



Myth and the Irish State

John Regan

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When we read a history we believe ourselves to be reading cold, hard, facts of the events that took place and how they occurred. But there is no real, truthful way to know the approach our historian has taken with the historical sources. This book deals with the uncertainty in writing history in the context of Irish history in particular.

Regan argues in this book that the notion of elision, simply ignoring unhelpful evidence, threatens Irish history today. Regan believes that some historians have ignored unhelpful facts that perhaps do not further their point or perhaps contradict them altogether.

Each chapter focuses on a period of Irish history that Regan believes to be inconsistent or incomplete in its facts. He asks the controversial questions about the period of history such as ‘why do some historians deny or marginalise the British threat of war and re-conquest in 1922?’, why do so many Irish historians describe Michael Collins as a ‘constitutionalist’ or a ‘democrat’ when the evidence argues otherwise?’ ‘Was the Irish Civil War really fought between ‘democrats’ defending the state, against ‘dictators’ attempting its overthrow? Did the new state briefly experience a military-dictatorship under Collins in 1922?’

‘Thinking historically’ is not about learning history or accepting the past as it is presented to us – it is, as Regan argues in his thought-provoking work, about developing the critical skills to interpret history for ourselves.

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