

examines the process of publication of *Hard Times* and how its final title came to be chosen among fourteen alternatives; in "Background," there is a selection of letters about *Hard Times* addressed by Dickens to Victorian intellectuals and men of letters such as John Forster, Mark Lemon, Peter Cunningham, Charles Knight, and Thomas Carlyle; in "Criticism," we find three critical excerpts about this novel by Hippolyte Taine, John Ruskin, and F. R. Leavis; and so forth. The section called "The Education System" is of particular interest because *Hard Times* notoriously combines a critique of the working conditions in the nineteenth-century industrial city of Preston—under the fictitious name of Coketown—with an indignant satire on the education given to young children in the Gradgrind school following the wake of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarian philosophy.

Apart from these introductory sections, Dr. Soto Vázquez's edition is complemented by a chronology of Charles Dickens's life and publications, a glossary of Lancashire dialectal forms, substandard words and circus slang, a fourteen-page section of explanatory notes to the text of *Hard Times*, and a substantial bibliography. Fifteen years after the publication of Dr. López Ortega's edition of *Hard Times* by Alhambra in 1981, this new edition of Dickens's classic novel stands out as a valuable addition to the array of annotated and commented English literary texts now available to Spanish university students.

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J. A. Hurtley, B. Hughes, R. M. González Casademont, I. Praga y E. Aliaga. *Diccionario cultural e histórico de Irlanda.* Barcelona: Ariel, 1996.

In the introduction to the book the authors refer to the increasing interest in everything related to Ireland and her culture over the last few decades. The film industry, musical groups and leading literary figures have helped to forge a new image of Ireland. Films like *The Quiet Man* or *The Commitments*, celtic groups like The Chieftains or Enya, writers like Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, or Seamus Heaney, each from their own viewpoint contributed to expose one side of Ireland, a small but tremendously complex country. They also complain that some quarters in English Studies are reluctant to admit certain Irish writers belong to an Irish literary tradition, with Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* as just one significant example. Besides, as far as Spain is concerned, there is an almost complete ignorance of Irish affairs beyond what is highlighted in the media which produces a distorted vision of real Ireland.

The dictionary is precisely aimed at filling that gap. It is really a most interesting and helpful reference book which will be essential for the student, the ordinary reader interested in Ireland, and the scholar alike. Perhaps, one is somewhat surprised at the beginning to find the items in English when the book is in Spanish. The explanation to that is given in the introduction; however, to a certain extent, that involves a fairly high knowledge of English and ordinary readers might be discouraged by this way of presenting the information. The contents provide very important definitions and explanations of Irish cultural and historic events, mainly devoted to the 20th century, although that does not mean that references to the past are ignored. In fact, anyone

looking for the meaning of *immram* or *rapparee*, for instance, will find valuable information, and these are two items selected at random which are very important if we are to understand part of the Irish past. The same could be said of other terms or expressions related to contemporary Ireland found in the dictionary: *gallowglass*, *hooker*, *sash*, *ivy*, *B-specials*, *England's difficulty*, etc. All of them are present in contemporary Irish literature and one wonders about the reader's understanding of the text without a knowledge of their specific implications.

In one way, *Diccionario cultural e histórico de Irlanda* and Robert Welch's *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* also published in 1996 are complementary. As we can gather from the title their scope is different but I think that the first is more ambitious and valuable for everyone in Spain who is not acquainted with Ireland's rich culture. Apart from providing a great amount of necessary information about historic feats and events, the dictionary also gives detailed references of authors and their output, which makes it very useful. Two little things one would like to add. First, there is no mention of *The Freeman's Journal* (1763-1923), whereas less important journals are registered, and secondly, there are two items, Molly Bloom and Anna Livia, which stand for the only fictional characters included in the dictionary and one does not exactly know why only these two were selected when there is no mention of any others.

The *Diccionario cultural e histórico de Irlanda* is a very valuable book which comes to fill a place in Irish studies, and I am sure it will benefit to those interested in Ireland. It is a landmark in Spain for the popularisation of Irish culture and it provides encouragement for those who have already started contributing to a better knowledge of Ireland and her culture in Spain.

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Ronald Carter and John McRae. *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. Fwd. Malcolm Bradbury. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Histories of literature are necessary. Both students and teachers require them as a guide not only for their courses but also as an indication of the accepted literary cannon and of the critical approach assumed by the academy. The present one is an excellent example of that type of text. It reflects contemporary postmodern views on literary studies including a revision of the cannon that offers, for instance, space for women's voices in all ages, thus acknowledging the importance of literature by women. Together with that the work provides full information about authors, literary movements and the different periods in which they flourished.

It is a book written for a wide audience, probably a global one, as it covers the needs and interests of both native and non-native readership in that cultural, historic and linguistic aspects are analysed in a manner useful for any literature student. One may imagine how difficult it is nowadays to give a title to a work such as the present one, so that it looks like the standard work (the one and only book to be chosen by the market) and, at the same time, it has a mark of distinction that makes it unique. In this case the