

studied instances. While always a fragile accomplishment, this was likely the survival of a venerable scientific tradition sustained by Europe's Catholic educational institutions and quite recently brought into scholarly view by John Heilbron and others. O'Leary also says nothing about the set of Catholic scientists associated with the Medical School in Cecilia Street, Dublin in the late nineteenth century. Was their science of the 'seaweed and potash' variety or were their scientific interests substantially coloured by their religious convictions and the Catholic environment in which they lived and worked? O'Leary does not tell us.

We might also regret that O'Leary did not have the space to pursue his own telling observation that Irish Catholicism was never confined to Ireland, but had a hugely influential transnational reach. The career of the priest, polemicist and science lecturer Daniel William Cahill (1796–1864) might be mentioned in this respect. His lectures were astonishingly popular, not just in Ireland but also among an Irish Catholic diaspora in Britain and North America. Drawing upon his training in natural philosophy, Cahill used science to carve out a space for Catholic politics and apologetics in cultural settings where they were frequently reviled and ridiculed. A more sober example from the twentieth century is the distinguished philosophical career of Ernan McMullin (1924–2011). McMullin briefly appears as an author of an article in the *Irish Theological Quarterly* published in 1965 but then vanishes from view (because no longer writing articles for theological journals published in Ireland?). This is understandable from a pragmatic point of view, but it does serve to remind us, as O'Leary is the first to admit, that 'there is much scope for further research about how Irish Catholics responded and contributed to developments in science' (p. xvi). Caveats aside, there is no doubt that O'Leary's book provides a reliable and readable starting point for those future investigations.

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THE DYNAMITERS: IRISH NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE WIDER WORLD, 1867–1900. By Niall Whelehan. Pp xvi, 324. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2012. £60.

This detailed and thorough monograph examines late-nineteenth-century Irish nationalist experimentation with urban bombing between the patenting of dynamite in 1867 and the dynamiters' last explosion in 1900. Niall Whelehan carefully details the process by which nationalist Ireland's insurrectionary failure helped to prompt the adoption (as in other contemporary countries) of alternative, dynamiting methods. This 'skirmishing' – as it became known – focused on attacks in Britain during the 1880s. Building on the work of Vincent Comerford, Charles Townshend, Matthew Kelly and Owen McGee, the book helpfully adds to our knowledge of a fascinating episode in the evolution of nationalism in Ireland. It is well grounded through newspaper and archival digging, and it usefully attempts to set Irish activities against international contexts, considering (among others) Russian nihilists and Parisian and Italian conspirators in relation to its Irish central subject.

Given their international dynamics, it seems to me impossible to properly understand the Fenians and their period without such an international, transnational approach. As Whelehan rightly suggests, the transnational is a complement to, rather than a replacement of, local and national history. The book sets out to analyse 'strategies of resistance' (p. 21) amid technological change, and it clearly sees this violence as a species of politics. Indeed, it presents it as a form of political negotiation, in this case set against the background of the long-contested legitimacy of the nineteenth-century union of Great Britain and Ireland.

The dynamiters considered that an independent Ireland could not be established without the use of violence. In truth, as Whelehan shows, by the time that the campaign had

effectively dribbled to an end by 1890, little of substance had been achieved. So this turned out to be a rather feeble campaign, despite the exaggerated claims made by its initiators and also the predictable fears of some people in response to the damaging bombs.

Whelehan addresses his story in good detail. But I felt that his sharp analysis could have been further enriched had the book engaged with the literature on nationalism as such: its nature and causes and dynamics and contours. Even impressive books on Irish nationalism such as this one still tend, regrettably, to be written in apparent innocence of work on the wider phenomenon of which this Irish version forms such a vivid part. To reflect on bombers elsewhere is helpful. To explain the deeper dynamics and processes of nationalism itself, and to relate the Irish dynamiters to that understanding, would have made the study even more hard-hitting; it would also have made it of potential interest to a much wider audience.

Yet there is much that thoughtful readers can take from this Irish narrative. Indeed, given the regrettable amnesia evident in so much post-9/11 reflection on terrorism and political violence, it is valuable to have such a detailed analysis of one small but telling episode in urban violence in Irish history. For many themes familiar in later periods and in numerous other settings can be detected in this book. We see conspirators engaged in the ultimately futile killing of civilians, while their own ranks are deeply penetrated by state agents and spies ('In the 1880s, Irish organisations were riddled with secret agents' (p. 136)); we witness international fund-raising for violent campaigns, and also the terroristic pursuit of revenge through retaliatory violence; there is the bloodstained grabbing through violence of international media attention; readers hear of counter-productively harsh treatment of some prisoners by the state, as well as the expansion of police powers in response to anti-state violence; there are decisively low levels of public sympathy for the attacks, and considerable public panic sometimes generated by them; political enemies engage in caricatures and stereotypes of one another; and the political hopes of the faction-ridden bombers prove to have been illusory, as they are shown to have exaggerated the power of their violence to achieve desired outcomes. It is a resonant story.

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TOM CLARKE: LIFE, LIBERTY, REVOLUTION. By Gerard MacAtasney. Pp xvi, 306. Sallins, Portland: Merrion. 2013. €16.15.

DUBLIN 1916: THE FRENCH CONNECTION. By W. J. McCormack. Pp 248. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. 2012. €23.99.

In the rising tide of publications on the revolutionary period in Ireland the two books under review here are largely unique in subject matter and approach. Surprisingly, the book by Gerard MacAtasney is the first biography of Tom Clarke (arguably the most influential figure in the 1916 Rising) since the hagiographical attempt by the Frenchman Louis Leroux in 1936, and although the international context of the Rising has received increasing attention, Bill McCormack's work is the first comprehensive attempt to put the thinking of the 1916 leaders in a longer term international perspective.

MacAtasney's biography of Clarke which aims 'to understand the man as he was' consists of a 100-page biography and almost 200 pages of personal letters written by Clarke between 1893 and 1916. The nature of the available sources and probably also the personality of Clarke himself make it nevertheless exceedingly difficult to get close to the man. The biographical sketch remains largely factual and descriptive while the letters are not particularly revealing. The first available letter is written from prison where Clarke