

and film are increasingly influenced by politics, tourism, and economic policy. Using three plays, he demonstrates how in this ‘transformational moment’ the sense of community is being influenced by top-down agencies facilitating the movement of capital, goods, and intellectual property, but that this is prompting the emergence of a bottom-up ‘national theatre’ by Irish writers. Erin Hurley’s view of contemporary theatre in Ireland and Quebec is that it has long been privileged as the site for the representation of identity through the construction of *imaginative* worlds. However, through her discussion of two contemporary plays, she indicts them as crimes against national identity that pose questions about theatrical performances and the restrictions they impose on representations of identity.

Clearly, I am much impressed by the diversity and innovation of this multi-disciplinary foray into previously unexplored tangible and intangible dimensions of culture and heritage. I look forward to the reactions of future scholars to future applications in other comparable regions and equally imaginative topics.

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CHARITY MOVEMENTS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND: PHILANTHROPY AND IMPROVEMENT. By Karen Sonnelitter. Pp 218. Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2016. £65. (Irish Historical Monographs series)

Charitable initiatives in eighteenth-century Ireland – schooling, hospitals, encouraging new manufactures, crops and farming methods, even succouring foundlings, mendicants and prostitutes – are a familiar aspect of this highly stratified world. Some have been closely investigated already. Also, the motives of the philanthropists have been suggested: in some cases, a quest for contemporary prestige and posthumous acclaim; in others, Christian, humanitarian and mercenary promptings. The ventures were undertaken, managed and overseen by collectives – the Dublin equivalents of the voluntary associations which multiplied across Christian Europe and America. They owed much (frequently too much) to determined individuals. As a result, Henry Maule and Hugh Boulter, both Church of Ireland bishops, Thomas Prior, Samuel Madden, John Putland, a ubiquitous but elusive Dublin *rentier*, and particularly Lady Arabella Denny are credited with responsibility. Dr Sonnelitter draws together what has hitherto been diffuse. While acknowledging that ‘rational self-interest’ inspired many benefactors, she apports roles to the strengthening quests for improvement and enlightenment. Sharp spurs to action came from the parlous economic and physical conditions in which most of the population existed. Seeing it as essential background, she sketches the political system, run largely by and on behalf of the small Church of Ireland minority, and shows how civic-minded activists, whether in parliament, their parishes or groups, took the lead. Through activism and altruism, they sought to justify their legal and material privileges. The substance of this useful study is a methodical investigation of several public-spirited operations, mainly Dublin-based. Dr Sonnelitter does not dissent from the generally harsh verdicts of those who have previously analysed these schemes. An exception is Lady Arabella Denny, whose personal oversight of the Magdalene Asylum (a shelter for prostitutes) showed greater sensitivity and discrimination than did most of the works. Indeed, Denny emerges as one of a very few in eighteenth-century Ireland who is wholly praiseworthy.

The focus of the book is avowedly Dublin and the established Protestant church. Some of the charities, especially the educational and medical ones, assisted provincials. It remains to be uncovered how much local help was organised, either on Dublin models or independently. Similarly, the charities of the substantial Presbyterian communities in the north, of the cohesive Quakers, and of the Catholic majority are

largely hidden from view. Visual evidence – not just the portrait of Lady Arabella but the drawing of Hackball, king of the beggars, by Hugh Douglas Hamilton – is not included, although they would have reinforced vividly this sober and often sombre text. On occasion it has been suggested that the initiatives in Ireland were precocious, notably the opening of hospitals and funding them in part through regular musical performances. Dr Sonnelitter, however, stresses the similarities between English and Irish activities, and indeed the indebtedness of the latter to the former. In the main, she follows predecessors in doubting whether the interventions did much to reduce mortality, poverty, and destitution, or to improve education and conduct. It is tantalizing to note the possible influences from continental Europe, but these are not pursued: Bishop Maule, the begetter of projects for English schooling, recorded his admiration for the German Pietists. Lady Arabella Denny made at least one lengthy continental tour, which included the Low Countries where practical philanthropy had long flourished. Physicians, heavily involved in several of the endeavours, had usually studied abroad. In several instances – the Incorporated Society and the Dublin Society – there were fierce disagreements over priorities and methods. If some arose from clashing personalities, others told of fundamental divergences as to how problems were best addressed. There is, then, room still to investigate further the sources of the thinking behind what was attempted in Ireland. Meanwhile, thanks to Dr Sonnelitter's careful account, it is possible to appreciate the range and the workings (typically disappointing) of these schemes.

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RADICALISM AND REPUTATION: THE CAREER OF BRONTERRE O'BRIEN. By Michael J. Turner. Pp x + 378. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. 2017. \$49.95.

For Karl Marx, one of the great anomalies of history was the dilatory development of socialism in the cradle of the Industrial Revolution. The oddity has made Chartism, England's only mass working class movement with claims to be revolutionary, all the more attractive to British historians. Chartism has never been neglected, and as Britain once led the world in labour studies, it has enjoyed the consideration of some illustrious scholars, such as the Thompsons, Briggs, and Saville. Turner traces the evolution of the historiography in an excellent introduction. Another peculiarity of this very English movement, is that its two best known leaders, Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, were Irish. Of the two, the 'great Feargus', colourful, demagogic, and immensely popular in the north of England, has received by far the most attention. The less eloquent and more intellectual O'Brien has survived in relative obscurity. While he is invariably discussed in interpretations of Chartism, biographies have been few, discouraged perhaps by the want of detail on his personal life. As the title indicates, Turner's biography focuses on O'Brien's ideas and the debates on their merit and impact. Two of his seven chapters are devoted to O'Brien's views on America and on what he calls 'The Irish dimension'.

James O'Brien was born in Granard, Co. Longford, in 1804 according to Turner, others say 1805, a Catholic (O'Connor was Protestant) and son of a failed wine and spirits merchant. With the help of a benefactor, he was educated in Edgeworthstown and read law in Trinity College, Dublin. Continuing his legal studies in London, he was drawn to the contemporary political ferment and the burning question of the day, the extension of the franchise and parliamentary reform. From 1831 he used the pen-name 'Bronterre'. Turner suggests he forged it out of the Irish 'brón tír', or possibly the Irish and French 'brón terre', to indicate his origins, his fascination with the French Revolution, and his affinity with 'the sorrow of the land'. O'Connor gave him the barbed soubriquet 'the schoolmaster' (p. 42).