

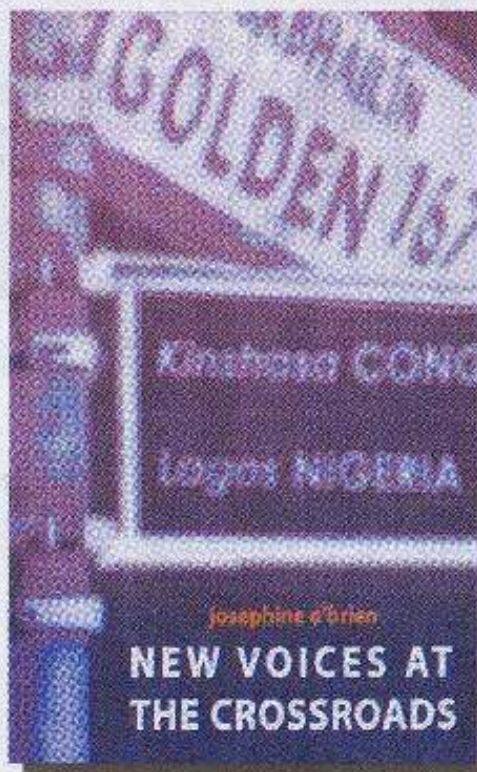
## New Voices at the Crossroads

By Josephine O'Brien  
(Choice Publishing)

FASCINATED BY the rich mixture of cultures and the diversity now visible in today's Irish society, Josephine O'Brien – a language tutor experienced in teaching English to many a newcomer – started collecting the stories and thoughts of the new Irish.

Based on interviews recorded over the dying years of the Celtic Tiger, the range of people given a voice in this publication, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, is truly astonishing. The collected reports seem to represent true and authentic accounts based on the different backgrounds and experience among the variety of people interviewed.

There are students, refugees, doctors, workers, entrepreneurs, newly arrived migrants and others living in Ireland for more than a decade – presenting a kaleidoscopic image of Irish society. Some are positive, other are very critical of Irish society, but in all cases O'Brien's achievement lies in the fact



that interviewees haven't held back their opinions.

However, this diversity is also one of the main downsides of this collection. Whereas it is certainly interesting to see a representation of such a variety of nations gathered in Ireland, the randomness of people given a voice is often confusing.

Huge discrepancies in quality between the individual reports point to poor editing, and makes one question if the project might not have benefited from a stronger underlying structure.

It's a pity that some excellent ideas get lost among too many insignificant anecdotes.

For the reader, *New Voices at the Crossroads* is at times challenging, interesting, boring and predictable. It comes across as a missed opportunity as the wealth of experience behind these interviews does not seem to be digested properly.

O'Brien merely presents a collection of stories without any structure, thus making this book an exercise in ethno-sociological recording, certainly,

but one missing out on the wealth of experience and creativity offered by the interviewees.

It appears a Herculean project which was too big for the editor, or indeed for just one book.



Isabel Roleff has written articles and reviews for various magazines in her native Germany. More

about her work can be found at [irishwritersexchange.com](http://irishwritersexchange.com)