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<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Paperback review of 'White Savage'</th>
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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
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White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America
Fintan O’Toole
Faber and Faber, £9.99

In a planned series of three books about Ireland’s historical contribution to America’s mythology of itself, O’Toole’s first subject provides for a complication of the Irish postcolonial narrative – an established scheme in his journalism – and for an intriguing illustration of the complex history of Anglo-America. Johnson, an ambitious native Irishman brokering the British Empire among the native Americans of the north-eastern frontier in the mid-eighteenth century was a model for Fenimore Cooper’s Last of the Mohicans. Lusty and lordly in deportment, Johnson emerges in O’Toole’s empathetic hands not as the cynical and greedy collaborator others would have him, but as an adept of realpolitik whose lifelong adaptability was schooled in the complex strategies of conversion and evasion he developed at home as the scion of a Gaelic Jacobite family. O’Toole is both biographer and dramatist here, and his combination of reader-friendly narrative drive with scholarship suggests by the end that he would surely have the flair for a fine historical novel.

John Kenny