An Irish Clerisy of Political Economists? Friendships and Enmities Amongst the Mid-Victorian Graduates of Trinity College, Dublin

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Eagleton, T. *Scholars Et Rebels in Nineteenth Century Ireland.* Blackwell. Oxford, 2000. Pp. 177. ISBN 0-631-21445-3.

Terry Eagleton, the Thomas Warton Professor of English Literature at Oxford University and irreverent commentator on all things post-modern, has written an astonishing book on that remarkable community of intellectuals that raised Trinity College, Dublin, and indeed the town of Dublin itself, to its cultural and scholastic apogee in the second half of the nineteenth century. The work is the final part of a trilogy of books by Eagleton on the main cultural currents of Irish history, the first two of which were *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (1995) and *Crazy John and the Bishop* (1998). The intellectuals he examines in the final part of this series include, amongst others, William Wilde (Oscar Wilde's father), Jane Elgee (Lady Wilde), Charles Lever, William Edward Lecky and Samuel Ferguson, and, which will be of slightly more interest to the readers of the hermetic articles of staid economic journals, that curious melange of nineteenth-century Irish political economists, Isaac Butt, T.E. Cliffe Leslie, John Elliot Cairnes and John Kells Ingram. Eagleton is interested less in tracing the individual theoretical contributions of these scholars, and more with delineating their activities as a community or clerisy and, through this exercise, meditating on the role of the intellectual in society. To this end, he draws upon Antonio Gramsci's celebrated notions of the 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectual to portray the Irish intellectual community as being torn between old and new visions of the intellectual's function; that is, between the 'traditional' intellectual's search for transcendent values through disinterested inquiry and the 'organic' intellectual's employment of knowledge as a 'practical, emancipatory force' (1999:2). Eagleton argues that, as the nineteenth century progressed, Irish intellectuals shifted their allegiance between these two visions (in either direction) in response to the rising threat of Gaelic nationalism. He therefore, not surprisingly, depicts the intellectual as having a social purpose, opening his work with the following striking definition: 'Not all intellectuals are intelligent, and not all the intelligent are intellectuals. The word "intellectual", like "hairdresser" or "chief executive", denotes a social function rather than a personal quality' (1999:1). Such epigrammatic agility and felicity of style is a feature of the book, and Eagleton may be seen as sustaining that great English tradition of writing on literary, cultural and sociological matters—including all of those fertile 'isms' of disreputable European origins that recently nearly brought this tradition to an end—in a way that any educated reader, with a little effort, can comprehend. My only complaint is that, as with most writers in the field of cultural studies, he is not above affronting the senses by employing the occasional jarring neologism and, which is only slightly less pernicious, rushing forward from one observation to the next without spelling out their implications in a declaratory manner. It is indeed becoming increasingly apparent to me that closure of argument is left to the reader in cultural studies, and

this perhaps explains why Eagleton's chapters end abruptly and the book itself has no concluding chapter.

It also must be admitted that Eagleton does not actually shed any new light on the 'ABC' of the theoretical models normally associated with the aforementioned Irish political economists. He does, however, clearly provide a better understanding of the social milieu and broader conceptual frameworks which spawned these models. He portrays Butt, Leslie, Ingram and Cairnes as a loose group of heterogeneous economists, within a broader clerisy, struggling to come to terms with the unfolding tragedy of Irish history and, as already mentioned, the associated rise of Gaelic nationalism. Their economic and social doctrines are consequently represented as predominantly unorthodox in nature, sociological in scope, 'activist' in intent and possessing 'capacious Humanism'. Eagleton is thereby following Raymond Williams (whom he clearly admires) and other lesser twentieth-century cultural critics of the English left, in depicting Victorian scholars as being caught in vast and overpowering cultural currents, against which some fought, but with which most were happy to be carried along. Eagleton has, in fact, used this very same technique to famous effect on an earlier occasion for a more recent generation of scholars in *Illusions of Post-Modernism* (1996), in which he contended, for reasons far too complex to consider in the small compass of this review, that the rise of post-modernism towards the end of the last century was predominantly a reaction to (or should that be 'constructed by') the triumphant advance of free-market capitalism and the associated destruction of the old-fashioned left (I baulk at employing the clumsy, but more apposite label, 'old new-left'). In any event, as a non-economist armed with the new-fangled tools from the flourishing discipline of cultural studies and the very reasonable idea that agents are buffeted by complex historical forces beyond their control, Eagleton at once provides a fresh take on the Victorian political economists of Irish descent and, understandably for a generalist rather than a specialist, makes some frightful omissions and peculiar choices in narrative emphasis. Thus, to take only a few examples, he provides a fresh account of Cairnes's pre-Popperian criticism of historicism and a very reasonable sketch of Leslie's innovative anti-realist (or anti-essentialist) attack on the theories of the classical economists, yet he overlooks entirely Leslie's complex Baconian criticisms of the orthodox deductive method and, still more astonishingly, fails to even mention the English *Methodenstreit* or 'Battle of Methods', which monopolised the attention of the Irish economists after 1865. This last omission is the least excusable of these historiographical oversights, as this methodological dispute is clearly delineated in the literature cited by Eagleton, and, more importantly, it was via this debate that Leslie, Ingram and to a lesser extent Cairnes articulated their policy proposals for economic and social reform in Ireland.

Eagleton's curious narrative decisions relating to political economy are nonetheless a small price to pay for the picture he paints of the broader intellectual community of Victorian Ireland, and I suspect that no historian of economic thought will hereafter be able to write on the Irish political economy of this time without first directing the reader to this work for background reading. Indeed, for this reason, rather than continue to highlight faults in this cultural history in a way that would only be of interest to an over-specialised antiquarian like myself, I devote the remainder of this review to presenting some highly qualified criticisms of Eagleton's principal objective, namely, his quest to identify a burgeoning Irish intellectual community in the nineteenth century and to describe the different

(Gramscian) ways in which its members reacted to the historical forces then operating. My chief query relates to the extent to which the mid-Victorian Irish political economists either themselves constituted an intellectual community or were even distantly part of a wider intellectual community. At one stage Eagleton argues that there was a tight-knit social clique centred on the over-grown market town of Dublin and its most important Anglo-Irish institution, Trinity College. To this end he draws upon Noel Annan's *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* ([1951] 1984), arguably one of the greatest biographies of a Victorian yet written, in which Annan described the rise of an English intellectual aristocracy: 'Certain families established an intellectual ascendancy and began to share the spoils of the professional and academic worlds between their children. These children intermarried and formed a class of able men and women who drew into that circle people of intellectual distinction' (*ibid*:3). An extended family is thereby woven from the Thorntons, Macaulays, Stephens, Russells and Woolfs, and a long thread is drawn between the intellectually honest Clapham Set and the intellectually arrogant Bloomsbury Group. Eagleton maintains that a similar (but admittedly looser) intellectual aristocracy emerged from the incestuous melange of Victorian Dublin (2000:40ff), with its members making their mark as doctors, lawyers, political economists and, above all, amateur scholars. Now, although Eagleton has perhaps failed to take sufficient account of the class, racial, religious and regional forces acting to hinder the emergence of an Irish clerisy, (the Belfast-Dublin divide is almost overlooked completely), I believe that he has successfully identified an Irish intellectual community of sorts. He has done this less by tracing formal links between its members and more by recounting the scandals and famous witticisms that usually emerge from community interaction. This effectively means that the anecdote of the drunkard and spendthrift Isaac Butt prosecuting his friend William Wilde for sexually assaulting one of his maids (*ibid*:51) serves as a protocol statement in the same way that would the assertion that these two individuals attended the same clubs, scholarly meetings or dinner parties. Yet, and this is my main concern, Eagleton makes no effort to construct a community amongst the Irish political economists. It is as if he was hoping that readers would carry over the sense of community created in the earlier chapters to their reading of the chapter specifically devoted to the political economists. This oversight is undoubtedly due to the paucity of comment on such matters in the secondary literature, which hitherto has been preoccupied with R. D. C. Black's research program of tracing the subjectivist doctrinal theme running through the heretical publications of the holders of the Whately Chair of Political Economy at Trinity College, Dublin (Black 1945, 1947a, 1947b; see, however, Boylan and Foley 1984). It is an oversight nonetheless.

The issue therefore arises as to whether or not there was a community, in any form, of which the Irish political economists were a part. Those who want a definitive answer to this question must wait for an industrious doctoral student who has ready access to the relevant archives scattered through Ireland and elsewhere. Some provisional conclusions may nevertheless be drawn. All the political economists considered by Eagleton were of Anglo-Irish descent and had attended Trinity College, which was then the institutional epicentre for economic proselytism in Ireland. It is, indeed, noteworthy to say the least that Cairnes, Leslie, William Edward Hearn and Richard Hussey Walsh were members of the same Junior Freshman Class of 1842-3 of this institution (see Ingram 1888:ix ; Butchaell and Sadlier 1924), a fact which I have yet to see cited in the secondary literature.

This surely must be one of the greatest freshman classes in the history of the discipline of economics. Admittedly Walsh became a minor political economist at best, and is now chiefly remembered (if at all) for *Elementary Treatise on Metallic Currency* (1853), but Cairnes's *Slave Power* (1862), *Some Leading Principles* (1874) and *Character and Logical Method* (1857, 1875), Leslie's *Land Systems* (1870) and *Essays in Political Economy* (1879, 1888) and Hearn's *Plutology* (1863) are patently well above the common ruck. It is, moreover, highly likely that these undergraduates became acquainted with Ingram, who is now chiefly remembered for the highly successful *History of Political Economy* (1888), and who had entered Trinity a few years earlier in 1837, graduated in 1843, and gained a fellowship in 1846. These five scholars were of roughly the same age in 1843—Ingram was 20, Leslie was 16, Cairnes was 20, Walsh was 18, and Hearn was 17—and it is probable that they were all exposed to, but not necessarily beguiled by, the heretical teachings on value of the early holders of the Whately Chair. The writings of Samuel Montifort Longfield, the first holder of this Chair, were certainly prescribed and revered at Trinity well into the 1870s (Black 1945:143). It is, by contrast, more difficult to delineate the precise relationships of these five contemporaries with Butt, since he was older (30 in 1843), had graduated from Trinity in 1835, and, as a precocious scholar, had already made a career as a political economist, holding the Whately Chair from 1836 to 1841. It is also difficult to trace the relationships (if any) of these contemporaries with the other slightly older and younger holders of the Whately Chair, namely James Anthony Lawson (26 in 1843 and holder of the chair in the years 1841-1846), William Neilson Hancock (23 in 1843 and holder of the chair in the years 1846-1851), and Arthur Houston (10 in 1843 and holder of the chair in the years 1861-66). My deliberations from this point on will therefore turn on the social and professional relationships that developed between Leslie, Ingram, Cairnes, Hearn and Walsh, even though Eagleton does not mention the final two of the scholars in his own case study.

As one would expect, these contemporaries went their separate ways as their careers progressed. Their professional paths nonetheless did cross in their mad scramble to secure the limited number of academic posts then available and, in most cases, they maintained a close connection with Trinity for many years: Ingram held various prestigious professorial and administrative posts at Trinity for the rest of the century and became an examiner of the candidates for the Whately Chair at Trinity; Walsh held the Whately Chair from 1851 to 1856 before relocating to Mauritius to become an inspector of schools and to meet an early death in 1862; Cairnes succeeded Walsh as holder of the Whately Chair from 1856 to 61 before accepting professorial positions at Queens College, Galway, and University College, London; and Leslie unsuccessfully attempted to succeed Cairnes to the post at University College, London, in 1872. It also must be noted that, although Leslie seemed to be sidelined from this circuit of more prestigious posts, dividing his time between London and the less impressive (part-time) chair of Jurisprudence and Political Economy at Queens College, Belfast from 1853 until his death in 1882, he still maintained a close connection with Trinity College. He read papers before the Dublin Statistical Society in the early 1850s and (along with Walsh, Cairnes and Hearn) delivered public addresses as a Barrington lecturer, a position then overseen by that society; the Provost and Senior Fellows of Trinity honoured him by publishing on his behalf a selection of his articles under the title *Essays in Moral and Political Philosophy* (1879); and he was asked to examine the candidates for the Whately Chair shortly before his death in 1882 (*Ingram Papers*,

D2808/43/15, Jan 16, 1882). Hearn seems to be the only one to make a complete break from Trinity and to drop out of this professional orbit early, when he resigned his chair in Greek at Queens College, Galway, to migrate to the Antipodes in the early 1850s, where he subsequently became celebrated as the first Australian political economist. In fact, there appears to be no extant correspondence between Hearn and his undergraduate colleagues, and, apart from a single reference to *Plutology* in Ingram's encyclopaedic history (1885:399; see also 1888:ix), there is no mutual recognition between him and the others in their respective published works on political economy. It is also interesting to note that, for all their professional proximity, and despite their common Trinity background and possible exposure to the heretical tradition of subjectivist political economy at Trinity, this group of contemporaries could not be said to have constituted a doctrinal school. Leslie and Ingram championed an activist historicism and called for a research program entailing the study of evolving consumer preferences; Hearn dwelt on the role of static consumer preferences in conferring value on objects, in a way that caught the eye of Alfred Marshall; Cairnes rejected both the static and dynamic subjectivist programs when he paused at the orthodox half-way house between the classicals and neoclassicals; and Walsh's limited economic writings demonstrate only that they had nothing in common with the aforementioned research programs. These contemporaries were instead, as Eagleton would wish to portray them, a loose community of scholars who knew each other (whether they liked it or not), stood in each other's way for the limited number of academic posts, bumped into each other at scholarly meetings in their formative years, and were exposed to the same social and economic stimuli.

The sense of community and personal interaction experienced by these contemporaries is most dramatically reflected in the friendships and, as one would expect from a group of self-important academics on the make, the deep-seated animosities that developed between them. The palpable distaste that Cairnes and Leslie had for each other is certainly one of the most dramatic mutual loathings in the history of economic thought that I have come across. The only modern historian to have commented on this sour affair is Gerald M. Koot (1975:323-4), whose many pioneering works on the English *Methodenstreit* are, surprisingly, not cited by Eagleton. Koot attributes the hostility between Cairnes and Leslie partly to their doctrinal differences, partly to Leslie's resentment that Cairnes held a chair at University College, London, while he held only a provincial chair at Belfast, and partly to Leslie's jealousy of Cairnes's relationship with their mutual friend, John Stuart Mill, when all three resided predominantly in London in the 1860s and early 1870s. There is definitely evidence for the first of these claims, with the historicist Leslie repeatedly complaining that the orthodox Cairnes deliberately failed to cite his writings in an effort to stifle the rise of the historical school. In Leslie's words: 'Mr. Cairnes was careful throughout his economic career to draw no attention to my views, and never to name them: but I believe I was, and am, the exponent of the ideas and tendencies of a new generation of economists already numerous on the continent, whom no silence on the part of the followers of Ricardo can prevent getting the ear of the public' (cited in Anonymous 1883:323; see also Koot 1975:323). There may also be something in Koot's inference that Leslie was jealous of both Cairnes's professional career and his relationship with Mill. It is clear from the correspondence between Mill and Leslie, for instance, that Leslie struggled throughout the 1860s to publish in suitable journals and to gain either a financially rewarding or professionally reputable academic post. Mill consequently

took it upon himself to act as Leslie's mentor. He promoted Leslie's views on peasant proprietorships and other issues between 1861 until his death in 1873; he recommended Leslie's writings to the editors of the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Westminster Review*; and he proposed Leslie to Cairnes as the latter's locum at University College in 1867 and then as his successor when Cairnes retired due to ill health in 1872. In relation to this last issue, Mill suggested to Cairnes in 1867 that 'Leslie is, next to you, by far the fittest person I know to fill the place, among those who would take it' (*Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, July 1867, letter 1117). Yet, for all this, Mill was probably closer to Cairnes and, worse, Cairnes not only chose to support Leonard Courtney's ultimately successful push for the London post, but also actively denigrated Leslie in the process: 'I dare say you have gathered that I have no particular admiration or liking for him' (Cairnes to Courtney, 4 Aug. 1867, *Courtney Collection*, quoted in Koot 1975:324). Poor Mill must at times have felt like a father figure caught between two wayward and recalcitrant disciples, especially when Leslie explicitly complained to him, as a child would complain when a sibling monopolises a toy, that publishers hung on Cairnes's every word. I nonetheless suspect that these jealousies over doctrinal, professional and mentoring issues, though real, were just as much symptoms as causes of Cairnes's and Leslie's mutual dislike. Academics simply do not operate in a vacuum, and animus of this singular intensity is invariably driven by personality differences that emerge after personal interaction, whether this interaction takes the form of a sneer in response to a lame joke, absent-mindedly cutting short someone's anecdote, or a drunken squabble over an issue of no consequence. The fact that both were nearly always in pain—with the uncongenial and arrogant Cairnes virtually paralysed from a rheumatic disease and the embittered and paranoid Leslie incapacitated by an unspecified crippling malady—probably also did not help matters. They may have deserved each other.

The breathtaking mutual antipathy between Cairnes and Leslie was matched only by the mutual goodwill between Ingram and Leslie. It is apparent from the extensive correspondence between Ingram and Leslie that the two had a close friendship and that, over time, this friendship was sealed tight by their incessant plotting to bring an end to the (real or imaginary) orthodox hegemony in political economy and to crown historical economics in its stead. It is indeed noteworthy that very nearly every letter from Leslie to Ingram contains some reference to the best strategy by which to promote their historicist views, and, as if these two were the templates for C. P. Snow's meditations on academics, earnest gossip on the subject of who was for them and who was against them. Henry Sidgwick, for instance, is singled out as a critic and William S. Jevons as a friend; Arnold Toynbee is said to be suspicious of Herbert S. Foxwell from Cambridge; James Johnston Shaw, the holder of the Whately Chair in the late 1870s, is pigeon-holed as narrow, unfair and not to be trusted; Frederick Pollock is presumed to be the one who is providing favourable unsigned reviews of Leslie in the *Pall Mall Gazette*; Frederick Harrision is accused of slipping back to the orthodoxy of the old school because he has finally realised that he cannot displace Leslie as the leader of the new; a recent graduate of Cambridge, Joseph S. Nicholson, is (mistakenly) described as a future historical economist; the editors of the *Athenaeum* and *Pall Mall Gazette* are labelled as supporters, but the *Economist* as a whole is said not to be civil; and so on (see *Ingram Papers*, various letters). This conspiratorial dialogue naturally extended to Ingram and Leslie actively promoting each other in the market place. To take just one illustration, Leslie encouraged his good friend

Jevons to correspond with Ingram on the life of Richard Cantillon (on whom Jevons was then writing), and it was Jevons who subsequently put Ingram's name forward as the scholar most suitable to write the political economy entry for the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It should also be no surprise that Leslie recruited Ingram in his whispering campaign against Cairnes (even after Cairnes's death), at one stage writing: 'You may have noticed that Cairnes never would allude to me, even while giving a string of names of economists. This he did hoping to surpass me & all opponents to his dogmatism. Next to Ricardo I look on him as the man who has done most to obstruct the progress of philosophy [indecipherable] to society, by bolstering up a false method of investigation as well as false doctrines' *(Ingram Papers* D2808/43/32 undated, but c1878). Ingram himself did not seem to need much prompting to disparage Cairnes (who was an arch-critic of the Comtean framework to which Ingram adhered), and, after Leslie's death, he did his best to destroy the reputation of the former and to puff the reputation of the latter. To this end Ingram wrote a eulogistic entry on Leslie in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and devoted just as much space to him as to more important economists in the main entry on political economy. Ingram (with a young Charles F. Bastable) also re-edited Leslie's *Essays in Moral and Political Philosphy* in 1888 as *Essays in Political Economy*. By contrast, Ingram described Cairnes's *Logical Method* as a retrogression in methodology, and wrote of his *Leading Principles*: 'Whilst marked by great ability, it affords evidence of what has been justly observed as a weakness in Cairnes's mental constitution—his deficiency in intellectual sympathy, and consequent frequent inability to see more than one side of a truth' (1885:380-1). It is also probably not by chance that Ingram wrote all of the biographical entries on the political economists in the *Britannica* except the one on Cairnes, which was written, in far more cordial tones than Ingram would doubtlessly have struck, by Robert Adamson of Owens College, Manchester.

The unhealthy enmities and friendships that developed between those who remained in the British Isles could not, of course, extend to those, like Walsh and Hearn, who were forced to migrate to the extremities of the empire. There is, however, evidence that some of the Alma Mater of 1842-3 either kept in contact with Hearn or at least recognised him as a contemporary who had made a name for himself. For example, even though archival research has yet to yield any letters between Hearn and his contemporaries, it is clear that they did in fact correspond on occasion, since Leslie once related to Ingram that 'Hearn has written to me that he has failed to get a copy of my *Essays*' (*Ingram Papers*, D2808/43/22, 21 Feb, c1879). Also, despite the paucity of mutual recognition between Hearn and the others in their respective works on political economy, Leslie did write an unsigned review of Hearn's *Aryan Household* (1879). This review can be identified as Leslie's handiwork from his correspondence with Ingram (*Ingram Papers*, D2808/43/18, Jan 27, c1879), and although Leslie uses the review to gently admonish Hearn for departing from the principles of historical jurisprudence laid down by his hero Sir Henry Maine, the tone of the piece is overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, the review ends with the assertion that Hearn's book 'does great honour to the author's Alma Mater' (Leslie 1879:119). There is also indirect evidence that Hearn and Cairnes kept abreast of each other's careers. In a remarkable letter from one F. W. Moffat to Hearn,—which was only purchased at auction in 1961 and was therefore initially unavailable to Hearn's biographer La Nauze (1949)—Moffat sheds a great deal of light on Hearn's early life by recounting what had happened to their contemporaries at Queens College, Galway,

where Hearn had held the chair in Greek before gaining his position at Melbourne University in 1854 and where Cairnes had held the (part-time) chair of political economy and jurisprudence a little later, from 1858 to 1867 (*Hearn Papers*, Box 2/2, Grp 5/1, 25 August, 1887). At one stage Moffat stated that the sister of the wife of a mutual friend of theirs, William Nesbitt, had married Cairnes, and, giving the impression that the latter was an old associate of Hearn's, added that the sister survived Cairnes, who died 'universally lamented' (*ibid*)—a judgement with which Leslie would surely have disagreed. In another remarkable letter from Houston (the 1861-66 holder of the Whately Chair) to a Mr Webb (whom I have not been able to identify), which is in the Hearn Papers and therefore must have been passed on to Hearn, Houston provides a glowing review of *Plutology*. He does nonetheless query both the title of Hearn's book and the broadness with which he maps out the borders of political economy. In support of these views Houston wrote: 'I wonder whether Mr Hearn had read our friend Cairnes's Definition & Logical Method of Political Economy. He seems doubtful whether the limits of the science are accurately fixed. In my mind Cairnes's Definition as given in the little work alluded to completely settles the question' (*ibid*, Box 2/2, Grp 5/1, Dec 1863). No doubt other links between Hearn and those from his undergraduate years will surface in time.

Readers of this critical review, while perhaps concurring with my representation of the slightly ludicrous nature of relationships between overly ambitious and excessively earnest academics, may cavil at some of the historical verdicts I have drawn on the basis of the proverbial lonely fact, the occasional tenuous inference and some well-placed adjectives ('conspiratorial dialogue'!, 'whispering campaign'!). To be sure, there is a want of information relating to the early years of the Trinity contemporaries whom I have chosen to target, and for this reason I can only speculate about the extent to which they interacted as young men. Is, for instance, Leslie Stephen accurate in claiming that Cairnes led an aimless life, without any interest in political economy, until he came under the influence of Nesbitt in 1855 (Stephen 1917: 668)? Did Hearn seek the Whately chair before attempting to improve his prospects in Melbourne? Was Leslie beaten to the Whately Chair by either Cairnes or Walsh? To what extent did Walsh's Catholicism, which barred him from a fellowship at Trinity and forced him to pursue the Whately Chair, set him apart from the others (Carlyle 1917)? Did Leslie's heritage of notable clergymen grate with Cairnes's background in brewing? And were Cairnes *et al.* in the audience when Leslie read his first paper on political economy at an 1851 meeting of Dublin Statistical Society (Fetter 1968: 261)? But, as I argued earlier, these and other unanswered questions relating to the Trinity graduates of the 1840s are simply prompts for further research, and they definitely should not stand in the way of drawing provisional conclusions, especially if they are clearly stated as such. I certainly believe that Eagleton's analysis of the intellectual positions of Butt, Ingram, Leslie and Cairnes would have benefited from one or two paragraphs drawing these figures together at a social and scholastic level. A clerisy, after all, does not spring forth fully formed when individuals are suddenly exposed to the same social and economic stimuli, even if, as in this case, these stimuli took the form of Irish cottiers dying by the score on one's doorstep and Fenians committing the most appalling outrages. For all this, I am sure that Eagleton would be bemused by my overly specialised deliberations. It is clear that he has a number of fish to fry, and it should not be forgotten that the Victorian political economists of Ireland are the subject of only one of the five

chapters that constitute the book under review. There is also little doubt that, as with his other writings, he has made a contribution to the literature. Eagleton may occasionally ride roughshod over the specialist's domain, and he may be a little too breezy and sardonic to inherit the torch passed from Mathew Arnold to F. R. Leavis and I. V. Richards and then to Raymond Williams, but he is without question one of the leading English cultural critics of his generation, he has an eye for the ridiculous, he never fails to impress, and he definitely should not be ignored.

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