

CULTURES OF CONTACT, CULTURES OF CONFLICT?
*Identity Construction, Colonialist Discourse, and the Ethics of Archaeological
Practice in Northern Ireland*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary implications and memories of ‘colonial’ entanglements vary wildly and remain contested in historical, political, economic, and popular understandings of the past. In Northern Ireland, present-day identities remain rooted in dichotomous understandings of the impact of British expansion in the 16th and 17th centuries. Heritage sites are invariably implicated in the construction and maintenance of the remembered histories that reify these contemporary identities. Employing case studies from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the potential of a critical, inclusive archaeology to positively impact upon a divided society is considered, along with the ethical implications of acknowledging and challenging historical narratives. Incorporated is an analysis of how professional archaeologists make decisions about inclusivity and exclusivity, as well as a critique of the simplistic application of postcolonial theoretical approaches to analyses of the convoluted history of Anglo-Irish relations in the early modern and modern periods.

INTRODUCTION

Current trends in the archaeology of formerly colonized regions specifically highlight the concerns of indigenous and descendant communities in addressing the ethics of archaeological practice in the modern world. In most formerly colonized regions, there is clearly an imbalance of power yet to be addressed, and in places like Australia and South Africa in particular, archaeologists have immersed themselves in efforts to validate the concerns of historically disenfranchised communities, and in some instances, to promote their agendas (eg. Harrison 2002; Harrison, Greer, and McIntyre-Tamwoy 2002). The ethics of practice, while hardly straightforward, have a clear focus. Such advances in indigenous rights and involvement in archaeology are critically important and of significant import and impact for 21st century archaeological practice. But the situation in Northern Ireland is not quite so 'black and white.'

Contemporary identity in Northern Ireland is fragile, complicated, and fragmented. The modern division of society into two 'traditions', Roman Catholic/nationalist and Protestant/unionist, is rooted in the fraught interactions of native Irish, English, and Scots during the 17th-century Plantation period when British control was made manifest by importation of loyal Protestant settlers. Archaeological evidence from the period readily contradicts essentialist notions of 'the two traditions,' yet in terms of self perception both communities currently view themselves as constituting a distinct and threatened minority. What do we do when faced with a paradoxical situation where all communities self-identify as potentially marginalized and dispossessed? Arguably, by focusing on the ambiguity and complexity inherent in contemporary Irish society as rooted in the relations of the last 500 years, there are lessons for other contested places where contact breeds conflict and creates culture(s).

In looking at the ethics of archaeological practice in Northern Ireland, and also in the Republic of Ireland, I want to reflect not only on the potential of a critical, inclusive archaeology to positively impact upon a divided society, but I also want to analyze more explicitly how we, as professionals, make decisions about inclusivity and exclusivity. Not just how we select 'passive' audiences, but how we aim to identify those active groups generically and awkwardly labeled 'stakeholders.' To what extent do these stakeholders (be they real or constructed) determine, direct, constrain, or broaden our practice? How do we address the validity of competing historical narratives while acknowledging our own biases? Before addressing these issues, however, it is necessary to examine the tangled roots of contemporary conflict in Northern Ireland and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of applying postcolonial theory (broadly defined as approaches which seek to redress historic imbalances) to its interpretation.

BACKGROUND

The roots of contemporary conflict in Northern Ireland lie in the expansion of English, and subsequently British, control over Ireland in the 16th and 17th centuries. While England maintained a degree of political and economic control over Ireland since the Anglo-Norman invasions of the 12th century, the Reformation, fears of Spain, and the increasing commodification of nature inherent in what Immanuel Wallerstein's labeled the capitalist world system (Wallerstein 1974), conspired in the strengthening of England's grip on the island. After a prolonged war in Munster which ended in 1583, Queen Elizabeth instituted a policy of planting English settlers on 400,000 acres of forfeited land, building upon earlier efforts to secure protection for Dublin through the creation of English enclaves in what are today Counties Laois and Offaly. The remainder of Ireland, however, did not submit to English authority until the defeat of Hugh O'Neill in 1603 (Canny 2001).

When James VI of Scotland ascended to the English throne in 1603, England was well positioned to profit from its authority over Ireland. The "flight of the earls" of Tyrone and Tyrconnell in 1607 resulted in the forfeiture of the six counties of Armagh, Cavan, Coleraine, Donegal, Fermanagh, and Tyrone to the Crown. James I (VI) began to plant the newly acquired lands, along with nearby Antrim and Down, in an effort to replace the native population with loyal British subjects. Land grants were made to individual 'undertakers,' often loyal soldiers. To help fund this Ulster Plantation initiative, James compelled the Livery Companies of London (the medieval merchant guilds) to finance part of the effort, repaying the companies with grants of land in the newly created county of Londonderry. By 1630, the Companies had collectively contributed between £60,000 and £70,000 to build and protect their settlements, located in what was considered to be the wildest and most vulnerable part of Ulster (Bardon 1992; Canny 2001; Curl 1986; Gillespie 1993; Loeber 1991; Moody 1939; Robinson 1984).

The ambitious aims of the Ulster Plantation, however, were never fully achieved. Native Irish residents were never wholly displaced, and the incoming British settlers never constituted a powerful, unified elite. Political uncertainty and involvement in the War of the Three Kingdoms (better known by the wholly inaccurate label of the English Civil War) in the mid-17th century ensured that the ambitious goals of the plantation scheme, in terms of landholding and urban development, were never achieved. Protestant control over the affairs of Ireland was not assured until after the Williamite Wars of 1688-1690, when the Catholic James II was unsuccessful in challenging the royal claim of the Protestant William of Orange (Canny 2001; Kennedy 1996; Ohlmeyer 1993).

Yet historical memories of the 17th century are invoked by both traditions to illustrate and underscore ongoing conflict, as reflected in the internationally recognized tradition of mural painting (Jarman 2002). Loyalist murals employ images and memories of symbolic events such as the ‘massacre’ of Protestant settlers during the Irish Rebellion of 1641, the 1689 Siege of Derry, and the subsequent victory of King Billy at the Battle of the Boyne in July of 1690. Polemical tracts celebrate the achievements of “peace-loving and industrious” Protestants, who introduced “habits of order and industry” to Ireland during the Plantation, “where before there had been only robbers’ castles, miserable huts, and mud cabins” (Dunleath 1914). By contrast, Republican communities lament the Flight of the Earls (sometimes termed Flight of the Gaelic Nobility to lessen the emphasis upon the English title of Earl), and recall with bitterness the ‘massacre’ of Catholic Irish in Drogheda and Wexford by Cromwell’s soldiers in 1649.

Moving beyond the 17th century, nationalist murals employ imagery from the Great Hunger of the 1840s to suggest a deliberate policy of genocide on the part of the British government (a perception encouraged largely by the persistent Famine memory of the Irish American Diasporic community). Representations of these events serve to justify the violence that characterized the most recent conflict, which began in 1968 and is colloquially termed ‘The Troubles.’ Over 3,000 deaths have been attributed to the Troubles. In light of the overall population size of Northern Ireland—approximately 1.7 million people—the ratio is roughly equivalent to half a million deaths in the United States (O’Leary and McGarry 1992 in McLernon et al 2003). Adding a further level of complexity to understandings of contemporary Northern Irish society is the often downplayed reality that a disproportionate amount of Troubles-related violence was suffered by Protestant and Catholic working class communities. For example, examination of the 2,763 deaths that occurred in the first 20 years of the Troubles reveals that “areas of the Province that are materially disadvantaged have also experienced disproportionately high levels of violence” (Coulter 1999: 72, based on McKeown 1989: 50). Scholarly as well as political debate over whether or not ‘The Troubles’ are best understood as the result of economic, social, or religious tensions is heated, ongoing, and unlikely to be resolved. However the contemporary conflict is understood, its legacy has left an indelible mark upon the people of the province and particularly upon how they are perceived externally.

While the distinct nature of the two traditions is open to question, it is clear that in terms of self perception, both communities view themselves as constituting a threatened minority. As the Catholic population continues to rise in the North, unionist fears of the inevitability of a united Catholic Ireland increase, exacerbated by

the growing alienation of unionists from the remainder of the United Kingdom. While strong links still exist between Scotland and Northern Ireland, some English people seem to be unaware that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom (by way of anecdotal evidence, when I moved to England I was repeatedly told when trying to open a bank account that the fact I already had a Northern Ireland bank account was irrelevant to my application as the account was in a 'foreign' country). Forty-seven percent of Northern Ireland's population self-identify as British (74 percent of Protestants and 12 percent of Catholics self identify as British, 2004 *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*, www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2004/) yet would be labeled as Irish or perhaps Northern Irish outside the boundaries of the province (Nic Craith 2002: 131-132).

By contrast, Catholic Northern Irish may be increasing numerically, but they themselves are often viewed suspiciously by many in the Republic of Ireland (Nic Craith 2002: 145). Despite the ambiguities experienced by both communities, the majority of works purporting to explore the topic of Irish identity—scholarship which draws heavily upon postcolonial theory—is the assumption that the historical and contemporary experiences of the Catholic nationalist community equate to subalternity (eg. Garner 2004; Graham 2001; Graham and Kirkland 1999; Kiberd 1997; cf. Gramsci 1971; Spivak 1988). But to identify any community as somehow more subaltern than another effectively constitutes a political statement. Arguably, if anyone in Northern Ireland could be classified as subaltern it is the working class communities on both sides of the community divide which truly qualify.

IRELAND AS POSTCOLONIAL?

To analyze the potential contribution of postcolonial approaches to Ireland's historical archaeology necessitates a critical examination of basic concepts, as well as considering who benefits from the imposition of postcoloniality on the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. To be postcolonial presumably requires first being colonial. So, how do we define colonialism, and is it the best framework for understanding the archaeology of early modern and modern Ireland? To answer these questions requires balancing the disparate and often heated arguments of scholars in the fields of Irish history, anthropology, cultural theory, geography, politics, and economics, while also considering the broader Atlantic context—especially in light of the trend towards an ideology of a global historical archaeology (eg. Orser 1996). It has not been difficult for scholars to make the case that the Republic of Ireland is 'postcolonial' by its own definition following the struggle for independence in the early 20th century. The potential of understanding the archaeology of the 26 counties of the Republic through the lens of colonialism is being tested by Charles Orser's work in Roscommon and

Sligo (Orser 1996; 2004), the work of postgraduate students in Dublin, Galway, and Cork, and Jim Delle's attempt to draw parallels with Jamaica (Delle 1999). Elsewhere I have critiqued Delle for drawing stark, simplistic parallels between the experience of enslaved Afro-Jamaicans and Irish Catholics in his effort to 'outline a spatial theory which can be used to compare the material culture of colonial episodes in disparate temporal and spatial contexts' (Horning 2006a; cf. Delle 1999: 115).

While comparative colonialism may be a useful framework for examining the archaeology of the Republic of Ireland, in any application of colonialism to Irish history the elephant in the room is inevitably Northern Ireland. Imposing the rhetoric of postcolonialism on the North merely drives the wedge of dichotomization between the 'two traditions' deeper. In the North, unionists and some historians employ the close relationship between medieval England and Ireland in questioning a colonial past. By contrast, 'de-colonization' remains a central platform of Sinn Féin ideology, which therefore places the incendiary label of 'colonizer' or 'settler' onto present day Ulster Protestants, a problematic label that is often uncritically accepted by social scientists (eg. D. Miller 1998). Not only does the label imply a straightforward colonial history, but it also ignores the perspective of those who point to the strong connections between the western isles of Scotland and the north of Ireland stretching back into the Neolithic period. Some of the more extreme claims promote the idea of the Scots as the original Irish (based upon a loose reading of Iron Age evidence relating to a tribe named the Cruthín) to promote the greater claims of the Ulster Scots protestants to the land of the north of Ireland. According to one such tract, "the ancient people of Ulster—the Cruthín—began a migration to Lowland Scotland after their defeat at the hands of the Gaels at the battle of Moira in 637 AD" (Hume 1986: 12). By this logic, Scots who participated in the Plantation were reclaiming their ancestral lands. While I am not particularly sympathetic to some of these claims, I very much believe that as practitioners, we have an ethical responsibility to the people we study and the communities in which we work that includes recognizing the power and seriousness of multiple narratives. The interests of local communities may not be well served by an overemphasis upon simplistic models of colonialism and postcolonialism, coupled with the muting effects of a global historical archaeology, which assumes an often adversarial and always uneven relationship between colonized and colonizer. Not only are the interests of contemporary populations not well served by stark models, neither are those of the original participants in what was a murky process riven with uncertainty, insecurity, and incompleteness.

While Declan Kiberd (1997: 81) overtly celebrates the Irish as "the first English-speaking people... to attempt a programme of decolonization," the Republic of

Ireland's active participation in the European Union has concomitantly spurred a rejection of the colonial model of Irish history in favor of models of European state development (cf. Ruane 1992). In asking "How does this [Irish] self-image of exceptional suffering and victimhood, which belongs primarily to the nationalist community in Ireland, look when viewed in comparative terms?", historian Liam Kennedy finds little evidence to support the postcolonial formulation. Kennedy clearly enjoys his role as a revisionist, celebrating the fact that "historians have a tendency to spoil a good story" (Kennedy 1996: 187). Yet it is the tenacity of the stories, and the strength of perceptions of colonialism that nevertheless remain paramount in the construction of contemporary identities, and therefore must be recognized and potentially deconstructed in public discourse.

To use colonialism as a lens requires that we recognize the spotty, complicated, non-inevitability of the process, and to view colonialism, in the words of Stephen Howe (2000: 110) as "a patchwork quilt, an enormously varied set of forms of rule and domination, largely the product of improvisation and full of internal contradictions and strains, rather than a deliberately constructed global system." Static treatises on the nature of colonialism presume a binary opposition between colonizer and colonized (not unlike the two traditions model), which offer little to considerations of the complexity of Irish identities. Recognition of the ambiguous structures of early modern colonialism centuries takes us closer to addressing the ambiguities of identity formation. Any examination of colonialism has to acknowledge that social relations are never purely colonial, in the sense of being firmly rooted in exploitation.

EDUCATION, MEMORY, AND MULTIPLE HISTORIES

Over the last decade, I have taught the archaeology of British expansion—'colonialism'—in the United States, Northern Ireland and most recently and currently, England. In each land, historical understandings of the colonial process, and more critically, its legacy, vary wildly. The word 'colonial' in America's Chesapeake region is swaddled in patriotic rhetoric, the violence, uncertainties, and unresolved conflicts deliberately forgotten. In suggesting back in 1993—on the basis of pretty incontrovertible archaeological evidence—that Virginia's 17th-century capital Jamestown was actually a bit of a non-functioning dump filled with garbage and abandoned buildings, I did not endear myself to tradition-minded Virginia archaeological patrons (Horning 1993; 1995; 2000; 2006b; 2006c). Supporting the notion that Jamestown and its scant citizens were actually more English in culture and outlook than proto-American also seems to have fallen on deaf ears, as official rhetoric associated with the 2007 anniversary of Jamestown's founding emphasized the site as the 'birthplace of

America’—exactly as celebrated in 1957. Despite calls by native and African American leaders to consider the multiple legacies of the Jamestown settlement, President George Bush overtly employed the word ‘celebrate’ in his keynote speech at the 13 May, 2007 commemorative assembly at Jamestown Island, stating “...we celebrate the 400th anniversary of Jamestown to honor the beginnings of our democracy” (www.dailypress.com May 13). Given the current political climate in the United States, with its intensification of nationalism and protectionism, this is hardly surprising—but it does not bode well for the ongoing struggle of some of Virginia’s First People to gain Federal recognition and thus a degree of empowerment through the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

Academic discussions of the colonial process in the Chesapeake (outside of Jamestown) have begun to focus on creolization, emphasizing shared elements and creativity within colonial society (eg. Mouer 1993; Mouer et al 1999). Similar emphasis upon cultural creativity can be found in Chris Gosden’s general examination of the archaeology of colonialism (Gosden 2004). American students find this relatively ‘positive’ view of the creativity of the colonial encounter far more palatable than one that emphasizes the violence and discord of colonial entanglements, such as those presented by Carmel Shrire (1996) and Martin Hall (2000) for South Africa. It is not difficult to ascribe these contrasting views of the colonial encounter to contemporary politics and historical memories in both lands.

By contrast, I have found English students to be uncomfortable with discussing any aspect of colonialism, initially unable to disassociate themselves from feeling implicated in the process. Lacking a diachronic conception of the process of European expansion over the last 500 years, owing to the theme-based approach of secondary school history curricula, the students struggle to break away from their episodic knowledge of Victorian imperialism to consider the ambiguities of Elizabethan and Jacobean exploration and colonization. Furthermore, unlike American and Irish students, they are wholly unaccustomed to considering a linkage between early modern British expansion and the unsettled socio-political realities of the 21st century. In discussing history teaching in Northern Ireland, Barton and McCully note that “teaching history in a society that has experienced violent and on-going conflict, at least partially as a consequence of contested views of national identity, presents significant challenges for educators” (Barton and McCully 2003: 107). Oddly, in my experience, teaching history where people have no sense of it at all may be more of a challenge, particularly when introducing concepts such as memory, identity, multiple histories, and the inextricable linkage between past, present, and future.

Northern Irish students from both traditions at the University of Ulster had a far more sophisticated, critical, and, perhaps unfortunately, realistic approach than either the English or American students that I have taught. The Northern Irish students politely listened to my fervent efforts to introduce concepts such as creolization and Gosden's 'creativity,' and they readily accepted the archaeological evidence for the sharing of a material culture by 'natives' and 'newcomers' and the significant daily relations that implies. They saw it all, they recognized it all, they could even intellectually situate themselves as products of this process. Yet they also understood that in contemporary Northern Ireland, the reality of a shared material culture in the 17th century, and by extension the lack of clearly definable cultural differences between the two traditions, seemingly matters very little. In a land where only four percent of schoolchildren are educated in an integrated environment, sectarian narratives of the past remain deeply rooted (Barton and McCully 2003; Nic Craith 2003). Ingrained, externally imposed patterns of belief about social relations concurrently bolster and dismiss a colonial past.

More unfortunate is the fact that the students' understanding of the irrelevancy of the complexity of past experiences in considering modern dichotomous identities is reflected in the astonishing lack of historical knowledge prevalent in a range of sociological writings about the Northern Ireland 'problem.' By focusing solely on the contemporary conflict, the potentially subversive impact of a deeper historical understanding is ignored. For example, in an otherwise sophisticated discussion of memory in Northern Ireland, McLernon *et al* completely misconstrue the history that is being remembered. The authors state "...after the emergence of Protestantism in England, the controlling English swamped the Catholic faith in Ireland and the identity of the Irish people. ...by the 18th century the colonists occupied 95 percent of the land which they had confiscated from the natives..." (McLernon et al 2003: 126). This statement may resonate with a particularly nationalist view of the past, but it is factually incorrect and in the charged climate of Northern Ireland, is dangerous. English control over Ireland was never absolute, nor was Catholicism ever obliterated, nor did the complex of multivalent Irish identities ever diminish in the absolute fashion implied.

If we are ever to go beyond merely assessing the importance of historical memory to altering its results, surely we need to re-examine the efficacy or inefficacy of the remembered histories. Here at last is a socially-engaged role for archaeology, an opportunity to capitalize upon the often inherent interest of the public in the idea of archaeology, which can lead to a surprising exchange of information and interpretation. Unlike most social scientists immersed in studying contemporary Northern Ireland,

our work is physical and publicly visible. In the seeming tangibility of archaeological data, in the incontrovertible physicality of Irish-made pottery found in an 17th-century English village, lies the power to spark a rethinking of narratives. The power is held not by the archaeologists interpreting the significance of the material, but by the non-specialist and how they choose to account for the physical evidence in front of their eyes. It is not for us to control this process, while at the same time judicious, respectful direction may be the course most appropriate for the past and for the present.

TOWARDS ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT IN UNCOMFORTABLE HISTORIES

Negotiating the landscapes of identity and politics in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland within the framework of comparative colonial archaeology is dependent upon the development and implementation of an ethical and publicly-inclusive practice. An ethical and nuanced archaeology of early modern Ireland must not only acknowledge but must prioritize the role of archaeology in fostering positive and informed discourse to challenge the assumptions which reify a deeply divided society. Our challenge as academic archaeologists is to not only be well-versed in our intellectual familiarity with the writings of postcolonial theorists, or our knowledge of primary documentary sources and material culture, or our understanding of stratigraphy and construction sequences, but to possess a willingness and an ability to engage disparate publics in a discourse. Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, we must recognize the valid concerns of private sector field archaeologists and accept the responsibilities of our 'privileged' position as researchers (Horning 2006a). We must put our time into developing a nuanced and inclusive practice—an effort that is often denied to even our most concerned and self-aware compatriots in the time-pressured and constrained environment of development-driven rescue archaeology.

Part of the process, as everywhere, is to embark on the difficult process of identifying 'stakeholders' and interested/affected communities, and consider the relevance and role of the 'audience' in determining the archaeological agenda. I have chosen to prioritize the relationship with local communities in my work in the case studies to follow. However, it has to be acknowledged that throughout the Republic of Ireland (in contrast to Northern Ireland), the audience for 'heritage' is not only local communities, but also tourists. Specifically, American tourists. More specifically, the millions of Americans who claim Irish ancestry. As the peace dividend pays out in Northern Ireland, this trend is likely to creep past the border, with a concomitant effect on the character of local history presentations. Already the voyeuristic practice of 'Troubles Tourism' attracts many foreign visitors, who cruise along in black taxis or

minibuses through the embattled neighborhoods of working-class Belfast. Armed with their assumptions as well as their cameras, visitors are treated to the spectacle of murals, ‘peace’ lines, the Holy Cross primary school, and the graves of Hunger Strikers in Milltown cemetery (Jarman 2002). The significance of memory amongst Diasporic groups has long been acknowledged by scholars, some of whom celebrate the connections, and some of whom lament the connections—witness the oft-repeated satirical phrase coined by Kerby Miller regarding “the loud communal whine” of Irish American politics (K. Miller 1985).

In considering the audience for his studies of Famine-era rural life in the west of Ireland, American historical archaeologist Charles Orser acknowledges the influence and role of the Irish Diasporic community: “The descendant community encompasses a global cohort of thousands of people who were forcibly evicted from their homes as a direct result of landlord power. Many of these men and women find themselves living in North America and elsewhere simply because their ancestors were dispossessed in Ireland” (Orser 2004: 174). Yet motives for emigration are always complex. This characterisation of the Famine-period emigration to North America (according to one estimate, approximately eight million Irish emigrated between 1801 and 1892 [Fitzpatrick 1984; see also Foster 2002 for a critique of Famine scholarship]) as wholly derived from landlord evictions ignores the movement of urban residents as well as small landholders, overstates the numbers of evictions, and does not take into account the historiography on wider European population movements during the 19th century. As a characterisation of the entirety of Irish emigration to North America, it overlooks the movement of substantial numbers of Ulster Protestants during the 18th century. No matter how solid an Irish American’s genealogical associations may be, in terms of daily life and identity, the actual connections of fifth and sixth generation Irish Americans to the Famine-era Irish sites are at best visceral and at worst imagined. Irish Americans already approach Ireland from a position of privilege. Shouldn’t their external, Diasporic concerns be secondary to those of the people currently in the ‘homeland’?

Like Delle, Orser (1996; 2005) also endeavors to draw parallels between the Irish experience and that of the African Diaspora in referencing his experience working at Palmares in Brazil, and in considering the racialization of the Irish in the 19th century. However, the experience of enslavement, and the psychological impact of being classed as property, cannot be viewed as equivalent to the experience of a rural peasant, no matter how difficult the life of an Irish tenant farmer may have been, how much economic and political inequity they suffered, and however they may have been described by contemporary chroniclers. Despite the clever arguments of Ignatiev

(1996), discussing the experiences of enslaved Africans as articulating with the experiences of the Irish Diaspora runs the risk of being unself-reflexive and potentially deeply offensive. While in no way equating the experiences of the African Diaspora with that of the Irish, I would also argue against prioritizing the concerns of African American visitors to Ghana who are uncomfortable with the preservation of the Elmina slave trading post—while acknowledging the validity of the visitors’ complaints (see Kahnpeyeng and DeCorse 2004). In the end, their economic power and hence louder voice should not overturn the local decision to commemorate the complex occurrences at a site which undeniably witnessed much bloodshed, heartache, and unresolved cultural anxieties.

While I can question Orser’s choice of stakeholders for his archaeological projects, at least he identifies them. A quick scan of publications produced by the well-funded Discovery Programme for archaeological research in the Republic of Ireland reveals no consideration of the audience for these projects, reliant instead on a presumption of value rather than sailing into the uncharted territory of asking ‘why’? Elsewhere, it would appear that heritage professionals intentionally decry the power of a public, any public, as witness the rather astonishing statement in the poorly-illustrated, densely-packed 713 page tome ‘The Heritage of Ireland’ which baldly states on the first page that “the interests of Ireland’s heritage are perhaps best served ...[by entrusting] its advancement to people suitably equipped to discharge this responsibility” (Buttimer, Rynne and Guerin 2004: vii). Bolstered by exceptionally strong legislation protecting historic sites, few seem to outwardly question the public value of heritage, although this debate is beginning to occur in the Republic of Ireland owing to public interest in the impact of a motorway scheme on the archaeological landscape of the Hill of Tara, itself a potent nationalist symbol.

POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE PRESENTATION OF HERITAGE IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Before returning specifically to the ethics of practice in Northern Ireland, I would like to tarry a little longer in the Republic of Ireland to illustrate the power of a nationalist-derived, Irish American voice. The abandoned cottages which dot the landscape of the west of Ireland serve as an ever-present reminder of the impact of emigration and concomitant memories of poverty, discord, and to some, cultural oppression. Emotive survivals such as the Deserted Village of Slievemore (FIGURE 1), on Achill Island, Co. Mayo, appeal to visitors infused with Kennedy’s MOPE (Most Oppressed People Ever) syndrome (Kennedy 1996: 121), while more locally the site inspires discomfort and disinterest. Surprisingly little documentation seems to exist about those who dwelt in

the village following its 18th-century establishment. The Deserted Village has been archaeologically investigated since 1991 under the aegis of the Achill Archaeological Field School, founded by Achill native Theresa McDonald, who began the project initially more interested in the Neolithic activity underlying the post-medieval village. In 2004 and 2005, I directed fieldwork in the village for two twelve-week training excavations principally attended by paying American students. We took a household archaeology approach, focusing specifically upon the potential of the material culture associated with the 19th-century village to inform our understandings of daily life during a period of undeniable political, economic, and social turmoil, and instituted a series of public open days (McDonald and Horning 2004; Horning and Brannon 2005).

Probably the most intriguing aspect of the village is the disjuncture between presumptive memory and archaeological reality. Visitors to the village encounter the stark and empty husks of long-abandoned houses. No great leap of imagination is required to visualize the depopulation as a direct result of the Great Hunger. Indeed, Famine memory is strong on Achill, particularly in relation to the activities of the Protestant Achill Mission at Dugort, established at the foot of Slievemore Mountain. The Mission and its founder Reverend Edward Nangle are popularly understood as buying converts (derided as ‘jumpers’ or ‘soupers’) with food relief (McDonald 1997, 1998; McNally 1973). Whatever the truth of these tales, Achill undoubtedly was hit hard by the Famine. However, archaeological evidence from the Deserted Village makes it clear that occupation continued throughout and following the Famine period. Despite perception and even memory, the Deserted Village was not deserted until the end of the 19th century, with continued use (albeit seasonal) into the 1940s.

Over the two seasons, we excavated one half of a single unit byre dwelling along with its adjacent garden. Evidence for daily practice is plentiful. Sandy patches in the well-turned soils in the potato rigs suggests the enrichment of the soil through the use of seaweed and provide testament to the routine labor of women. Investigation of the interior of the dwelling revealed how the past occupants altered the original uniform house plan to suit their own purposes (Horning and Brannon 2005). While 18th- and 19th-century descriptions of the west of Ireland expound upon the dearth of material possessions and a lack of interaction with a so-called outside world, the piecemeal artifact assemblage is replete with decorated tea wares (principally English and Scottish spongewares), manufactured glass, and commercial food jars and cans. Such findings from Slievemore give the lie not only to the 19th-century commentators, but also to mythical notions about the west of Ireland existing in some sort of arrested medieval Gaelic manner until the policies of the British government conspired to eradicate the last vestiges of the true Irish through starvation. I hasten to add that

possession of tea wares does not ameliorate the genuine economic and political inequities at play on Achill, but it should force us to re-evaluate our black and white understanding of the rural Irish experience, putting some color and complexity back into the lives of the Slievemore villagers even if it is not what people who come to the site today expect to find.

In his excavations at Ballykilcline, Co. Roscommon, Charles Orser encountered similar ceramic assemblages, noting that “such a large relative percentage of English-made ceramic vessels at the house sites of the Narys was unexpected.” Orser suggests that ‘the purchase of English ceramics may have been conceptualized as an act of covert resistance on the part of the Ballykilcline tenants,’ to explain why “they willingly bought into the economic system being pressed around the world under the auspices of the same colonial power that sought to dominate them” (Orser 2004: 74-75). Given the documented acts of resistance to rent-paying attempted by these tenant families, perhaps that was indeed their motivation for buying decorated teawares. But is the consumption of tea in the 19th century inherently a colonialist imposition? A century after its introduction to Ireland, it must have become something quite different. Like ‘new’ habits and material culture anywhere, it is subsumed and subverted into an operational vocabulary. Why couldn’t the Slievemore villagers have conceived of teawares—mainly produced in the potteries of Glasgow (and thus arguably Scottish)—not as alien or foreign, or ‘English’, but as familiar and desirable? Given the outward similarity of their stone cabins, perhaps variety and color on the table served to demarcate individuals and families, and to highlight each family’s ability to share hospitality. I have yet to be convinced that the most efficacious means of interpreting the archaeology of 19th-century Ireland is the black and white, adversarial rhetoric of resistance predicated upon essentialised notions of cultural identity and traditional folklife, which themselves are based upon dominant nationalist narratives of Irish history.

Such nationalist narratives impact upon the interpretation of material culture beyond the very few excavations which examine the 19th century. Not far from Achill Island, the National Museum of Ireland recently opened up the Museum of Country Life, highlighting its impressive folklife collections, in the market town of Castlebar, Co. Mayo. Located in the former Turlough House Park, once owned by the Fitzgerald family, the Museum of Country Life aims to “portray the lives of ordinary people who lived in rural Ireland in the period 1850 – 1950. Emphasis is placed on the continuity of lifestyles, which were established for several hundred years and which lasted well into the 20th century.” One of the permanent exhibits addresses *Romanticism and Reality* and is described in museum publicity as follows: “Life in rural Ireland is popularly

portrayed as simple and romantic. The reality was different. Life was a struggle and survival depended on a detailed knowledge of landscape and environment, on craft, skill and ingenuity. This way of life changed little over many hundreds of years and continuity is evident in the similarities between recently-made objects and their counterparts made long ago” (<http://www.museum.ie/countrylife/overview.asp>). The hard if inventive lives of the country folk are presented in clear contrast with those of the Fitzgeralds (descendants of twelfth-century Anglo-Norman ‘colonizers’) in the high Victorian gothic Turlough House. Displays highlight crafts such as furniture making, thatching, vernacular boat construction, and basketry, with images from windswept Achill Island and other west coast locales providing a backdrop which emphasizes isolation. Hardship is overtly defined in light of the colonial relationship with Britain, with the underlying theme of an essential Irishness that ultimately triumphed through Independence.

While the museum’s interpretation is geared, in part, to remind today’s materially-rich Irish population of the sacrifices of their ancestors, the interpretation is also readily understood by a Diasporic visitor, weaned on stories of oppression tempered by eventual triumph on the golden shores of America. Like a superficial reading of the Deserted Village, the exhibits play into accepted histories and memories. Sadly, the complexities of the lives of now deceased Irish rural families and communities have been intentionally erased in favor of this one-dimensional portrayal, a calculated useable past which dehumanizes and obliterates. Irish country folk, we must believe, never even had the choice to buy English and Scottish teawares, regardless if such an act exemplified a desire to engage in rituals of hospitality, or rituals of resistance. The archaeological records of 19th-century Slievemore and 19th-century Ballykilcline might as well not exist at all.

HERITAGE AS SOCIAL ACTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Archaeologists practicing in Northern Ireland who aim to question similarly stark, dichotomous histories do so while operating in a world marked by political uncertainties with Plantation-era roots, where public discourse over colonialism can entail genuine personal risk. Drawing immediate and overt links between past and present risks losing the attention of a public hyper-sensitized to even the slightest hint of partisanship, in a land where even the name you choose to use for one of Northern Ireland’s largest settlements, Derry/Londonderry, is construed as a statement of political allegiance. As noted by one archaeologist in response to a questionnaire I sent out to colleagues in Northern Ireland, some archaeologists try to avoid the period altogether: “many practitioners barely register the post-medieval period as being of

archaeological interest, or are nervous of the historical and political baggage that comes with it” (anon. 2001). In such a climate, those archaeologists who are interested in post-medieval sites often opt to privilege the archaeological process or local history in site interpretation. This approach should be seen as intentional and sensitive; a means of ensuring maximum cross-community engagement in a non-threatening fashion and in a manner where the door is at least opened for further critical discourse (Horning 2006a).

While never overtly political in expression, texts relating to the archaeological heritage of Northern Ireland often evoke an intended audience and a hoped-for outcome. For example, in the Foreword to the monumental study of the maritime archaeology of Strangford Lough, then Minister of the Environment Dermot Nesbitt wrote “our archaeologists have developed the theme of maritime archaeology in a holistic way to examine not just wrecks but all aspects of maritime culture, social, political, economic, and religious” (Nesbitt in McErlean et al 2003: xix). Emphasis on holism and religions is intentional, as Nesbitt continues on to recall how the visit of the tall ships to Belfast in 1991 “gave us a glimpse of normality in those troubled times and what life might be like if we work together as a society” (ibid.). Heritage in this instance is viewed, perhaps naïvely, as a means of encouraging inclusion and cooperation, and the audience is clearly that of Northern Ireland.

Encouraging cross-community interest and participation in archaeology in Northern Ireland is aided by the general public interest in heritage, whatever role that heritage plays in community narratives. In directing the Movanager Village Project in 1998, an excavation at an abandoned 17th-century Londonderry Plantation village, I was encouraged if initially surprised by the level of public interest as well as the ready cooperation of the media. Having unearthed evidence for significant interaction between native Irish and English and Scots settlers in what was designed to be an exclusive plantation village, we were able to invite local schoolchildren and adults from both communities to consider the evidence for themselves. Radio and television were employed to reach a wider audience. One of the more notable findings was evidence for a partially-earthfast Irish vernacular dwelling exhibiting a subrectangular plan, central open hearth, and swept floor located within the village (Horning 2001). Material culture found in association with this structure included English border ware and North Devon gravel-tempered utilitarian ceramics alongside hand-built Irish everted rim ware, suggestive of daily interaction. That such interactions were complicated and clearly not always benign is evident in the presence of spent lead shot and musket balls.

Whatever the meaning of the Movanager material culture in the past, it must be remembered that these plantation sites continue to exist in the present, with their meanings and associations renegotiated and reconsidered by each generation. In Co. Tyrone, the stark walls of the ruinous Castle Caulfield tower above the small village bearing the same name. Constructed by an optimistic Sir Toby Caulfield between 1611-1616, Castle Caulfield was an ambitious H-plan Jacobean mansion boasting wide windows (even at ground level) and massive, soaring chimney stacks, defended only by a previously existent late medieval guardhouse (Jope 1958; Brannon 1999). The choice of style over defense was soon regretted, as rebel forces laid waste to the structure in 1641. Today, the site is maintained by the Department of the Environment, who face an uphill battle to combat the spraying of loyalist graffiti in hidden spaces within the ruin (FIGURE 2). Does this graffiti indicate that the site is being reclaimed as a protestant bastion? Or are the taggers unaware of the history of the site, content to spray their slogans on any conveniently concealed location—where its significance lies more in accomplishing a forbidden act than in making a publicly visible statement?

Elsewhere, continuity of association is more overt. Situated just outside of the village of Dungiven, Co. Derry/Londonderry, lie the impressive ruins of a 12th-century Augustinian Priory, itself built upon the site of an early medieval monastery. Adjacent to the site of the priory (FIGURE 3), in state care, is a holy well (the central depression in a bullaun stone, and referred to as the wart well), and rag tree where each fluttering strip of cloth attests to the seeking of a 'cure' for a variety of ills, a living tradition presumed to be of great antiquity. Little seems to have changed at this site, sacred to the Gaelic population for over one thousand years: continuity of Gaelic life made materially manifest? Looking more closely at the site, however, a series of unusual foundations are appended to the south and east. Unearthed in excavations in the 1980s, these walls are the remains of an O'Cahan tower house and the later bawn and castle of Sir Edward Doddington, designated 'first farmer' of the Skinner's Company Proportion within the Londonderry plantation (Brannon and Blades 1980). While the pre-plantation, pre-Reformation history of the site appears reclaimed, the muted but nonetheless highly visible traces of Doddington's stronghold may provide the first spark for a meaningful discourse about history, identity, and memory. In the meantime, however, local tourism brochures and initiatives emphasize only the pre-plantation history of the site, even though government signage at the site clearly addresses its plantation history (see for example http://www.loughfoyleferry.com/dungiven_priory.htm).

A nearby plantation monument that has been recognized and recast by a local community is the Vintner's Company bawn and manor house at Bellaghy (Horning

2006a). Public outreach during the excavation and restoration of the bawn encouraged locals from the predominantly nationalist community to reconsider the role and meaning of the site, long perceived as Protestant territory (Brannon 2002). Through a government and local partnership, the restored Bellaghy Bawn now houses the Seamus Heaney Centre, celebrating the life and poetry of the local hero, while incorporating exhibits acknowledging the Plantation history of the site and the village. This conscious, locally-determined re-imagining of the bawn's appropriate function, coupled with the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the physical and spatial realities of the site, exemplifies the dynamism which characterizes colonial entanglements.

Finally, another archaeological project which is endeavoring to reinstate and investigate the complexity of the process and personal experiences of the Ulster Plantation is an ongoing investigation of an upland landscape in Goodland Townland, Co. Antrim. On this windswept site above the waters of Murlough Bay lie the traces of what may have been a plantation village occupied not by Protestant settlers, but by Roman Catholic Scots from Islay and the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland, part of an effort by the Catholic grant holder Randall McDonnell to maintain his power in north Antrim during the reign of James I (Horning 2004; Horning and Brannon 2004).

CONCLUSION

Current trends in historical archaeology emphasize the centrality of capitalism and colonial discourse in examining commonalities in the archaeologies of fictive worlds such as the British Atlantic. Yet far from informing archaeological practice, overly simplistic incorporation of postcolonial approaches in comparative archaeologies can impede our ability to disentangle the complexities of the colonial experience. Contemporary implications and memories of 'colonial' entanglements vary wildly and remain contested in historical, political, economic, and popular understandings of the Irish past. With the exception of a brief, and to some degree unsuccessful, period in the early 17th century, the development of Ireland does not truly adhere to a colonial model as it would be understood in North America, Africa, or India. At the same time, ideas of colonialism pervade and structure identity, north and south. In the Republic of Ireland, the pace of development is bringing destruction of the post-medieval heritage in direct contravention to the aims of the National Monument Act and despite the hard work of individual archaeologists and organizations such as the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group (Brannon and Horning 2005; Donnelly and Horning 2002; Horning and ÓBaoill 2000). As clearly illustrated by the nationalist tone of the displays at the National Museum of Country Life, assumptions about a colonial past not only infuse daily life in the Republic, but also reify the beliefs of the Diasporic community.

The insights of postcolonial scholarship can aid in our understanding of modern Ireland, but only if we approach such scholarship with a nuanced, fulsome understanding of Irish historiography and a recognition of the potential of visible, physical archaeological practice to not only deconstruct simplistic models of colonizer versus colonized, but to engage an Irish public who are in danger of sacrificing the experiences of their ancestors to the insecure and myopic machinations of postcolonial political posturing.

By contrast, the unsettled nature of social relations in the north of Ireland is reflected in the ongoing debate over how to treat the built heritage of the Troubles. Should Army bases be destroyed and all traces removed? What ought to be the fate of the Maze prison, scene of the Hunger Strikes and arguably, the centre of the cooperation between Republican and Loyalist prisoners which permitted the Belfast Agreement of 1998 (Brannon 2001; McAtackney 2005). Like the power sharing executive, decisions will have to strike a balance, with the preservation of a perceived nationalist monument balanced by the preservation of a unionist monument (Brannon 2001; Jarman 2002). However fallacious the divisions may be, the maintenance and continued existence of these discursive sites at least contain the seeds for negotiation, remembrance, and reconciliation.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. *Deserted Village, Slievemore, Achill Island, Co. Mayo*. Although the archaeological record indicates that these dwellings were still in use into the 20th century, the site evokes received memories about the Famine and the trauma of 19th-century emigration amongst visitors. Public open days associated with the Achill Archaeological Field School aimed to challenge these perceptions employing the archaeological evidence. Photograph by the author.



Figure 2. *Loyalist graffiti (Ulster Volunteer Force, a paramilitary organization) on a gatehouse door lintel of the 17th-century Castle Caulfield, Co. Tyrone. Does the graffiti signify ownership and association with the plantation history of the building, or is it merely a convenient locale for sectarian expression? Photograph by the author.*



Figure 3. *Rag tree and holy well at Dungiven Priory and Bawn, Co. Derry/Londonderry.* Although there are substantial traces of the plantation-period occupation of this site, local community understandings of the site emphasize the pre-Reformation history of the priory and the evidence for continuity of Gaelic folk traditions. Photograph by the author.

