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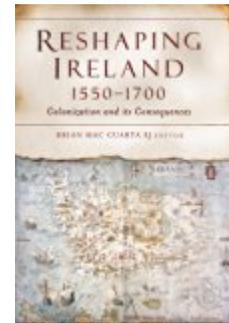
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Brian Mac Cuarta, ed. *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: Colonization and Its Consequences*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. Illustrations, maps. 300 pp. \$74.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84682-272-8.

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In the more than forty years since Nicholas Canny, the honorand whose festschrift is here for review, began writing on the history of early modern Ireland, the subject has undergone dramatic transformation. Where once at the start of his academic career Canny could count on his fingers the number of fellow specialists in his chosen field, there are today countless scholars conducting research on early modern Ireland. The nature of historical writing and research has also been transformed, from a discipline that was only then emerging from the twin shadows of nationalist and unionist views of Irish history, but that continued to offer a narrow focus on the political and ecclesiastical history of Ireland, into a broader, more variegated brand of history, free from earlier historiographical markers. This new scholarship sets the experience of early modern Ireland within British, European, and Atlantic contexts and is unafraid to employ other disciplines like social history, linguistics, and geography to aid in the endeavor. Canny has been at the center of this transformation. At one level, his many publications—listed at the end of the festschrift by Marie Boran—redefined the parameters of the historical study of Ireland, for Canny’s work frequently looked at Ireland in a comparative context, most notably pointing up the similarities between English, later British, political expansion and settlement in Ireland and North America. At another level, the wide-ranging nature of Canny’s arguments and ideas led to his collaboration with historians from outside of Ireland while occasionally sparking debate with Irish historians, several of which played out in the pages of international academic journals: collaboration and debate had the combined effect of raising the international profile of the study of early modern Irish

history. Not surprisingly, over the decades students were drawn to study under Canny’s supervision and in some cases these students matured into professional historians in their own right.

Canny’s peers and former students are brought together in *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700* to pay written tribute to the man who, as the collection’s editor, Brian Mac Cuarta, puts it in a brief introduction, has been instrumental in making the study of early modern Ireland “part of the wider historiographical mainstream” (p. 16). Of the many strands running through the honorand’s written work, Mac Cuarta identifies colonization as the most prominent, and employs it here as a means of drawing together the fifteen essays that comprise the volume.

The preponderance of the essays, like Canny’s own work, begin with the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland in the later sixteenth century, pivot on the transformative decades prior to 1640, and culminate in the upheaval and wars that consumed Ireland in the 1640s. The first two essays are devoted exclusively to the Tudor period. Cianran Brady offers a welcome summary of the recent historiography of the period before providing an erudite discussion of Tudor strategies to effect the reform of Ireland. John McGurk takes a different tack on a similar theme in his case study of the proposals for Ireland’s reform put forth in the last years of Elizabeth’s reign by the remarkably indiscreet English soldier Thomas Lee.

It is the larger grouping of essays devoted primarily to the early seventeenth century, however, when plantation and the prospect of plantation were rapidly transforming Ireland, that forms the core of this collection. Annaleigh Margey’s analysis of English maps of

Ulster and Virginia—eight of which are reproduced here as full color plates—and Rolf Loeber and Terence Reeves-Smyth’s examination, supported by a map and several illustrations, of Lord Audley’s building schemes in Ulster are concerned with the visible and physical representations of English settlement in Ireland. Mac Cuarta and Jane Ohlmeyer consider, respectively, some of the consequences of this settlement in essays on the extraordinary Matthew De Renzy, the German-born settler who attempted to carve out a life for himself in Ireland as a member of the New English community, and on the changing faces, and confessions, of the peerage of Ireland. That Thomas Wentworth, the much-reviled lord deputy in the 1630s, exploited the divisions in Ireland arising from British settlement to use the kingdom as a testing ground for some of the authoritarian forms of government adopted by Charles I in England is well known. But Brendan Kane explains that Wentworth was also concerned with cultural matters of honor, and that he compelled New English elites in Ireland to conform to social norms as they existed at Charles I’s court. Essays by Bernadette Cunningham, on attitudes toward the growing prevalence of the English language and bilingualism in Ireland, and by David Finnegan, on Old English views of Gaelic history, are less period specific, and both draw on examples from the Tudor and Stuart periods to highlight how a new cultural world was emerging in Ireland along with, and in opposition to, the new political order based on colonial settlement.

Three essays are devoted to the turbulent 1640s. Jason McHugh and Aidan Clarke look at the early years of the decade through the often-distorting lens of the corpus of material known as the 1641 depositions. McHugh’s essay, a local study of events in county Wexford, is an homage to Canny’s similar study of Cork in 1641 and shows how pent-up Catholic grievances exploded in waves of violence which were ultimately appropriated by the clergy and directed into a holy war against Protes-

tantism. Clarke uses his essay to reconstruct the functioning of the commission that was established in December 1641 to collect the depositions on which the punishment of Irish rebels was to be predicated once order was restored. Kevin Forkan’s essay looks at the 1640s from the perspective of the Ulster Scots, whom he refers to as “a separate and independent community within Ireland,” as they were subjected to the push and pull forces exerted by the Scottish covenanters, English parliamentarians and royalists, and confederate Irish Catholics (p. 280). Three additional essays—Alan Ford’s analysis of how Irish history, notably the 1641 insurrection, was used to bolster the anti-Catholic hysteria that gripped England in the 1680s; Pádraig Lenihan on the impact on the Catholic elite of the bloody battle of Aughrim; and Toby Barnard’s study of Sir Richard Bellings, an example of an Irish Catholic who thrived in voluntary exile in England while maintaining links in Ireland—are intended to round out the volume’s emphasis on the Stuart period. But while each are fine studies in their own right, they stand chronologically apart from earlier contributions and sit less comfortably with the colonial paradigm that binds the rest of the volume together.

There is no formal conclusion to take stock of the contents of this volume. Instead, the final say is left to John Elliott in a short piece entitled “Atlantic Horizons.” Elliott praises Canny for the care shown by him throughout his career to place Ireland “into its British and European framework.” For Elliott, however, Canny remains a “committed Atlanticist” whose Ireland is “westward-facing” (p. 350). The essays in this festschrift, with the exception of Margey’s piece, display little of Canny’s overtly Atlantic interests so admired by Elliott. But these essays make important contributions to the study of early modern Ireland—the subject on which Canny built his career—and for this the editor should be praised and honored and can be proud.

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