

with other parts of this book, the level of detail is derived from the very rich sources to which the author had access.

The history of mental health services is an emerging area of study in Ireland and each new piece of original research based on archival material from individual hospitals, or from government archives, is a welcome addition to this field of study. The high level of psychiatric institutionalisation in Ireland in the twentieth century is largely due to the importance of the asylums on the economy of the local area. In this book, Cox has shown the reader how this happened. My main critique of the book is that I found it quite difficult to read. A larger font size on the text and in the tables would have enhanced this very comprehensive historical study.

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IRISH CATHOLICISM AND SCIENCE: FROM 'GODLESS COLLEGES' TO THE 'CELTIC TIGER'. By Don O'Leary. Pp xvi, 343. Cork: Cork University Press. 2012. €39.

In the introduction to his 1979 book, *The Post-Darwinian controversies*, James Moore decried the dearth of work on Christian reactions to Darwinism. According to Moore, one exception to this dismal record was scholarship on Roman Catholic responses. In the intervening period, there was something of a reversal of fortunes. The 1980s and 1990s saw a number of probing studies on the reception of Darwinism among Protestant thinkers but little by way of work on Roman Catholic figures. In his *Roman Catholicism and modern science* (2006), Don O'Leary helped to make amends by supplying a detailed survey of some of the key encounters between Roman Catholic thought and evolutionary science since 1859. Although other scientific subjects were considered, evolution provided the book's mainstay. The same is true of O'Leary's latest offering, which restricts its analysis to Irish Catholicism but retains the lean towards evolution that marked the earlier work.

*Irish Catholicism and science* is also characterised by the same lucid prose and coherent argumentation that made O'Leary's earlier book such an effective guide. There is, perhaps unavoidably, some overlap between the two books. Even so, the terrain surveyed has not been well worked over, and O'Leary selects some fascinating moments in the changing relationship between theological opinion and the science of evolution in Catholic Ireland. As a book about the reception of evolution among Catholic theologians in Ireland, then, it succeeds admirably and provides a stimulating introduction for those wanting to contextualise more fully the episodes covered by O'Leary. As a book about Irish Catholicism and science in general, however, it is less successful. One of the consequences of the focus on evolution is a tendency, against O'Leary's own stated intention, to conceive of the relationship between religion and science as an interminable conflict between two bodies of abstract ideas. This is exacerbated by over-reliance on theological periodicals such as the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. What we do not get is a sense that Irish Catholics co-opted scientific thinking for their own ends and nurtured scientific investigation to help sustain Catholic priorities.

It may well be true that certain scientific subjects had little bearing on Irish Catholic concerns. Few would want to argue with O'Leary's quip that we can do without a lengthy study of the relationship between Catholicism and 'the extraction of iodine and potash from Irish seaweed' (p. xvi). Even so, surprising omissions remain. There is barely any mention of the fact that, despite the well-known impediments to scientific culture in Catholic Ireland, a number of church-run educational institutions maintained laboratories to aid research and teaching in natural or experimental philosophy up to at least 1870. Nicholas Callan's career at Maynooth is the most notable among a number of under-

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