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Irish Studies as a significant area of teaching and research focus has grown and expanded considerably over the past thirty years. While historically the area may have been the concern of scholars primarily based in the Anglophone world, in the disciplines of literature and historical studies, as this new volume from Routledge reveals, relevant research in the area now includes a much broader range of disciplines and scholars within an increasingly global and multilingual context.

Beginning with the global financial crash of 2008 and its impact (and aftermath) in Ireland, approaches to Irish Studies, much as Irish culture and society itself, has moved on considerably from a people defined by religion and a specific place, as is pointed out in this volume. Increasingly the area has embraced more diverse fields of critical enquiry including queer studies, disability studies, critical race studies, and ecocriticism—fields that have informed dedicated chapters within this volume.

The collection is structured around seven sections that take the reader from an overview of Irish Studies and its development internationally, in the United States and in the non-Anglophone world, to historical studies, the global Ireland experience, conceptions of Irish identity, aspects of Irish culture (including fiction, poetry, theatre, visual culture, music, and sport), contemporary theoretical approaches, and a final section entitled ‘Legacy’ that brings together a variety of reflections on Irish society and culture today and the continuing relevance and resonance of past events and traumas. Each section is preceded by a very helpful overview and introduction that I expect will be particularly appreciated by those seeking initial context and summary for the topics under consideration.

The handbook opens with John Waters’s hugely impressive (in its breadth and depth for a single chapter) overview of the development of Irish Studies in the United States. Moving from a consideration of the intellectual engagement with the academic study of the Irish language, the chapter charts impressively the evolving and complicated nature of Irish Studies as a field of research and teaching in the United States (as well as the main contributors to that development), and the movement from language to culture, literature and history in that engagement. Michael Cronin follows this chapter with a perhaps understandably shorter consideration of Irish Studies in the non-Anglophone world, although here too it is clear that this is an area of increasing significance and indeed of importance with regard to Irish political ‘soft power’ internationally.

Following this overview, part II provides a historical review of the development of major disciplinary areas within Irish Studies, including Irish historical studies (Guy Beiner), state histories (Timothy G. McMahon), folklore (Kelly Fitzgerald), Irish language (Brian Ó Conchubhair), politics (Eoin O'Malley) and Northern Ireland (Dominic Bryan and Gordon Gillespie). A recurring theme in this section is the broadening out and deepening of what Irish Studies refers to; Beiner, for instance, foregrounds the important (and perhaps for too long neglected) work of nonprofessional historians and antiquarians, contending that an 'appreciation of the prolific legacy of antiquarian scholarship can open up other ways of approaching the past' (p. 55).

Reading through this collection one is struck by not just the variety of areas Irish Studies now encompasses but the challenge in trying to bring coherence to such a diverse field. The range of disciplines featured in this collection reflects the changing nature of Irish Studies and the editors must be commended for their achievement in bringing together such a varied and distinguished range of contributors. The increasingly globalised context within which Ireland and Irish Studies now exists is addressed in part III. Here the paradoxes and contradictions of Ireland's position in the world today are addressed—a (post-)modern post-industrial country that hosts European headquarters to most of the major international tech companies and yet deals appallingly with the issue of housing and immigration, evident in high rates of homelessness and, as the editors remark, in Ireland's rating by the US Department of State (along with Romania) as the 'worst country in western Europe for tackling the epidemic of human trafficking' (p. 124). This section begins with chapters dedicated to the Irish diaspora globally (Mike Cronin), in the United States (Liam Kennedy) and Britain (Mary J. Hickman). A striking if unsurprising feature of Ireland's changing global relationships is the increasing importance of Ireland's relationship with Europe (as Martina Lawless details) as Ireland's dependence on its nearest neighbour the UK has declined—a process expedited by the arrival of Brexit. Nonetheless, the UK continues to be a major trading partner and Lawless flags the likely long-term negative impact Brexit will have on the Irish economy, particularly for small to medium enterprises more dependent on trade with the UK. Ireland is today however increasingly an economy dependent on the digital economy, as detailed in Kylie Jarrett's chapter which includes the memorable subtitle 'From Cows to Code' a succinct description of the movement of emphasis within Irish society over the past fifty years.

Part IV of the handbook addresses the complex and challenging (particularly in an Irish context) issue of identities. The transformation of Irish society from a primarily emigrant culture to a country increasingly the recipient of immigrants from a broad range of international contexts is addressed in both Lucy Michael's and Sarah L. Townsend's contributions here. Michael considers the political and policy context of immigration and citizenship in post-austerity Ireland,

examining in more detail the recent experiences of immigrants in terms of housing, work, education and civic and political participation, all areas in which the Irish state has failed to respond effectively. Townsend conversely examines the theme of multiculturalism through an analysis of the evolution of Corktown (Detroit, Michigan) including a consideration of the interlinked nature of race, urban renewal and upward mobility and their relevance to contemporary Irish multiculturalism. Townsend offers an innovative and engaging reminder that there are precedents and parallels between the recent immigrant experience in Ireland and that experienced by Irish emigrants historically.

The issue of gender and Irish Studies since 2008 is addressed by Claire Bracken who identifies a changing discourse, informed increasingly by concerns more with physical realities than with postcolonial or symbolic paradigms, and revealing an increased ‘interest in the politics of matter’ (p. 230). Queer studies has also grown to occupy an increasingly important place in contemporary Irish Studies, reflecting again the changing configuration and values of Irish society itself. However, as Ed Madden observes in his contribution to the handbook, definitions and understandings of ‘queerness’ have evolved to acquire complex meanings. He maps the various resonances and contestations, contending that despite all the progress made in recognising and empowering LGBTQ+ identities in Ireland, such a self-congratulatory narrative may fail ‘to acknowledge voices and communities left out of that story, such as those marginalized by economics, migrant status, race, or HIV stigma’ (p. 247).

In the final part of the ‘Identities’ section, Oliver P. Rafferty examines the place of Catholicism and the Catholic church in contemporary twenty-first-century Ireland. While the Catholic church and Catholic dogma had a pivotal role in how the Irish state developed post-independence, the various scandals and increasing secularisation of Irish society has fundamentally altered the power and position of the church. Nonetheless, most Irish people continue to self-identify as Catholic, revealing the complexity of the changing dynamic in contemporary Ireland. Rafferty maps the changing place and power of the Catholic church and Catholicism in Ireland and identifies as a key weakness in the church ‘its inability to move beyond past regulations and systems’ (p. 268).

Part V of the handbook deals with key aspects of Irish culture including sport, language, literature and the arts. The editors stress correctly, informed by Stuart Hall’s conception of the field, the constantly changing nature of cultural forms, and as such their appropriateness to the equally volatile and contingent nature of Irish identity. This section also emphasises the critical role Irish culture (whether in literature, music, fine art or sport) has played as ‘an important lens’ (Laura Farrell-Wortman: p. 308) through which to comprehend and navigate the contemporary moment. While the contributors reveal contemporary Irish culture in all its myriad forms to be an imaginative space of innovation and contestation, contemporary cultural practitioners also frequently return to Ireland’s past for

content and inspiration evident in the engagement of fiction writers with the nineteenth century in their work (Renée Fox) and of contemporary musicians with seminal moments in Ireland's musical and literary culture (here Méabh Ní Fhuartháin discusses the continuing resonance of Pádraig Mac Piarais's 'Mise Éire' in contemporary performance). The inclusion of a chapter here by Paul Rouse on sport is also a significant indicator both of the significance of sport to Irish people's sense of identity and also the increased engagement in Irish Studies with sport as an important piece of the larger Irish Studies picture; as Rouse observes, 'the very fact of writing about sport has deepened understanding of Irish history and its modern culture' (p. 342).

The inclusion of a section dedicated to 'Theorizing' may seem somewhat redundant in a collection in which all chapters, to a greater or lesser extent, are engaged with aspects of theory and its employment. However, the section concerned foregrounds theoretical paradigms less evident in Irish Studies until relatively recently, including ecocriticism (Nessa Cronin), animal studies (Maureen O'Connor), disability studies (Elizabeth Grubgeld) and new directions in film and media studies (Emma Radley). The final chapter of this section brings psychoanalytic theory to bear on a specific cultural text in Seán Kennedy's illuminating and insightful analysis of Donal Ryan's *The Spinning Heart*. Kennedy persuasively uncovers the novel's repression of economic trauma in stark contrast to the acclaim the novel received for its encapsulation of the suffering the 2008 economic crash brought.

The period since 2008 has been traumatic for more than just the immediate and contemporary challenges it has brought; past traumas have also been highlighted in the period and these inform the final section, appropriately titled 'Legacy'. Here the chapters engage with narratives and historical legacies to discern their resonances within contemporary cultural practice: the ways in which contemporary culture and society attempt to make sense of historical traumas. Kate Costello-Sullivan sees contemporary fiction as providing an important resource (including in the work of Anne Enright) for recuperation and overcoming historical trauma. Margot Gayle Backus and Joseph Valente employ Sebastian Barry's *The Secret Scripture* to contend that the concept of an 'abused Ireland' is both an individual and systemic condition. The increased engagement with the theme of 'Aging' (and aging studies more broadly) in Irish Studies is evident in Margaret O'Neill and Michaela Schrage-Früh's chapter in this section which provides an overview of how Irish essayists, poets and fiction writers have foregrounded the aging body to provide agency and reveal the subjective experiences of older people. A further welcome inclusion here is a chapter on Irish architecture (an area in need of considerably more engagement within Irish Studies) by Brian Ward, who contends that the 2008 crash exposed 'the discipline's precarious position in Ireland's open economy' (p. 448). The post-2008 period was also synonymous with a range of commemorative events (still ongoing) and

Michael Cronin provides an overview of this repackaging of history, contending that the most valuable legacy of the ‘Decade of Commemorations’ may ‘lie in the creative and scholarly work the broad field of Irish Studies furnished in relation to these contemporary celebrations’ (p. 468).

Perhaps appropriately the handbook concludes with a chapter concerned with the single most traumatic event of the past two years (and perhaps of several generations): the Covid-19 pandemic. Here, however, as elsewhere in the collection, there is an innovative engagement with this experience in Malcolm Sen’s consideration of the impact of the pandemic on Irish Studies and on the humanities more broadly, contending hopefully that ‘the biological nature of the coronavirus’s threat, its pathogenic inscrutability, and its attendant alphanumeric nomenclature, makes critical humanistic engagement with COVID-19 crucial’ (p. 472). It is likely that the *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies* will also be a crucial text for students and scholars of Irish Studies for many years to come. It is a timely, comprehensive, innovative and imaginative collection of essays that captures impressively both the evolving and expanding nature of Irish Studies today.

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