

Introduction: Ireland in the Early Modern World

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Ireland's place in the early modern world is well illustrated through an examination of the contents of a wash pit at Rathfarnham castle in Dublin. Archaeological excavations in 2014 unearthed a veritable treasure trove of 17,500 well-preserved artefacts, probably dating from the second half of the seventeenth century. This extraordinary discovery offers a unique window into *élite* material culture but also highlights Ireland's global convergences. Built in the 1580s by Archbishop Adam Loftus, first provost and founder of Trinity College Dublin, Rathfarnham castle, with its thick *trace italienne* flanker towers, gun loops and mullioned windows, was typical of the fortified mansions constructed across early modern Ireland.¹ Protestant, well connected, and on the make, members of the Loftus family were amongst thousands of 'New English' settlers who colonised Ireland from the 1530s and made their fortunes, often by dubious means.

The Rathfarnham hoard provides a glimpse into the cosmopolitan material world, both public and private, of the Loftus dynasty and their household.² Extant fashion items recovered included leather and wooden shoe parts (heels, uppers, soles and buckles). Worn down heels suggest that these shoes had multiple owners, with mistresses passing on once-precious pumps to their daughters and maids and fathers handing down their shoes to their sons and servants. Though no textiles survived in the damp wash pit, archaeologists recovered wooden and metal buttons, pins and clasps. These fastened undergarments, dresses and jackets, no doubt made from locally manufactured woollens and linens or exquisite silks and satins, tailored in London, or

I undertook much of the research for this chapter during a sabbatical year (2014–2015) during which I was the Parnell Fellow at Magdalene College in Cambridge and a Visiting Professor in the School of Historical Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. I am grateful to my colleagues in Cambridge and Delhi for their hospitality and conviviality. I am also very grateful to John Cunningham for his research assistance.

1 See Chapter 14 by J. Fenlon.

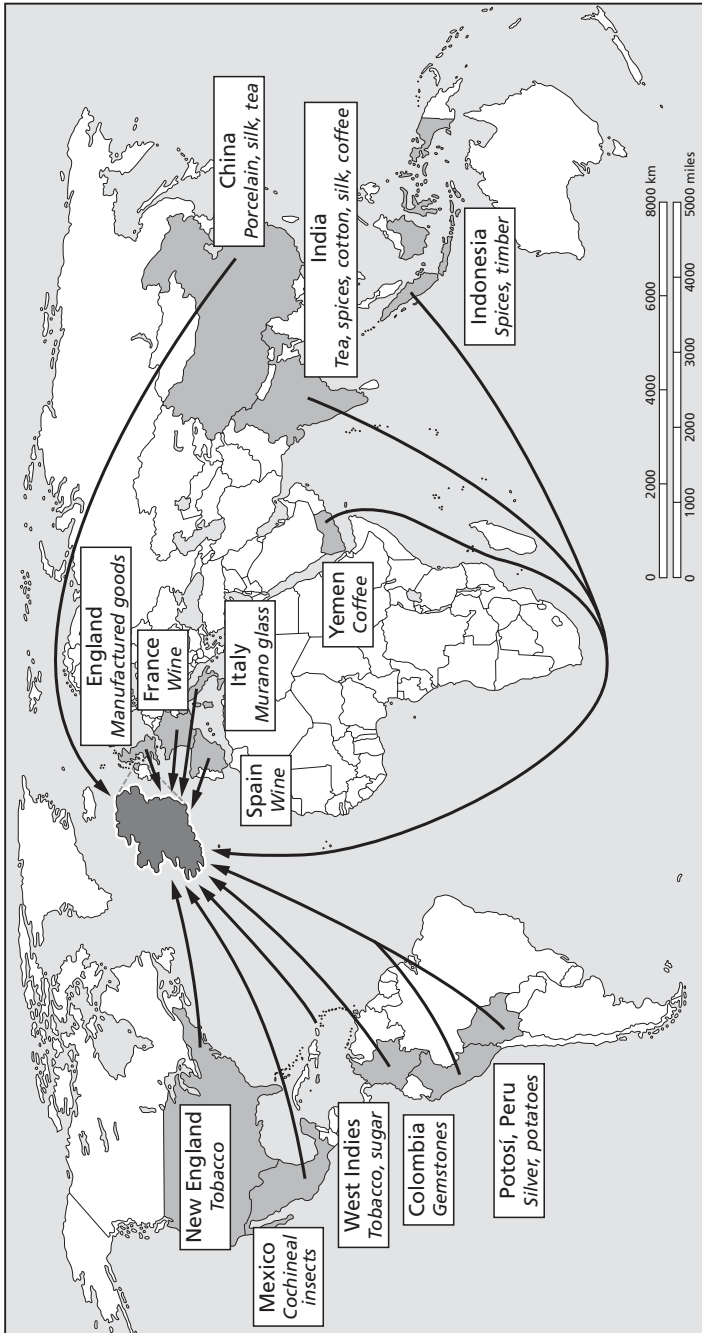
2 Also see Chapters 12 and 13 by M. O'Dowd and S. Flavin.

JANE OHLMEYER

colourful Indian calicoes, which were the height of fashion across Western Europe in the later decades of the seventeenth century. The survival of lace bobbins and bodkins invokes images of intricate lace collars and cuffs, set off with a delicate tortoiseshell fan, the frame of which is also extant. Even more exotic is a stunning (probably from Colombia) emerald, which was excavated along with gold brooches, rings mounted with semi-precious gems, amber beads, and finely engraved sleeve buttons made from silver, gold and glass. More intimate still, is a grooming kit – toothbrush, hairbrush and ear wax spoon – together with a handle for a razor, a fragment of a sponge and a glass jar apparently containing the remains of red lip or cheek rouge, which was derived from cochineal insects (native to Mexico). More mundane were the chamber pots, which have also been recovered; most were tin glazed and others, from Staffordshire and North Devon, more ornate.

Unsurprisingly no bulky household furnishings found their way into the wash pit, while other highly prized possessions – elaborate wall hangings, damask drapes and bed covers, or ‘Turkey carpets’ (so common in the inventories of other grand houses) – presumably perished. More durable luxury items were recovered: miniature glass figurines, probably from Nevers in France and the Venetian island of Murano in Italy; and exquisite blue and white Chinese porcelain, along with cruder Dutch and English copies. These extant ceramics suggest that the Loftuses kept up with the latest trends, drinking tea (from Asia) from Chinese porcelain cups and saucers, together with coffee (from Yemen in the Middle East), from fine English-made coffee cups. Sugar, readily available from plantations in the West Indies, could have been used to sweeten both beverages and hot drinking chocolate, the beverage of choice for the very rich. Equally fashionable were the flint crystal glass goblets, manufactured from the 1670s probably in London using innovative glass making technology, which were used to drink spirits and wines (excavated bottles suggest that wine was produced especially for the castle).

Scientific analysis of the food remains in the wash pit – especially bones, shells, seeds, nuts and even a banana skin – provides fascinating insights into everyday diet. The inhabitants of the castle ate meat, fowl, game, fish and foods made from a variety of cereals (especially oats and wheat), along with delicacies like apricots, bananas and peaches, grown in glass houses, and marrows and courgettes, plants from the New World that spread to Europe during the early decades of the sixteenth century. Though there is no extant archaeological evidence in the wash pit, they presumably used a variety of Asian spices, ubiquitous in Ireland by this period, in cooking, preservation and for medicinal purposes and ate potatoes, indigenous to the Andes. Tobacco was



MAP 2. Ireland and the Early Modern World.

JANE OHLMEYER

also native to the Americas and the recovery of a large number of clay pipes suggests that smoking proved a particularly popular pastime at Rathfarnham. The survival of coins, trade tokens, lead weights and wax seals tells a story of international commercial engagement. Particularly noteworthy is a silver 'piece of eight', mined and minted at Potosí in Spanish Peru and dated 1655, along with a jeton, struck at the end of the sixteenth century in Nuremberg, one of Europe's greatest centres of production.³

Global Convergences and Early Modernity

The Rathfarnham hoard reflects Irish interactions with and access to commodities and foodstuffs from all over the globe: Spanish America (modern-day Colombia, Mexico and Peru) and the Caribbean in the Atlantic World; to England, Italy, France and Germany in continental Europe; to China and India in Asia. It also illustrates some key features of early modernity. While relative localism characterised the medieval, the early modern period saw the swift and unprecedented global circulation of commodities, peoples, ideas and technologies. Processes like commercialisation, urbanisation and the growth of economies, determined by markets and money, were developments common across Europe, the Middle East and Asia, as was rapid population growth. The discovery of global sea passages established maritime connections between Europe, Asia and the Americas. This allowed for the circulation of New World silver, especially from the Potosí mines, which by the 1570s produced two-thirds of the total output of precious metals from the Americas, to Asia, often via Europe. It was this American silver, not the exchange of European manufactured goods, that allowed the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English to purchase the luxury commodities, initially spices and later textiles, so coveted in the West.

In addition to transforming commerce, these global interactions facilitated the rise of cosmopolitanism and of cultural and intellectual exchange, already revolutionised by Johannes Gutenberg's introduction of moveable type into printing. This made possible the unprecedented circulation of ideas. Over time, scientific discoveries and technological innovations, especially in ship construction, when four-masted galleons replaced galleys, underpinned European expansionism and by 1800 the West controlled 35 per cent of the globe. Thus the wars of the eighteenth century, unlike those of the sixteenth

³ A. Giacometti and A. MacGowan, *Rathfarnham Castle Excavations, 2014* (Dublin: Archaeology Plan, 2015), especially chapter 7.

Introduction: Ireland in the Early Modern World

and seventeenth, were truly global conflicts. The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1741), for instance, between Spain and Britain, involved naval action off Cartagena and Cuba and merged into the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748), where French and British armies fought each other in North America and in India, as well as in Europe.

On land, military innovations facilitated the rise in the East of the 'gunpowder empires', the Mughals, Ottomans and Safavids; while in the West developments associated with the 'Military Revolution', especially *trace italienne* style fortifications (exemplified in the thick flankers of Rathfarnham castle), helped to drive state formation across Europe.⁴ Confronted with the greatly increased costs of firearms, fortifications and armies, early modern states turned their attention to improving their land tax assessment and collection. In the East, the period saw the growth of large, stable states that attained size, efficiency and territorial reach not seen since antiquity. In South Asia, for instance, the Mughal Empire established its suzerainty over nearly the entire subcontinent of India and promoted religious and cultural pluralism. In terms of scale and wealth, the Mughal Empire compared favourably with the contemporary Ottoman and Safavid ones and with any state in Europe, where incessant warfare, triggered by dynastic jealousies and intense religious struggles, ensured that there was hardly a year of peace during the early modern period.

Ireland in 1550 and 1730

An important dimension of early modernity is that it is transitional, incorporating processes of change across time. A study of processes, structures and *mentalité* in such transitional moments is vital to understanding the problematic of continuity and transformation. This is one reason why this volume opens in 1550 and closes in 1730. Neither date is significant as the beginning or the end of anything; rather they represent 'transitional moments' marking Ireland's passage from medieval to early modernity and from early modernity to modernity.

During these years Ireland experienced, according to one scholar, 'the most rapid transformation in any European seventeenth century economy, society and culture'.⁵ In some respects 1550s Ireland, with its patchwork of lordships,

⁴ See Chapter 10 by J. J. Cronin and P. Lenihan.

⁵ K. Whelan, 'Ireland in the World System 1600–1800', in H.-J. Nitz (ed.), *The Early Modern World-system in Geographical Perspective* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993), 204.

JANE OHLMEYER

its pastoral economy, limited urbanism, and its fighting and feasting culture, was very 'medieval', but this was also a period of transition as the Tudor state determined to increase its control over the island. In 1550, Edward VI, Henry VIII's sickly teenage son, oversaw attempts to make Ireland Protestant in the face of a Catholic Church, renewing itself under Jesuit guidance. The king launched an ambitious reform programme and instructed Humphrey Powell to publish *The boke of common praier after the use of the Churche of England* (1551), the first book to be printed in Ireland.⁶ His lord deputy, Sir James Croft, launched aggressive military campaigns, first into Munster, where he secured the submission of the leading Gaelic chieftain, MacCarthy Mór, before turning to Ulster, where he captured Shane O'Neill, who, along with other Ulster warlords, had earlier in the year hoped to conclude treaties with envoys from France, England's great enemy.⁷ In short, this was a period of political instability and religious uncertainty, exacerbated by dynastic insecurity as Catholic Mary succeeded Edward in 1553, only to be replaced five years later by her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth I. Distractions at home meant that the Tudors did not get involved, at least until the later decades of the century, in the wars of religion that embroiled first Germany and central Europe, and, from the 1560s, France and the Netherlands.

One hundred and eighty years later, in 1730, wars were no longer fought over religion. Enlightenment thought, scientific advances and the writings of the French philosophers, questioned all accepted ideas and prepared the ground for political revolutions first in America and later in France.⁸ This was the beginning of the 'Age of Revolutions' in other respects. Technological developments in cultivation, popularised in the 1730s in the writings of Jethro Tull, laid the foundations for the 'Agricultural Revolution'. Innovations in textile production, such as the flying shuttle (patented in 1733), marked an early step in Britain's 'Industrial Revolution'. During these years the Hanoverian king, George II, and his Whig 'prime minister', Sir Robert Walpole, did what they could to secure peace abroad, contain the Jacobite threat at home and restore prosperity after the disastrous consequences associated with the bursting of the South Sea Bubble (1720), the first financial crisis of modern times.

In early eighteenth-century Ireland the Protestant Ascendancy, shored up by a full raft of repressive penal legislation, was well established and the

6 See Chapter 18 by D. Rankin.

7 See Chapters 1, 7 and 8 by C. Brady, T. Ó hAnnracháin, and C. Lennon.

8 See Chapter 20 by I. Campbell.

Introduction: Ireland in the Early Modern World

majority Catholic population fully (and finally) reduced.⁹ It is believed that between c.1550 and c.1730 the population of Ireland doubled (from roughly one million), which was the highest rate in contemporary Europe.¹⁰ Society was ethnically diverse, with nearly one-third (c.27 per cent) of the population of immigrant stock, descendants of the 350,000 people – English, Scottish, Welsh and French Huguenots – who migrated to Ireland, mostly during the course of the seventeenth century.¹¹ Technological innovation and intensive proto-industrialisation characterised the development of the Irish linen industry and exports soared from 1.5 million yards in 1712 to 8 million in 1740. Earlier schemes for colonisation and commercialisation had transformed the economy into one that was money and market orientated and favoured landed estates with a rent-paying leasehold tenantry.¹² As a result the composite landed *élite* of the seventeenth century became increasingly Protestant and Catholics' landholding dropped from about 54 per cent in 1641, to 23 per cent in c.1670.¹³ The building of villages and towns, with their 'big house', church, marketplace, school, court and jail, transformed the Irish landscape, as did the draining of wetlands and the fencing of open pastures. A sustained onslaught against the woodlands, largely due to iron smelting and the export of timber, resulted in massive environmental change.¹⁴

Chapters in this volume chart many aspects of the intense political, religious, economic, environmental, intellectual and societal transformations between 1550 and 1730, along with the cultural trauma and dislocation that accompanied them.¹⁵ No volume is ever comprehensive, so the contributors also identify areas that would benefit from fresh research.

Kingdom and Colony

Ireland formed an integral part of the English and, after 1707 and parliamentary union with Scotland, the British Empire. Yet Ireland was also colonial. Whether Catholic or Protestant, constitutional nationalists like Patrick Darcy, William Molyneux and Jonathan Swift fiercely resisted attempts to cast them as colonists, preferring to focus on Ireland's status as a kingdom first within a

9 See Chapters 5, 6 and 9 by C. I. McGrath, D. W. Hayton and R. Armstrong.

10 See Chapter 11 by C. Tait.

11 Nicholas Canny's foreword in K. Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2004), xi.

12 See Chapters 21 and 22 by R. Gillespie and A. Margey.

13 See Chapter 23 by M. Ó Siochrú and D. Brown.

14 See Chapter 24 by F. Ludlow and A. Crampsie.

15 See Chapters 16 and 17 by M. Caball and B. Cunningham.

JANE OHLMEYER

multiple monarchy and, with the Act of Union (1800/1), as an integral component of the British Empire.¹⁶ Certainly, the Kingship Act of 1541, which declared Henry VIII king of Ireland and accorded those of Irish provenance the same rights as those of English origin, gave Ireland the constitutional status of a kingdom. Yet Poyning's Law (1494), which mandated that no parliament could meet in Ireland unless licensed to do so by the king and that the king and his English council approved all legislation to be submitted to an Irish parliament, remained on the statute books and restricted the legislative function of the Dublin parliament, which, as a result, met erratically during the early modern period. The Declaratory Act (1720) enshrined the subordinate position of the Dublin parliament to that of Westminster, which now had the authority to make laws for Ireland.

Baldly stated political, military, cultural, religious and economic concerns drove English rule in early modern Ireland. At a practical level, Ireland, with its very large Catholic population, represented a potential security threat to England. This meant that it had to be fully conquered, secured from internal insurrection and external invasion, colonised and 'civilised'. Central to this 'civilising' (or 'Anglicising') agenda was the promotion of the English language and the widespread use of English architecture, agricultural practices, culture, law, land tenures, systems of governance and religion (Protestantism).¹⁷ Towns, especially corporate ones on the English model, were regarded as key features of the 'civilizing' process. During the early decades of the seventeenth century, Ulster's rate of incorporation (twenty-eight corporate towns were established) was second to that of England. One historian has suggested that Ulster served 'not so much a "laboratory" of empire [but] as a red hot crucible for precisely the kind of "civil society" that already characterised much of provincial England'.¹⁸

The military, political, economic, religious, social, legal and cultural initiatives that underpinned the interconnected processes that made Ireland English, which are discussed at length in this volume, began in the Middle Ages but gathered steam with the reform ('surrender and regrant') initiatives

16 K. Kenny, 'Ireland and the British Empire: An introduction', in Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire*, 1–15, for a helpful overview of the current debate.

17 See Chapters 1, 2 and 3 by C. Brady, D. Edwards and J. Cunningham. Also see J. Ohlmeyer, 'Conquest, Civilization, Colonization: Ireland, 1540–1660', in R. Bourke and I. MacBride (eds.), *The Princeton Guide to Modern Irish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 22–47.

18 P. Withington, 'Plantation and Civil Society', in É. Ó Ciardha and M. Ó Siochrú (eds.), *The Plantation of Ulster. Ideology and Practice* (Manchester University Press, 2012), 55–77, p. 69.

Introduction: Ireland in the Early Modern World

of the 1540s. Thanks to an aggressive policy of plantation, they gained further momentum during the early decades of the seventeenth century. With the completion of the Cromwellian reconquest and the mid-century revolution in landholding, a new order founded on English legal, administrative, political, landed and economic structures, the English language and English culture had been established. Out of this period of profound dislocation and transition emerged the Protestant Ascendancy of the eighteenth century. This was not a linear progression, nor was the outcome predestined. On the contrary, what is striking is the haphazard, messy and clumsy nature of the processes surrounding state formation and the very real limitations on central power.

Economic imperialism reinforced political dominance. From the 1660s (and the Navigation Acts), legislation consistently privileged the English economy over the Irish one and created a political economy of dependency centred on London, where trade was controlled, enterprise financed and joint stock companies established.¹⁹ The novelty of the joint stock model of corporate enterprise and the advantage (and monopoly) it accorded to predominately English, often London, merchants and investors cannot be overstated and allowed them to acquire global portfolios of assets which often included Irish investments. Consider the example of the East India Company, the most successful of any joint stock trading network. Of the seventy-three men who served as directors of the East India Company during the 1660s and 1670s, over half had subscribed to the Adventurers' Act (March 1642), which offered Protestant speculators 2,500,000 Irish acres, and to subsequent schemes which, by the 1650s, represented the most ambitious attempt to plant Ireland at any point in the island's history. At least ten of these directors had close family members living on Irish estates acquired during these years or in the plantations of the early seventeenth century. Others were members of the Irish Society, itself modelled on the 1600 charter of the East India Company, which was the joint stock venture responsible for colonising, on behalf of the city of London, the entire county of *Londonderry* in an effort to bring capital and economic prosperity to a commercial backwater. The investment proved to be a long-term one; it was the later seventeenth century before the London companies began to see a meaningful return on an investment made generations before.

Many contributors to this volume carefully document the varied responses to these convulsive colonial processes. Some contemporaries embraced with enthusiasm the changes, while others espoused them in order to survive.

¹⁹ See Chapter 4 by T. McCormick.

JANE OHLMEYER

Many clearly abhorred them. Some bards, reeling in the wake of political but not intellectual collapse, criticised the transformation in the landscape, ‘the mountain all in fenced fields; fairs are held in places of the chase; the green is crossed by girdles of twisted fences’.²⁰ Some condemned the workings of the courts, or members of the Catholic *élite* who had converted to Protestantism. Others vented their spleen against the newcomers, whom they regarded as low-born thugs and as ‘English-speaking bastards’ who were drawn, according to John Lynch, ‘from the barbers’ shops, and highways, and taverns, and stables and hogsties of England’.²¹ These writers, like the Ulster poet Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh who lamented that Ireland had become ‘a new England in all but name’, may have been appalled by the changes wrought by conquest, colonisation and commercialisation but they were powerless to stop, never mind to reverse, them.²²

Given the political, cultural and economic emphasis on making Ireland English, what did ‘Irishness’ mean during these years? Strictly speaking only the Gaelic-speaking Catholic natives regarded themselves as being ‘Irish’. Those of Anglo-Norman ancestry, such as the earls of Clanricard or the Butlers of Ormond, consistently stressed their ‘Englishness’ often at the expense of their ‘Irishness’, even if sixteenth-century commentators described them as ‘Anglo-Irish’ or ‘English-Irish’. By the early seventeenth century, this community become known as the ‘Old English’ and represented themselves as the crown’s loyal and devoted servants, arguing that their Catholicism in no way jeopardised their fealty to a Protestant prince nor their ability to serve him as their ancestors had done. Studies, largely by Gaelic literary scholars, suggest that after the defeat in the Nine Years’ War (1594–1603) and the ‘Flight of the Earls’ in 1607, the native Irish, while acknowledging the centrality of Catholicism to their identity, increasingly adopted the same conciliatory, *politique* attitude towards the crown, which had traditionally characterised the Old English. Despite prohibitions against it, extensive intermarriage and cultural cross-assimilation had occurred between the two communities, with the result that many members of the former had become Anglicised and the latter Gaelicised. Predictably this further blurred boundaries between ‘Irishness’ and ‘Englishness’, as did the conversion to Protestantism of leading native

20 C. Maxwell (ed.), *Irish History from Contemporary Sources (1509–1610)* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923), 291.

21 John Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, trans. Mathew Kelly (3 vols., Dublin: Celtic Society, 1851–1852), iii, 75.

22 B. Cunningham and R. Gillespie, ‘The East Ulster bardic family of Ó Gnímh’, *Éigse*, 20 (1984), 108.