provoking study which offers telling insights into the development of Ulster Presbyterian political thought in the aftermath of the Union and does much to advance our understanding of the cultural, political and religious life of early nineteenth-century Belfast.

KYLE HUGHES
School of English and History, University of Ulster

NEGOTIATING INSANITY IN THE SOUTHEAST OF IRELAND 1820–1900. By Catherine Cox. Pp 276. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2012. £65.

Carlow Asylum, which is the focus of this book, featured in the evidence presented to the commission of inquiry into the state of lunatic asylums in Ireland in 1857 (*Report of the commissioners of inquiry into the state of lunatic asylums and other institutions for the custody and treatment of the insane in Ireland. Part 1: Report; Part 2: Evidence and documents*. HC 1857–8 [2436] xxvii.1. (Hereafter, *Inquiry on lunatic asylums 1857*)). It was held up as an example of poor facilities and neglectful treatment. Like many of the district asylums built in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century, it had very little in the way of patient comfort. For example, the commissioners heard that the patients in Carlow were 'left to wash in the open courts under the shelter of a shed: and, at most, one bad and imperfectly constructed bath being provided for each side of the building'. Even more worrying was the fact that during their visit of inspection, the commissioners found 'that a man suffering from dropsy was tied down to his bed, and locked up in his cell, without the knowledge of the Resident or Visiting Physician' (*Inquiry on lunatic asylums 1857*, p. 13.) That is not to say that Carlow Asylum was any worse than other asylums of the time. Rather it was used by the commissioners to illustrate some of the problems inherent in the rapidly expanding mental health care system of the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the early asylums had little in the way of sanitation, heating, or ventilation.

In her book, Catherine Cox uses a similar technique to explore the interweaving patterns of family life, economic reality and political pressure, which led to the establishment of a network of district asylums in the first half of the nineteenth century and its rapid expansion as the century came to a close. With unprecedented access to all of the papers from this asylum, Cox takes the reader through the issues that were the subject of debate at the time and remain relevant today. One of these is the tension between central and local government when local money had to be found to improve services to a standard required by central government. As in other asylums, the board of governors at Carlow often ignored or disputed the demands for building improvements emanating from the Lunacy inspectorate. This was understandable in the light of the fact that asylums were an ever-growing burden on the local areas in which they were located.

Another issue explored in great depth by Cox is the way in which policies or laws may have unintended consequences. Using admission records to track the routes into the asylum, she puts flesh on the bones of the debate on the overuse of the 'dangerous lunacy' route into the asylum. The reader also gains new insights into the process of certification through the discussion of doctors' reports and of evidence presented to petty sessions. Now that the process of admission to a mental health service is largely confined to the sphere of medicine, it is difficult for us to imagine that it often took place in the very public space of the courtroom. While the purpose of judicial certification was to protect the interests of the individual patient, it is clear from Cox's research that this did not always happen.

In the final chapters of the book, the reader is given a detailed description of the population in the asylum in terms of age, marital status and gender, together with a discussion on the forms of therapy and treatment available in the nineteenth century. As

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.

PAULINE PRIOR
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast

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-