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 Brendán Breathnach, author of Ceol Rince na hÉireann and many other seminal books 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.

"In this timely and important book of essays Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch does what she is very well-placed to do—chart the coming of age of art history in Ireland, to mark the resurgence of interest in Irish art and how the construction of identities has been influenced by and reflected in artistic expression and the tensions in the contemporary dialogue between art and Commemoration.”

MICHAEL F. RYAN, Director, Chester Beatty Library
While this account of Ireland's past is presently the accepted early history of Ireland, it was not always so. 'History' is a word whose meaning changes according to the accepted beliefs of those who write it. For hundreds of years, a different series of events was accepted as history, which are now referred to as 'mythical origins'. This history was unfolded in the book known as Lebor Gabala Erenn (The Book of the Taking of Ireland or The Book of Invasions), written in the late 11th/early 12th century CE. Removes Ads.

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They were attacked by the Tuatha De Danann (children of the goddess Dana) who were masters of magical arts and formidable adversaries. The Fir Bolg were defeated by the Tuatha De Danann at the Battle of Moytura and forced to serve them. 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 Ireland, as an island lying out on the north western fringe of continental Europe was settled by humans civilisations relatively late in European prehistory terms with the first human settlements taking place around 6000 BC. Since that first human settlement in 6000 BC Ireland has had many periods of invasion and change in its civilian populations. This rich history and heritage has helped to shape Ireland (both north and south) into the unique country it is today. Separate to the Republic, Northern Ireland’s recent history has been vastly different. Whereas the Republic of Ireland was born out of a nationalist demand, Northern Ireland arose out of a defensive reaction on the part of a people who never quite became nationalists of any sort. As of 2011, Ireland had a population of about 6.6 million with 4.8 million residing in the Republic of Ireland and the rest in Northern Ireland. Learn more about culture of the Republic of Ireland and its similarities with its northern neighbors.

Ethnicity, Language, and Religion in Ireland. Irish Whiskey, known as the water of life, and beer have long histories in Ireland. Whiskey distilleries and beer breweries are found throughout the country. Guinness, the world's largest stout brewery, is based in Dublin, Ireland. Performing Arts in Ireland. Ireland has a thriving scene of folk, classical, and contemporary music. The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is an Irish folk music festival held every year in Ireland to promote Irish folk music. Location and Geography. Ireland is in the far west of Europe, in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of the island of Great Britain. The island is 302 miles (486 kilometers) long, north to south, and 174 miles (280 kilometers) at its widest point. The area of the island is 32,599 square miles (84,431 square kilometers), of which the Republic covers 27, 136 square miles (70,280 square kilometers). Although the image of the small-holding subsistence farmer persists in art, literary, and academic circles, Irish farming and farmers are as advanced in technology and technique as most of their European neighbors. Poverty persists, however, among farmers with small holdings, on poor land, particularly in many parts of the west and south.