

*Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies*. Edited by Renée Fox, Mike Cronin, and Brian Ó Conchubhair. Abingdon: Routledge, 2021, 518 pp.

Up-to-the-minute history rarely works, but this impressive collection is a valuable exception. Indeed, it is its very determination not only to capture but also to focus on the most recent developments both in Ireland and in Irish studies that makes this collection both a success and also a valuable corrective to the somewhat repetitive ‘deep history’ approach to Irish history. The latter may well work with some Irish communities, both at home and in the diaspora, but there is also a somewhat stale, indeed bitterly backward looking character to it, and notably so from the perspectives of Dublin and of the younger Irish. There is a section in the book on Historicizing Ireland, but most of the book is far more on the here and now. That includes not only Ireland itself but also ‘Global Ireland.’ The present is very much observed in terms of responding to austerity, but Brexit is also part of the context. So, more clearly, is what is referred to as ‘post-Celtic Tiger’ Ireland. Some of the topics are somewhat tangential, and notably so in the section on Theorizing, which, for example, includes two brief pieces on Irish animal studies and Contemporary Irish Studies and the impact of disability. As with most comparable works, and there is no criticism specifically here of Irish studies or of this collection, there is a real failure to engage with the regional and the local. The role and experience of Dublin is particularly underplayed, or, looked at differently, a certain view from Dublin is presented as the panoptic lens. Certainly, other aspects of the capital are neglected. So also with most other parts of Ireland. Regionalism is seriously underplayed, as is localism. Other themes and topics that could have done with attention include crime and, more generally, elements of illegal or semi-legal lifestyles.

It is more pleasant to focus on what is discussed. Here, the range is particularly strong on society and identities, but with an instructive coverage also of aspects of culture and, to a much lesser extent, politics. It is useful to see essays on topics such as sport and Irishness, Irish music studies, histories of Irish fiction, immigration and citizenship, and digital Ireland. Indeed, this range offers a strong model for comparable work on other areas. The collection is much to be welcomed, and hopefully will encourage much debate including over methodology.

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