

negotiated their evolving role as a legislative and judicial body in England. As Michael Braddick shows, Parliament portrayed their actions as defensive and based on historical precedent. His analysis of how Parliament legitimated its authority provides food for thought for scholars of the Confederation of Kilkenny in Ireland.

While Morrill's work on biography and religion is impressive, by far his greatest contribution, from the perspective of Irish history, was his ability to incorporate Ireland and Scotland into his discussions of early-modern England. Several of his works engage with the problem of 'British and Irish' history. This field of historical inquiry is problematic, however; it is an undisciplined discipline. Indeed, Morrill's attempts to define methodologies of 'British' history have not met with widespread acceptance. Although the purpose of the book is to celebrate, as opposed to critique, Morrill's work, it would have been interesting had some contributors engaged with the challenges presented by at least the more notable critics of New British History. Mary Geiter investigates how William Penn's experiences in Britain and Ireland shaped his political outlook in colonial America while articles by Joong-Lak Kim and Declan Downey deal with events in Scotland and Ireland, but their focus is precisely on those geographical regions. In fact, none of the articles could be considered as adopting a 'three kingdoms' or 'Britannic' approach despite the editors' claim that the book does so. What about the limitations of 'British' and 'Atlantic World' history? For example, Ariel Hessayon's essay deals with the attempted embezzlement of the Jewish community in London; yet, Europe provides a key context for his discussion. Similarly, the marriage contract between Henrietta Maria and Charles I (as discussed by Dagmar Freist in this collection) provided the basis for anti-popish sentiment in London in the 1640s. Nonetheless, this contract was framed with wider European politics in mind. All these issues pose many questions for historians to address. How can scholars of British and Irish history incorporate both the Old World and the New in their work? Has the explosion of Atlantic World studies forced historians to look west while ignoring Europe?

Such considerations aside, this is a valuable contribution to the historiography of the English Revolution. Irish historians will once again be reminded of how Ireland and Scotland were laboratories for the British Empire. The essayists stress the importance of the language of contemporary polemics, and the use of biography may be useful for Irish historians interested in a prosopographical analysis of the significance of the 1640s during the Confederate wars in Ireland. Its omissions should provoke historians to think about Britain and Ireland's place in Old and New World political and religious affairs and prompt further debate on New British History. As it stands therefore, *The experience of revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland* is a fitting tribute to one of the leading scholars of early modern Britain.

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A HISTORY OF THE IRISH NOVEL. By Derek Hand. Pp x, 341. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2011. £55.

Until fairly recently it was a set-piece post-colonial flourish to posit that the faltering evolution of the Irish novel revealed a contingent history of political difficulty, the genre exposing in print the fractures, repressions and inconsistencies of a national struggle for definition. This compelling but unhealthy critical symbiosis has now unravelled somewhat, thanks in part to the realignment of transnational perspectives inspired by Franco Moretti's 1998 *Atlas of the European novel*, and in part again to the efforts of various Irish-based archivists of the subject. Rolf and Magda Loeber's exhaustive 2006 anatomy of Irish novels over nearly three centuries (*A guide to Irish fiction, 1650–1900*)

blasted through conventional descriptions of a relentlessly enervated form; J. W. Foster's similarly provocative 2008 *Irish novels, 1890–1940* put into play a surprisingly broad array of popular fiction in the Revival period, breaking down long-held myths of Irish exceptionalism and, indeed, of the Irish novel's supposedly unremitting formal and constitutional fragility.

Our attachment to the novel's history as a means of telling the Irish story (or a version of it) remains strong, nevertheless, and in framing the subject Derek Hand wisely recognises the value of this construction together with its limitations. Simply put, he argues that the Irish novel remains the form best suited to exposing the contradictions of a historical progression – contained and ordered on one hand, dissolute and conflicted on the other – which frustrates linear evolution towards modernity. This is a generous opening position and the book's introduction tends a little towards bagginess, even sententiousness, as a result: there is too much protesting here, I think, about the Irish novel managing to be both mundane *and* magical, both journalistic *and* picaresque, both nationally specific *and* universally 'human'. But then the territory is so dogged by critical tension that perhaps a bold if bland pluralism is the best route through it, in the interests of getting the job done with some degree of comprehensiveness.

Beyond the slightly uneven introduction, this book offers an informed and lively engagement with Irish fiction's pedigree. Hand pursues a chronology of the novel's development with a firm grip of essentials: there are few diversions into archival obscurity or eccentricity, and instead a solid recuperation of what has become, like it or not, a recognisable Irish novelistic canon. From early seventeenth-century origins and an account of Richard Head's *The English rogue* (1665), we plunder the novelistic repercussions of 1690; the self-fashioned tale-spinners of the eighteenth century; the repressed Victorians with their exuberant Gothicism on one hand, worthy historical realists on the other, and the *fin de siècle* decadents squeezed in before Ireland's late burst into modernity, astutely and very elegantly routed through George Moore. In amongst these, inter-chapters on Edgeworth, Joyce, Bowen and McGahern help complete a survey which stays admirably close to actual texts and their analysis.

Again, the push for inclusivity leads to a rather shallow treatment of more obscure works, and Hand misses opportunities for the revision of a traditional lineage. William Carleton still gets extensive star treatment as peasant savant, Charles Lever is still passed over in a paragraph of complaint about his Irish burlesque, with no attempt to interrogate – against a critical grain – the extraordinary productivity and popularity of this writer in the context of European publishing fashions (p. 88). To compensate, the book is excellent on the bureaucratic fiction of an emerging modern state. Hand's expert readings of Peadar O'Donnell, Sam Hanna Bell and Ben Kiely (whom he has long championed as a leading chronicler of midlands *ennui*) show a willingness to push out the boundaries of twentieth-century critical narratives on the novel, while his situation of *Finnegans wake* (1939) as an end-point to the formal evolution of Irish fiction, Joyce's universalist ambitions closing the door on nineteenth-century models of cultural insularity, is convincing and apposite. Inevitably readers will start cavilling again over the final sections of this *History* and the coverage of a contemporary fictional output which has yet (as the author acknowledges) to settle its critical colours. Does Seamus Deane really deserve so much space, Edna O'Brien so little? Why is Chris Binchy here, but no Hugo Hamilton? The volatility of the contemporary Irish novel is reasonably well managed however, and Hand successfully resists the easy escape route of a blanket 'post-nationalism'.

In sum, this is a lucid, pragmatic and authoritative route-map which will deservedly take its place on the 'background reading' booklists for the subject. The question it foregrounds, meanwhile, is whether, indeed, the Irish novel may still be recruited to tell the 'Irish story': is it national history by another means or has determinism had its day? Intriguing in Hand's account are occasional brief glimpses of an alternative exploratory framework – an economic one – composed of the dynamics of printing evolution, copyright laws, trade circuits, libraries and readerships, and international networks of

production and distribution. Current scholarship trends in book history should further illuminate this version of Ireland's novelist heritage in coming years, and may ultimately present a very different portrait of the Irish fictional tradition.

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THE ALCHEMY OF MEDICINE AND PRINT: THE EDWARD WORTH LIBRARY, DUBLIN. Edited by Danielle Westerhof. Pp 224, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2010. €55.

This interdisciplinary collection of essays originated from a conference in 2008, which was hosted by the Royal Society in London to celebrate the 275th anniversary of the foundation of the Edward Worth Library in 1733. The library acquired trust status in the 1990s and is housed in the Health Service Executive building in Dublin, formerly Dr Steevens's hospital. The books in the library remain in their original cases in the room specifically designed for them. The library contains works dedicated to historical, alchemical, astronomical, mathematical, medical and philosophical topics.

In the majority of cases, the essays are concerned either with the founder of the library himself, the noted physician, Edward Worth, or the items he purchased for his collection. Collectively they explore themes such as the connection between medicine and philosophy; the relationship between medicine and the printed word; the foundation and use of private medical libraries; the interaction between author, text and audience; and how medical education was shaped along confessional lines in the early modern period.

Lisa Lambert's piece is a prosopographical study of the membership of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in Dublin during the 1690s. It explores not altogether uncharted territory in its portrayal of the shared political, religious (Protestant) and educational backgrounds of these men, the founding fathers of the college. Davis Coakley's contribution is an intelligent case study of Edward Worth's milieu (as part of Dublin's professional elite), his medical career and book-collecting practices. Using library catalogues of four Irish physicians of the later Stuart era (including Worth himself), Elizabethanne Boran argues that elite members of the Irish medical profession were acutely aware of contemporary debates and developments in continental chemistry. Similarly, Jean-Paul Pittion examines medical developments in Europe through a detailed examination of the medical collection of Marsh's Library, Dublin, founded in 1701 and incorporated in 1707. He argues that the collection contains not only texts indebted to traditional Galenic medicine but is reflective of more 'modern', late seventeenth-century, medical developments. Charles Benson's essay contends that the Protestant professional elite in Ireland (including luminaries such as Samuel Foley, William Molyneux, St George Ashe, and William King) collected books not just as status symbols, or to cater for their own personal interests, but to educate their peers and familiarise them with new scientific ideas.

On quite a different note, Bill McCormack explores the universal language project in seventeenth-century British science and philosophy through a literary critique of Maria Edgeworth's four-volume novel, *Patronage*, published in 1814. Michael Hunter examines Robert Boyle's attitude to print, contending that Boyle, a leading scientist and prolific publisher, believed in the 'crucial yet normative role of print' (p. 110), and as a result sought to control the reception and distribution of his own scientific treatises. Danielle Westerhof's article explores an agricultural treatise written in Latin in 1306, of which Edward Worth bought two copies. Worth's interest in the work is seen here to have been sparked, in common with many before and after him, by its implicit medico-philosophical theme of the maintenance and restoration of health.

Ilham Ibnou-Zahair's 'meditation of the troubled identity of the healer from Hippocrates to Avicenna ... raises the issue of the relationship between medicine and