This volume of essays brings together the ongoing research of Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch in the unique relationship between the fine arts and the narration of Ireland’s history from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Until recently little attention was paid to the role of art in constructing the “story” of the nation by scholars and students from all disciplines including that of art history. This wide-ranging study of Irish pictures and sculpture opens up the subject by providing a fresh interdisciplinary approach. Each work is analyzed beyond its strictly art historical relevance. A deeper investigation into the context in which a work was produced reveals much about the aspirations and ideological ambitions of artists, those commissioning works, and the viewing public at the time of production and indeed beyond. The study of such diverse topics as the representation of the Irish peasant, the behind-the-scenes tensions in setting up a national gallery for Ireland, the erecting of political monuments, Church art, West of Ireland landscape painting, and the difference in nationalistic fervor among artists as diverse as Albert G. Power and Jack B. Yeats unveil much fascinating testimony about Ireland’s collective national “needs” and its constructs of identity.

Dr. Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch was born in Dublin and educated at University College Dublin and Trinity College, Dublin. Curator of Irish Art at the National Gallery of Ireland since 1998, she previously taught art history at UCD and was a tutor for the Open University. Her interest in art began with a fascination for the illustrations in books she read as a child and it was further enhanced by many visits to the National Gallery in Dublin with her father, the late Brendan Breathnach, author of Ceol Rince na hÉireann and many other seminal works on the history of Irish music. A personal interest in Irish art and Irish history led to a study of fine art from the point of view of the political, social, and cultural context in which that art has been produced and its relationship to the “story” of Ireland.
The history of Ireland music is a fascinating one, encompassing pre-Baroque music, Celtic dance songs, present day rock, and much more. In May, visitors can attend one of the more traditional events in Ireland—the Fleadh Nuo. The Fleadh Nuo is the annual festival of traditional Irish music, song, and dance. It takes place in Ennis, County Clare. Attending a music festival is a fabulous way to learn about the culture and history of Ireland. One of the more popular music festivals in Ireland is the Galway Early Music Festival, which also gives tourists a good look at the history of Ireland music. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is one of Christianity’s most widely known figures. But for all of his prevalence in culture—namely the holiday held on the day of his death that bears his name—his life remains somewhat of a mystery. Many of the stories traditionally...read more.

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