Journal of British Studies 56 (January 2017): 177–222.

Book Reviews

Post-1800

KIERAN ALLEN. *1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition*. London: Pluto Press, 2016. Pp. vi + 234. $80.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.148

RICHARD S. GRAYSON and FEARGHAL MCGARRY, eds. *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xiii + 274. $99.99 (cloth).

Like other parts of the world, countries in Europe have witnessed their own memory phenomenon of late. In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, for example, thousands of events have been held to mark the centenary anniversaries of two of the most influential events of modern Irish (and British) history: World War 1 and the 1916 Rising. These commemorations have been enriched by the publication of newspaper columns, magazine and journal articles, collections of essays, and monographs. Among these are *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, edited by Richard S. Grayson and Fearghal McGarry, and *1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition*, by Kieran Allen, both of which offer wide-ranging perspectives on the complexities and diversities of Irish history and memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Grayson and McGarry's *Remembering 1916*, which originated from the Wiles Colloquium held at Queen's University Belfast in 2015, is a collection of interdisciplinary essays that investigate the way that two seminal events in 1916—the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme—have been memorialized over the course of one hundred years in the island of Ireland and beyond. The contributors to part one of the collection, "Memory and Commemoration," set the context by examining general theories and practices of memory. Guy Beiner introduces two concepts: "prememory," which can be used to analyze the expectancies of those committed to predetermine how history is remembered; and "postmemory," which can illuminate the apprehensions of self-appointed guardians of memory over its changing nature. Dominic Bryan examines how the past is utilized for the justification of the political present

and the imagined future, while Roisín Higgins outlines the influences that territory, state, and economy have had on commemorations of the Easter Rising. The contributors to "Narratives," part two, primarily focus on the ways that stories of 1916 have evolved over space and through time. David Fitzpatrick looks at "instant" histories of Ulster Day (28 September 1912), Easter Week 1916, and Anti-Conscription Day (21 April 1918), and highlights how both actors and observers experienced contemporary happenings "as if they were living out history and in history" (65). In examining the remembrance of the Abbey Theatre's 1916 rebels, McGarry looks at the impact of kinship networks and changing political contexts on their own stories of insurrection. Richard Grayson uses newspapers, medal rolls, and pension records to investigate the service rendered in World War I by 138 West Belfast members of the Ulster Volunteer Force, while David Brundage outlines the array of memory practices that characterized the remembrance of the 1916 Rising in the United States from 1919 to 1963.

The contributors to part three, "Literary and Material Cultures," examine the association between remembrance and its mediation. Heather Roberts shows how the excitement around the centenary of the 1798 Rebellion played a role in the politicization of the revolutionary generation of 1916, while Nicholas Allen explores the impact of opinions of the Rising and World War I on literature, theater, and art. William Blair uses the lens of museology to scrutinize the Ulster Museum's approach to the collection and interpretation of World War I and the Rising, and recent efforts to confront existing myths in pursuit of more inclusive narratives. The museum's approach to 1916, he argues, has shifted "from passive to active," with the peace process resulting in greater efforts "to contribute to the public policy agendas of 'shared history' and 'shared future'" (203). The contributors to part four, "Troubled Memories," look at how memories of 1916 were affected by the Northern Ireland Troubles and then reshaped by the peace process. Margaret O'Callaghan analyzes how the remembrance of 1916 was reframed by the Irish state at the height of the Troubles in the 1970s. In an attempt to change people's attitudes towards physical-force republicanism, there emerged "a very low-key commemorative acknowledgement of 1916" (208), which persisted until the mid-2000s. The politics of commemorating the Rising since 1994 is addressed by Kevin Bean, who examines how memory of Easter Week continued to provide an arena for deliberations about the validity of contemporary political projects and the degree to which 1916 ideals had been accomplished. The collection ends with Jonathan Bell's ethnographic examination of the commemoration of the Somme by loyalists. He argues that "an understanding of its role in a communal politics defined by chronic uncertainty and discord may … be crucial in the pursuit of lasting peace" (258). In sum, the contributors to part three—indeed the whole volume—address most persistently the way in which memory can be mobilized for political projects of the present.

One of the key ideas in *Remembering 1916* is the enduring significance of 1916 in Irish politics, society, and culture. This has been the case in the Republic of Ireland in particular, where memory of the Rising lingers strongly. As Roisín Higgins makes clear, the "anticipation surrounding the centenary [in 2016] … suggests that a great deal is expected still, emotionally and politically, of the Easter Rising" (61). Such anticipations are evident throughout Allen's *1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition*. Allen, a sociologist, focuses on the uneasy relationship between Irish socialism and republicanism over the course of a century. He also endeavors to reimagine the future by suggesting a political use for memory. "One hundred years after the Rising," writes Allen, "there is much reflection on where Irish society is going. … Many want to honour the rebels but they also question how the current Irish state matches up to their ideals" (vi). Simply put, he argues that the 1916 Rising resulted in a revolutionary tradition that still haunts the political establishment. The austerity and privatization policies employed by the Irish state in recent years, he feels, sit uneasily with the radical vision embodied in the writings of James Connolly, who was one of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation. Connolly, he notes, "lived and breathed revolutionary socialism and Marxist politics"

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2016.148 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(49), but his "tragedy was that he died without having constructed a solid party that could carry through his distinctive revolutionary socialist legacy" (59). The "ideals of the Irish revolution" (104), argues Allen, were shattered after the Free State forces emerged as victorious in the Civil War of 1922–23. This marked the beginning of "a counter-revolution" (104), and the efforts to restore law and order resulted in "an order where the poor knew their place and where there would be no more talk of … better conditions for workers" (101). In recent times, however, an "Irish revolt against austerity" (168) has manifested itself in the form of the Right to Water Campaign. This has created "a space … for a more radical left" (176), leading to the possibility of reconnecting with a revolutionary tradition stretching back to Connolly. "The coincidence of the rise of rebellion in modern Ireland with the commemoration of the 1916 Rising," states Allen, "creates favourable conditions for ensuring that this framework has a distinct anti-capitalist hue" (187).

The controversial *Ireland Inspires 2016* promotional video, which the Irish government released in late 2014 (but quickly withdrew after it sidelined the signatories of the Proclamation), sets the scene for Allen's criticism of the "current political elite" (1). Although they "owe their positions to the series of violent events that followed the Rising," he feels that "they do not like to be reminded of how their ancestors came to power through a revolution"—hence the focus on a "heritage-linked tourist opportunity," where "earth-shaking events are supposed to belong to a distant past and need to be packaged up purely for cultural memories" (1–2). There is nothing uniquely Irish, of course, about this type of approach to commemoration. With the passage of time, history can find expression in multifaceted forms of heritage. And in post-conflict situations, cultural memory can sometimes assist in peace and reconciliation efforts involving former foes, as has happened with commemorations of World War II in Europe. However, Allen's aversion to heritage tourism reflects a concern often aired by academics, namely that overcommercialization or dumbing down can obscure and belittle historical truths. Incidentally, this issue is briefly touched upon by David Fitzpatrick in his contribution to *Remembering 1916*, when he asserts that commemorations can result in "soft, easily digestible history" that avoids "hard questions" (65).

At another point in *1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition*, Allen is critical of the Irish government's stance on geopolitics. "The current 26-county state," he laments, "accepts partition and to justify this stance, promotes the notion of one island with 'two cultures,'" namely "republican and Orange" (54). Rather problematic, however, is the sweeping assertion that "all the talk of reconciliation" stems from concerns about a backlash from "many angry people suffering from the policies of austerity": "If the population became too fired up by the 1916 commemorations," warns Allen, "some malcontents might even be tempted to do a repeat today" (2). While it is true that the Fine Gael/Labor Coalition government, like earlier governments, was careful not to allow republican dissidents to highjack the 1916 commemorations at Easter 2016, it should not be forgotten that reconciliatory approaches to memory long predate the era of austerity that followed the crash in Ireland's Celtic Tiger economy in 2008. In 1965, for example, the British government made a gesture of goodwill by repatriating the mortal remains of Sir Roger Casement (hung in Pentonville Prison on 3 August 1916) from London to Dublin. In the following year, which marked the Golden Jubilee anniversary of the Rising, the diplomatic relationship between Britain and Ireland was also bolstered by the actions of the Imperial War Museum in London. It returned the tattered "Irish Republic" flag that had flown over the General Post Office in Dublin during Easter Week 1916, and this was subsequently included in an exhibition that was launched at the National Museum of Ireland on 12 April 1966. Three days later, during the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at Boland's Mill in Dublin, 1916 veteran and Irish president Éamon de Valera had a cordial meeting with Captain Edo John Hitzen, formerly of the Lincolnshire Regiment, to whom he had surrendered during the Rising. While Anglo-Irish relations deteriorated in the early 1970s as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles, further acts of

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reconciliation occurred after the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998. On 11 November 1998, the Peace Tower, symbolizing reconciliation, was unveiled at the Island of Ireland Peace Park at Messines, Belgium by the president of Ireland, Mary McAleese, in the presence of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. The tower is dedicated "to the memory of all those from the island of Ireland who fought and died in the First World War." Other reconciliatory occasions included Queen Elizabeth's historic visit to Ireland in May 2011 and President Michael D. Higgins's state visit to the United Kingdom in April 2014—the first by an Irish Head of State.

Both Grayson and McGarry's *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, and Allen's *1916: Ireland's Revolutionary Tradition* offer a significant and timely intervention at a time when the Republic of Ireland in particular is looking both backwards and forwards in time—remembering the historic events of Easter Week 1916, reflecting upon the country's achievements and failures since then, and reimagining the future for coming generations. Allen's thought-provoking commentary will no doubt be cited many times by those looking for evidence of radical left-wing political reflections in 2016—ones that have certainly energized debates on the country's failures since 1916. "The best way to commemorate the 1916 Rising," he argues, "would be a new revolt to change Ireland—so that it will be, in reality, 'cherishing all the children of the nation equally'" (196). On the other hand, Grayson and McGarry's collection will be obligatory reading for scholars venturing into the burgeoning field of Irish memory studies. While a skepticism about the links between history and commemoration is evident in certain parts of their collection, Grayson and McGarry openly acknowledge that historians have shifted "from a felt requirement to debunk popular memory to taking it seriously as a subject worthy of study in its own right" (8).

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Sarah Amato. *Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. Pp. 306. $65.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2016.149

Beastly Possessions: Animals in Victorian Consumer Culture begins with a series of vignettes: a taxidermist in Hampshire examines the contents of his bird trap; a Londoner reads the notice of Jim, a missing cat, in the newspaper; a terrier naps on a chair "upholstered with the skin of a baby giraffe" (3); the keepers at the London Zoological Gardens prepare animals for transport to India; Marion in Market Deeping writes an advertisement bartering her dog Flo for a sewing machine; and, lastly, a suffragette receives a postcard illustrated with a cat. This vivid opening not only announces the focus on animals as objects of exchange but also sets the tone of Sarah Amato's highly engaging book, filled with fascinating examples of animals and their representations in Victorian consumer culture.

Amato establishes that the commodification of animals in pet keeping, zoos, and taxidermy was pervasive in England between 1820 and 1914 and that "Human-animal encounters became forums for exploring and expressing Victorian social hierarchies and intersections of class, gender, and race, as well as human and animal" (7). The conspicuous consumption of nonhuman animals bestowed rank on the human ones, and while this argument has been made before in terms of the upper and middle classes, Amato sheds new light on the discussion by including the working class. Furthermore, rather than subsuming the diversity of species within the category of the "animal," Amato is attuned to the gendering, classing, and racializing of specific species. For example, there is a chapter that focuses on the gendered implications