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Crying for the Enemy

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With the hindsight of almost 90 years, historians, both Irish and otherwise, now view the events of Easter Week, Dublin 1916, from a variety of perspectives. What remains unarguable, however, is the significance of these events for the evolution of today's Ireland. Lutzeier's novel, perhaps echoing Yeats's famous response, 'All changed, changed utterly', gives frequent expression to the transforming effect of what happened during that week. Her story brings together three young teenagers from disparate social and political backgrounds and, by skilful (and largely credible) plotting, interweaves the destinies they share from the day when 'freedom set fire to the city'. The dreams of that freedom are seen to exact some heavy prices; some of the realities to be encountered along the way are extremely painful. It is much to Lutzeier's credit that in the context of a children's novel she succeeds in conveying a convincing sense of the complexities of a key moment in 20th-century Irish history, though readers who come to the book with little knowledge of that history, especially where it concerns Irish-English relations, may occasionally be at a disadvantage. But the lives of the individual young characters - tragically short as some of them are to be - will speak to all of us.

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