

Taken as a collection of essays written by scholars knowledgeable about particular geographic areas, this book can be regarded as a basic reference source for anyone doing research on the Irish diaspora. Still, there are some problems.

Mainly, there's a conceptual slipperiness about just whose "vision of Greater Ireland" is being addressed these essays. Too often the voices that come through are the voices of priests, bishops, ministers, and the like, with little or no attention paid to the visions that might have been circulating in the minds of the "rank and file" of the migrant community. This slant may derive from what has survived in the documentary records on which the contributors rely, to be sure, but it is an issue that qualifies the "visions of Greater Ireland" focus that Barr and Carey tell us is central to their enterprise.

A second, and related, problem has already been mentioned: the general inattention to gender. With a few exceptions, the voices that come through these accounts are male voices, and it is their vision of Greater Ireland that is really being discussed. Did female Irish migrants share that vision? Possibly, but possibly not. Here and there, in any event, are some tantalizing clues to possible gendered patterns that might merit further investigation. One example will have to suffice.

In his essay on the Irish Catholic books imported into Australia, Kevin Molloy notes first that most of the books involved were religious, and he calls attention to the fact that many of these were small, compact volumes probably intended for private reflection or for use during Mass (80–81). He then also notes, however, that rosary beads and similar sacramentals do not make an appearance in bookseller ads until the 1860s. So, who *were* the consumers of the objects being described? Did men and women buy religious texts equally? Or was there a gendered tie to literacy? If the use of sacramentals was mainly associated with women (which I suspect), did something happen in the 1860s with regard to the gendered composition of the Irish migrant population? Or was there an increase in the involvement of women in religious matters? Such questions are simply not raised.

Michael P. Carroll, Wilfrid Laurier University

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Edited by Richard Bourke and Ian McBride, *The Princeton History of Modern Ireland* is an outstanding book and a tribute to the flourishing state of Irish historiography. It begins with six chapters summarizing the state of Irish history from 1541, when the Kingship Act made Henry VIII monarch of Ireland, to the 1998 Belfast Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland and the 2008 financial collapse in the Irish Republic and the recovery from it. These overview chapters are followed by fifteen thematic offerings covering not only political and economic history but also intellectual and cultural history, the history of religion and the Irish language, and gender issues. Of special note are chapters on Ireland's relationship with the British Empire and on the Irish diaspora, a topic sometimes ignored in histories of Ireland, although, as Enda Delaney notes, "No one as yet has come up with an overarching explanation for the scale and duration of Irish emigration since 1600 perhaps because a one-size-fits-all model ... would only serve to conceal the inherent diversity and complexity of the history of this diaspora" (491). Particularly valuable, too, is a chapter on the state of Irish historiography by Bourke. Each chapter is grounded on voluminous reading of secondary sources, summarizes the state of historical research on the topic with which it deals, and concludes with a useful short guide to further reading.

The volume is marked by a unity of approach unusual in such collective works. In a long introduction, Bourke sets out its postrevisionist perspective, putting forward two themes

that frame the book. The first is that the history of Ireland is by no means exceptional when considered in European terms; Irish history, Bourke believes, should become rather less introspective. The second (unsurprising but rich in its details) is that modern Ireland has come about as a result of historical contingencies, both local and international—for example, the Parnell divorce case, the outbreak of war in 1914 before Home Rule was on the statute book, and the early death of Michael Collins.

Ireland, Bourke insists, should be seen as part of a European continent in which the key is not “the formation of discrete national units” but “the inconstant fate of fluctuating empires.” “From this perspective,” he notes, “volatile frontiers constitute as central a focus as orderly consolidation.” Such an approach, as Bourke suggests, removes from Irish history the themes of “trauma or victimhood,” for these feelings rest upon the idea of a continuous national personality and a predetermined outcome, delayed or aborted by the British. This approach also enables us to “jettison accounts that depict Irish history as an exception to a norm” (15).

History has, of course, long had a political function in Ireland. Both nationalists and unionists have long used the grievances of the distant past to legitimize their activities in the present. It is said that when Lloyd George met de Valera in 1921 and suggested that they discuss Irish grievances, de Valera began by speaking of Cromwell. In the past, of course, Irish history was all too often marked by received pieties, by narratives that sought to legitimize the nationalism of the Irish Republic or the unionism of Northern Ireland, both of which came into existence as a result of popular rebellions. The revolutionary generation of 1912–1923, Bourke argues, “constructed a past that pointed to the legitimacy of their revolution, based upon the right to self-determination, a right that could be asserted by force.” This view, however, derives its strength “from the prior existence of a self-determining people,” but that, of course, for unionists, begs the question of whether the Irish were in fact such a single people. For the unionists saw themselves as Irish certainly, but also as part of the British people, something which their nationalist opponents strenuously denied. This volume shows that “there was no underlying purpose to which the history of Ireland can be made to conform. What we encounter instead is a sequence of attempts at political construction that met with various forms of contingent resistance,” and these attempts “spilled beyond the geographical boundaries of the island,” so that Irish history “should be seen as porous rather than self-contained” being “affected overwhelmingly by English and British policy, but also by European and American events, as well as developments in the wider diaspora” (3). Displaying the complexities and contingencies of Irish history and the contingencies of Ireland’s constitutional development can do much to help assuage the conflicts which still exist in that troubled island. History is, as it should be, the great propagator of skepticism and doubt.

These two themes—the positioning of Ireland in a larger scheme of European political development and the contingent nature of contemporary outcomes—inform most of the chapters in the book. For example, Fearghal McGarry concludes his chapter “Independent Ireland” with the pointed comment that the first years of the twentieth century saw a political transformation in Ireland that left its society and economy largely intact, while the last decades of the century saw something like the reverse—radical social and economic changes that, at least in the Republic, have left the political structure intact.

A short review is an inadequate vehicle to do justice to the richness and complexity of the various essays in this collection, or to their vitality. But suffice it to say that the *Princeton History of Modern Ireland* will prove quite indispensable to any serious student of Irish, or indeed British, history.

Vernon Bogdanor, King’s College London