

# **Histories of Punishment and Social Control in Ireland**

This exciting volume leverages the unique trajectory of Irish criminology's twenty-first century emergence and its distinctive commitment to historical inquiry to raise important questions for criminology as a field about what might have been and, moving forward, what could be. Editors Lynsey Black, Louise Brangan and Deirdre Healy invite readers to reconsider assumptions and received theories that have dominated a field whose tunnel vision for the USA and the UK has weakened our historical and criminological imaginations. Instead, by immersing themselves in the history of criminological theory and penal practices (broadly construed) of an under-explored nation, they observe large and small differences that challenge our conventional expectations and draw our focus to the importance of gender, religion, rural settings and ongoing colonial legacies for understanding penal-ity and how these considerations can play different roles from those we've come to expect from the standard national case studies. *Histories of Punishment and Social Control in Ireland* is a thus contribution not only to Irish Criminology, but to both broader Anglophone and global discussions about criminology, southern criminology, criminological history, punishment and society.

**Ashley T. Rubin,**

Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Hawai'i

The Irish Republic, at barely 100 years old, offers an important new lens onto the history of modern penality and an alternative to the Anglo-American bias in mainstream criminology. Across twelve engaging, original chapters, this comprehensive volume builds to a fascinating story that is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

**Shadd Maruna,**

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# **PERSPECTIVES ON CRIME, LAW AND JUSTICE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

**Series editors: Prof Kerry Carrington and Prof Máximo Sozzo**

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# **Histories of Punishment and Social Control in Ireland: Perspectives from a Periphery**

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# Glossary

An Garda Síochána/Gardaí/Garda – the national police service of Ireland

Bunreacht na hÉireann – the Constitution of Ireland

Cumann na nGaedheal – Irish political party (active 1920s–1930s) in government from independence until 1932, merged with smaller parties to become Fine Gael in 1933

Dáil/Dáil Éireann – lower house of the Oireachtas (the national parliament)

Fianna Fáil – Irish political party (active 1920s–present)

Fine Gael – Irish political party (active 1930s–present)

Oireachtas – the national parliament consisting of the President, Dáil Éireann (house of representatives) and Seanad Éireann (senate)

Saorstát Éireann – Irish Free State (1922–1937)

Seanad Éireann – upper house of the Oireachtas (the national parliament)

Taoiseach – head of government

Teachta Dála – elected member of Dail Éireann

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# Foreword

*Kerry Carrington and Máximo Sozzo*

The Republic of Ireland which de-shackled itself from British colonial rule in 1922 is largely absent from Anglophone criminology. The persistent exclusion of Ireland in criminological knowledge about punishment and social control is linked to a global hierarchy that privileges knowledge produced by the universities from the former imperial powers that once colonised about nine-tenths of the world, Britain and America (Connell, 2007). In southern theory, the south is a metaphor for this epistemic injustice. Ireland's rural, agrarian nature and deep links between Catholicism and the State do not fit with the foundational origin concepts within criminological theory. In this sense, the absence and silencing of Irish criminology is an enclave of the south within the north, as a former British colony.

This book contributes to the southernising of criminology and democratisation of knowledge (Carrington et al., 2016). It does this by resurrecting histories of punishment and social control peculiar to the modes of state and religious social control of the Irish Republic, absent from Anglophone criminology, such as gender, postcoloniality, religion, rurality and carcerality beyond the criminal justice system. The edited collection maps these rich and diverse histories of punishment and in so doing unsettles accepted criminological wisdoms about mass incarceration and punitive law and order discourses in England and the United States as the chief forms of social control in the twentieth century.

It does this by mapping the distinct ways punishment operated beyond and outside criminal justice, such as through systems of probation influenced by Catholicism and its use of charities and volunteers. It also examines the emergence of Irish custodial institutions in the 1950s and 1960s responsible for the endemic institutional abuses of Irish children in the Industrial and Reformatory Schools, again many of which were run by Catholic religious orders. The collection also shines a light on what O'Donnell and O'Sullivan term 'coercive confinement' outside the criminal justice system, including involuntary detention in psychiatric hospitals, confinement in Magdalene institutions and Mother and Baby Homes, and detention in Industrial and Reformatory schools. Magdalene Laundries in Ireland were state funded but church run. They were places of misogynous 'coercive confinement' where nuns sought to rescue 'impure' women, through punishing regimes of patronising and stigmatising social control, exploitation and abuse. These abuses were the subject of three key inquiries held between 1999 and 2021, into Industrial and Reformatory Schools, Magdalene Laundries, and Mother and Baby Homes. However research into the archives of these inquiries published in this book argues that much about those inquiries was

and remains secret and those abused in these institutions have never been granted their human rights.

Another set of chapters unsettle and re-think crime and punishment. The central argument is that instead of seeing Irish/Hibernian criminology as exceptional, the aim is to create an Hibernian epistemology that recognises both the need to craft bespoke theory while also contributing to wider international debates about the sociology of punishment and history of crime. For example the Irish death penalty was initially shaped by the country's colonialist origins, but over the century this changed to reflect Ireland's growing confidence and stature on the world stage, as a nation in its own right. Some of the authors explicitly use a Southern Criminology framework to (re)construct the historical narratives around prisoners' rights movements, by including perspectives from marginalised voices, bringing the 'other', the marginal, the invisible and subaltern to the centre.

The compendium offers particular insight about reinserting the role of women in the revolution and fight for independence from Britain, a much overlooked topic in male-stream history, and exploring the punishment and violence against women in the revolutionary period between 1919 and 1923. A complimentary complementary chapter interrogates the experiences of women's incarceration from the revolution to the Irish Free State and the Irish Republic. It makes a compelling argument that their experiences mirrored Ireland's history of colonialism, war, revolution and political activism, all very much shaped by discourses of masculinism, militarism and Catholicism.

What this book illustrates is that Irish criminology, while a relatively newly recognised discipline, has become a distinctly historical inquiry into the practices and genealogies of punishment in the past and the present. By using a southern and historical framework, the multidisciplinary collection aims to address gaps, and open up dialogue with the wider debates in the sociology of punishment and historical criminology from the vantage point of a formerly colonised island in the Global North. It makes an outstanding and original contribution to the southernizing of criminology as well as historical criminology. We are delighted to publish this original book of essays on the *Histories of Punishment and Social Control in Ireland*, in our Emerald book series and commend it to you.

# Acknowledgements

This volume was first imagined at the 2018 meeting of the Law and Society Association in Toronto. In the sunshine of a rooftop bar, conversations were had which led eventually here, to this collection and to what we hope becomes a contribution to a dialogue on penal history, punishment and society, and the production of criminological knowledge.

We are hugely grateful to all those authors gathered in this book, who surprised us by saying yes to our initial invitations to be part of the project. We are thrilled to see, collected here for the first time, those scholars who have shaped our own work and contributed so significantly to the discipline of criminology in Ireland and to the literature on the histories of punishment and social control. We are also thankful to Sindy Joyce for her support of the project and participation in a workshop which was held in the autumn of 2020.

We would like to express our thanks to the editorial Team at Emerald Publishing, particularly Katy Mathers and Hazel Goodes, who made the process enjoyable and straightforward.

Finally, we are hugely grateful to the series editors, Kerry Carrington and Máximo Sozzo, who recognised the contribution such a volume could make in taking a critical lens to what we mean by Anglophone criminology, and the significance of Irish penalty to the project of rethinking, de-colonising and southernising criminological knowledge production. As we note in the Introduction, this may be a neat volume, but we hope it offers an alternative tangent of consideration.

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# Introduction

*Louise Brangan, Lynsey Black and Deirdre Healy*

This collection concerns Irish penality across the twentieth century. How were techniques of confinement and social control organised? What, if anything, was distinctive about the Republic of Ireland's penal forms and functions? Which political, social and cultural forces help us explain and understand Irish penality since the foundation of the State in 1922 and its subsequent transformations? And why does any of this matter – how might the wider field of penology and historical criminology benefit from possessing a fuller view of these issues? It is precisely these historical and theoretical questions that this volume seeks to address.

As we will map out below, due to the conditions of its emergence, the study of punishment in Ireland has formed a strong historical orientation. The contributors whom we have brought together in this volume are the leading scholars in this area, and it is not an overstatement to say many of them have set the agenda for the Irish criminology community. Within this collection, their chapters provide a panoramic view of the main themes and debates that give Irish penal history its regional distinction, namely a strong focus on policy and government, as well as an impressively multifaceted conception of punishment and social control. The Irish understanding of penal culture is distinguished by its committed interest in history and for its focus on punishment *within* as well as *beyond* the criminal justice system. With that in mind, this collection seems timely and useful, providing a volume that collects the various accounts and debates within Irish historical punishment and society studies in one place, for the first time. Drawing together the intellectual threads across these works also reinforces the importance of research from places that often escape criminology's sometimes imperial gaze.

We need richer histories of punishment that are inclusive of a great many more practices and penal cultures than we tend to see in the narrow canon of criminology. As will become apparent, distinction and difference have become key terms that so often describe both Irish criminology and Irish penality. This identity is compounded by Ireland's frequent absence within Anglophone and European criminology. We contend that Ireland's position as a persistent outlier speaks to bigger critical concerns about the politics of criminological knowledge production. In bringing together these chapters we are also interested in *southernising* criminology (Carrington et al., 2018), and believe that history, and Irish penal history in particular, can make an important contribution towards democratising

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social studies of penalty. We argue that if punishment and society is to be more inclusive then it will also need to diversify its historical imagination, which to date has been dominated by concerns of law and order, punitive penal transformation and mass incarceration in England and the United States. However, the dynamics of Irish punishment and penal change across the twentieth century unsettle mainstream views of Anglophone penal history (Kilcommins et al., 2004; Rogan, 2011). If we are interested in de-centring the English-speaking metropole and how the histories of England and the United States have dominated the field, then Irish penal history can challenge the knowledge inequalities embedded within the discipline, and help develop a new pedagogy of penalty.

## **The History of Irish Criminology and the Rise of Historical Penalty**

How might criminology as a field of scholarship look, what sorts of interests might it pursue, if it had not emerged from the forces of nineteenth century scientific modernism? What matters would consume criminology if it had not been moulded and remoulded by the rise and fall of social democracy and neoliberalism in the twentieth century? This may seem hard to imagine, given that these events are central to criminology's origin story (Carrington and Hogg, 2017; Garland and Sparks, 2000). The Republic of Ireland provides exactly this kind of peculiar case, however, where criminology was only formally institutionalised as an academic discipline in 2000 (O'Donnell, 2005). Criminology in Ireland is, therefore, not simply another branch of English-language criminology. While criminological inquiry had been carried out prior to this watershed, it rarely occurred within a recognisably criminological space.

This peculiar (for this region of the world, at least) emergence of criminology as a product of the new millennium has seen criminology frequently described as the nation's 'absentee discipline' (Kilcommins et al., 2004; O'Donnell, 2005). That is certainly no longer the case. But the contemporary flourishing of Irish criminology quickly gave rise to a discipline without a canon of texts. The absence of touchstone Irish criminological studies may explain how our inquiries came to be inflected with such pronounced historical sensibilities. Arguably, what now gives Irish criminology its distinctive character is its tendency to investigate the past. The pursuit of historical knowledge is thriving within Irish punishment scholarship, such that, arguably, it is a leading area of study for Irish criminologists. These investigations have raised questions about how and why we punished as we did in Ireland, they contain qualitative and quantitative works, they encompass both social theory and social history, they study history for its own sake, and they compel us to trace the genealogy of the past in our penal practices today.

While penal transformation has been a mainstream interest in punishment and society (Garland, 2001; Pratt et al, 2005; Simon, 2007; Wacquant, 2009), these accounts tend to discuss history using broad generalisations and 'straw versions of the past', lacking an historical sociology that can illuminate culture and context with meaningful depth (Loader and Sparks 2004, p. 14). How can we really know anything about how we have come to be without knowing how we were in

the past? How would a fuller grasp of history alter our understandings of the present? Taking the past seriously can also revise our histories. A more ‘quizzical historical sensibility’ (Loader and Sparks 2004, p. 15) may reveal integral but overlooked structures, values, events and conflicts that shaped and reshaped our systems of social control and penal power.

What does it entail to think and research penalty historically and critically? There are certainly no easy answers or agreed approaches, but addressing the historical lacuna in our criminological imagination and toolkits requires a more advanced historical approach than has sometimes been acknowledged (Loader and Sparks 2004, p. 9). Recognising this, ‘historical criminology’ has recently emerged as a burgeoning subdiscipline, and discussions of what historical criminology can achieve and contribute are becoming part of the mainstream discourse (Churchill et al., 2022; Lawrence, 2019). While the emergence of this approach in recent years has been pronounced, this has been a long-term project with pioneers such as Bosworth (2000, 2001) demonstrating the necessity for historical methodologies to deepen our understandings of penalty. From the beginning, however, Irish criminologists accepted and reflected on how our comprehension of the past supports the legibility of the present. Given the depth and maturity of historical studies in Irish criminology, the works here might be particularly well positioned to contribute to these debates about historical sociology of punishment and penal transformation.

What is distinctive about the historical contribution across these chapters is that they are each interested in recovery, retrieving from the annals of time what has become forgotten or dismissed as inconsequential. But being forgotten and overlooked is often a matter of politics, so our histories also speak to present-day concerns. As E.P. Thompson told us, doing history with a critical sensibility is as much a matter of doing justice to the past by ‘rescuing’ disregarded communities and marginalised cultures ‘from the enormous condescension of posterity’ (Thompson, 2013). Historical criminology (like history itself) therefore balances the tensions between authentic description of times gone by and a commitment to generate new ways to understand contemporary problems. Scholarship grounded in the past can trouble conventional wisdoms about how things happened and question contemporary orthodoxy. Historical penalty can challenge a tendency towards ‘presentism’ within criminology (Farrall et al., 2009; Yeomans, 2019), highlighting some of the many penal practices that go overlooked in punishment and society’s general issues and debates. History in this vein can tell us more than just how punishment operated and how it has changed, it can be a critical lens to reassess the dynamics of the discipline itself.

## **Southernising Criminology**

The scope and ambition of our project is not limited to historical recovery, therefore. That we are interested in these matters of penal history in relation to Ireland is also of theoretical importance. It is now apparent that an alternative paradigm is taking hold within criminology, as many conventional claims and theoretical touchstones are being re-read, re-considered and at times challenged for their

ethnocentricity (Aas, 2012; Carrington et al., 2016; Lee and Laidler, 2013; Liu, 2009). Southern criminology, like Southern theory, has exposed the very limited geographical, situational and historical moments, and places from which punishment and society has derived its mainstream, and hence globally significant, theories.

Using southern theory, southern criminology has been devised to illuminate precisely this process, exposing ‘the power relations embedded in the hierarchal production of criminological knowledge that privileges theories, assumptions and methods based largely on empirical specificities of the global North’ (Carrington et al., 2016, p. 1). The theoretical trends and hot topics that have gripped punishment and society since its more fulsome formulation as a discrete area in the 1990s (though of course the social study of punishment predates this, see Simon and Sparks, 2013) reveals that it has been attracted to the turmoil of the punitive turn in England and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. Trying to interpret and explain the vitriol of law and order politics, penal populist soundbites, as well as the driving forces behind mass imprisonment has, by and large, occupied the discipline. But these problems are not general and have not been experienced everywhere equally, or at all. Yet the theories and ideas that concern explicitly Anglo-American penal problems have taken on an international sense of significance. Many of our most popular theories, binary conceptualisations and taken-for-granted research concerns – such as punitiveness and exceptionalism – are ‘Anglocentric formations’ (Brangan, 2020). With an assumed universalism, these concepts go on to be exported (as well as imported) and implanted to places, often at the periphery, where these ideas do not necessarily fit, let alone work (Connell, 2015). This becomes problematic when penalty at the periphery is subsequently and repeatedly ‘read from the centre’ (Connell, 2006), where we find ourselves unable to name, understand and on occasion even see ‘the various forms of confinement around the world ... which do not “meet the standards”’ of Western Anglophone penal theory (Aas, 2012, p. 13). Research that comes from ‘beyond the pale’ is then rarely recognised as having theoretical credibility, its empirical findings are often unlikely to be seen as relevant by an international audience, and this work is even less likely to be cited. Those of us operating in these margins are doomed to always be a branch of area studies first, punishment and society second. As long as this epistemological injustice persists, a deficit in punishment and society literature and our understanding of Anglophone penal history will remain.

Alternatively, a southern approach invites us to bump up against the limits of what we know and how we have come to know it (Connell, 2006). This isn’t for the sake of dissidence, most importantly, southern theory is generative. This is a critical approach that compels us to look beyond the usual problems, the mainstream trends and the obvious questions. Southern criminologists are interested in excluded ideas, overlooked histories and ignored penal phenomena, and then bringing that research from diverse settings to bear upon the deficit in our criminological discourse. Ultimately, it is a ‘redemptive project’ (Carrington et al., 2016), seeking to expand our understanding of punishment, culture, social order and penal power, and better illuminate how these forces intersect.

Part of the excitement and energy around southern criminology is that this critical reengagement with the mainstream is not limited to criminology, it captures the mood of our times. With a popularity that would have seemed inconceivable not too long ago, social constructionist, postmodernist, queer, feminist and decolonial discourses are now part of popular culture. These debates are propelling the rise of political movements demanding social justice across society's organising institutions. Protests in the United States and elsewhere organised under the banner of Black Lives Matter include calls to 'defund the police', as well as the 'Rhodes must Fall' campaign and its offshoots (Peacock, 2021). Within the academy, there are now demands for more global inclusivity and reflexivity in our practices of knowledge production. For the university, decolonising the curriculum is now a recognised expectation. It is clear from the new southern reading groups and seminar series along with the development of alternative decolonised reading lists, that there is an academic appetite for fresh, critical thinking, challenging new perspectives and greater inclusivity. How should those of us interested in punishment rise to meet these important new developments?

Certainly, this requires a greater sophistication in our research agendas, a reworking and diversification of concepts that reflects a broader array of penal phenomena. Much of this work begins with a critical reassessment of what theories are privileged as possessing universal purchase, and southern criminology presents us with an opportunity to confront the geographical limitations of such theories. This is a particularly acute problem in punishment and society studies, where it is not merely the 'Northernness' of our historical and theoretical parameters, but the domination of even narrower Anglophone penal concerns. Admittedly then, looking at Ireland – an English-speaking, Western, Christian and European nation that is indisputably a constituent of the North Atlantic and Global North – might be a somewhat provocative way to address the Anglocentrism of penology. However, in this volume, part of our contribution to southernising criminological knowledge is to bring into focus a broader and more diverse understanding of *Anglophone* penal history.

We thus use the subtitle *Perspectives from a Periphery* to highlight from the outset that we take a critical view of how Ireland has been marginalised within the epistemic hierarchy (though we accept that Ireland is probably best thought of as semi-peripheral, see Brangan, this volume). While the Global South is often deployed to distinguish places of economic disadvantage and exclusion in the southern hemisphere, in the context of the knowledge economy, the Global South is a metaphor for power rather than a distinct geographical region. The Global South can be found within the Global North (Currie, 2017). As de Sousa Santos (2014) and Carrington et al. (2019) each point out, there are southern places within Europe and we should avoid the erroneous depiction of there being one cohesive version of Western modernity and egalitarian Europe. We want to avoid the debate about where is and is not southern, or where southern criminology does or does not cover (this strikes us as potentially counterproductive), it is the focus on Ireland's peripheralisation, and recovering it from this hinterland, that concerns us.

Hitherto, these blurred lines are a fecund research territory that as of yet has not been capitalised upon. More concentrated focus on such ambiguous sites that obscure our sense of where the power rests (and does not), will further refine our understanding of the values and concerns that hold the current epistemological conventions in place. The history of the Irish Free State and latterly the Republic of Ireland presents precisely this kind of fuzzy North/South dichotomy. It is part of the Atlantic Isles that include the UK, yet rarely finds itself featured in attempts to theorise forms and practices of punishment and crime control in the Anglophone world.

Across the twentieth century, Ireland was primarily rural and agrarian with a political apparatus that saw health, education, welfare, as well as the power to punish, shared between Church and State (Ingliš, 1998). Ireland, then, simply does not fit with many of criminology's foundational assumptions and interests (Carrington et al., 2018), namely state-centric penal systems and urban-centric crime patterns.<sup>1</sup> Many of these assumptions were founded on the grand theories that emerged from the 1800s, premised on industrialisation and the expansion of large urban centres that created the problem of 'crime' for the first time (Connell, 1997).<sup>2</sup> By bringing the Republic of Ireland back in, how do we improve our understandings of penalty? By being about twentieth century Irish penal history, the volume inherently foregrounds often absent perspectives in criminology, such as gender, postcoloniality, religion, rurality and carcerality beyond the criminal justice system. As such, theorising from Ireland can enrich the southern theory and punishment and society literature.

This collection of chapters is therefore more than a case of historical area studies. As Garland (2001, p. vii) wrote, there will always be a tension between 'empirical particulars' and 'broad generalization'. Highlighting issues that do not comply with the general theoretical sweep might problematise matters, but it does not necessarily undo or fundamentally undermine pre-existing theoretical claims. We hope that what is shown here is not misunderstood as being caught in the analytical crosswinds Garland identified. The contributions herein are not merely small-scale quirks of local variation, the kind to be expected in any regional penal system. Nor should these histories be viewed as case studies which merely seek to test Anglo-American ideas. These histories explore how and why a Western Anglophone nation followed a distinct penal trajectory through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. These are not anomalies, but an integral part of

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<sup>1</sup>Moosavi (2019) notes that given that a higher proportion of people in the non-West live in rural settings that southern criminologists may be more willing than others to consider the importance of religion in their research. These two aspects are intrinsic to an understanding of Ireland.

<sup>2</sup>These narratives were, as Blaustein et al. (2021), recently traced, essential to the initial nexus of crime and development too, as nascent United Nation's organisations applied this theory to countries in the Global South in their forecasting of criminal justice issues on the horizon.

the penal history of this region and with theoretical significance. These accounts should prompt us to reconsider grand narratives of English-speaking punitiveness that have long side-lined Ireland, reducing it to a theoretical exception.

We do not suggest here a radical rewrite of late-twentieth century North Atlantic penality, instead we argue for greater conceptual inclusivity, diversity and tolerance of theoretical variation in Anglophone penal theory and history. It is possible to have a sociology of punishment:

[...] that does not claim universality for a metropolitan point of view, does not read from only one direction, does not exclude the experience and social thought of most of humanity, and is not constructed on *terra nullius*. (Connell, 2006, p. 262, original emphasis)

If distinctiveness rather than homogeneity (and thus also divergence) is part and parcel of the tapestry of penal culture, then our theoretical tools need to also be equally varied and accommodate difference and debate. It is, as Connell (2006) suggests, that theory must work as a conversation among many views and voices rather than operate from a single definitive stance. We believe that this volume, concerned as it is with Irish penal histories, contributes directly to this project of epistemological democratisation.

## Overview of Structure

This collection is thus an occasion to create dialogue between scholars whose projects concern punishment and society, historical methodologies and critical considerations of knowledge production. Doing so in Ireland is also an opportunity to further recover the past in a country where criminology was once considered absent. The collection will take as its focus the twentieth century. Although key institutional changes commenced in the years after independence in 1922, no single year can ever represent a definitive break with the past. The collection therefore defines the past century in broad terms, in a manner which allows contributors to tell their stories and make their cases. This is very much Ireland's recent past, a past that continues to speak to contemporary political discourse. Through exploration of this period, the collection reimagines Ireland's history within the Anglophone histories of penality, and allows us to rethink the sometimes taken-for-granted histories of crime and punishment in the English-speaking world.

To explore these questions the contributing authors to this volume are drawn from history, criminology, law, sociology and philosophy. The chapters that follow will focus on the state of Irish punishment scholarship, on prisons, the death penalty, sentencing and sexual violence as social control, as well as looking beyond the criminal justice system, to Ireland's 'architecture of containment' (Smith, 2007), to the ideologies underpinning responses to young people, and to the role of voluntarism and religion in shaping key services such as probation.

Methodologically the chapters demonstrate the special skills that are part of the historical researcher's toolkit, with examples of oral history, policy analysis, historical press analysis and material cultural approaches.

Inevitably, by bringing these themes together for the first time we can also identify gaps. There remain perspectives that are not included, and which should be taken up in new studies of Irish penal histories. For example, decades of mass emigration decimated the Irish population across the twentieth century. To fully chronicle Ireland's punishment past and to develop more inclusive global penal histories will require historians to bring penological questions to bear upon the Irish diaspora. During the twentieth century Irish prisoners were the largest group of foreigners in British prisons (it has been suggested that there were in fact more Irish prisoners in British prisons than in Irish ones). This diasporic perspective is an important but overlooked part of Irish penal history. Without it this volume admittedly is restrained, representing an 'island story', showing Irish penal history still has some way to go to catch-up with modern Irish history, which has broken away from this island insularity (Delaney, 2011). Future research of Irish punishment may also be enriched, as [Ciocchini and Greener \(2021\)](#) urge, by a consideration of the legacies of 'Empire'. How did legislators of the new Irish state adopt, adapt or disband the social control tools of their coloniser and how are these represented in contemporary patterns of neocolonialism? These studies could help refine and expand the nascent area of postcolonial penalty (Brown, 2017). And what about the indigenous Mincéir (Irish Travellers), who have been subject to the extremes of social control, even cleansing, akin to that of other Aboriginal and Indigenous ethnic minorities across the colonised world ([Ó hAodha, 2006](#))? We cannot say we are democratising and expanding our penal histories without being fully attentive to all marginalised peoples – especially as these groups are those who are most harshly penalised, stereotyped, stigmatised and targeted as suspect populations. While this volume may be welcome for its relative neatness, we hope that this is not the final word but a beginning, the opening of a dialogue about Irish penal history: what do we know? why and how have we come to understand our penal past in the terms we do? what has been overlooked? and importantly, what is the significance of Irish research to wider theoretical conversations? We hope therefore readers are energised by both the richness of the Irish criminological historical enterprise, and that future researchers are inspired to address the numerous gaps that pervade historical-social studies of penalty, in Ireland and elsewhere, from new and diverse perspectives.

We see then that a southern and historical framework should not reduce academia to indigenous theories, restrict us to narrative history, or limit our work to a specific analytical framework. Instead, its ambition is to open up the global, comparative and international connections in our shared research interests. And we believe that in undertaking this sort of demanding task, a study of Ireland, with its (i) ambiguous place in the networks of criminological knowledge, and (ii) shifting historical position from colonised island to European nation, offers an exceptionally useful vantage point from which to contribute to the development of punishment and society and historical criminology.