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London Irish Fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and Identity

Tony Murray

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This is the first book about the literature of the Irish in London. By examining over 30 novels, short stories and autobiographies set in London since the Second World War, London Irish Fictions investigates the complex psychological landscapes of belonging and cultural allegiance found in these unique and intensely personal perspectives on the Irish experience of migration. As well as bringing new research to bear on the work of established Irish writers such as Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, Emma Donoghue and Joseph O'Connor, this study reveals a fascinating and hitherto unexplored literature, diverse in form and content.

By synthesising theories of narrative and diaspora into a new methodological approach to the study of migration, London Irish Fictions sheds new light on the ways in which migrant identities are negotiated, mediated and represented through literature. It also examines the specific role that the metropolis plays in literary portrayals of migrant experience as an arena for the performance of Irishness, as a catalyst in transformations of Irishness and as an intrinsic component of second-generation Irish identities. Furthermore, by analysing the central role of narrative in configuring migrant cultures and identities, it reassesses notions of exile, escape and return in Irish culture more generally. In this regard, it has particular relevance to current debates on migration and multiculturalism in both Britain and Ireland, especially in the wake of an emerging new phase of Irish migration in the post-'Celtic Tiger' era.

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