Map-making, Landscapes and Memory
A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland, c. 1530-1750

William J. Smyth

Map-making, Landscapes and Memory offers a new and challenging analysis of the conquest and settlement of Ireland by the New English (and Scottish) and the consequences of this often violent and deep-seated intrusion upon the cultures and landscapes of pre-existing Irish societies.

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ISBN 1859183972 Hardback

To enlarge on our understanding of this period in Ireland's history, William Smyth has included over 100 original maps using often previously untapped sources and these maps point up the nuanced and regionally varied character of the engagement between local peoples and incomers. The use of so many maps thus highlights many hidden Irelands, often obscured in a strictly historical/narrative format. Uniquely, the book uses Irish language (as well as English) sources to illuminate Irish ways of understanding and using territories and resources, understandings and practices which were often undermined and eroded under New English rule.

Map-Making, Landscapes and Memory contains three regional case studies which explore the early anglicised county of Dublin, the hybrid, if feudalised, county of Kilkenny, and County Tipperary, where the Gaelic north-west contrasted with the Old English-dominated south-east.

Using the twin concepts of ‘colonialism’ and ‘early modernity,’ William J. Smyth offers a geographical analysis of the most formative and revolutionary period in Ireland’s history. He analyzes the conquest and settlement of Ireland by the New English and Scottish and the consequences of this often violent intrusion upon the cultures and landscapes of pre-existing Irish societies.

Smyth focuses on the ways in which the early modern British state subjugated Irish territories, including British systematic use of surveillance techniques; implementation of mapping and inventories of strategic landscapes and resources; and development of bureaucracies and administrative techniques of law and the market economy so as to obliterate regional expression of Gaelic cultures and practices. What results is a fresh interpretation of Ireland's experiences in this crucial early modern period.

William J. Smyth is holder of the Chair of Geography at University College Cork. He was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1999.

“The richness of detail and command of sources is of course expected, as well as the good clear writing. It is his overall conception of this complex transformation, the insistence and intensity of his tracing of an Irish Ireland through it all, and his brilliant opening focus on maps and his ‘deconstruction’ of them that is all so very
impressive. Clearly the author has wrought a masterpiece, a great landmark study, a geography of the utmost quality.”
—Donald W. Meinig, Maxwell Research Professor of Geography, Syracuse University

“The story of Ireland c.1530-1750 will always be retold. But few retellings will bring such a freshness of eye or depth of analysis as Map-making, Landscapes and Memory. Brilliantly conceived and meticulously researched, it captures the complexity and subtlety of Ireland’s changing landscapes, identities, mentalities, and spaces with great skill and considerable style. Few authors can have done more to release the meaning embedded in maps, whether those produced by sixteenth and seventeenth century surveyors like Robert Lythe, Richard Bartlett, and Sir William Petty, or those produced in abundance by himself.”
—Robert A. Dodgshon, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

Reviews

“This book tackles grand themes on a grand scale. . . . William Smyth’s great achievement is to show that so much of the early geography of early modern Ireland can be recovered and that so many topics can be mapped in considerable detail. An outstanding feature is the inclusion of more than one hundred maps ... sixteen pages of colour plates allow the reproduction, in astounding clarity, of some of the most relevant manuscript maps compiled for English intelligence. These maps are an eye-opener to the embedded nature of Irish regional variations, challenging us to treat history with respect for geography.”
—The Irish Times

“Smyth presents a synthesis of Ireland's history, c.1530-c1750, exploiting to advantage both case studies and his knowledgeable appreciation of this period. Smyth analyzes the conquest and settlement of Ireland by the new English and Scottish peoples. He studies and places in regional context culture collisions and their resultant forms.”
—Choice

Map-Making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland, c.1530-1750 by Professor Willie Smyth, Geography Department, UCC and published by Cork University Press was nominated in the Irish Times top five non-fiction books of 2006. The choice was made by Eileen Battersby, Literary Correspondent with the Irish Times.
Eileen said “Scholarship, imagination, the multi-disciplinary overview of the historical geographer, an understanding of the power of conflicting cultures and more than 100 of the author's maps (as well as period maps) imbue this magnificent Simon Schama-like undertaking - to contextualise the evolving Irish landscape.
This is the first engagement by a geographer in one book of this most formative and revolutionary period (c. 1550 - c. 1750) in Ireland's history. Using the twin concepts of 'colonialism' and 'early modernity', the book comprises a geographical analysis of the conquest and settlement of Ireland by the New English (and Scottish) and the consequences of this often violent and deep-seated intrusion upon the cultures and landscapes of pre-existing Irish societies. The book effectively isolates the emerging methodologies of the early modern British state.