

IRELAND 1916: REVOLUTIONARY GENERATIONS.

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John Redmond. The National Leader, vol. 2, by DERMOT MELEADY, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2014, x, 494 pp., ISBN 978-1-908928-31-3.

The Irish Revolution 1912-23 Tyrone, by FERGAL McCLUSKEY, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2014, xv, 179 pp., ISBN 9-781846-823008.

Vivid Faces. The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923, by R.F.FOSTER, London, Allen Lane, 2014, xxiii, 464 pp., ISBN 978-1-846-14463-9.

Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918, by SENIA PAŠETA, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, viii, 292 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-04774-7.

Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War, by GEMMA CLARK, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, xx, 229 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-03689-5.

I.

The recent State funeral of Thomas Kent in the churchyard of a North Cork village was a moving event. Yet, the crowds were not grieving a recent loss: Kent had been dead for 99 years: he was shot as a rebel in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising. Almost on the eve of the centenary of the rebellion, his body was coming home, and so was the memory of the Revolution, whose local, almost intimate dimension and its national and international significance were expressed by the unusual congregation at the Mass, combining family members and the village community, with ambassadors, legates, statesmen and the President of the Republic. The event should be celebrated, not only because the Ireland he dreamed of has become a proven success, a democracy which stands up for 'humanity, dignity and hope', as the Taoiseach Enda Kenny said in his funeral oration.¹ But also because all nations need from time to time to reaffirm the values and vision which form the *positive* legacy of their history, which is otherwise often violent and tragic, and not necessarily consistent with democratic ideals. In particular, as Ian D'Alton has pointed out recently, 'the Rising was the work of a tiny cabal of completely unmandated and unrepresentative urban intellectuals'.² Indeed: they were a revolutionary elite.

¹ 'Taoiseach praises Kent's sacrifices', *The Irish Times*, 19 Sep. 2015, p.4; see also 'Deep emotion in village of Castlelyons as Tomas Kent comes home after 99 years', *ibid.*

² I.D'Alton, 'Commorating the 1916 Rising', *The Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 2015, p.15.

How does such a group come about? The past fifty years have seen the fall of a number of interpretative models, most notably those based on 'class' in its two traditional understandings – namely as an 'objective category' of reality defined by the distribution of the means of production and exchange, and as a cultural and largely political form of collective identity. We are now sceptical about grand theories, and more pragmatic and eclectic about those which have not been totally discredited. At the same time, there is a re-discovery of simpler - though not necessarily easier to define – categories. Two stand out in particular: generational divides and the importance of the regional dimension or the local social environment. In the present article, sections II and III focus primarily on how some historians have recently explored the generational factor, while the last section examines the way the local dimension has also been the focus of much recent innovative research.

II.

Like the *Risorgimento* (or 'resurrection') of Italy between 1848 and 1860, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution of 1916-23 were characterized - among other things - by generational conflicts. Not only were most of the original rebels young (the median age for officers in the GPO garrison was 25), but also, as Peter Hart has noted, each of the later phases of the conflict – and particularly the civil war - was spearheaded by even younger men and women.³ They rebelled against Michael Collins as much as Collins and Patrick Pearse had challenged John Redmond and John Dillon. In their turn, the latter had, in their early days, been a 'revolutionary' elite: Dillon started as a Fenian and so did Michael Davitt and (as argued by Paul Bew) Charles S. Parnell.⁴ The three of them spent terms in prison for their subversive activities and politics. Indeed, the Parnellite generation gained their prestige partly because of their revolutionary connections.

Though both Parnell and Davitt died early (the former at 45, the latter at 60), most of the other leaders of that generation - Timothy Healy, Joe Devlin, T.P.O'Connor, as well as Dillon and Redmond - dominated Irish nationalist politics until 1918. Most of them have attracted substantial studies and biographies, but, curiously, Redmond has hitherto been comparatively neglected, with the exception of monographic studies on various aspects of his leadership,⁵ the relevant bibliography has long been dominated by works produced in the

³ P.Hart, *The I.R.A and its enemies. Violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), chapter 8.

⁴ P.Bew, *Enigma. A New Life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin, 2011), pp.95-103.

⁵ P.Bew, *Ideology and the Irish question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism* (Oxford, 1998); J.P.Finnan, *John Redmond and Irish unity, 1912-1918* (Syracuse, N.Y., 2004).

immediate aftermath of his death.⁶ Dermot Meleady's two-volume biography fills an important gap in the scholarly literature. The second volume - reviewed here - covers the last part of his life and career, a period of less than two decades, starting with the reunification of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in 1900, after a ten-year split in the aftermath of the Parnell divorce (1890-1).⁷ The emphasis is historical rather than biographical: Meleady is more interested in Redmond's political battles and their context, than his private life. The period is bookended by two major conflicts: the Second Boer War - which Redmond opposed as an aggression against 'gallant, small' republics - and the First World War - which he supported, feeling that Ireland must stand up for 'gallant, small' Belgium and hoping that Nationalist support for the war effort would help to reconcile Ulster to Home Rule.

In between these two wars, as leader of the third largest party at Westminster, he was involved in negotiating a series of important social and constitutional reforms, while struggling to keep the party united and strong, and fending off internal opposition and the external challenge of Sinn Fein (first established in 1905). The Third Home Rule Bill ought to have been the culmination of a career of spectacular achievements, but instead became Redmond's nemesis. As the author says, the nationalist leader's work was 'erased by history' after 1919 - with Home Rule discredited and rejected and his party (the IPP) vanquished.

Redmond's strategy ultimately failed because the forces aligned against him - including the catastrophic effects of the Great War - were more than enough to frustrate any peacetime plan, however well conceived. Yet, he went very close to bringing about - peacefully - a settlement which would not have looked very different from the immediate post-1922 outcome: a partitioned Ireland with parliamentary regimes based in Belfast and Dublin respectively. A deal was under discussion at the Buckingham Palace conference in 1914, when the Great War injected an artificial truce between Unionists and Nationalists, together with a newly-found, but ephemeral, air of 'national' solidarity. Eventually, about two years after Redmond's death, London passed legislation which - had it been fully implemented - would have created two devolved and subordinate parliaments, in Stormont and Dublin respectively. Thus, Northern Ireland was given a parliament they had not demanded, but for the South the modest measure of self-government offered was, by then, 'too little, too late'.

⁶ W.B.Wells, *John Redmond: a Biography* (London, 1919); S.L.Gwynn, *John Redmond's last Years* (London, 1919).

⁷ D.Meleady, *Redmond. The Parnellite*, vol.1 (Cork, 2008). Starting with an analysis of the family political tradition, the first volume reconstructs the career of the nationalist leader in Victorian politics, with an 'Epilogue' that sketches the author's interpretation of Redmond attitude to the revival of liberalism and the rise of the 'forces of democracy' in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Much has been said about the inadequacy and flaws of the proposed settlement, including that it sanctioned the breaking up of Ireland into two jurisdictions. However, while no politician since Redmond has been able to negotiate a deal which ended partition, Mealeady argues forcefully that, had Redmond succeeded, Ireland would have escaped the violence and terrible legacy of civil war. Moreover, the South would have become a less 'theocratic' society than the Free State and early Republic, for 'the stronger British connection and a less marginalized Southern Protestant community would have acted as a brake on the ambitions of Catholic clerics' (p.4).

These are tempting, but ultimately imponderable, counterfactuals. In any case, as Meleady shows, Home Rule was only *one* aspect of the party's programme and engagement with UK politics. Much of their Westminster time was devoted to other, less celebrated, causes, in which Redmond had better success, exemplified by his painstaking involvement in land reform, housing, education, rural drainage and urban light-railway schemes (p.154). All of these were more immediately relevant for most people's everyday life than the achievement of the ultimate goal of self-government, though Redmond's failure on this single issue has seriously tarnished his memory and reputation.

Splendidly researched and elegantly written, Meleady's account is balanced, judicious and perceptive. There are, however, a couple of areas which should have deserved greater discussion and scrutiny. One is the extent to which under Redmond the party became unwilling to make room for a new generation of politicians. As Conor Mulvagh has recently shown, Redmond together with John Dillon, Joseph Devlin (spokesman for the Belfast Nationalists) and T.P.O'Connor (Liverpool-based, influential in New Liberal journalism), was able to enforce a high level of discipline and cohesion, which at the time was what the party needed in order to secure its policy aims and stem internal opposition.⁸ However, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was undermined by the very features which had previously made it such a powerful and effective machine: namely, centralization and a pragmatic focus on winning elections at the expense of encouraging internal debate and ideological renewal. Thus, in 1914 the front bench consisted of MPs who were already eminent when Gladstone was at the apex of his powers thirty years earlier. Understandably, they were determined to stay on until the completion of their life's work, namely a self-governing Ireland, and were suspicious of anyone threatening to mess up their strategy at this crucial time. 'New' men were considered if they offered the party a prospect of some immediate electoral advantage:

⁸ C.Mulvagh, *Sit, act, and vote: the Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-1918* (Manchester, 2016).

thus, in 1904 the IPP tried to secure the eminent Irish revivalist Douglas Hyde as a parliamentary candidate, not because of his intellectual standing or ideas, but because his name might have attracted Gaelic League voters. Anyway, he belonged to the same generation as Redmond. By contrast, younger men like Pearse and George Plunkett, no obvious 'vote-catchers', fell below the party radar and were gradually 'lost' to the cause of constitutional nationalism. One wonders how 'revolutionary' this generation would have been had Redmond managed to co-opt enough of them, as he did with Tom Kettle. The latter's political trajectory is significant: he became a Nationalist MP but was killed in September 1916, only a few months after some of his contemporaries had lost their lives in the Dublin Rising. He died, however, not as a rebel, but fighting as a British army officer on the Western Front.

III.

Another major flaw in Redmond's politics was his relentless hostility to women's suffrage. Again, he almost gratuitously deprived his party of the resources and potential that women could have provided. In a compelling and evocative study, Senia Pašeta demonstrates how suffragism plus nationalism produced a powerful mix when adopted by women of a younger generation, activists whose expectations reached a climax in 1916. *Irish Nationalist Women* focuses on the fifteen years which preceded the Easter Rising, offering a superb analysis of the political, social and literary aspects of their involvement in the nationalist movement.

Nationalist women were divided by ideological and tactical questions, but all groups were ready to subordinate the suffrage agitation to the war effort or the nationalist cause: in this, they mirrored feminist women elsewhere in Europe, as in no country was 'gender ... the primary determinant of political affiliation' (p.6). This 'non-exceptionality' of the Irish case is reflected also in the way the IPP regarded the women's movement. Like Asquith and indeed liberal leaders in France and Italy, in his hostility to women's suffrage Redmond was motivated by a concern that the latter 'would produce a conservative vote and clerical domination' (p.71). Yet, there was little evidence that it would: the women's movement steered clear of confessional considerations, partly because it included a good proportion of Protestants who would hardly have tolerated the ascendancy of the Catholic priesthood. Likewise there was little evidence that they would be 'conservative' had they been granted the vote. For example, during the 1913 Dublin lock-out organizations such as the Ladies' School Dinner Committee were active in feeding the striking workers, and this brought them in

closer contact with radical ideas and personalities. They were active not only in progressive causes, but also in shaping their own role in public memory in a way which associated them with the left. Thus, in the aftermath of the Easter Rising, women writers started to circulate accounts of the revolution, magnifying the role some of them had played in the Rising. This reflected not only a desire to embellish their own historical record, but also an attempt to define the new national narrative in a gender-inclusive way. They tried to seize the historiographical initiative, perceived as the continuation of a 'revolution' which was not only about national liberation, but also the fulfilment of the feminist promises of the 1916 Proclamation. As Pašeta notes, considering that all but one of the signatories of the Proclamation were feminists, while only one (James Connolly) was a socialist, it is extraordinary that the women's contribution to the 1916 radical agenda has hitherto not been acknowledged, though Connolly's input has regularly been noted (p.193). The omission is particularly striking, given that, at the time, this eminence of women was itself more 'revolutionary' than socialism.

In *Vivid Faces* Roy Foster further explores the full extent of the radicalism of this elite. Here women are examined as part of a subversive elite throughout its career - its origin, apotheosis, disappointment and denouement. Appropriately, they dominate the book's cover illustration, with a dishevelled Muriel McSwiney, her bonnet off, attending the funeral of Cathal Brugha - alias Charles William St. John Burgess, the republican commander killed in action by Free State troops in July 1922. Foster's strategy is to use this group as a window onto 'the culture of pre-revolution', focusing on 'emblematic figures and their intersections ... structures of intermarriage ... networks of friends, lovers, sisters'. They were 'all supporting each other as siblings as well as fellow-separatists' (p.23), rising against 'the wise domination of age', as medical student Ernie O'Malley was to put it (cit. p.7). This in itself signalled them as being part of a 'generation'. In defining the latter as a tool of conceptual analysis, Foster uses Karl Mannheim's idea that a 'political' generation takes shape when its members - at a critical stage in their youth - are 'exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization' (p.27). The latter was certainly one of the consequences of the policies enacted by the British government in Ireland between 1890 and 1912, involving a mix of rapid economic modernization, social reform and political repression.

Though sympathetic to the plight of the poor, they were not themselves under-privileged, or people having personal reasons to complain either of British rule or of life in general. Instead, they comprised a cross-section of the educated elite - 'students, actors, writers, teachers, civil servants; often from comfortable middle-class backgrounds' (p.xix).

They included a number of Protestants: like many radicals then emerging from *Mitteleuropa* Jewish culture, by espousing a radical cause and vision of the future, these minority voices tried to secure 'a gateway into another, freer society', where their marginal status would no longer set them apart from 'mainstream' national identity.⁹ It was also significant that Gaelic became their favourite medium of radicalization; it was supposed to be the language of the future, but was also that of the remote, pre-Christian past, an age allegedly as yet unaffected by confessional conflict (to underscore this, rule 2 of the Gaelic League's constitution defined the organization as 'strictly non-political and non-sectarian'). Yet, far from being introverted and insular, they breathed the intellectual air of the great cultural and philosophical movements of contemporary Europe. Thus, for example, in 1906 a student manifesto espoused the Sinn Fein policies of national self-reliance drawing on examples from 'Hungary, Poland, Finland, a section of Russia ... India and China' as well as Ireland (p.61).

Commenting on Irish theatre in 1906, Kathleen O'Brennan - sister-in-law of the executed 1916 signatory Éamon Ceannt - stated that 'drama was a "nationalizing force"' (p.75). Typically, she cited the experience of countries ranging from Denmark to Japan - and she could also have added Italy in the Risorgimento, when opera was one of the most effective ways of popularizing the nationalist message. Like Giuseppe Verdi's arias in 1848-60, drama in Ireland was 'the "art of the people", the quickest way to galvanize the emotions of the crowd into energy, the most democratic of the arts"' (cit. p.75). It was also the medium through which an elite could popularize their ideas.

Foster examines this dimension in a chapter which covers both North, where Hobson hoped that 'theatre could perform miracles of reconciliation' (p.102), and South, where Synge explored generational conflict through controversial works such as *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). There follows a chapter on 'Writing' - which shows this elite as 'a periodical community', to borrow Lucy Delap's concept, that is one which contributed to the magazines which they read.¹⁰ The chapters on 'Arming' and 'Fighting' present the Rising as the group's short-lived 'apotheosis', before they were brought back to earth by the establishment of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, with the accompanying disillusionment - discussed in the aptly-named chapter 'Reckoning'. 'Finally, 'Remembering' explores the 'mechanisms of public memory and amnesia [which] continued to keep the two Irelands in mutual isolation' (p.143) until the 1960s, when Sean Lemass (veteran of the

⁹ For a discussion of this dimension see S.Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938: a cultural history* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹⁰ L.Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2007).

Rising) and Terence O'Neill (then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland) started a rapprochement between the nationalist and unionist traditions.

The irony is that the state that emerged was in many ways a mirror image of the Unionist system which it replaced. Rosamond Jacob, one of the many women who play a central role in *Vivid Faces*, was a reader of Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboos*, which she interpreted as an allegory of generational conflict. But Foster notes that the book was actually about 'the origins of the social contract, and the evolution of civil society. It posits a post-revolutionary situation where the band of brothers, having killed their father, had to rationalize a new order which would preserve the organization that had made them strong. This involved the subordination of women as well as a reconciliation with the values and image of the dead father ... for many Irish ex-revolutionaries who lived on into the Free State set up by the Treaty ... it would have rung a very loud bell indeed' (p.143).

This is a commanding and engrossing account of a generation which thought about their country's future and struggled to achieve elusive, perhaps impossibly lofty, goals of personal and national liberation. Based on substantial archival evidence - including letters and diaries - besides published works, essays, plays and poetry, Foster has written a perceptive and moving collective biography of a generation. *Vivid Faces* is a tour de force and will be essential reading not only for Irish specialists, but, more importantly, for anyone interested in revolutions and avant-garde elites.

IV.

Besides stressing the role of youth, Peter Hart has also emphasized the revolution's 'local' and regional dimension, which also affected the way ideas were perceived, programmes appropriated or rejected and everyday politics negotiated.¹¹ The local or regional dimension of the revolution is systematically discussed in two of the other books reviewed here. Gemma Clark focuses on the three contiguous counties of Tipperary, Limerick and Waterford, all of which experienced revolutionary and civil war violence at different levels of intensity: the latter two were relatively peaceful, while Tipperary had an established tradition of unrest. By contrast *Tyrone* is part of the county histories, a series edited by Mary Ann Lyons and Daithí Ó Corráin. Here Fergal McCluskey examines a Northern county with a slight Nationalist majority, stranded in a part of Ireland which otherwise was solidly Unionist. This makes the subject an interesting case study, further complicated by the Liberal

¹¹ P.Hart, *The I.R.A. at War 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp.37-41.

traditions of the local Presbyterians and the fact that their Unionism was based more on economic and commercial concerns than on religious animosity (pp.25-26). Despite the strong support they offered to the 1912 Ulster Solemn League and Covenant and the efficient propaganda machine which presented the situation as involving a stark choice between 'Rome Rule' and the Union, the community was less than united. Equally divided was the nationalist camp, where by 1916 constitutionalists and republicans 'appeared to have chosen diametric paths' (p.63).

McCluskey endorses the view that the Rising and resulting executions transformed 'everything utterly', yet his own evidence suggests that some of the changes - the drop in army enlistment, for example - also affected the Unionists. The latter now 'held aloof, preferring to reap the economic rewards of high agricultural prices' (ibid.), and 'did not share their leadership's enthusiasm for compulsory military service' (p.75). The cooling down of their patriotic fervour was obviously not caused by the Rising. Rather, another factor may have affected the change in attitude to the war effort, one which affected both Catholics and Protestants alike. In the context of mounting losses at the front (culminating, in July, with the battle of the Somme), this is likely to have been the realization of the full horrors of the war.

Tyrone experienced the revolution only later, from 1919, when it came with partition and sectarian violence. As Timothy Wilson has shown, it was the civilian population that suffered most, particularly those belonging to groups which were in a local minority.¹² Surprisingly, McCluskey does not have much to say about this side of the story. By contrast, Gemma Clark's monograph is primarily about the 'civilian' victims of violence and the implications and meaning of what was directed against them. This is a question that has attracted considerable debate and controversy in recent years. In fact, it has become one of the most eminently 'public history' dimensions of the Irish past, with both sides of the dispute often behaving as if the issue involved the whole standing and credibility of the Republic.¹³ Yet, that revolutions – however virtuous their leaders might have been – are generally accompanied by wanton violence and ideological killings is well known. As early as 1959 Denis Mack Smith pointed out that even the Resistance in Italy (1943-5) – which provided the foundation and moral energy for that country's democratic renewal – was

¹² T.Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence. Conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010). [Rev ante – we'll add these details]

¹³ See the media coverage generated by Gerard Murphy, *The Year of Disappearances: Political Killings in Cork, 1921–1922* (Dublin, 2010), for example Eoghan Harris, *The Irish Examiner*, 5 Nov. 2010 and Caoimhe Nic Dháibháid, *The Irish Times*, 11 Dec. 2010, and the correspondence on the burning of the Ballyconree Protestant Orphanage in West Cork in 1922, particularly Niall Meehan in *The Irish Times*, 20 Jan. 2012.

blotted by summary 'executions' and personal vendettas on a disconcerting scale.¹⁴ The debate remains heated and Gemma Clark is therefore brave in renewing its exploration in this volume. However, what makes her book really innovative is the author's ability to understand and explain Irish revolutionary violence not as '[a] side effect of conflict and war', but as 'a rational, social phenomenon' (p.1), deliberately aimed at intimidating, humiliating or eliminating individuals or groups who were identified as potentially hostile. It was about 'ordinary people enact[ing] change by violent action' (p.16): in this sense, she argues against the distinction frequently drawn between agrarian and revolutionary violence, for the former was as political as the latter, and its effects profoundly revolutionary.

For Clark violence was not generally or explicitly sectarian (Catholic loyalists were also targeted), and, in contrast to much contemporary violence in post-imperial Central and Eastern Europe, it did not have 'ethnic cleansing' aims. Yet, her work 'highlight[s] an inescapable trend: Protestants and those with a connection with the British administration in Ireland were targeted with violence and intimidation, resulting in significant departures from independent Ireland' (p.39). Though she does not compare the situation in the South with the violence against Catholics in the North, it is remarkable that, while most Northern Catholics returned to their homes after the situation in Belfast calmed down, most Southern Protestants did not. Their exodus was not reversed but instead became the beginning of a further haemorrhage, which almost extinguished the community in many parts of the country.

Clark concludes that 'whilst the Irish Revolution is a much scaled-down and less severe instance of the "un-mixing" process' - the most extreme examples of which concerned the Ottoman Armenians and Greeks, the Turks in Europe and the Germans in Russia - 'it can nonetheless be characterized as an ethnic conflict' (p.42). In each of these areas there is evidence that sectarian language pervaded threats of violence: the same applies to the three Irish counties examined by Clark (pp.50-1). The destruction of Big Houses was perceived - by both victims and perpetrators - to have as one of its aims the erasing of the most distinctive and visible marks of a long-dominant social group. Violence was supplemented by boycotting and intimidation, 'used deliberately in Munster, as allegedly it was in Palestine [against the Arabs in 1947], to clear out a target group.' (p.100). It is also interesting that the net loss of Irish Protestants (after deducting British military and civilian personnel, who would have left anyway with independence) was similar in the three counties examined here: 29% in Tipperary, 28% in Waterford and 27% in Limerick. In other words, the exodus from

¹⁴ D.Mack Smith, *Italy: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1959), p.493.

the less violent counties was only marginally lower than that from the region where revolutionary activity was more intense. In conclusion, while

not all Protestants experienced violence and expropriation during the war ... very few failed entirely to be affected by the threatening, sectarian atmosphere pervading many local communities in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. More intense and personalized than earlier periods of conflict, it was indeed during the Civil War that Protestants found their loyalty violently challenged and their place in the country in jeopardy. No one, and nowhere, was completely safe. Boycotts of Protestant-owned shops and business successfully weakened the minority's commercial hold on areas where the non-Catholic population and influence traditionally were strong ... Attacks on Protestant institutions and personnel leave even less room for doubt about the attackers' sectarian agenda ... (p.199)

Thus, in contrast to David Fitzpatrick - who has recently argued that the collapse in Protestant numbers after the Revolution was not affected by violence - Clark strengthens Andy Babenberg's conclusion that the community suffered severely.¹⁵ In a way, it could hardly have been otherwise. However, what marks out Irish atrocities against civilians from many other instances in post-war Europe, is that they were not systematic or organized from above: on the contrary, both the Free State and republican authorities consistently tried to prevent or contain them.

What lessons can be drawn? Ronan Fanning has recently called for an 'unashamed' celebration of 1916, wondering why the Irish should not be as bold as the Americans, who have no embarrassment in celebrating their revolution. There may be various answers to this question, as illustrated by a recent, heated debate in *The Irish Times*.¹⁶ However, when all is said and done, it is worth considering that the American Revolution also provoked a mass exodus of loyalists from the Thirteen Colonies into Canada, one similar to that which followed the Irish revolution. They fled for various reasons, including fear of violence and persecution. Perhaps the real question is not whether the Irish should learn from the

¹⁵ D.Fitzpatrick, *Descendancy. Irish Protestant Histories since 1795* (Cambridge, 2014) [Rev ante – we'll add this]; A.Bielenberg, 'Exodus: the emigration of Southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War', *Past & present*, 218 (Feb., 2013), pp.199-223.

¹⁶ See for example above footnote 2 and other letters to *The Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 2015, p.15 and *ibid.*, 4 March 2015, p.15; and the article by Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Clashing views of how to mark 1916 create a selection of surreal scenarios', *ibid.*, 28 Feb. 2015, p.14. The debate was ongoing as the present article went to press.

Americans to celebrate their revolution: rather it is whether the Americans - and the rest of us - should, like the Irish, ponder on the errors and horrors accompanying such upheavals.

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