

Liberals exerted only a negligible influence over Asquith. Doherty goes further still, arguing that it was Redmond's 'potential for splitting the Liberal Party, even more than the possible defection of the seventy-odd Irish nationalist votes in the House of Commons, that constrained Asquith's freedom of action' (p. 9).

The focus on Redmond and his attempts to exploit disaffection in Liberal ranks, and to manage the same destabilising phenomenon in his own party, dominates Doherty's narrative. It produces some of the book's more interesting interpretations, such as its presentation of the main party conflict in this period not as Liberal versus Conservative, but as the Irish Parliamentary Party versus the Liberal and Conservative front benches, particularly on the question of the special treatment to be given to Ulster. Not subject to the Liberal whip, Doherty contends that Redmond was often cast as the spokesman for backbench Liberal discontent, especially among the party's old radicals, though he is careful to acknowledge that the Irish leader's liberal credentials were doubtful across a range of issues, from women's franchise to free trade. But Doherty's determined defence of Redmond's motives and tactics in securing *any* home rule bill from the Liberal government also leads to less convincing detours and counterfactuals, such as the great weight placed on the potential for Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism to reach an agreement on temporary exclusion, but for the outbreak of the First World War. Moreover, the detail given to the internal dynamics of Irish nationalism is not matched by the book's treatment of the Liberal side of the equation. The latter is arguably its most original contribution, yet Liberal opinion is largely gleaned from a select number of periodicals, pamphlets and the correspondence of several contemporary figures, not all of them British Liberals. As a result, there is comparatively little on the actions and views of Liberal parliamentarians of all hues, and the emphasis on vertical tensions in the party is at the expense of examining its horizontal divisions and strains. In explaining and justifying Redmond's tactics in dealing with British liberalism, there is also the danger of overemphasising the Liberal Party's internal problems. The requirements of statecraft inevitably arouse the concern of backbenchers and out-of-doors supporters of whichever party is in government. This dynamic was especially noticeable in the tense circumstances of Edwardian politics, when many ordinary Liberals and Conservatives, let alone Irish Nationalists and Ulster Unionists, tended to equate 'democracy' with their respective partisan outlooks and agendas.

The value of *Irish liberty, British democracy* is in drawing attention to Redmond's attempts to exploit this situation for his own ends, and how this became caught up in his struggle to retain control over Irish nationalism and at the same time deal effectively with the Ulster question. Doherty addresses the various contending forces on the ground that buttressed and battered Redmond, Asquith and even Carson, and as such his account is not a traditional high politics approach to the period. Yet, he persists in viewing these phenomena from the Olympian perspective of the party leaders and concludes the book with the hope that the 'foregoing analysis in no way downplays the perfidy of Asquith and his colleagues, nor the root cause of the acute crisis in 1914: British Conservatives' cynical exploitation of Ulster as an electoral card in the game of domestic politics' (p. 236). It is a curious note on which to end a book that opens with the argument that Redmond should not be seen as a passive victim of British duplicity or as a foredoomed political leader in the unfolding crisis that led ultimately to the growth of advanced nationalism and the partition of Ireland.

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IRISH WOMEN AND THE GREAT WAR. By Fionnuala Walsh. Pp 254. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2020. £75.

In the National Library of Ireland, there is a folder of letters between John McDonnell, a lieutenant-colonel in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and his wife, Senta, at home on their

farm in County Meath. John spent most of the war in Queenstown (now Cobh), but in August 1918 was posted to the front. His letters to his wife turned darker after that, describing nights of ‘aeroplanes, bombardments and shells’, and ‘2 nights [spent] choking the Boche’. There is only one letter from Senta: the last she wrote to her husband, returned to her after his death at Ypres in August 1918. It describes her pride at running the farm and keeping the household going. We learn later that Senta tried and failed to have her husband’s body repatriated to Ireland, that she remarried, and that her only son from her first marriage, Robert, was killed while serving in the British Army in the Second World War. Fionnuala Walsh’s comprehensive new study of Irish women during the Great War allows the reader to contextualise the sparse account we have of Senta McDonnell’s experience.

The historiography of the Great War in Ireland is now well-developed. From the pioneering work of David Fitzpatrick, Terence Denman and Keith Jeffery, we have a flourishing field, with important edited collections by Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, John Horne, and Elaine Farrell and Jennifer Redmond, alongside major monographs by Richard Grayson and Niamh Gallagher. To this list we can now add Walsh’s work, a landmark contribution which insists that Ireland’s wartime experience — which often has been dominated by the stories of soldiers and regiments — cannot be understood without the story of Irish women on the home front. In this regard, Walsh is drawing on parallel historiographies — in particular that of British women’s history — but she is careful throughout to emphasise where the Irish and the British history part ways. She also is sensitive to the divergent experiences of women on the island of Ireland, and argues convincingly that the war served to entrench rather than patch over (even momentarily) the already deep political divisions. Crucially, she dates this entrenchment to before the Rising, although the rebellion served to deepen it. The war was a vehicle of radicalisation for Irish women of all political hues: those for or against the war effort in its early stages; the ‘separation women’ vigorously defending their husbands’ interests; the female workers who unionised to unprecedented extents; the suffragists who grappled with the challenges the war posed to their campaign; and, later, the women who mobilised, marched and protested against the threat of conscription. The penultimate chapter, ‘Politicisation’, is perhaps familiar territory, well-charted by Diane Urquhart and Senia Pašeta, among others; but Walsh shows how ‘the state’ (in this case, the British state) had become visible and present in women’s lives to an unprecedented extent, through enlistment campaigns, through welfare provision and charitable activities to support the war effort. As such, when radicalisation came, there was more to kick against.

Walsh’s research is deep and wide, drawing on an impressive array of sources across twenty-two archives. Successive chapters blend statistical analysis with personal testimonies, private documents, print culture and official sources. Class is a welcome theme throughout, and Walsh is careful to disaggregate women’s experiences of the war along intersectional lines: class combined with age, location, religion and marital status to constitute different strands of their great common thread. Women’s work during the war is one of the areas where the Irish story diverges somewhat from its British counterpart: Irish women workers were more likely to be unemployed or work reduced hours, there were fewer working opportunities to begin with, due to the lack of conscription in Ireland and the hiatus on emigration, and parts of Irish industry never recovered from severe economic depression at the outset of the war. As such, the notion that the war might offer a path for Irish women to enter the workforce on a long-term basis proved illusory. Nonetheless, women like Senta McDonnell and other women in the agricultural sector enjoyed relative prosperity, and thrived on the opportunities for household and farm management that might otherwise have been unavailable. A suggestive central chapter tackles the question of social morality, and here Walsh moves fluently between separation women, drunkenness, women’s patrols and ‘immoral’ sexual activity to paint a convincing picture of a wartime moral panic centred, unsurprisingly, on women’s bodies and women’s behaviour.

One minor cavil might be that the conclusion is a little too timid, drawing substantially on secondary literature. A more assertive closing section would have been welcome, making clear that this is a major step forward in Irish women’s history and the history of the Great

War in Ireland. In its detail, its scope, its adeptness in handling diverse sources, it is a welcome and major contribution.

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AMERICA AND THE MAKING OF AN INDEPENDENT IRELAND: A HISTORY. By Francis M. Carroll. Pp 312. New York: New York University Press. 2021. US\$35.

The historian, Nicholas Mansergh, writing in 1965, was of the view that American aid to Ireland's independence struggle was not 'decisive'. Now, however, it is widely accepted in the scholarly and popular literature that it is impossible to imagine Irish independence without the aid of Irish America. Francis Carroll, having examined the archival record, news media and the ever-growing secondary literature, over many decades, supports this consensus arguing that the United States 'played a dynamic part in Ireland's emergence as an independent state' (p. xii). Of course, this ground has been covered in numerous books and articles. In the 1950s, Charles Tansil in his study of Irish-American relations of this period, made a polemical attack on Woodrow Wilson for his pro-British bias and suggested the electoral disaster which his Democratic Party suffered in 1920 was down to an angry Irish-America. Since then, more measured tomes, notably those by Alan J. Ward (1969) and Bernadette Whelan (2015), have emerged. Professor Carroll wrote in the 1970s on American public opinion and the Irish question during the independence struggle and earlier versions of some of the chapters here have appeared as scholarly articles.

The author makes a detailed, if somewhat familiar, case for the importance of America to Irish freedom in the period between 1916 and 1928. He asserts that Irish America, disillusioned by the slow progress of home rule, the apparent success of Ulster's militant opposition and John Redmond's support for the British war effort had broken with the Irish Parliamentary Party by 1915. The path was open to the militants exemplified by John Devoy and the previously fringe Clan na Gael to win the hearts and minds of Irish America and be a lynchpin of the Easter Rising. The Clan were able to supply \$100,000 to the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Volunteers prior to 1916. Five of the seven signatories of the proclamation had spent time in the United States (though it is not made clear whether this radicalised them). American public opinion, including some of the Irish there, was initially critical of the Rising, as a betrayal of Redmond. As in Ireland, however, the executions of the leaders swung opinion 180 degrees. But Irish opposition to entering the war and the anti-Wilson attitude of more militant Irish Americans alienated major political figures, including the re-elected president and Theodore Roosevelt, who were both sympathetic to Ireland. Nonetheless, Wilson and other senior American officials pressed Britain to take a more constructive line over Irish self-rule.

Efforts by the British government during 1917 to resolve the Irish question, including the 1917 Irish Convention, arguably were driven by the need to remove the grit of Ireland from the smooth running of the war time alliance. But, crucially, advice on conscription was ignored, showing there were limitations to American influence. Carroll argues, as have others, that the ignoring of the American Commission on Irish Independence by Britain and the United States turned Irish-American opinion against both Wilson and the Versailles Treaty. One of Wilson's advisers would later claim it was the failure to solve the Irish question that more 'than anything else ... was responsible for the Treaty's rejection' (p. 62). Later in 1920–21, the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland by exposing 'the cruel and inexcusable actions' of the British in Ireland 'made a significant contribution to ending the Anglo-Irish War' (p. 110), as did the work of the American Committee for Relief in Ireland which 'significantly influenced the British government's decision to open talks with the Irish' (p. 140).