

Review Essays



Early Modern Ireland

Clare Carroll

It is now almost forty years since the Folger Shakespeare Library published D. B. Quinn's *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (1966), a work whose coverage of Renaissance English texts on Ireland inspired a generation of both historians and literary scholars.

At that time, as Toby Barnard has noted, there was a 'mere trickle' of work on early modern Ireland, whereas now there is 'a spate'. Along with greater production have come higher standards. The best recent work not only reaches deeper into the archives, it also covers a wider range — not just the usual political but also intellectual, economic and cultural history. And it is more comparative, partly because of the example of the New British History, which has emphasized the need to relate the history of the three kingdoms to one another. Perhaps most importantly, as scholars have engaged with materials in Irish — the language of the majority of people on the island in the early modern period — they have revealed histories hidden from those locked within the limits of English. Accompanying the research into Irish language material is research into Latin, Spanish, Italian, and French sources, which has both advanced our understanding of developments within Ireland and Ireland's relation to Catholic Europe, the site of the first Irish diaspora.

For thorough archival research, broad comparative scope, and imaginative historiographical innovation, Breandán Ó Buachalla's *Aisling Ghéar: Na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn, 1603–1788* and Marc Caball's *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1558–1625* stand out as, without

question, the two most important books of the last decade on early modern Ireland. Their scholarly rigour is exemplary; but it is their refreshing originality in developing a new history of the period that places them apart. This was, in part, a consequence of immersion in hitherto neglected sources, particularly in the Irish language.

Ó Buachalla's book took some twenty years of research in twenty-eight archives in six countries. Yet it is not just its scope that is so formidable. It reconfigures the whole field by its examination of the impact of the *aisling*, or vision poem, upon the literary and political history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland. Ó Buachalla interprets this visionary poetry — widely disseminated in song — both as an expression of political thought and as a motivator of political action. Ó Buachalla charts the formation of the idea of the Irish nation in the matrix of religion, kingdom and fatherland, beginning with the bardic celebration of the Stuarts as the true inheritors of the Irish kingship after the Nine Years War. He demonstrates how the *aisling* mobilized support for James II and, later, for the Stuarts in exile on the continent.¹ Although less grand in scope and ambition, Caball's *Poets and Politics* is a brilliantly executed study of the various cultural and political changes registered in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century bardic verse. The traditional codes of Irish bardic poetry were transformed to express

Aisling Ghéar:
Na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn, 1603–1788
Breandán Ó Buachalla
Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar, 1996
xii + 808 pages
ISBN 0-90375-899-7

Poets and Politics:
Continuity and Reaction in Irish Poetry, 1558–1625
Marc Caball
Cork: Field Day and Cork University Press, 1998
vii + 220 pages
ISBN 1-85918-162-7

Ailbhe Ó Monacháin,
untitled illustration,
reproduced from Brian Ó hUiginn, ed., *The Wolfe Tone Annual*, 15 (1947), 35

the reaction to conquest and colonization, which included a concerted attempt to maintain the continuity of the older culture in the face of violent change. In a way, Caball's book can be seen as taking up the challenge made by Ó Buachalla in his scathing critique of Tom Dunne's and Michelle O'Riordan's earlier work on bardic poetry. The former claimed that post-1603 bardic poetry was simply defeatist and the latter claimed that such poetry was so sclerotic that it did not register any change but simply repeated the *topoi* of the medieval tradition.² Free of any polemic against these earlier interpretations, Caball's readings demonstrate again and again the great variety of the responses to contemporary events that is manifested in this poetry — the horror at the change in the landscape wrought by English colonization, the hope for a sovereign with a Gaelic lineage with the accession of James I, and the development of a modern political vocabulary grounded in an emerging Irish national identity.

The new understanding of the role and function of poetry, especially in its political dimensions, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is further enhanced by the revaluations that three new biographies demand. All three embody the characteristic interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, and historiographical awareness of the innovative work of recent times. Two of them are devoted to key figures of the time, Gerard the 11th Earl of Kildare and Geoffrey Keating. The third, Colm Lennon's *Archbishop Richard Creagh of Armagh, 1523–86*, reintegrates a figure, once reserved to the hagiographical and ecclesiastical tradition, into social and cultural history. As Lennon puts it in his preface, 'the new historiographical context for Irish Reformation studies' now makes it possible for an ecclesiastical figure such as Creagh to be interpreted in relation to 'his socio-economic background, formative cultural and educational experiences, and receptivity

to ideas thrown off by the welter of his time'. Lennon gives a compelling narrative of a man who started out in life as a merchant, pursuing his well-to-do Limerick family's business, and became one of the leading intellectuals and advocates for education and, at the end, a prisoner for the faith in the Tower of London. Lennon takes us through Creagh's intellectual formation in Louvain and Rome, where his talents attracted the attention of Ignatius Loyola and Pope Pius IV, back to Ireland and his mission as bishop of Armagh, where Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam had him incarcerated because he was posing too much of a threat to the Protestant competition. A brilliant man who wrote not only theological but also historical and linguistic works, Creagh was strictly devoted to his local traditions and religion, yet always protested his allegiance to the Queen. Lennon scarcely needs to point out that it would be anachronistic to see Creagh as a nationalist, but he usefully explains how his uncompromising defence of Catholicism, as well as his erudite defence of the Irish language, expressed a specifically early modern sense of *patria*. Lennon's expert narrative, drawing on a wide array of archival sources — everything from the few scraps of Creagh's bilingual treatise on the Irish language in Trinity College Dublin to Latin manuscripts in the Jesuit and Vatican archives — deepens our understanding, not just of Creagh, but of the state of Catholicism in Ireland, and of Irish relations with Rome throughout this period.

Likewise, Vincent Carey's study of 'the "Wizard" Earl of Kildare' fully embeds its subject in his social and cultural history. He shows how Kildare earned the nickname bestowed on him by local folklore: the earl had the nimbleness simultaneously to operate in the Gaelic world of late feudal vassalage, and in the English world of court factions. Carey's closely-worked account of political and social institutions in the late medieval borderland of the Pale sets the

1 It has long been rumoured that Ó Buachalla will produce an English translation of his indispensable study, if only in a shortened version. I would reckon the hardest part of this task to be the translation of primary texts. (Indeed, the citing of over 700 poems calls for a major work of editing and translation that would make this body of literature available to a wider audience.) It is one of the terrible ironies of Ireland's postcolonial condition that one of its greatest works of scholarship remains unread by the professional historians who should be required to read it, while at the same time its translation could be seen as promoting the dissolution of the very culture that it seeks to record.

2 See Breandán Ó Buachalla, 'Poetry and Politics in Early Modern Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an Dá Chultúr*, 7 (1992), 22–26.

Archbishop Richard Creagh of Armagh, 1523–1586: An Irish Prisoner of Conscience of the Tudor Era
Colm Lennon
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000
166 pages
ISBN 1-85182-473-1

scene for the wider and more enduring conflict between Gaelic and English concepts of land tenure and jurisdiction that continued beyond the rebellion of Silken Thomas (1534–35) into the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth. His account of how Kildare attempted to regain the jurisdictional and military rights that would have been part of his medieval Gaelic inheritance is based on hitherto unexplored archives in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. In addition to explaining Kildare's involvement in Gaelic institutions, Carey also describes his apprenticeship in and mastery of European court politics. Rescued from danger after the rebellion of Silken Thomas, Kildare was raised on the continent where he was master of the horse in the house of Cosimo de Medici and a frequent guest at the French court. Kildare was well connected with the English court. He married a lady-in-waiting of Queen Mary, Mabel Browne, whose sixty-year-old father had wed his sister, the 'Fair Geraldine'. But he had to struggle to survive the lethal ideological warfare of the 1570s and 1580s. With Elizabeth excommunicated and the Earl of Desmond bringing in papal troops to Smerwick (Kildare's own wife was said to have been involved in plotting this expedition), he struggled to maintain contradictory roles as loyal subject of the queen and leader in the Gaelic Catholic community. On the one hand, he hired hunted Catholic priests to teach his children and, on the other, he detained and surrendered the Catholic Archbishop Creagh to the Crown. The final chapter describes how Kildare's strategy was undermined by his New English rivals. Their intelligence briefs concerning his relations with the rebel Baltinglass, passed on by Walsingham's spies, ultimately convinced Lord Deputy Grey that Kildare had to be imprisoned. Although his abject apology persuaded the queen to spare him, Kildare ended his days confined to the area around Dublin, exiled from both Ireland and the court. What is so compelling about

Carey's account is that it allows the reader to comprehend the contingencies of power politics in this period from various perspectives — those of the New English elite, the Crown and Leicester factions, Kildare's Gaelicized English-Irish feudal clients, the Irish rebels, and of Kildare himself. Carey's focus is not simply on the individual story of a man, struggling to maintain a power base rooted in a customary law that was being swept away by colonization and conquest. It is sufficiently sustained and sharp to exhibit the story's representative status. This makes the account more resonant than others.

Bernadette Cunningham's *The World of Geoffrey Keating* is the third of these three important contributions to Irish biography. This book is scrupulously researched and thorough in its coverage of the intellectual and social formation of Keating and his contemporaries, and of the response to his work by both Catholic and Protestant historians. Nevertheless, it does not fully capture what is required in a biography of such a significant intellectual and cultural figure. Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* was the first major prose work in Modern Irish; he created the modern literary language, in much the same way that Dante created Italian in his *Commedia*. Similarly, he was the first historian working in Irish to engage the humanist debates about how history should be written, according to what criteria, from what perspective and with what responsibilities to its audience. As its title implies — literally the 'Foundation of Knowledge about Ireland' — the work tackles historiographical questions. Since many manuscripts of the *Foras Feasa* are lacking the historiographical prologue, Cunningham surmises that it was the least interesting part of the work to a contemporary audience although she perceptively notes that '[in] a country that hovered between kingdom and colony, readers understood the significance of alternative readings of the past'. Whatever

*Surviving the Tudors:
The 'Wizard' Earl of Kildare
and English Rule in Ireland,
1537–1586*
Vincent P. Carey
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002
240 pages
ISBN 1-85182-549-5

*The World of Geoffrey
Keating:
History, Myth and Religion in
Seventeenth-Century Ireland*
Bernadette Cunningham
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001
xv + 263 pages
ISBN 1-85182-533-9

the status of the prologue in the seventeenth century, this is the most interesting part of the work today; the questions that it asks of the historian are still valid. Does the historian have the necessary linguistic competence to write a history of a people? How does his or her relationship to the audience influence the writing of history? And how does the historian's own experience of life influence what he or she writes? To avoid these questions is to write uncritically, and to assume that these questions can be overcome through some quasi-scientific objectivity is either a form of naïveté or of the will-to-power.

Cunningham's biography provides a goldmine of information for future research projects, but I wish it had made a more compelling case for Keating's cultural achievement. Keating's *seanachas* was far from being purely antiquarian in the sense that it focused merely on the preservation of the past. For example, through an implied comparison of the Norman conquest with the early modern English conquest, Keating gave a potent critique of the contemporary situation. Like Machiavelli in his *Discorsi*, he used historical knowledge as a political weapon. Keating's poetry, not the book's intended focus, nevertheless merits more attention and would certainly have enriched our sense of his overall achievement. Still, this is an excellent introduction to Keating's intellectual background, prose writings, and critical reception. My reservations are voiced here only because the responsibilities assumed in writing an account of Keating's life — and the first one at that — are so vast. Few scholars of early modern Ireland have the palaeographical and linguistic skills, which Cunningham has deployed here.

One historian who has a real knack for making early modern Irish history relevant is John McCavitt, who conceived of his book *The Flight of the Earls* as 'a narrative of compelling human interest to the general reader'. The book is eminently readable —

truly the only page-turner of the lot reviewed here — and scholarly. Both his earlier book on Sir Arthur Chichester and this one derive from his doctoral thesis. *The Flight of the Earls* contains many dramatic episodes, including 'kidnapping and hostage taking ... extramarital affairs, rape, and suggestions of homosexual liaisons'. McCavitt has chosen an intriguing topic — an event that has remained a mystery, long debated by historians. In seeking to solve it, he creates a clear narrative out of the complex events that led up to O'Neill's decision to follow O'Donnell into exile, the tumult following his departure and the defeat of O'Doherty's rebellion. In addition to explaining the flight and its consequences for those left behind, the book also serves as the second half of the biography of Hugh O'Neill. It picks up the story where Hiram Morgan left it in *Tyrone's Rebellion* and follows the great chief to his initially splendid, but ultimately frustrating, and sadly diminished end in Rome.

In contrast to McCavitt's detailed narrative of a specific event and its ramifications, Nicholas Canny's *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* and David Edwards's *The Ormond Lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642* seek to interpret a critical period in Ireland's early modern history. Each, in its own way, attempts to account for the changing configuration of land-ownership and use, the administration of law, and Crown policy, within the relationship between England and Ireland. Canny's focus is mainly on Ulster; the number of Protestant Scots who initially settled there stood in the same proportion to the total native population as that of Spaniards to the peoples of the New World. Within this context, the term 'British' came to be significantly and frequently used to describe English legal and economic institutions created by English and Scottish settlers to enforce and justify their rule over Irish under-tenants and labourers.³ For Edwards, the focus is on Kilkenny, which since 1610

3 See, for example, *Conditions to Be Observed by the British Undertakers of the Escheated Lands of Ulster* (1610), a key document of the Ulster Plantation.

The Flight of the Earls
John McCavitt
Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002
x + 277 pages
ISBN 0-71713-047-9

Making Ireland British, 1580–1650
Nicholas Canny
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003
xiv + 633 pages
ISBN 0-19-925905-4

The Ormond Lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642: The Rise and Fall of Butler Feudal Power
David Edwards
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003
xiv + 378 pages
ISBN 1-85182-578-9

An Irish lackey, c.1603–06.
Huntington Library, MS
25863: Album of
Hieronymus Tielch.



had been, as he points out, the ‘spiritual centre’ of Irish Catholicism (through the work of Bishop David Rothe) and then, with the founding of the Confederation in 1642, its ‘secular capital’ also. For Canny, the key institution for analysis is plantation; for Edwards, lordship. Therefore, in Canny’s work, the defeat of the Desmond rebellion, the Munster plantation, the Cromwellian conquest and the subsequent devastating land confiscations that ensued are the central linking events in making Ireland British. In Edwards’s account of the Ormond lordship, he begins with the rule of the 8th earl, the Gaelicized English-Irish warlord Piers Ruadh, and ends with the Confederation of Kilkenny, which coincided with the demise of the Ormond lordship under the 12th earl, James Butler. These points define what is at stake. In Canny’s

book we read how the drastic social change wrought by plantation brought about Ireland’s increasing, if troubled, incorporation into Britain. In Edwards’s we read how the persistence of English-Irish feudalism helped resist, at least for a time, such nightmares of colonial rule as the mass-executions under martial law, the confiscations of the plantation policy, and the political disenfranchisement of the Irish under English rule.

This is not to say that there is no common ground here. While focusing on what he calls ‘one of the great under-explored themes of early seventeenth-century Irish history — the continuing vitality of feudalism’, Edwards does not ignore the corrosive force of modernization introduced by the English administration of Ireland.

And Canny's book also reveals the resistance of older cultural forms to this process. His chapter on the intellectual resistance of the native Gaelic élites is notable, but would have profited from a greater engagement with more thorough studies of political thought in the Irish language, such as Caball's *Poets and Politics* and Ó Buachalla's *Aisling Ghéar*. In a sense, both Canny's and Edwards's books can be read as explanations of the conditions that created the rebellion of 1641. Lord Deputy Wentworth plays a key role in both narratives. In Canny's study, we see him reading, imitating, and enforcing Spenserian plans for garrisons, confiscations, and plantations. In Edwards's study, the all-too-eager cooperation of James Butler with Wentworth's plans for centralized power brings about the alienation of his Catholic gentry constituents, their rebellion, and his consequent inability to control and represent the interests of the local community. Canny convincingly shows how the appropriation and widespread adoption of the colonial model in Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596) brought about the disenfranchisement and subjugation of the indigenous population, which in turn led to their rebellion in 1641. Edwards's reading of James Butler's poisoned relationship with the local community and with his grand-uncle, Richard Viscount Mountgaret, goes a long way towards explaining the strains behind the 1643 truce and 1643–46 peace talks, both of which have seemed murky in earlier accounts. I hope that Edwards will further investigate local alienation from Ormond and its long-term consequences for the Confederacy and beyond. He tantalizingly ends this magnificently researched and argued book with speculation about just this topic.

The 1640s are the subject of two groundbreaking new monographs — Pádraig Lenihan's *Confederate Catholics at War, 1641–49* and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's *Catholic Reformation in Ireland: The*

Mission of Rinuccini, 1645–1649 — and an important collection of essays, *Kingdoms in Crisis*, edited by Micheál Ó Siochrú. All three volumes owe a great deal to Ó Siochrú's *Confederate Ireland, 1642–1649: A Constitutional and Political Analysis* (Dublin, 1999), which has superseded Donal Cregan's unpublished 1947 dissertation as the standard history of the 1640s. Ó Siochrú's introduction to *Kingdoms in Crisis* — the collection is dedicated to Cregan — is one of the most succinct and comprehensible accounts both of the period and of what is needed in future histories of it; the introduction is particularly valuable for its critique of historians' neglect of Irish language materials, many of them literary, in favour of researching official state papers. In the first essay in the collection, Toby Barnard argues for an approach to 'confederate rebellion as baronial uprising' that would bring accounts of Ireland in the 1640s more into line with English and European histories of this period. It would be interesting to explore the limits of such an approach, given the very different conditions of the élites in Ireland to those in the rest of Europe. Jane H. Ohlmeyer's essay on Irish recusant lawyers draws on Donal Cregan's unpublished notes to produce a richly documented and deftly contextualized account of why Irishmen attended the English Inns of Court and what role they came to play in Confederate Ireland. In a related article, Bríd McGrath argues that the evisceration of Catholic power by successive parliaments drove recusant lawyers like Plunkett and Darcy, who had been members of parliament, into alliance with the Northern rebels and into active participation in the Confederacy. Other important articles in this volume include Pádraig Lenihan's analysis of Confederate military strategy, and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's reading of the relationship between the Irish clergy and the papal nuncio, Giovanni Batista Rinuccini. Lenihan argues that the Confederate army's failure to see the need for a strategy that would consolidate and

Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s: Essays in Honour of Donal Cregan
Edited by Micheál Ó Siochrú
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001
288 pages
ISBN 1-85182-535-5

Confederate Catholics at War, 1641–49
Pádraig Lenihan
Cork: Cork University Press, 2001
xi + 260 pages
ISBN 1-85918-244-5

defend an area ‘lying south of a line from Drogheda to Galway’ left Ireland weaker and more vulnerable to Cromwell. Ó hAnnracháin’s treatment of Rinuccini is surprisingly sympathetic, emphasizing the cardinal’s good faith and sustained efforts to increase the strength of the Irish clergy. Lenihan’s fascinating *Confederate Catholics at War, 1641–49* is enlivened by its sharp grasp of historiographical issues, and by its clear explanation of the conditions leading up to the war. These included the excessive taxation exacted from Catholics in exchange for limited toleration, and the ever-increasing share of land holdings by British settlers on the Ulster plantation and elsewhere. In his account of the mobilization and financing of the army, Lenihan documents the numbers of men in the various counties, their wastage, sickness, and desertion, and provides figures on taxes and pay rates. One of the main problems was lack of pay. He is even able to ascertain the economic level of the recruits, the single largest group of which was made up of domestic servants. There are also numerous maps showing campaigns, fortifications, and battle lines. Not only does Lenihan provide plenty of hard data, but he also explains such distinctive features of the Confederate army as its status as *gairm slua*, or hosting, rather than a standing force. Throughout, his analysis is made more profound by his knowledge of the Irish language — he cites Irish sources on everything from the use of the pike to O’Neill’s exhortations to his troops at Benburb. Destroying the bogey of antiquated ‘Celtic’ warfare, Lenihan maintains that the pike was an effective weapon, and that the Confederate army, especially the Leinster section of it, was quite advanced in its ability to organize and rout cavalry formations. He ends the book with an account of Dungan’s Hill, which, tellingly, in the Irish, but not in the English sources, emerges as a sheer massacre. His conclusion lays the blame for the final defeat of the Confederacy on the lack of experienced generals, although he praises

O’Neill, who seems to have had the charisma and strength both to control his troops in battle and also to exhort them to remain calm and steady. According to Lenihan, seventeenth-century warfare was psychological, even more than it was physical, in its demands.

The decisiveness of Lenihan’s study is in stark contrast with the inescapable ambiguities of Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin’s involved account of Rinuccini. The various perspectives of Rinuccini, the Vatican, the Old English, the Confederate army, and the plain people of Ireland, provide a series of contrasts and even contradictions. Although at first Rinuccini was welcomed with open arms in the streets of Kinsale, ultimately he was embittered and rather isolated. Whereas he antagonized the Old English by insisting upon open jurisdiction for the Church and no compromise with Protestants, he believed that he was doing so in the best interests of the Catholics of Ireland, many of them Old English. But even the Vatican’s reaction to the excommunication that Rinuccini imposed on those who would agree to a truce with Protestants was less than enthusiastic. Ó hAnnracháin attempts to make sense of all this by locating Rinuccini’s actions in the light of his intellectual and spiritual formation as a Counter-Reformation bishop in Italy. The largely unsympathetic cleric emerges from Ó hAnnracháin’s accounts as a sincere reformer, not bent on his own advancement — he chose a posting in Ireland over one in Florence — but devoted instead to his mission to strengthen the Church in Ireland, which for a time he succeeded in doing. At the same time, Ó hAnnracháin explains the Vatican’s position towards Ireland in relation to its concerns about Westphalia. Negotiating with Protestants in Ireland might compromise the Church’s stand in the Protestant German-speaking territories. The larger European historiographical perspective here, which is absent from insular and British accounts of Irish history,

helps set what would otherwise seem bizarre in a comprehensible context. This is a brilliantly researched book based on a wealth of Italian, Latin, Irish, and English sources that presents a deftly nuanced and often ironic narrative. The author wryly observes that ‘Rinuccini’s most notable accomplishment was to impede the formation of a unified party capable of resisting the 1649 invasion’.

In addition to his book on Rinuccini, Ó hAnnracháin has published a number of articles on Counter-Reformation intellectual history, one of the best of which — in *Kingdom or Colony*, a superb collection of essays edited by Jane H. Ohlmeyer — deals with varieties of Irish Catholic political thought in the mid-seventeenth century and places them within the context of wider European developments. Here, Ó hAnnracháin investigates the responses of the seventeenth-century Irish intelligentsia to rule by a Protestant king — these ranged from revolution and regicide to accommodation with Protestant monarchy and defence of the Confederate critics of Rinuccini. The Confederates who opposed the 1648 censure were in turn criticized by O’Ferrall and O’Connell in their *Commentarius Rinuccinianus* (1661–62), only published in the middle of the twentieth century and only now in the process of being fully translated into English.

Ohlmeyer’s *Kingdom or Colony* is a product of seminars on early modern Irish history sponsored by the Folger Institute, as is Hiram Morgan’s earlier collection, *Political Ideology in Ireland, 1541–1641*. These collections include some of the finest examples of the kind of interdisciplinary and critically self-interrogating history that is yielding innovative results, not least by interrogating the limits of inherited historiography, including the older colonial and the newer ‘British’ models. What emerges is a much more palpable sense of

both the ideology and the practice of colonization — how England ruled the Irish as a colonized people, with lesser rights than English subjects. The essays also give a sense of how the Irish envisaged their own sovereignty in terms that were drawn from both Irish and continental political traditions. Providing strong evidence based on the conduct of the English administration on the ground in Ireland, David Edwards’s brilliant article on martial law demonstrates how summary executions without trial were the rule in Elizabethan Ireland. Investigating the roots of an Irish political tradition rooted in continental natural law, Colm Lennon’s essay on ‘The *Analecta* of Bishop David Rothe’ shows an Irish political thinker envisaging a religious toleration in Ireland, such as that allotted to the Protestant minority in France by the Edict of Nantes. Articles by Vincent Carey on Old English bilingualism and by Marc Caball on identity formation and the critique of the English conquest in bardic poetry, show the strength of Irish language political thought. As Caball observes of the Gaelic literati, that they ‘managed to formulate a transcendent ideology of culture, religion, and sovereignty in less than auspicious political and economic circumstances is indeed remarkable’. The growing concern with what Ohlmeyer, in her characteristically lucid and comprehensive introduction, terms the ‘considerable cross-fertilization [that] occurred between different religious and ethnic groups at all levels’ is evident in excellent articles on the representation of the king, parliament and people in Keating’s *Foras Feasa* and John Lynch’s *Cambrensis Eversus* (Bernadette Cunningham), popular culture (Raymond Gillespie) and Vincent Gookin’s arguments against the transplantation of the Irish in the 1650s (Patricia Coughlan).

Historians are profiting from a new recognition of the pertinence to their work of literary works and of methods of

Catholic Reformation in Ireland: The Mission of Rinuccini, 1645–1649
Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002
x + 324 pages
ISBN 0-19-820891-X

Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony
Edited by Jane H. Ohlmeyer
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000
xvii + 290 pages
ISBN 0-521-65083-6

Political Ideology in Ireland, 1541–1641
Edited by Hiram Morgan
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000
264 pages
ISBN 1-85182-440-5

interpretation developed in literary criticism. (For example, Nicholas Canny devotes a whole chapter of *Making Ireland British* to Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.) At the same time, the analysis of historiography itself has benefited greatly from the interpretive acuity of literary scholars. In *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland*, for instance, Patricia Palmer analyses English accounts of the Irish language, and describes the activities of Irish translators in bringing about the Anglicization of Ireland. She also connects the Linguistic experience of the English in Ireland and in the Americas, unfavourably contrasting their lack of capacity or interest in Amerindian languages with the extensive production of dictionaries and transcription by the Spanish. In her final chapter, following Homi Bhabha, she argues for the need to open up a 'space of translation,' in which English and Irish languages are in dialogue with each other. I disagree with her conclusions about the English incomprehension of Irish — I would argue that the English had to have at least an instrumental knowledge of Irish to operate on the ground outside the Pale — and lament the preponderance of English language sources, largely from the State Papers, in her bibliography. Richard McCabe's contribution to David J. Baker and Willy Maley's *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* is, like Palmer's, another significant literary intervention in early modern Irish history. McCabe sees the colonial 'rhetoric of superiority' in Holinshed's *Irish Chronicles* as 'an index of self-doubt'. Teasing out the various layers of authorship from Giraldus Cambrensis to Campion, to Stanyhurst, and Hooker, McCabe masterfully reads the conflicting impulses in each appropriation of the text, explaining the Welsh, English, and Irish dimensions of these various contexts, which might collectively be called 'British.'

Baker and Maley's introduction to *British Identities* sets up a compelling debate that runs throughout the entire volume about the possibilities and limits of the New British

history. Richard Murphy weighs in on behalf of the 'archipelagic' and 'Atlanticist' models that place Ireland somewhere between England and the Americas. In her response to this wide-ranging collection of essays on historiography, Shakespeare, the New World, Britain, and Ireland, Ohlmeyer sensibly and authoritatively insists on the use of 'British and Irish histories' — which has the distinct advantage from an historical perspective of corresponding to the term used by people writing in the early modern period.

If the archipelagic model sees Ireland between England and America, yet another historiographical approach is placing Ireland in the cultural geography of Europe. Two outstanding volumes on the Irish in Europe, one edited by Thomas O'Connor, *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815*, and the other co-edited by O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, *Irish Migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820*, go a long way toward redressing the dearth of material on the Irish on the continent. The essays in both volumes are based on hitherto-neglected continental archives, such as those explored by Ciaran O'Scea in his account of the Spanish version of what went wrong at Kinsale, and by Karin Schuller in her work on Irish migrant networks in Spain. These essays offer fresh insights into the Irish in such far-flung locations as Madrid, Poitiers, and Yorktown Heights. And they cover a range of economic levels: from the destitute families of discharged soldiers on the streets of *ancien régime* Paris, movingly portrayed by David Bracken, to the aristocratic Wild Geese at the Jacobite court of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, richly described by Edward Corp. (He has now produced an entire book on this topic as well as one on the Stuart court in Rome.) From Hector MacDonnell's narrative of his own ancestors' response to the changes of the seventeenth century, one gets a sense of the wide-ranging European connections of one of the few Catholic families that held on to

Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion
Patricia Palmer
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001
xii + 254 pages
ISBN 0-521-79318-1

British Identities and English Renaissance Literature
Edited by David J. Baker and Willy Maley
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002
xvi + 297 pages
ISBN 0-521-78200-7

The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815: The Other Hidden Ireland
Edited by Thomas O'Connor
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001
219 pages
ISBN 1-85182-579-7

Irish Migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820
Edited by Mary Ann Lyons and Thomas O'Connor
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003
288 pages
ISBN 1-85182-701-3

its power. Both volumes are also strong on political and intellectual developments, many of which found expression in Irish and Latin. Notably, Mícheál Mac Craith and David Worthington give a fascinating account of the ‘literary activity’ of the Irish Franciscans in Prague and O’Connor analyses Peter Lombard’s argument for ‘foreign intervention in early modern Ireland’ in his *Commentarius* (1600). These books also contain a wealth of information on the Irish military-men in Europe and beyond, such as those Irish Jacobites who participated in the American War of Independence, as chronicled by the French historian Patrick Clarke de Dromantin. These are truly international and comparative studies that bring together work being done by Czech, French, German, Spanish, and American, as well as Irish and English scholars.

Another major contribution to the study of the Irish on the continent is *The Irish College, Rome, 1628–1678*, an edition of a manuscript history of the college written in 1678 by James Reilly SJ to mark its fiftieth anniversary. Printed in Rome by the Pontifical Irish College, this sumptuously produced volume features colour photographs of the architecture and art of the early years of the college, an informative historical overview of seventeenth-century Irish ecclesiastics in Rome by Thomas O’Connor as well as a very detailed introduction to the text itself by John J. Hanly. Among the alumni of the college whom O’Connor describes were the saintly scholar Oliver Plunkett and the combative rogue Terence O’Kelly, who complained a great deal during his student days and later, as vicar apostolic of Derry, ‘took to himself a mistress and lived publicly with their children’. The history itself recounts such topics as the endowment of the college by Cardinal Ludovisi, the Jesuit take-over of the college administration, financial difficulties, and how various rectors dealt with them. This volume suggests the riches

in European archives yet to be mined for future histories.

Irish history has long been dominated by political and military approaches but both younger and more established historians are beginning to show the influence of European trends in cultural history, in which visual and literary, as well as popular and religious history play a role. In early modern literary studies of the 1970s and 1980s, it was almost as if religion had become the taboo that sex had once been; whereas sex and power were everywhere. If this has begun to change in literary studies, with, for instance, Stephen Greenblatt’s marvellous meditation on the meaning of Purgatory for understanding *Hamlet*, the same is true for cultural history. Two striking examples of Irish historians approaching religion from an open-ended anthropological perspective are Clodagh Tait’s *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* and Toby Barnard’s *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641–1770*. Tait’s volume includes representations of public executions, martyrdom, disinterment, and the place of monuments in the construction of honour. While I applaud her attention to material culture, I was disappointed not to find any treatment of Gaelic laments (*caointe*), through which grief was expressed in both learned manuscript and folk traditions. As she maintains, Irish poetry is ‘conventional’, but so, too, are funerary monuments and narrative histories, both of which provide her source material. All human linguistic expression is constructed, and it would be naïve or disingenuous to discount poetry as ‘problematic as a measure of sorrow’ for this reason. The point is to take the time to understand the conventions and how they work.

Toby Barnard is off the hook when it comes to Irish sources since the *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents* that he describes largely took place in English. Nevertheless, realizing that Irish was the majority

The Irish College, Rome, 1628–78: An Early Manuscript Account of the Foundation and Development of the Ludovisian College of the Irish in Rome
Contributions by John J. Hanly, Declan Lawell, Albert MacDonnell and Thomas O’Connor
Rome: Pontifical Irish College, 2003

Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650.
Clodagh Tait
Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002
ix + 229 pages
ISBN 0-333-99741-7

Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641–1770
Toby Barnard
Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004
xvi + 359 pages
ISBN 1-85182-693-9

Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766: A Fatal Attachment
 Éamonn Ó Ciardha
 Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002
 468 pages
 ISBN 1-85182-534-7

language and was particularly important for zealous Protestants bent on reforming the Irish, he has written about ‘Protestants and the Irish Language’. Amongst those Protestants who studied and promoted the language were scholars such as Archbishop William King, who warned against the baleful effects of a ban on the Irish language, and William Bedell, who translated the Bible into Irish. Barnard points out how Bedell was inspired to save souls by the vernacular by the example of the Genevan scholar Diodati, who had translated it into French and Italian. Irish Protestants also travelled in European circles; such cultural connections deserve further investigation and research.

Barnard is a remarkably versatile historian. In a book which gathers together some twenty years of his essays, he explores local socio-economic and cultural experiences as expertly as he addresses issues in intellectual history; for instance, his analyses of the ‘political, material, and mental culture of the Cork settlers’ in the late 1600s, the power that Katherine Conolly of Castletown wielded as a hostess, and ‘the uses of the 23rd of October 1641’ are all exemplary. His writing displays a recurrent desire to strike an ironic note or to undo received ideas, a tendency that is at once a strength and a weakness. He revels in making observations that might overturn the strongly held opinions of other historians — that no one cared about Edmund Spenser in eighteenth-century Ireland, for example — when this is not precisely the case. It was only that there was no interest in Spenser’s poetry, not that there was no interest in *A View*, reprinted twice in that century. And he also engages in distinctions that are sometimes beyond me, as in ‘It could be that a scheme of 1749 to outlaw the employment of Catholics as agents arose not to safeguard the Protestant interest but the employment prospects of Protestants.’ I fail to see the difference.

A book to be read in conjunction with

Barnard’s is Éamonn Ó Ciardha’s *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766* (an opinion with which Barnard, given his own review of the book, would agree). I cannot think of a recent book in Irish history that better combines original primary research, including profound research into Irish language poetry, a continental European perspective, and a concern for both élite politics and popular culture. Ó Ciardha interprets the meaning that the Stuart cause had for expatriate Irish Jacobites who served in European armies as well as for dispossessed rapparees on the ground in Ireland, who like their shining prince, would become the stuff of song and legend. Ó Ciardha discusses some four hundred poems (all usefully catalogued by an index of first lines) which he skilfully reads in relation to the events and concerns from which they arose and the politics which they envisioned. As he repeatedly points out, such poems were intensely topical, performing the function of news from Britain and the continent. They also expressed the political aspirations of the Irish not just for a rightful king but also for the restoration of their confiscated lands. From the cultural point of view, Jacobitism was deeply bound up with Catholicism; the Stuarts in exile exercised the power to appoint bishops to Irish dioceses, and later, when the Pope rescinded that power, the laity doubted the Stuarts’ claim to the Crown and scorned the clergy who had misled them. Jacobitism was also bound up with the Irish language (although, as Ó Ciardha points out, James himself disavowed any concern for it in his own writing). This is a truly original book in that it has overcome a huge imbalance of historiographical focus on 1691 and on the last decades of the eighteenth century leading up to the 1798 rebellion. The years in between have largely been written about as the history of the Protestant Ascendancy. Anyone who wants to contend with eighteenth-century Irish history from now on will have to engage with Ó Ciardha’s *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause*. ■