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Janick Julienne, *Un Irlandais à Paris. John Patrick Leonard, au cœur des relations franco-irlandaises (1814-1889)*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016. xiv + 216 pp. Illustrations (black & white). ISBN 978-1-906165-67-3.

Review by Sylvie Kleinman, Trinity College, Dublin

From the birth of the Irish tricolour in Paris in 1848 and throughout the next four decades, the dynamic force behind a dense and heterogeneous network of exiles (all the while befriending conservative and monarchist French elites and frequenting salons at the Élysée palace) was John Patrick Leonard, indisputably 'l'homme incontournable' (p. xi) to seek out for Irish nationalists, be they moderates or militants. An indefatigable networker, facilitator and fixer of sorts, but never an overt political agitator, Leonard was for most of his life a modest *professeur de collègue* and a regular correspondent for Irish nationalist newspapers. Yet he has been described by Pierre Joannon, Honorary Consul of Ireland for Antibes/Cannes, as his generation's *de facto* Irish ambassador, though bilateral Franco-Irish diplomatic relations were not established until 1930.

Until recently, popular memory in most countries has been aroused by, and moulded around, feats of martial glory. Thus, if anyone in Ireland today remembers Leonard beyond Spike Island, his remote place of birth in county Cork, it is for his most honourable and public role during the Franco-Prussian war, not as a combatant but as Red Cross inspector of the voluntary Irish field ambulance. For his services tending to the wounded on many fields of battle, he was made a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* in 1872, and also received a Red Cross medal. But his most memorable contribution to the cause of Ireland is, arguably, leading Irishmen in Paris in 1848 to congratulate Lamartine. No matter that they had been frostily received (and no official commitments made to support Irish campaigns for a domestic parliament), the delegation returned to Dublin buoyed by the experience and armed with what is accepted as the first *Irish* tricolour, the manufacturing of which Leonard had most probably facilitated. Yet he has been largely excluded from this foundational myth in favour of the much heroised Thomas Francis Meagher (largely due to the latter's subsequent command of an Irish brigade on the Union side in the American Civil War). Leonard was, however, pro-active throughout his life in fostering and promoting Franco-Irish links, and also championing the causes of many Irishmen in France. If, from a macro-historical standpoint, it may appear that Leonard accomplished little of major significance, his biography still struck Janick Julienne as worthy of a full-length study. This project is an extension of her doctoral thesis, which examined Irish networks in Paris from 1860 to 1890, including Fenian and Land League power bases. [1] Rooted in rigorous scholarly research in both French and Irish archives, and

consistently contextualising the subject in the prevailing politics and mindsets of his time, this book is a major contribution to our understanding not only of Franco-Irish relations but of key personalities in nineteenth century-history.

Catholicism was a defining pillar of Leonard's identity, and he appears (if modestly) as the archetypal nineteenth-century Irishman, enterprising and constantly interacting with ecclesiastical institutions. In this regard, France was an ideal *terre d'asile*. Although from a modest background, Leonard had not been forced into exile for financial reasons: after having studied there as a youth, he settled in France in 1834 and enrolled in medical school near Paris. Probably lacking the means to support himself, he never completed his studies but the certificates and experience he gained would prove vital during the Franco-Prussian war. Unsurprisingly, he then turned to the one resource which would ensure his survival in France, teaching English, first in Sens (1836-1846), then in Paris.

Julienne's thoroughness in the art of biography allowed her to identify both youthful shenanigans and plucky character traits, all embedded into her narrative with scholarly sobriety. Exacting school inspectors described him as 'de conduite légère, homme dissipé et amateur de plaisirs, sans ordre, sans constance et prodigue d'argent', and this poor role model was also a weak disciplinarian whose classes often became 'le théâtre de scènes d'insubordination' (p. 11-2). Never progressing to the agrégation, though maturing into a respected pedagogue, he nevertheless had no qualms about asking for a pay raise. Teachers led a modest existence, but giving private lessons to the haute bourgeoisie or the aristocracy could also forge strategic links. Leonard would also distinguish himself throughout his life for his generosity and readiness to help others. His actions ranged from saving a drowning youth, bleeding a cleric in the street struck down by a fit of apoplexy, and aiding a man knocked down by King Louis-Philippe's horses; in the latter case, the monarch had even come to his aid. Leonard's life was a *comédie humaine*. His exploits are all documented, and Leonard began petitioning earnestly for a *Légion d'Honneur* in 1839, though he would not be awarded one until 1872. Julienne suggests that his persistence may have been motivated by a wish to speed up his naturalisation, which was eventually granted in 1849. But when the *printemps des peuples* erupted, he had forged his place as the lynchpin of Irish networks in Paris, a role he would play until his death in 1889.

In 1848, and now a member of the *Gardes nationales*, Leonard headed a delegation of Paris-based Irishmen to salute Lamartine, head of the provisional government, in the celebrated *manifestation populaire* of March 17 at the Hôtel de Ville. By a fortuitous twist of fate, it was the Irish *fête-nat* of sorts, St. Patrick's Day. Lamartine had praised Ireland's peaceful agitation while hoping it would soon achieve full constitutional independence. Ireland was devastated by the Famine, and nationalists in the Young Ireland movement were campaigning for the repeal of the Act of Union and restoration of the Dublin parliament, but not openly calling for revolt. Yet the more militant wing deployed bellicose rhetoric, made an open call to arms and travelled to France for support. This second Irish delegation was frostily received by Lamartine in April; by then the British ambassador had expressed displeasure that France had commented on the internal affairs of the United Kingdom. Resplendent in his uniform, Leonard acted as organiser and interpreter on both occasions, presided at gala dinners, guided his compatriots through Paris and even got two of them into his own unit of the guards. Nevertheless, Meagher—who, in fairness, praised Leonard in his memoirs—dominates in popular memory of this event.

A major theme of this book is the overlapping *cercles de sociabilité* within which Leonard networked. They are such a defining aspect of his life that Julienne deconstructs them in a reflective concluding chapter, identifies strategic overlaps, and visualises them in a chart (p. 191) that speaks for itself: Leonard is at the centre. Some circles he had been privileged to enter. Among the *hommes de pouvoir* he befriended was Maréchal Patrice de MacMahon, Duc de Magenta, a military hero descended from seventeenth-century Irish exiles, a Catholic conservative and later president of France (1873-1879). In 1869 they had devised a project to settle Irish farming families in Algeria, financially supported by the French state and prudently supported by the British authorities. The plan quickly failed, but Leonard's agency and determination that this would also be a Catholic proselytising mission are well documented. The plan was discussed (substantiated by a rich corpus of letters) with another longstanding friend of note, the eminent Catholic liberal Félix Dupanloup, bishop of Orléans, later a *député* (1871), permanent Senator, and no stranger to the political and social controversies of his day. By 1848, Leonard had also become a central figure among the *Anciens Irlandais*, an elite network of old Irish families in France and/or descendants of military veterans. Leonard organised their annual St. Patrick's gala dinner at the prestigious *Grand Véfour*, was their chronicler and genealogist, and wrote about them in Irish nationalist papers. While many an exalted exhortation about independence would have been uttered, and many a virtual sword brandished, this rhetoric was typical, and not really threatening to British security. That Leonard also liaised with incoming Irish journalists goes without saying, but his most tantalising and ever-shifting network was that of Irish militant nationalists, among whom were writers and artists but especially Young Ireland and Fenian veterans of the ill-fated 1848 uprising. Julienne is clear about the vagueness of Leonard's nationalism, but teachers who doubled as journalists, as he did, were closely watched in a city known to be a cauldron of revolution. Not implicated in the socialist and anarchist circles his compatriots mixed in, Leonard was however identified by the French consul in Dublin as 'à la tête des manifestations irlandaises' (p. 51) in 1865, i.e. precisely when the Fenian and Irish Republican Brotherhoods operating out of America were beginning to lay roots in Paris, near enough to Dublin and London, but also the cosmopolitan capital of Europe. Here they could fraternise with Italian and Polish exiles, but more importantly use the city as a safe haven to deposit and/or re direct funds raised in the US. Arguably Leonard's most intriguing role was as co-treasurer in the 1860s of IRB funds alongside John Mitchel, linking him to many agitators and escapees. In the 1880s, the strategic activity in Paris of more respectable groups gravitating around parliamentarians, the Home Rule Party, and the Land League, peaked. They too banked in Paris and interacted with Fenians, including the iconic Parnell whom Leonard had introduced to MacMahon, and whose influence remained strong during this last phase of Irish agitation in the French capital. The authorities deported key Fenians in 1885, and after Leonard's death in 1889 the networks he had built up began to unravel, grounded as they were 'in his personal agency' (p. 159).^[3] Though Julienne refrains from any overarching conclusions--because no French political party committed themselves to Irish nationalists--it is hard to believe that sojourns in Paris had not matured their view of a strong state, emboldened their republicanism, and enlightened them on the issues of secularism, politicisation, education, but also revolution. And at every turn there was Leonard, finding jobs and getting Irishmen into the Légion Étrangère.

Julienne has produced a compelling biographical account. The book follows a linear-chronological structure though, as stated above, the concluding analysis on networking provides a theoretical model. Transnational studies often throw up imbalances in the

expectations of one or another target audience. The only reservation in terms of methodology is the absence of a vital research tool, a subject index, with which French academia still dispenses. In terms of scope, though the author ably accomplished her goal—a complete biography—scholars of Irish history (for many of whom macro-history and the national struggle still dominate) may wish to have more samplings of Leonard’s own words (quotations are well translated in the text, but appear in English in the notes) if only to demonstrate the vagueness, or ambiguity, of his nationalism. Did Leonard envisage an Irish republic, or was a constitutional monarchy acceptable? Julienne, it must be said, contextualises his actions by referencing works of Irish history and accessing Irish manuscripts and newspapers not available in France, where, appropriately, most of the action is set. But it is now up to others to pursue new avenues, and several research projects could readily flow out of this study of Leonard’s career. While the French willingly sent aid to Ireland during the Famine, Leonard created opportunities for the Irish to respond, for example after the Garonne flooding disaster of 1875. Dupanloup, and many French and Irish senior clerics, supported these worthy causes from the pulpit, but so too did Élisabeth de MacMahon (also a life-long friend of Leonard’s) as *présidente* of the French Red Cross. There were also attempts to develop direct maritime links between Leonard’s native Cork and Le Havre, supported by a circle of prominent local business entrepreneurs. Leonard was indefatigable during the *Exposition universelle* of 1878, promoting Irish industries and exhibitors. The French and Irish press would be accessible and rich sources on these activities.

As readers will have guessed, Leonard was evidently not only an agent of cultural transfer, but also a productive translator, though he only used his initials to sign the English versions of Dupanloup’s sermons published in Ireland. The latter had willingly supported many of Leonard’s Franco-Irish projects, ranging from Catholic education and temperance, to mutual aid. Postgraduate research could engage with these translations, and their reception in Ireland against the backdrop of rising Catholic fervour, assertiveness, identity politics, and the overwhelming trope of misery. But this implies the self-evident—bilingual research skills—and leads us to a particular concern about this book’s potential reach: its audience will remain limited until it is translated into English, because the vast majority of students and scholars of nineteenth-century history in Ireland are not francophone. This is a pity, because apart from a lesson in personalities and networking, the art of the possible, and how exiles could assist their *patrie*, one irrefutable outcome of this book is that France did matter, if not at the level of the state. Julienne has long been recognised as a specialist in her field, if slightly inaccessible to monoglots; an important essay on the Irish in the Franco-Prussian war was published in English, but had been poorly translated and proofread.^[2] Serious scholars however can recognise robust research. Her most recent publication in English was infinitely superior, and brings to life the vibrancy of Paris as a cauldron of revolution in the decades in question, as she draws readers into the cafés and cabarets where the Irish sang a forbidden *Marseillaise*.^[3] Though Leonard was not among them, his influence is omnipresent, and his agency irrefutable. Overall this book is a most insightful and welcome contribution to Franco-Irish studies and to the subtler forms of shaping history.

NOTES

[1] ‘La question irlandaise en France de 1860 à 1890 : perceptions et réactions’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Paris VII, 1997).

[2] Janick Julienne, 'The Irish and the Franco-Prussian War: hopes and disappointments', in Nathalie Genêt-Rouffiac and David Murphy eds., *Franco-Irish Military Connections, 1590-1945* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), pp. 219-237.

[3] Janick Julienne, "John Patrick Leonard and the Irish colony in Paris, 1848-1849," in Pierre Joannon and Kevin Whelan eds., *Paris Capital of Irish Culture France, Ireland and the Republic 1798-1916* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017), pp. 145-174.

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