A sea change has occurred in Irish historical studies within the past twenty years or so. Far from apologetically seeing Ireland as an island “entire of itself,” or even as merely part of a northwestern archipelago, most historians now confidently view it as “a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”¹ From a variety of perspectives, including those of historian, literary scholar, and archaeologist, new works highlight a whole series of Renaissance European influences on Irish politics, society, and culture. By contrast with the rather forlorn presence of one or two scholars working on Ireland at large international congresses before the mid- to later 1990s, nowadays there are whole panels devoted to Irish themes at the annual conferences of the Renaissance Society of America and the Society for Renaissance Studies (which held its National Conference in Dublin in 2008). These sessions have provided not only a welcome humanistic context for a consideration of Irish topics, but also opportunities to reflect on the heterogeneity of the Renaissance, which “found its way to the far reaches of Europe and beyond through different media and different interpretations.”²

Two recently published essay collections, *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540–1660* and *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance, c.1540–1660*, both edited by Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton, demonstrate how thoroughly the situation has changed. The present survey of recent historical work in the field of Irish studies takes its lead from the convincing case made in these volumes for the integration of Ireland in the Renaissance. Assessment of scholarly output in the areas of governmental modernization, society, settlement and colonialism, religious reformation, and ethnocultural self-presentation fits very well within this innovative (for Ireland) conceptual framework. Of course there are those who may prefer alternative framings of this scholarly corpus, finding the term *Renaissance* either too restrictive or too loose. The now-annual Tudor and Stuart Ireland conference held at University College, Dublin, which incidentally showcases the talents of many younger scholars in the field, is perhaps deliberately open-ended in

¹Sparrow, 98.
²Corcoran, 144.
the choice both of title and the range of subjects. In summoning up monarchical dynasties, the event is a reminder of how Ireland has become firmly embedded in the scholarly discourse of the three kingdoms during the past two decades. This has redounded particularly, but not exclusively, to the benefit of the field of seventeenth-century Irish history, in which many suggestive comparative studies have been produced, including the collection of essays *Conquest and Union*, edited by Steven Ellis and Sarah Barber. Furthermore, the consideration of thematic aspects down to the later eighteenth century has elicited the longer, if conceptually neutral, perspective of early modern studies. While Renaissance, Tudor and Stuart, and early modern frames may not align exactly, for the purposes of this field review, the works discussed, mostly monographs, will be viewed against a backdrop of what are generally accepted as Renaissance themes and chronology. As *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance* is being noticed in this journal for the first time, reference will be made to the essays therein insofar as they resonate with current historiographical themes and debates.

The agenda of research fields as originally laid out in the collection of essays *Natives and Newcomers*, edited by Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie, has been addressed by many of the contributors themselves and others in the intervening quarter of a century. Magisterial surveys of the Anglo-Irish political and constitutional nexus by Brendan Bradshaw (on constitutional revolution), Steven Ellis (on Tudor frontiers), and Brady (on the chief governors) have laid the groundwork for recent case studies of regional and local polities in the sixteenth century. These analyses of the impact of increasing royal power on a variety of Gaelic and Old English lordships include those of Christopher Maginn on the O’Byrnes and O’Tooles, Anthony McCormack on the earldom of Desmond, Vincent Carey on the earldom of Kildare, and Mary O’Dowd on Sligo, while there is a sampling of Emmett O’Byrne’s full-length study of Leinster in his essay in *Dublin and the Pale*. David Edwards’s *The Ormond Lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642* serves as a model of these studies of local authorities responding to the centralizing tendencies of the Renaissance state. On the latter theme, Jon Crawford’s *Anglicizing the Government of Ireland* examines the expansion of state power within the island. Accounts of bureaucrats and officials engaging with Ireland, such as Christopher Maginn’s *William Cecil, Ireland and the Tudor State*, John McGurk’s biography of Sir Henry Docwra, and John McCavitt’s and Hans Pawlisch’s studies of Sir Arthur Chichester and Sir John Davies, respectively, may perhaps presage future works on political figures whose mental worlds often embraced Ireland, England, and other places. Sir Henry Sidney, upon whose governance and patronage many recent articles have been
written, would appear to be a prime candidate for portraiture, for example, but there are many others. Meanwhile, the topic of Ireland in English and European foreign policy has been broached in the scholarly contributions of William Palmer and Marian Lyons. The state of the art in terms of historical surveying of the field is currently reflected in Sean Connolly’s two volumes *Contested Island* and *Divided Kingdom*.

Much historical research in the field has focused on the political and military history of the seventeenth century, and particularly on the events of the critical decades of the 1640s and ’50s. Among the monographs on the place of Ireland in the wars of the three kingdoms are those by Micheál Ó Siochru, Robert Armstrong, Michael Perceval-Maxwell, Padraig Lenihan, and Aidan Clarke, and there are collections of essays edited by Ó Siochru, Jane Ohlmeyer, and Ohlmeyer and Ciaran Brady. Thanks to a major project at Trinity College, Dublin, the vast archive of depositions taken from survivors of the depredations of the 1641 uprising is available online. This has piqued the interest of scholars from a wide range of disciplines, which will no doubt emanate in an upsurge of works, not just on political conflict, but on social, religious, and cultural history as well. These explorations may produce changes in the historiographical landscape, if not in the chronological contours of the field of Irish history, which understandably retains its familiar marker dates, such as 1607, 1641, 1660, and 1690, for example. Jane Ohlmeyer’s recently published work, *Making Ireland English*, is a substantial contribution in this respect, adducing social, cultural, religious, and political history to examine the establishment of central control over Ireland through the agency of the nobility, both new and old, and synthesizing the elements of state-building within a comparative British and European context.

Most of the essays in *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance* adumbrate this multilayered approach, raising significant questions about interfaces between English and Irish, Old English and Gaelic Irish, and Ireland and Europe. For example, John Bradley’s essay on Kilkenny not only probes the concept of the late medieval Pale, but presents that city as an exemplar of Renaissance civic planning and vision. Ben Murtagh’s essay on Athy provides a good example of how the methodologies of archaeology and history can be combined in the study of a smaller town. Sinead Quirke examines the substance and symbolism of Rathcoffey, a Tudor castle on the Pale border, drilling deeply into the architectural, religious, and ideological emblems of liminality between English and Irish, and Gaelic and Old English. Similarly innovative studies of other Irish boroughs and towns are lacking, though there are certain suggestive studies that betoken some quickening of scholarly activity in this regard. Perhaps because the rural
setting of the late medieval Irish towns was so extensive, most studies tend to focus on extra-urban facets of society and settlement, though the foundation of purpose-built plantation towns in the seventeenth century has elicited some designated urban studies.

New English settlement is explored in *Dublin and the Pale* through the surveys by Michael Corcoran and Jane Fenlon of architectural features of large houses in Counties Louth and Kildare. These reveal complex combinations of influences from England and the Continent, echoing the ideas of those who have reflected on physical, social, and cultural aspects of the irruption of newcomers into the Irish countryside. The work of scholars such as Rolf Loeber and Michael MacCarthy-Morrogh on sixteenth-century plantations, and Michael Perceval-Maxwell, Philip Robinson, and Jonathan Bardon on those of the seventeenth, follows in the wake of D. B. Quinn, who situated colonialism in Ireland within a broader European migration. A recent book by John Montaño, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland*, explores the genesis of English ideas concerning the settlement and colonizing of Ireland, and the application of these principles in the sixteenth-century plantations. Nicholas Canny’s important study, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650*, examines how the concept of colonization, which was further developed in the writings of Edmund Spenser and others, was put into practice in many parts of Ireland, and also details the responses of the Irish inhabitants.

Conflicts between newcomers and natives, the major causes of which are indicated in the works of Montaño and Canny, are central to the scholarship of those who have turned their attention to the themes of violence, warfare, and military power. Individual books by Hiram Morgan, Darren McGettigan, Rory Rapple, and John McGurk have investigated the causes and strategies of military activity, especially during the Nine Years’ War (1594–1603), while *Age of Atrocity*, a recent collection of essays on the practice and practitioners of violence in early modern Ireland, edited by David Edwards, Padraig Linehan, and Clodagh Tait, addresses the context created by European massacres in the era of religious wars, including the Thirty Years’ War. *Age of Atrocity* makes a significant contribution to an understanding of how political, ethnic, and religious divisions were caused, emphasizing the sufferings of victims and survivors while exploring the mentalité of the perpetrators. In her own monograph, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650*, Tait has pioneered the study of the social history of death in Ireland, both violent and peaceful, and includes a study of funerary monuments that drew on Renaissance sculptural models.

In place of confrontations across ethnic and geographical boundaries, cultural interchange between the ethnic communities in Ireland is evident in
some of the essays in Dublin and the Pale, reflecting a wider historiography. The notion of the Pale is explored in terms not only of its being a fixed topographical enclave in eastern Ireland that denoted the putative limits of Englishness, or as transposable in concept to the southeast and northeast of the country to protect local identities. The Pale also served as a genuine exchange for ideas and artistic forms between the Old English and Gaelic Irish, and between both groups and the wider Renaissance world. In this collection, the adaptability of Irish music and the Irish language is explored in essays by Christopher J. Smith and Brendan Kane. The former shows how musical influences flowing westward through the Pale from the Continent and England helped to fashion the work of Irish composers; while the latter addresses the use or even manipulation of Gaelic scholarship and sources by an anglicizing Gaelic nobleman, the fourth Earl of Thomond, to negotiate intricate questions of identity in courtly life in Dublin and London. Kane’s monograph, The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541–1641, expands upon the theme of how codes of honor operated and developed among the ethnocultural groups in response to English imperialism in Ireland. Here, as elsewhere, the borders between the older communities on the island are shown to have been porous, and this approach mirrors that of Micheál Mac Craith, Marc Caball, Nollaig Ó Muirthile, Bernadette Cunningham, and Breandán Ó Buachalla in their studies of the richness of Gaelic culture and learning in the later Renaissance.

The reciprocating perspective of the Old English on the Gaelic world outside the Pale is suggested in Quirke’s study of the Wogans of Rathcoffey, and to some extent in Rolf Loeber and Magda Loeber-Stouthamer’s essay on the ownership of printed books, while two other contributions to Dublin and the Pale attest their engagement with English and Continental society and culture. Vincent Carey’s essay on Mabel Browne, wife of the eleventh Earl of Kildare, demonstrates the importance of female networks of power and diplomacy for the Geraldine and Butler families in their experience of court politics and intrigues. This complements Carey’s monograph, Surviving the Tudors, which vividly evokes life on the borders of the Pale for the restored Fitzgerald family in a time of great crisis. Thomas Herron’s essay, which analyzes the translation by Richard Stanihurst of the first four books of Virgil’s Aeneid, places that work firmly in the context of the Counter-Reformation in Ireland and Europe, drawing upon a rich vein of allegorical interpretation. More directly political in its focus was the Book of Howth, which was produced in a Pale milieu at a time of challenge to the Old English patrimony in the 1560s and ’70s. This is the subject of Valerie McGowan-Doyle’s recent monograph, The Book of Howth: Elizabethan Conquest and the Old English, which assesses the nature of
that threat and the formation of a response to state reforms in government, society, and religion.

Both Carey and Herron touch upon attitudes toward the Protestant Reformation, whether in the form of domestic recusancy in Kildare or Catholic militancy in the community of exiles abroad. Rachel Moss’s contribution to *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance* is an introduction to the use of architecture, iconography, and material culture to reconstruct the social history of religion in the Pale in an era of doctrinal and liturgical reform. The coverage straddles the advent of the Reformation, raising salient questions about the depth and scope of devotional changes. A number of recent book-length studies of dioceses in eastern Ireland trace the social and religious impact of the early Reformation on the laity and clergy: these include Henry Jefferies on Armagh, James Murray on Dublin, Brendan Scott on Meath, and Marian Lyons on Kildare.

Fleshing out the lineaments of reform strategy as indicated in articles such as that by Brendan Bradshaw are overviews of the Reformation in Ireland by Jefferies, Alan Ford, and Samantha Meigs. Works by Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin and Thomas O’Connor address aspects of the Counter-Reformation in Ireland, the former measuring the Catholic renewal in Ireland against the benchmark of Continental Tridentine reform, and the latter assessing the impact of Jansenism on religious and political life in Ireland. Raymond Gillespie’s work *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* traces popular attitudes to the sacred in early modern Ireland. A volume of essays edited by Alan Ford and John McCafferty, *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, contextualizes issues of confrontation and violence in the expression of religious experience within British and European historiography. McCafferty’s study of the Anglican church at a time of attempted strengthening encapsulates the serious difficulties in the evangelizing of the population through the early modern period and beyond.

The study of texts written in a number of languages by religious and lay contemporary figures has burgeoned in the past two decades. Some of the output has been specifically literary in its tone, but much of it has been incorporated in the historiography of religious and political ideology. The works of writers on Ireland, both native and foreign, have been studied intensively to glean evidence of mentality. A good starting point was the collection of essays *Representing Ireland*, edited by Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley. Another early contribution was the collection of essays edited by Hiram Morgan — who himself has highlighted the influence of the twelfth-century Welsh chronicler, Giraldus Cambrensis, on early modern historians and commentators — on Irish political thought.
from 1541 to 1641. Much of the focus has been on Edmund Spenser, with important contributions by Herron, Canny, Patricia Palmer, Andrew Hadfield, Richard McCabe, Clare Carroll, Christopher Highley, and Willy Maley, but other writers on Ireland — including William Shakespeare (the subject of a recent monograph by Stephen O’Neill), Francis Bacon, Richard Beacon, and John Hooker — have been studied with a view to divining English attitudes toward governing Ireland.

Much work has been done in illuminating the Continental milieu from which the leading Counter-Reformation ideologues emerged. A recent volume of essays documents the achievement of the Franciscans who founded Irish colleges, which were incubators of Gaelic culture and learning abroad. Nollaig Ó Muirthile has provided a new scholarly version of the chronicle of the Ulster leaders’ withdrawal from Ireland to Rome in 1607–08. The military refugees and their families in the Spanish Netherlands have been studied by Gráinne Henry; Bernadette Cunningham has vivified the Gaelic cultural world straddling Ireland and Catholic Europe, as reflected in the work of Geoffrey Keating and the Four Masters; and Benjamin Hazard’s biography of Fhlaithrí Ó Maolchonaire examines the political engagement of a scholar-bishop. Mention must be made here of two projects that have furthered an understanding of Irish literature in the Renaissance. One is the Centre for Neo-Latin Studies in University College, Cork, which, besides pioneering editions of the works of Irish intellectuals who wrote in Latin, has also produced a volume of essays edited by Keith Sidwell and Jason Harris, entitled *Making Ireland Roman*, that places this efflorescence of Latin writing in its Renaissance context. The other project is the Oxford History of the Irish Book, which has produced as its first volume *The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800*, edited by Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield.

The field of historical studies of Ireland in the Renaissance having been staked out, it may be useful to identify areas that are particularly promising in terms of future research. One such is that of social history, with specific reference to the history of women and the family. In general the study of women in the period has been developed by the work of Mary O’Dowd, Marie-Louise Coolahan, and Clodagh Tait. O’Dowd’s comprehensive survey of women’s experience from 1500 to 1800 complements Coolahan’s presentation of women’s writing in the early modern period, while Tait has published on gendered topics such as baptism and godparenthood. Her work on early modern society in Britain will further develop the contextualizing of Irish history, and give a fillip to the study of Irish social history in the early modern period. Dianne Hall has published on women in the late medieval church, and there is scope for follow-up studies in the period.
under review. The history of the institutions of marriage and the family in Ireland is still comparatively under-researched, but the study of social interconnections within the groups in Ireland and between them and people in other countries may be fruitful in this respect. In general, the state of early modern urban studies lags behind, with much to be done by way of documenting the social and cultural history of the larger boroughs and the towns. Creative use of the more than two dozen historic towns atlases already published by the Royal Irish Academy’s Towns Atlas project, as well as of the archaeological and cultural-material approaches indicated in some essays in *Dublin and the Pale*, should prove to be very productive.

Another sphere for further research is that of the history of religion, which in the past has been studied very much from the point of view of church institutions. The work of the present author in respect of religious associational culture has benefited greatly from the adducing of the field of international confraternity studies, and Rachel Moss’s aforementioned article in *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance* suggests an approach to the study of popular religious devotion through the fabric and ornamentation of places of worship. More diocesan surveys of southern, western, and northern dioceses in Ireland should help to build up a picture of the *ecclesia inter hibernicos* on the eve of the Reformation to complement that of the *ecclesia inter anglicos*, gleaned from the studies of dioceses in the Pale. More needs to be done, by way of divining the mind of Irish Protestants vis-à-vis their Catholic counterparts and vice versa, in order to comprehend theological and jurisdictional issues in the debate on the Irish Reformation. There is a pressing need for a comprehensive study of the implementation of Catholic reform over a long duration to update the work of Patrick J. Corish, which has held the ground remarkably well since the early 1980s. It is to be hoped that the valuable work being done on the Irish Catholic émigrés by various scholars — especially the study of the experience of the Irish before the Inquisition being carried out by Thomas O’Connor — will soon come to fruition.

A final area of the field to be tilled could be the cognate one of the intellectual history of the period. Thanks to the enhanced accessibility of texts online, the impact of Renaissance humanism on Irish thinkers can be explored more extensively. The Irish in Europe project based at NUI Maynooth has been important in casting wide the net of communication with scholars of Ireland in many countries, as evidenced in the collection of essays edited by O’Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, *Irish Communities in Early Modern Europe*. In the case of Spain, for example, this is paying off handsomely in the form of the lively fraternity of Spanish scholars, such as Enrique Garcia Hernan, Oscar Recio Morales, and Igor Pérez Tostado, who
have produced several books on Ireland and Spain in the Renaissance period. Other linguistic groups, including French, Italian, and Flemish, may become similarly engaged through these contacts. A final thought with respect to the efflorescence of literary scholarship devoted to English and Irish sources, which has yielded such a wealth of interpretation in the past twenty years. It is desirable that the discourse as advanced by collections of essays such as that on postcolonialism, edited by Clare Carroll and Patricia King, be integrated more fully with the historical corpus for the mutual enrichment of the work of literary scholars and historians in the advancement of the intellectual history of the Ireland in the Renaissance. Ní neart go cur le chéile: no strength without unity.

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