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Renée Fox, Mike Cronin, and Brian Ó Conchubhair, Editors. *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies*. Routledge, 2020. 518. ISBN 9780367259136

Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies presents itself as a very ambitious project, striving to encompass in its five parts (“Overview,” “Historicizing Ireland,” “Global Ireland,” “Identities,” “Culture,” “Theorizing,” and “Legacy”) all the major tendencies and phenomena that have been shaping the picture of contemporary Ireland, its society and culture. The *Handbook* casts a critical eye on Irish Studies as a discipline, what form it has taken at present, and how global and local challenges have influenced the very narrative of the field. The *Handbook* prompts the reader to reflect on the current state of Irish Studies and the way the discipline has evolved during the period from 2008, the time of austerity, when the global economic crash hit Ireland, and up to 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. Within this rather tight time framework, the *Handbook* successfully navigates between wider perspectives and close-ups, engaging its readers in a thought-provoking conversation, re-evaluating the past, (re)conceptualizing the present, and mapping out the future.

The volume opens with an overview of the history of the field, highlighting its key problems and current tendencies, such as redefining – or even reading beyond – the canon and rethinking the notions that have long been at the heart of the Irish Studies discourse, for example, the concept of nation that for many decades remained “a defining category” (5) for critics and academics. However, with the increase of immigration and the subsequent inflow of different cultures and languages to the island, the very notion of what it means to be Irish has started to transform. This transformation is analysed in detail and from various angles in further chapters of the book. For instance, focusing on the history of Ireland and the process of historicizing the country, Part II demonstrates the rapidly changing theoretical approaches in this area that within the last two decades have shifted from the traditional view defined by concepts of nation, nationalism, and national history to research inspired by transnationalism, ecocriticism, ethnography, and other innovative areas. Likewise, Part IV, “Identities,” argues about the datedness of binary choices and oppositions that have been shaping the identity of the island for many decades (Tuatha Dé Danann/Celt, Gael/Anglo-Norman, Old English/New English, etc.). In 1995, at the close of the twentieth century, the poet Thomas Kinsella summarized Ireland’s perception of itself and its colonial past in the essay *The Dual Tradition*. The duality suggested that the image of Ireland and its culture had been shaped by two major forces: the Gaelic tradition and the English-language tradition of the colonials. However, in contemporary Ireland, we cannot ignore the necessity to reach beyond this duality and think outside the postcolonial set of ideas, viewing Ireland as a complex, multiethnic, and multilingual country that can no longer be inscribed into the standard “Irish Versus English” paradigm. As the editors of the collection argue, the work of Irish Studies nowadays should be aimed at “unmooring the idea of Irishness from narrow and outdated set of cultural associations” (200), and it is exactly what each chapter of Part IV encourages us to do.

Much of the focus of the *Handbook* is still placed on Ireland’s relations with America and Britain. Chapters like “Towards a History of Irish Studies in the United States” by John Waters, “Irish-America” by Liam Kennedy, or “Irish Britain” by Mary J. Hickman study this aspect from various points of

view – scholarship and research, history and economy, local and global politics. However, the editors and authors of the *Handbook* are well aware of the truisms and clichéd approaches which Irish Studies has often been prone to and which can still arise in research devoted to Irish material and especially touching upon such topics as Irish-English and Irish-American connections – centeredness on diaspora studies, immigration, or Ireland’s colonial past, to name just a few. That is why, the *Handbook* insists on diverting from well-known paths, on broadening and reshaping the concept of Irish Studies, and in doing so, renewing its discourses and methodology. The chapter that proves this point and is crucial to the volume is “Irish Studies in the Non-Anglophone World” in which Michael Cronin insists on the necessity of shifting from “diasporic to diffusive perspective on Irish culture” (33) and moving towards “transnational and translational reading of Irish experiences” (38). The chapter also draws our attention to the importance of breaking the monopoly and stepping outside the well-established realm of Anglophone scholarship. Indeed, research and material existing in languages other than English, and concerning the reception of Ireland in non-Anglophone countries remains mostly an unknown territory.

The publication of the *Handbook* is very well-timed. Being overtly self-reflective, the collection perfectly resonates with the pandemic world focused on revisionism and re-evaluation. By exploring various aspects of Irish culture and society, addressing the notions of identity, and asking questions about what “Irishness” is, each chapter tries to approach the question of what Irish Studies as a discipline is. The editors of the *Handbook* claim that “the central function of this collection is to consider how, why, and to what ends Irish Studies has changed in the years since the economic downturn” (8). However, the volume does not search for any definitive conclusions or offer a fixed paradigm of Irish Studies today. On the contrary, ending on a meditation over the pandemic and its far-reaching consequences which we cannot fully predict, but which inevitably influence the way Irish Studies will be evolving in the nearest future, the collection courageously leaps towards the next turn of the gyre. It raises new questions and opens new trajectories for the discipline, inviting further discussions, which, it is to be hoped, will soon follow.

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Tihana Klepač. *Dancing in Red Shoes: Barbara Baynton and the Australian Myth*. FF Press, 2020. 293. ISBN 978-953-175-798-0.

Dancing in Red Shoes: Barbara Baynton and the Australian Myth is a rare study of Barbara Baynton, a critically neglected Australian author of the turn of the twentieth century, and of her place in the Australian canon. The monograph’s title reflects the key argument of Klepač’s manuscript: an analysis of the ways in which women’s writing from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries made a transgressive step forward (that is, “a dance step in red shoes”) into the then exclusively male canon of writers. This male canon not only marginalized women: it frequently represented them as passive observers of social and historical events while it utterly ignored women writers. Baynton,