AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND, 1790–1913: A HISTORY OF THE US CONSULAR SERVICE. By Bernadette Whelan. Pp xvi, 299. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2010. £60.

Bernadette Whelan is one of the most foremost historians of U.S.–Irish relations, and with this book she extends her coverage of that relationship back to the end of the eighteenth century. *American government in Ireland* is a detailed study of the work of U.S. consular agents and their roles as agents of policy, reporters on conditions in Ireland, and facilitators for the thousands of Irish and Americans who had business to conduct with or through the American government. It would be easy to assume that a detailed study on a topic such as this might not have much to add to broader historical questions about the U.S.–Irish relationship, but Whelan brings to light new and important insights, including how a set of outsiders viewed Ireland in the nineteenth century, and the beginnings of several long-lasting elements in U.S.–Irish relations.

Whelan begins her analysis of the consular service by exploring who was appointed and for what purposes they applied. For the most part, these consuls were not professionals; they were underpaid and used the benefits of the office to augment their official salary. In spite of the consuls' patchy credentials and side businesses, Whelan argues that their work – certifying exports and reporting on commercial opportunities for American businesses – helped form the basis of a long era of trade between the two countries later. Another important aspect of their work involved representing the interests of U.S. seamen, and Whelan documents how U.S. consuls in Ireland navigated the troubled diplomatic relationship between Britain and the U.S., particularly concerning the issue of impressment. Irish issues and concerns intruded into Anglo-American diplomacy well into the twentieth century, and Whelan's analysis adroitly explores this first set of complications.

The book's most important contribution is its analysis of consular work during the American Civil War and during the British–American disputes concerning the post-war efforts of the American-inspired Fenian movement. U.S. consuls in Ireland worked hard to thwart Confederate government efforts to use Ireland as a base for increasing its naval capabilities. At the same time, consuls aided the Union effort by encouraging emigration, allowing for military recruits and factory labourers to reach the U.S. After the war, Whelan shows how the consuls worked hard to secure pensions and back-pay for Irish relatives of fallen soldiers. When many of the surviving soldiers, most of whom were now U.S. citizens, returned to Ireland, the British authorities arrested them in an effort to avert a Fenian uprising. The efforts by U.S. consuls to secure the rights of these prisoners helped lead to the Motley–Clarendon Convention of 1870 that granted American citizens in the British Empire the rights that British citizens would have in the U.S.

Unfortunately, the details of the research can occasionally be overwhelming, and there are times when the reader is wondering whether the arguments could have been made just as strongly without the level of minutiae supplied. For example, we learn that William Knox, the first U.S. consul in Dublin, was born in Boston at 247 Federal Street (p. 4); the *Peterhoff*, a ship carrying cotton to Liverpool during the American Civil War, was owned by L. Pearson of Hull, England (p. 116); Daniel Conway of 216 East 66th Street died on the *City of Chicago* in Queenstown, and the consul's office helped with his personal effects, which included three linen shirts, rosary beads, and one linen waistcoat (p. 231). There are far too many other instances when an unnecessary level of detail is provided.

That minor consideration aside, the book breaks new ground in aspects of American diplomatic history, American Civil War history, Irish emigration history, and the history of the wider U.S.–Irish–British relationship.

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