

IRELAND'S EXILED CHILDREN: AMERICA AND THE EASTER RISING. By Robert Schmuhl. Pp 232. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. £19.99.

It is encouraging to note that several of the volumes published in conjunction with the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising have focused on the American contribution. After all, Thomas Clarke and James Connolly had lived in the United States, and Patrick Pearse, Sean Mac Diarmada, and Joseph Plunkett had travelled to America to raise money or on Irish Republican Brotherhood business, and the Proclamation itself singled out the Irish community in the U.S. as Ireland's 'exiled children in America'. Robert Schmuhl has taken that phrase for the title of his book and he explains the American part in the Rising through the work of four figures: John Devoy, Woodrow Wilson, Joyce Kilmer, and Eamon de Valera, his thesis being 'the roots of the Rising grew in U.S. soil and ... the American reaction proved critical to determining its consequences' (p. 2).

John Devoy is an obvious choice—the 'greatest' of the Fenians, arrested and imprisoned in 1866, spent most of the rest of his life in the U.S., immersed in the intrigue of Irish revolutionary organisations, and eventually editing the strongest Irish nationalist newspaper. Schmuhl shows Devoy had the determination to hold to his revolutionary principles despite the apparent triumph of the home rule movement from 1910 to 1914. He was prepared to support the Irish Volunteers through the confusing months of 1914 when John Redmond appeared to take control of the organisation and steer it toward enlistment in the British Army. In those very months Devoy was the link to Clarke and the I.R.B. in Dublin, to German Ambassador von Bernstorff in New York, and to Sir Roger Casement in Berlin. Devoy and the Clan na Gael were the source of funds for both the I.R.B. and Casement leading up to the Rising, as well as the force behind the founding of the Friends of Irish Freedom in March of 1916, which became the leading Irish nationalist organisation in the U.S. One of Devoy's many obstacles, however, was President Woodrow Wilson, a surprising choice for Schmuhl's subject figures. Wilson, however, had good Irish lineage – his father's parents came from Ulster – but Schmuhl sees him as indifferent to Irish nationalism. Wilson publicly supported home rule in 1910, and when the U.S. entered the war in 1917 he did push the British government to resolve the Irish question – the unsuccessful Irish Convention of 1917–18 being the response. Could Wilson have extracted concessions from the British at the Paris Peace Conference that would have satisfied Irish claims? This question seems more problematical. Schmuhl regards Wilson as denying his Irish heritage; Devoy saw President Wilson as much an enemy as any British prime minister.

Another surprising figure upon whom to base an analysis of the American role in the Rising is Joyce Kilmer, who adopted a romantic Irish identity, but who had no family link. Kilmer is remembered today for his poem, 'Trees', which is now parodied if mentioned at all. Schmuhl gives Kilmer much more credit as a poet and a journalist, and his focus on Kilmer provides an insightful analysis of U.S. newspaper coverage, which the author regards as decisive in shaping American opinion on the Rising and Irish self-government. The *New York Times* of 29 April ran eight articles about the Rising on the front page (out of a total of eighteen articles) and eight more on the second page, and the paper carried front-page Irish articles until 8 May. The editorial policy of the *New York Times* was critical of the Rising, but it printed sympathetic articles by Kilmer (and Padraic Colum), especially in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* where the leaders of the Rising were praised. Indeed, Kilmer wrote a touching article about Cumann na mBan survivor Moira Regan, which when printed in Irish newspapers led to their suppression (reprinted in the appendix to Schmuhl's book).

Eamon de Valera is almost unavoidable in any discussion of twentieth-century Ireland, but he too can hardly be thought of as Irish-American. Much of this chapter traces the extensive debate over whether de Valera's survival after 1916 was determined by the fact that he enjoyed some form of protection because of his U.S. birth, or whether the hostile reaction to the earlier executions had led to pressure from the British government to end them, or whether he was too far down the queue of participants.

The documentary evidence remains ambiguous, but Schmuhl concludes that de Valera's own specific statement in 1969 ruled out any American influence in the decision not to execute him. Is this matter of any historical significance? Schmuhl asserts that de Valera's American birth gave him a valuable mythic link to the U.S. and Irish America, which was of great use in his repeated visits seeking help and financing in building the Ireland de Valera envisioned. 'One conclusion', Schmuhl states, 'is that de Valera himself wanted to maintain an aura of mystery and that his often-asserted life-saving association with America strengthened him in his political and governmental pursuits' (p. 138). By the time of his 1969 statements denying any American influence in his survival, de Valera could let go. Intrigue, romance, denial, and myth are the terms Schmuhl uses to describe the American links to the Rising and the struggle for Irish self-government his four subjects characterised. This is a valuable innovative study.

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THE I.R.A. IN BRITAIN, 1919–1923: 'IN THE HEART OF ENEMY LINES'. By Gerard Noonan. Pp xiv, 371. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2014.

'The war of independence and the civil war were ultimately won and lost by the actions of actors in Ireland, but republicans in Britain played a noteworthy role in the drama' (p. 328). This is the central conclusion of Gerard Noonan's Ph.D.-based study of the 1919–23 activities of militant Irish republicans in Britain. The book is well-researched and it offers much impressive detail. Its undramatic conclusion should not be held against it, and the study valuably complements the work of scholars such as Peter Hart and Iain Patterson on this subject.

Dr Noonan concentrates mainly on the Irish Republican Army (I.R.A.), although the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.), Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna Eireann also feature appropriately. Physical force Irish republicanism in Britain during this period was, unsurprisingly, greatly sustained by nineteenth-century Irish immigrants. In relation to these people, the book draws well on archival sources and on contemporary newspapers, as it traces what Irish republican activists did in Britain and how the authorities there responded to them. The tale echoes a familiar narrative, but it does so on the basis of much direct quotation from the players themselves, and it is helpful in that respect.

The numbers of people involved were not large: 'the total membership of the I.R.A. in Britain in the autumn of 1921 was somewhere between 2,282 and 2,582' (p. 52). Michael Collins emerges as vital for these people ('For republicans in Britain, Collins was the most important figure in the leadership in Dublin' (p. 40)). And – as is clear from other studies of the Irish revolution – the initiative of a small number of individuals proved to be decisive in terms of what was and was not achieved.

Echoing other studies also is Noonan's judgement that family background, and the influence of friendship groups, could play a major role in leading people towards republican commitment. Once they were indeed committed, what many of these people focused on in practice was gun-running. Indeed, the author concludes that, 'Gun-running – the acquisition and smuggling of weapons to Ireland – was the most important activity of republicans in Britain' (p. 133) during these years. They also carried out some violent operations themselves, of course (often motivated in doing so by revenge). And they experienced the fractious vicissitudes of the civil war split as did their comrades in Ireland: 'The civil war saw men and women who had seen action in the republican movement in Britain during the war of independence serve on both sides, in Britain and in Ireland' (p. 262).