and-thrust of circulation battles with rivals, of the underlying health of the paper as a business, would certainly be of some interest, but would need to be accompanied by a sense of how the business interests of the newspaper influenced and shaped its political role, consciously or otherwise. Meanwhile, social historians might want to know something of the newspaper's staff, with their diverse backgrounds and work practices and their common rituals and prejudices. Social historians would probably also seek an understanding of the role of the newspaper in shaping the social order of which it was a part, of how it reflected but also reordered divisions of region, class, gender and ethnicity, of how it actively constructed (rather than simply commented on) the imagined identities of its readership. Cultural historians might share many of the same interests, and also seek to discern some of the discordant voices that found their echo in the newspaper's pages. Cultural historians might want a 'history from below', something for which newspapers can sometimes (if not always) provide us with excellent source material.

Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter seek to do some of these things in their edited collection of essays on the history of the *Irish Independent*. The focus is largely on the political realm, and many of the contributors to the collection focus on telling us what the newspaper's journalists and editors said about key issues in Irish national politics. This fits into a broader tradition of writing newspaper history as the story of the intersection of journalism and high politics, and into a particular Irish tradition of writing newspaper history as part of the narrative of the nationalist project. The book thus contains several richly-detailed accounts of the role of the *Independent* in Irish national and nationalist politics from the late-nineteenth to the late-twentieth century, with the emphasis on what the paper said, what its proprietors and editors did or thought, and how they interacted with influential Irish politicians. Aoife Whelan's essay takes us into a consideration of the