The Jesuits and especially their influence upon society and culture, mainly in the early modern period (from the order’s foundation to its suppression), have become a major field of research over the last few decades, and one whose output in terms of published studies has increased exponentially within the last decade. Yet during the same period students and younger scholars undertaking research into this field have increasingly little direct knowledge, let alone personal experience, of Christianity in general or Catholicism specifically, without which understanding of the Jesuits is inevitably limited. Thomas Worcester’s book is therefore timely in that both an overview of recent research and a general introduction for novices, notably non-Catholic ones, to the field, were urgently needed.

The contexts that have provided the fertile ground in which recent studies of the Jesuits have flourished are plural. A major one, initially in continental Europe and subsequently in North America, has been the coincidence of the Annales school’s promotion of (re)examination of archival sources and of wider access to the Jesuit archives; given the order’s system, virtually from its origin, of rigorous recordkeeping, these are a dream for any Annales-type researcher. Not surprisingly, one of the principal locations for such research was, and continues to be, the École des hautes études (since 1975, “en sciences sociales”) in Paris, where various scholars, since the Jesuit François de Dainville who taught there for a couple of decades after the Second World War, have taken Jesuit archives and applied quantitative analysis. This approach has been particularly fruitful in France for studies derived from one of Dainville’s own major fields, (Jesuit) education, but has often tended to treat Jesuit teaching in isolation, without much consideration of the ways in which the Society’s wider mission impacted upon this activity (never intended to become their principal one). Another major context for (re)examination of the Jesuits has—over roughly the last thirty-five years in France (from Jean Delumeau’s *Le catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire*, 1971) and twenty years in the Anglophone world—been the paradigm shift concerning the Counter Reformation (or Catholic Reformation, Catholic renewal, early modern Catholicism, or whatever one may wish to call it). It has enabled historians, including non-Catholic ones, to [re]consider the origin and early development of the order afresh, in terms of its actual social and cultural situation, aware of rather than colored by either opponents’ propaganda or Jesuit apologetic.

Recent studies have investigated many of the fields in or through which Jesuits exercised influence, not surprisingly including their educational and intellectual work (including re-examining their role in advancing modern science), and the modernity of their administrative system. Most of them, however, have derived
from current trends in historical research: focusing on artistic works Jesuits devised (cultural history), or on the order’s impact outside Europe, principally in the ‘New World’—both Americas—and Asia (paralleling and sometimes interacting with early colonialism). Perhaps one of the most revealing areas of research has concerned the Jesuit sodalities, or congregations, which (from Louis Chatellier’s *Europe of the Devout: The Catholic Reformation and the Formation of a New Society* of 1987) has turned attention back to the Jesuits’ primary vocation: reviving faith within the Catholic Church, in the ‘Old World,’ so as thus to transform not only individuals but entire societies, and linking these into an international network.

As an American Jesuit professor with European connections (having read philosophy in Paris and with a history PhD from Cambridge) Thomas Worcester has been able to secure the services of leading experts in each of the fields covered in this *Companion*. This book thus contains several excellent summaries of the current state of knowledge in various fields, such as Nicolas Standaert (Leuven) on the Jesuits in China and Antoni Uçerler (Oxford) on them in Japan, or Stanislaw Obirek (Lodz) on the Jesuits in Eastern Europe and Thomas McCoog (Archivist to the Society’s British archives) on the Jesuit mission to Britain. In terms of responding to current research trends the Society’s global impact is thus addressed, and an excellent essay by Louis Caruana (Heythrop, London, & Vatican Observatory) on Jesuit contributions to the scientific revolution redresses the balance against older accounts; but the order’s impact upon the arts is restricted to a single essay, by Gauvin Bailey (Aberdeen), itself dealing architecture alone, and that only in “colonial Latin America.” Moreover, the Jesuit role in education is represented—bizarrely, to European eyes—by an essay on American Jesuit schools post-restoration, and the sodalities lack the essay they deserve (reduced to a passing mention in an essay on Italy alone). Nevertheless, one can always quibble over topics selected, and overall the essays here are both authoritative and up-to-date.

The (perhaps inevitable) problem with such a work is catering for two divergent audiences, and the Jesuits might now be suffering from their own success in making primary sources widely available, through nearly half a century of their institute in St. Louis publishing English language editions of numerous source texts and related studies at affordable prices; more recently, Google and various Catholic universities have made English language texts of certain documents freely available on the web. This has enlarged the university-educated audience interested in all things Jesuit, and thus attracted by such a *Companion*. But in largely secular Europe (in contrast to the more churchgoing USA) these readers need more background material than is provided here. Within this perspective an essay on the arts in general but specifically related to their devotional usage (one thinks of recent work by Jeffrey Chipps Smith or Walter Melion in the USA, and Ralph Dekoninck in Belgium) would have been helpful. Lu Ann Homza’s essay on “The Religious milieu of the young Ignatius” is useful (also for presenting much material usually