

Christian chronology as a long-established intellectual tenet only recently put into question. The book concludes by projecting these debates onto the twenty-first century, particularly in those aspects concerning the so-called conflict between science and religion in Western societies, including the challenges introduced by the emergence of Darwinism and biblical literalism in the nineteenth century and the most recent Young Earth creationism in the United States.

Dal Prete's is a well-researched book of history and, most importantly, proof of how and why good and nuanced history is necessary to revisit invisible tenets of our contemporary societies, such as secularism and the connections between science and social life.

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They Flew: A History of the Impossible. Carlos Eire.
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023. xviii + 492 pp. \$35.

Carlos Eire sets this history of early modern levitations and bilocations against modern notions of the impossible. Like others before him, he notes that “the very era that gave birth to aggressive skepticism and empirical science” (1) also witnessed a florescence of claims about the marvelous, the miraculous, and the malevolently demonic. He also shows how those claims were fiercely contested in their own terms, irrespective of the modern frameworks to come. As he notes, the testimonies from which he will draw “themselves self-consciously accept the impossible event as impossible, as well as bafflingly and utterly real” (5).

In the first part of the book, which focuses on saintly levitation, Eire offers two case studies: the famous example of Teresa of Avila and that of the far less known Joseph of Cupertino, who nevertheless has the distinction of “levitating more frequently than any other saint in Christian history” (136). Although both Teresa and Joseph became saints, they also faced suspicion, skepticism, and, especially for Joseph, some nerve-wracking encounters with the Inquisition.

The theme of uncertainty continues in the second part of the book, on bilocation. Here Eire presents just one case study: that of the Spanish nun María of Agredá. Entering the Franciscan order in her youth, she had a brief career as a levitator but became far more famous for her bilocations, proselytizing to Native Americans in New Spain while remaining in her Iberian cloister. Bilocation was even more inscrutable than levitation in that there could be no individual eyewitnesses—that is, no one person could claim to have seen María in both Spain and the New World at the same time. Investigations were launched by both the Franciscan order and the Inquisition. They were long and involved but remained inconclusive.

Eire unpacks these details in a chapter titled “The Trouble with María” (which I dearly wish he had titled “How Do You Solve a Problem Like María”). Even the future

saint was uncertain about how her bilocations actually happened, suggesting that most likely an angel appeared in the New World in her form, and God allowed her to experience how the angel interacted with natives. Obviously, her answers passed some muster, and she remains a subject of veneration in the Catholic Church to this day.

The third part of Eire's study addresses the malevolent side of wondrous claims. The first chapter maintains the case study approach, presenting three Iberian nuns who made claims to mystical sanctity but were each exposed as frauds or failures in some way. Here too, Eire is eager to examine complications. One of the nuns, Luisa de la Ascensión, was accused of fraud by sisters in her own convent. She died while her case was still open before the Inquisition, but then, remarkably, one of her accusers admitted that her accusation was itself fraudulent, born out of jealousy. Luisa was acquitted but not fully rehabilitated.

In his final two chapters, Eire turns to the supposed wondrous acts of demoniacs and witches, and his approach changes too. Here he focuses predominantly on Northern Europe, not Iberia, and instead of a few extended case studies he summarizes the history of possession and witchcraft across the early modern period. Curiously, while he recognizes that the reality of witches' night-flight was contested throughout this period, he does not address that debate until late in his final chapter, noting that "when it came to the devil and his flying witches . . . there could be significant disagreement and surprising turns in any narrative" (351).

In lieu of a conclusion, Eire offers an epilogue with some methodological musings. Throughout the book he stresses that he has generally followed the standard historian's approach of bracketing the actual reality of the events he describes and focusing instead on the narratives those events generated. Here, however, he presents some scholars who question that approach, and he calls attention to what historians might get wrong about the past if they continually place out of bounds the very issue these narratives often raise—the hotly contested reality of seemingly impossible events. Although he does not side explicitly with one position or another, Eire's closing words are not a question but a declaration: "They flew!"

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Humanism, Universities, and Jesuit Education in Late Renaissance Italy.

Paul F. Grendler.

History of Early Modern Educational Thought 4. Leiden: Brill, 2022. xiv + 518 pp. \$174.

This collection of essays by Paul F. Grendler has many merits as well as uses for scholars seeking to understand late Renaissance humanism, universities, and Jesuit education. Twenty chapters in this large volume were produced between 2006 and 2019 by one of the most accomplished scholars in the field of Renaissance history. Their erudition,