Helen Kingstone. Panoramas and Compilations in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Seeing the Big Picture

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Helen Kingstone's book, *Panoramas and Compilations in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Seeing the Big Picture*, begins with a question: what does it mean to gain an overview of an era while living through it, and why is it so difficult to achieve? The concept of the overview is particularly interesting in the nineteenth century as people responded to, and sought to understand, the increasing sense of scale generated by industrialized modernity. Overviews might vary in form from painted panoramas of contemporary battles to ambitious encyclopedia and dictionary projects, but as Kingstone makes clear, all attempts to gain an overview of the contemporary era are implicitly historical. In Kingstone's words, nineteenth-century modernity posed a "challenge of how to represent historical events and populations that seem too large scale to be shown in their totality" (2), with nineteenth-century attitudes to this challenge drawing on two fundamental types of overview: the panorama and the compilation. Kingstone's book examines how these two conceptual types were employed across a range of media via "remediation (the way that apparently media-specific techniques and principles are adopted and translated from one medium to another) and intermediality (media exchanging characteristics in both directions)" (2).

As the book's title and the above summary might suggest, *Panoramas and Compilations* is a work of two main parts, "Panoramic Perspective" and "Big Data: Compilations of Contemporaneity," with a shorter transitional section in the middle which focuses on remediation in the Crimean War, as well as introductory and concluding sections. The panorama section is split into chapters covering contemporary history in static painted panoramas, panoramic perspective in histories of the French Revolution, and panoramic perspectives in Thomas Hardy's two works set in the Napoleonic Wars, *The Trumpet-Major* (1880) and *The Dynasts* (1904–08). The compilations section that follows is split into chapters focusing on W.T. Stead's periodical *Review of Reviews* (1890–93), the "explicitly ephemeral biographical dictionary" *Men of the Time* (1852–99) (180), and the monumental project that was the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885–1900).

The result of this structure is an interesting and original discussion of a series of case studies, mostly focused on media that readers may find familiar but which, situated within Kingstone's larger question about overview, are seen from a fresh perspective. For example, in chapter 5, "Photography Remediated in the Crimean War: Illustration, Exhibition, and Collection," which serves as transition between the sections on panoramas and compilations, Kingstone brings together visual and textual accounts of the Crimean War from the *Illustrated London News*, the photographer Roger Fenton, and the nurse Mary Seacole. Kingstone's discussion here makes salient points about how factors such as medium, publishing context, authorial identity, and audience expectations shaped and reshaped the representation of the war. Thus, we are told about Fenton's frustrations with newspaper artists who created impossibly detailed overviews of landscapes that in a photograph appeared expansive and empty with distant towns hard to discern. We are reminded, too, that one of the uses initially intended for Fenton's photographs was as preliminary material for a history painting by Thomas Barker. Kingstone traces the shifting values and modes of overview

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involved with these media, effectively demonstrating how photography "remediated the conventions of various painted genres and was in its turn extensively remediated into news illustrations, panoramas, history paintings and engravings" (143). The array of media and contexts at play, even in a single chapter like this, pose a challenge to coherence so it is all the more impressive that Kingstone is clearly and usefully able to analyze the conceptual connections between them.

One of the strengths of *Panoramas and Compilations* is Kingstone's critical sensitivity to conceptual approaches within nineteenth-century historiography, especially when dealing with sources like those on the Crimean War, which are about the very recent past. This draws on her first book, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past: Memory, History, Fiction* (2017), and the two complement each other well. In the newer book, *Panoramas and Compilations*, Kingstone is more attentive to the subjectivity of visual experience but there are clear parallels with Victorian history writing as in, for example, her emphasis on immersion and overview as key components of the panoramic visual mode, which are then used to analyze recent history texts like Seacole's account of the Crimean War. The overlaps between overview and history writing are prevalent throughout the book—one of many further examples is in the chapter on *Men of the Time*, which Kingstone argues performed a "sleight of hand" in treating "contemporaneity as if it were history" (198). As a result, readers interested in both nineteenth-century media and history writing will likely be very interested in Kingstone's discussion across the different case studies.

For scholars working on nineteenth-century Britain more broadly, there is also much to be gained from Kingstone's larger argument, which is both ambitious and original, particularly in her proposal of an empowering "new politics of distance, which involves rehabilitating the important spatial and epistemological concept of overview as a tool for temporal understanding" and which "enables people in otherwise overwhelming situations and scenarios to comprehend and manage this scale and to gain a valuable sense of collective, shared understanding" (235). In Kingstone's view, the compilations she discusses in the second half of her book make a clear ideological choice in compiling but not aggregating information, a choice which "refused to reduce or homogenize diverse instances into a bitesize headline or hall of fame," and which "acknowledged irreducible particularity even as it yearned for overview and enabled readers to explore that particularity" (238).

Although Kingstone acknowledges that the concept of overview has "been tainted by association with colonialist and totalitarian ideologies," her analysis only touches on this at various moments. For instance, Kingstone is astute in pointing to the role of subjective immersion not just in panoramic modes but also as a tool for understanding "big data." However, it is not always clear how easily the value placed on immersion resisted (or can resist) being subsumed into more abstracted approaches to data. Similarly, some of Kingstone's discussion points to the absorption of media into rationalizing projects of the kind famously characterized as the totalitarian results of Enlightenment rationality by Adorno and Horkheimer, among others, as for example in her description of the Royal Geographical Society's efforts to collect preexisting photographs, turning them into "tools of British imperialism" (140). The analysis could perhaps have interrogated such examples more fully, perhaps using them to locate Kingstone's larger argument within the context of well-known critical narratives of exploitative rationalization. Furthermore, inclusion of other "big data" projects such as the dogged efforts of the Ordnance Survey, which self-memorialized its work across the landscape with permanent trig points, or more deliberately and explicitly colonial surveys such as those conducted in Ireland and India, might also have added useful detail to Kingstone's argument. However, I do not think any of these additions would have contradicted or undermined Kingstone's conclusions, which remain compelling.

Kingstone's book deserves to be widely read and it is a compliment that my criticisms ultimately stem from a desire for more: for a longer account of her big conclusions, a wider variety of case studies, more sources beyond and alongside the case studies. The ideas in *Panoramas and Compilations* will likely enrich and inform the work of scholars across

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the breadth of nineteenth-century British studies, but especially those working on nineteenth-century media and history writing.

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Emily Mark-FitzGerald, Ciarán McCabe and Ciarán Reilly, eds. Dublin and the Great Irish Famine

Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2022. Pp. 250. $30.00 (paper).

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The Great Irish Famine has, since the sesquicentennial anniversary of its outbreak in 1995, been the subject of a steady flow of fantastic scholarship. Over the course of almost thirty years, an interdisciplinary army of authors has considered the catastrophe from a wide range of economic, political, social, and cultural angles. We now have a much clearer sense of where the potato blight came from, in what ways the government did (and did not) respond, and how over two million supposedly poor and ignorant peasants gathered the resources to emigrate around the world.

Yet why, in the midst of all of this great work, have historians of *An Gorta Mór* largely ignored Dublin and other Irish urban areas? In their introduction, Emily Mark-FitzGerald, Ciarán McCabe, and Ciarán Reilly suggest that the answer probably lies in "a wider suspicion of the urban context within the Irish historical experience" (xv). For many nationalist writers, who got the first crack at writing Irish history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the "true Ireland" was located in the countryside. Dublin and other big cities were dismissed as hotbeds of poverty, moral depravity, English administration, and Protestant loyalism. This volume seeks to open new ground in the field by offering twelve excellent chapters that explore "the effects of the Famine on Dublin, but also the effect of Dublin on the Famine nationally" (xv). The result is an exciting new book, which is sure to appeal to students and scholars of the Great Famine, Dublin itself, and European urban history more generally.

Following a brief overview of the subject by Cormac Ó Gráda, one of the few historians who have previously looked at Dublin during the Great Famine in any detail, the book is divided into four sections of three chapters each. "Section 1: Business Life and Industry" considers the ways in which the city's commercial sector was impacted by the Famine. In chapter 1, Reilly shows that the vast trade networks that Dublin merchants had built up before the Famine remained intact, allowing shops to continue stocking goods from all over the world (for those who could afford them). Similarly, in chapter 2, Declan Curran shows that while Irish joint-stock banks were largely untroubled by the Famine, this did not change their marginal position as a colonial institution, which positioned them as subsidiaries within the broader British monetary system. Peter Hession (chapter 3) extends the analysis out into the Irish Sea, demonstrating the ways in which maritime technologies

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