

with existing authorities where appropriate and articulating a distinctive view of its subject on the basis of a thorough trawl of the available evidence. Nor is it dry. The instances cited are often chosen with an eye for their entertainment value. The book, in fact, is as witty as it is reliable.

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*Ourselves alone? Religion, society and politics in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ireland.*

*Essays presented to S. J. Connolly.* Edited by D. W. Hayton and Andrew R. Holmes.

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The twelve essays in this volume by a variety of Irish historians represent a fitting tribute to Sean Connolly, who retired as Professor of Irish History at Queen's University Belfast in the autumn of 2017. Connolly's work has caused historians of Ireland to rethink the religious, social and political landscape of the country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His output has been prolific and his views are expressed with an assertiveness and daring which make his writing both invigorating and challenging. The editors concede that Connolly has often exhibited a relish for controversy and his pronouncements are at times delivered with an acerbic wit, especially when dealing with those who think his judgements do not quite flow from the evidence that he adduces. He once denounced the views of two eminent Irish historians of the penal laws as the product of traditional Catholic piety and schoolboy Marxism.

Connolly has, however, forced scholars to reassess Irish realities, especially when examining the penal laws of the eighteenth century. He has also raised questions about the constitutional status of Ireland prior to the Union of 1801. Was it a colony like Virginia or part of a European composite state and therefore typical of the *ancien régime*? This was Connolly's major contribution to Irish historiography of the eighteenth century: the death of Irish exceptionalism. In outlining Connolly's significant influence on the development of how historians think about Ireland the editors do not, however, allow for other voices which challenge Connolly's basic thesis that Irish polity conformed, in its essentials, to the old European order. It could with equal validity be argued that, precisely, Ireland did not conform to the European norm. Where else in eighteenth-century Europe was the religious and political interest of a minority forced upon the majority? Although the point that Europe as a whole was ruled in the interests of elites is well taken the Irish pattern does not conform in the way that Connolly has argued.

The individual essays are in general of a high order, represent many of the areas that have interested Connolly over the years and contain some original and innovative material. D. W. Hayton has some acute observations about the cult in Ireland of William III and convincingly demonstrates how Queen Anne allowed herself to be manipulated by Irish Tories. She faded rapidly from Irish consciousness. Louis Cullen reexamines Jonathan Swift's famous 1729 *Modest proposal* and regrets that it has not received the attention that it deserves from historians, in contrast to literary scholars, precisely because it was an important political and economic treatise. Not only must it be set alongside Swift's 1728 pamphlet the *Short view*,

but Cullen believes that Swift's writings as a whole are in part an attempt to work out themes of social responsibility that ought to have been taken up by government and local gentry. The *Modest proposal* on this score was one of the two most effect pamphlets of the age, the other being Thomas Prior's *List of the absentees of Ireland* (1729). However, the very playfulness of the *Proposal* has desensitised scholars to its political importance.

There are extremely good contributions from David Dickson on the Whiteboys in the years 1761–2, James Kelly on popular riots in eighteenth-century Ireland, especially in relation to Dublin brothels, and Toby Barnard on education in Ulster in the same period. Barnard emphasises the importance in Ireland of Locke's educational views, although his *Thoughts concerning education* (1693) did not find an Irish publisher until 1728. Barnard readily concedes that Ulster was unlikely to be representative of the whole country and its Royal Schools tended to be led by clerics who owed their positions to viceroys and primates who saw headships as a consolation for lack of promotion to high office in the Church. Educational provision in Armagh was unique in Ulster and its school's prestige, especially under the tenure of Archbishop Richard Robinson (1765–94), gave it a reputation as the Eton of Ireland.

Tom Bartlett reconsiders the Catholic Relief Act (1793), which has not had the attention it deserves. In Bartlett's estimation the act has its origins in a revolution in British thinking about the empire following the Seven Years' War. He also stresses the importance of Henry Dundas, Pitt's most important ally, in persuading Westmorland that concessions to Catholics were in the interests of Irish Protestants and the empire as a whole. The main issue of Catholic emancipation would have to wait for another generation. Mary O'Dowd's piece on Mary Lendbeater is a splendid tribute to a remarkable author and poet whose grandfather's Quaker school in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, produced, among others, Edmund Burke. Her references to the Society of Friends as a Church and her talk of clergy among the Quakers seem odd lapses for such a skilled historian. Andrew Holmes has a fascinating essay on Presbyterian communities in the USA and the relationship between the Church there and in Ireland. His richly textured treatment of fundraising in America to provide the wherewithal to conduct missions among Irish Catholics is, however, surprisingly uncritical.

Jonathan Wright has a wonderful essay on Eliza McCracken whose family produced the United Irishman Henry Joy McCracken, hanged for his revolutionary tendencies in 1798. Wright traces Eliza's life under three headings 'love, loss and learning', and paints an engaging portrait of this remarkable woman and the social climate of Belfast in the early decades of the nineteenth century. D. W. Miller's fascinating essay on the confessional state in Ireland is marred by his tendentious assertion that Ireland had three state Churches in the eighteenth century and by his talk of female Presbyterian ministers in the same century. The collection ends with a fascinating study of the Connolly family name from the pen of the accomplished economist Cormac O'Grada, largely based on the 1911 census.

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