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A Global Ireland: New Audiences and New Alliances

edited by
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Introduction

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Strengthening presence through the promotion of Irish heritage, literature, the arts, and culture beyond Europe is a challenging endeavour. Ireland has recently taken an initiative to do just that. The impact of the Global Ireland 2025 initiative can be felt in the efforts invested to strengthen Irish presence in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as in other parts of the world. As an academic from Egypt specialising in Irish literature, these efforts have supported my work and have allowed me to explore new pathways to promote Irish studies in ways that move beyond the traditional. Establishing the Research Centre for Irish Studies (RCIS) at The British University in Egypt is proof that Ireland is expanding beyond the borders of Europe. Decentring the Irish world has increased the visibility of Ireland in the region and has raised awareness about the importance of Irish studies as a discipline. New audiences from near and far are today attracted to the interdisciplinarity of Irish studies. The expansion prompts new generations to investigate the constituents of the field and to ask the inevitable question: what is there more to learn about Ireland beyond Joyce and Yeats?

By diversifying its efforts externally, Ireland has been able to better position itself to reaffirm its identity and promote Irishness in a new light. This monograph of which I am a guest editor, is further proof that Ireland and interest in Irish studies have finally been freed from the petrification by which they were bound in the past. Irish studies, is now a multifaceted academic field that is conceptualised internationally in a variety of ways as the contributors to this monograph amply testify. Decentring Irish studies and globalising the discipline keep it in an open flux of deconstruction, which in turn engages new audiences in debates around previously encountered authors commonly known as

part of the British literary canon. New and recent critical trends within the field have emerged as a result of decentring the Irish world and Irish studies in geographical spheres that transcend the national context bringing the local, regional and the global into critical propinquity.