

THE CAMBRIDGE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MODERN IRELAND. Edited by Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly. Pp xiv, 635. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2017. £74.99 hardback; £24.99 paperback.

As with the fabled buses – you wait for ages and then a convoy comes along in close formation – so, it seems, with certain kinds of books. Publishers have long behaved synchronically: to alight on the same idea at the same time. And the second decade of the twenty-first century would, as regards publications dealing with the history of Ireland, seem to have become the age of the multi-essay composite volume. In 2014 Oxford University Press published *The Oxford handbook of modern Irish history* (786 pp); in 2016 Princeton University Press produced *The Princeton history of modern Ireland* (526 pp); now, in 2017, Cambridge University Press has published *The Cambridge social history of modern Ireland* (635 pp). If, in one way, such volumes are to be welcomed for broadcasting the latest scholarship in compressed form (usually in less than twenty pages per essay), one nonetheless worries that students will now read little more and regard these pieces, not as tasters, but as sufficient in themselves. One also wonders whether libraries or individual readers are going to invest in all three.

Of course, they are all somewhat (though only somewhat) different. The Oxford and Princeton volumes go back to the sixteenth century, while Cambridge kicks off somewhere in the middle of the eighteenth. Cambridge also scores by including numerous, often fascinating, illustrations which enhance the text to considerable effect. However, there is also – perhaps unsurprisingly given the relatively compact size of the Irish historical community – a good deal of overlap with regard to contributors. The Oxford volume consists of thirty-seven essays, five of whose authors also contribute to the Cambridge volume's thirty-four, while six of Oxford's writers appear among the twenty-seven in the Princeton collection. Indeed, one contributor – Maria Luddy – collects the complete set: 'Gender and Irish history' with Oxford, 'Feminism' with Princeton, and 'Marriage, sexuality and the law in Ireland' with Cambridge. All of this suggests that, despite differences in periods covered and precise angles of approach, all three books are in effect at once historical fellow travellers and competitors.

This is in no way to deny the strengths of the three collections, with the Cambridge volume under immediate review containing much that is illuminating and useful to readers at all levels of expertise. Given the strength (not least in the field of Irish history) of individual scholarly opinions, the editors have inevitably been obliged to extend in their Introduction a comparatively light touch to contributors with the grand assertion that their book 'is not a point of arrival, but a point of departure ... methodologically eclectic, open to cognate disciplines ... Its totalising quest of meaning ... a project, rather than a narrative'. And certainly the Cambridge collection is to be warmly commended for its sustained attention in Part III to what it identifies as 'Emigration, immigration and the wider Irish world', not least because the majority of 'Irish' men and women have long lived outside the island itself. Nonetheless, even in social history, one has to start somewhere and in this case that would seem to be the catastrophic famine of 1740–41 (though two contributors – for reasons that are not immediately clear – prefer the date 1750). This is at once convincing and relevant and it would have been useful to start with an analysis of that great disaster so often glossed over in previous accounts.

Now, it would be impossible in a review such as this to deal with all of the essays in any detail. Indeed, merely listing the titles and authors would take up the space allotted to reviewers by the editors of *Irish Historical Studies*. This does not, however, mean that the overall quality of the contributions cannot be warmly saluted especially given the inherent difficulties posed by a collection such as this in which some writers deal with 'big' topics for which there exists an extensive literature while others discuss more 'compact' matters which have not hitherto received much sustained attention. Even though it is clearly easier to shine in the latter than the former mode of operation, Mary Daly and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh do wonders in their respective fifteen-page pieces on those long-considered crucial topics of 'Famine and famine relief, 1740–2000' and 'Languages and identities', while Peter Solar is, as always, incisive and to the point with

regard to 'Occupation, poverty and social class in pre-Famine Ireland, 1740–1850', as is Terence Dooley on the subject he has made his own, 'The big house'. Charting roads perhaps less travelled and doing so in interesting ways are Juliana Adelman in 'Food in Ireland since 1740' and Sarah-Anne Buckley and Susannah Riordan in 'Childhood since 1740'. Eugenio Biagini's essay on 'Minorities' (understandably but rather oddly placed in Part III) provides an elegant analysis, particularly of the numerically small but otherwise important Jewish community in Ireland and also of the earlier Huguenots and the more recent and indeed contemporary 'Travellers'. Inevitably the approaches adopted generally lie close to the contributors' disciplinary affiliations, with the interesting essays on 'Old age, death and mourning' by Patricia Lysaght and 'Celebrations and the rituals of life' by Diarmuid Ó Giolláin showing clear and illuminating evidence of embedment in the fields of anthropology and folklore studies.

The volume concludes with extremely useful maps and with a two-part essay by Guy Beiner and Eunan O'Halpin on the undoubtedly relevant topic of 'Remembering and forgetting in modern Irish history'. It is of course a cliché that 'successful' nations forget and 'victim' nations remember. Should there be any truth in this, is it now possible to detect a shift in such emphases with regard to both Ireland and England in the new century, a shift reflecting differing trajectories regarding success and prosperity in a changing world?

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HISTORIES OF NATIONALISM IN IRELAND AND GERMANY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY FROM 1800 TO 1932. By Shane Nagle. Pp vi, 259. London: Bloomsbury Academic. 2017. £85.

The writing and study of history, no less than transformations in clothing and appearance, have been and still are subject to dramatic changes in fashion. At one time the 'national' reigned supreme, now it is the transnational and the comparative. The reasons behind this are not much easier to understand than why in 1810 women wore dresses resembling nightgowns, while in 1860 they appeared equipped with enormous bustles or why in 1810 men were clean-shaven, but in 1860 sported impressive, even intimidating, beards. And lest historians see themselves as occupying more 'serious' territory, they should remind themselves that the reasons for shifts in their own 'fashions' rarely move much beyond the inexplicable modishness of the times.

That said Shane Nagle has written an interesting study of two national entities that might not obviously press themselves to the forefront of comparative analysis. Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was ostensibly an integral part of a single polity – the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. 'Germany' long remained a concept rather than a political reality, so much so that, even after the foundation of the second *Kaisereich* in 1871, individual kings remained on the thrones of Hannover, Saxony, Bavaria, and Württemberg, while Bavaria also continued to maintain what legally amounted to its own army and general staff. What, indeed, Germany and Ireland had, above all, in common was local particularism, with the Rhinelander Konrad Adenauer recording, as late as the 1950s, that, on crossing the Elbe in a sealed train bound through the D.D.R. for Berlin, he would wake and tell himself 'Jetzt bin ich in Asien' ('Now I am in Asia').

Nagle, however, makes little of this transnational equivalence of localism. Rather he looks to parallels in historical and political understanding and most of all, and most pertinently, to the rather different ways in which religion and sectarian divisions echoed interestingly between Ireland and Germany. 'Religion or confessional allegiance', he writes, 'became comprehensively nationalized' in both countries 'and in this respect the