New perspectives on pre-Restoration Irish book history

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Abstract
Early modern Irish book history has been reinvigorated in the last couple of decades; thanks largely to pioneering studies by Raymond Gillespie and Toby Barnard. Examining the impact of the book through the lens of social and cultural change has vastly improved our knowledge of 17th-century Ireland. Indeed, the genre continues to expand. By focusing on the historian and antiquarian, Sir James Ware (1594–1666), this essay looks at potentially new ways book history can be analyzed. Three key aspects are investigated. First, it assesses Ware’s scholarly achievements and suggests that his 11 publications were in some ways reflective of the evolving social dynamics in Stuart Ireland. Second, it analyzes his library and explores the reading habits of individuals who contacted Ware to borrow manuscripts and printed works. The items he loaned to both Catholics and Protestants are revealing, especially given the restrictive nature of institutional and private libraries. Third, it examines Ware’s diverse network that crisscrossed ethnic, confessional, and political lines. In so doing, this essay challenges preconceived ideas that the various groupings in Ireland were diametrically opposed to supporting any kind of common endeavor.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Somewhat belatedly, early modern Irish book history has found its feet. Whereas topics such as print, book ownership and circulation, reception history, and the material culture of the book flourished in European scholarly circles for decades, the response in Ireland was seemingly less enthusiastic. It was perhaps due to the relatively limited sources available for the 16th century. Moreover, as Raymond Gillespie (1998b, p. 87) noted, the mismanagement of the Irish presses, the absence of patronage, and the unique character of the Irish Reformation all contributed to the...
comparatively low yield of printed works in Ireland. Consequently, book history was considered an unprofitable field for research exploration. But as Gillespie, Mary Pollard, and Toby Barnard have demonstrated, this view was not only wide of the mark but also greatly misjudged. Pollard's examination of Irish print in the late sixteenth and early 17th century (Pollard, 1974, 1977) unearthed the potential for further study and culminated in her influential survey of the Dublin book trade in 1989. She later compiled a substantial biographical dictionary of members of the city's book trade between 1550 and 1800. Together with Tony Sweeney's catalogue of printed material relating to early modern Ireland, they continue to be essential reference works. At the other end of the chronological spectrum is Barnard's assessment of print culture from the Restoration to the late 18th century. His meticulous analysis of the production and reception of books as well as their commercial and intellectual value is revealing. His latest monograph on print in Ireland from 1680 to 1784 will undoubtedly be the benchmark for future generations. Finally, Gillespie's invaluable work on the relationship between reading and print has added a new dimension to our understanding of early modern book history. In pursuing these lines of investigation, he provided "a point of departure in understanding the world of print" in the political, religious, social, and cultural context of 16th and 17th century Ireland (2005, p. 4).

In many respects, Gillespie's Reading Ireland set a new standard in what was fast becoming a vibrant field of research by the turn of the millennium. His appraisal of the impact of print came at a time when scholars increasingly placed greater emphasis on the cultural significance of the book and its social implications. The third volume of The Oxford History of the Irish Book in 2006, which examined English language works in Ireland between 1550 and 1800, was instrumental in pushing boundaries and suggesting ways to advance the genre. Yet there were already indications of a shift away from examining contemporary printed works through the lens of political change and religious controversy. Over the last 15 years, historians have directed their attention to employing novel approaches to studying 17th century Irish society by considering the power of print. Fascinating topics include the role of private and communal libraries, the study of book ownership, the provenance and reception history of printed works, the development and evolution of intellectual and social networks, and the growth of cultural awareness and its effect on shaping ethnic and national identities. Consequently, the discussions not only underlined the value of studying Irish book history but also enhanced our understanding of early modern Ireland.

Clearly, then, the genre is in a healthy state. Even more encouraging is the wealth of available source material that ensures the existing arguments can be developed further. The historian and antiquarian, Sir James Ware (1594–1666) is an excellent case study in this regard. Cast in the shadow of his mentor and colleague, Archbishop James Ussher, Ware has received comparatively less attention than might be expected. William O'Sullivan, Graham Parry, Toby Barnard, and Mark Williams (2010 and 2014) have made welcome contributions but there remains no thorough analysis of Ware's achievements to date. It is all the more extraordinary given his pedigree. Over a 40-year period, Ware produced 11 influential works that placed Ireland’s history on a par with the histories of other European kingdoms. They varied from ecclesiastical histories to studies on the antiquities of Ireland to carefully compiled Irish annals for the Tudor period. The only book that did not focus on Ireland was an edited work published in 1664 containing two letters by the eighth century English monk, the Venerable Bede. What made Ware's studies so significant, however, was that much of his material broke new ground. For example, he was the first to edit and publish Edmund Spenser's controversial "View of the State of Ireland" in 1633. He was the first to publish St Patrick's Confessio and Epistola which appeared in his work entitled S. Patricio, qui Hibemens ad fidem Christi convertit, adscripta opuscula and published in London in 1656. Likewise, he was the first to edit and print Bede's letter to Archbishop Egbert, and his Catalogus (1648) was the first private library catalogue to be printed in Britain and Ireland. Above all, Ware's investigations elevated Irish history beyond the confines of Irish scholarly circles and brought it to the notice of a wider international audience. Well-researched, original, and informative, his works were highly regarded by his scholarly peers and the reading public. His primary objective was to promote the antiquities of Ireland and to demonstrate how the kingdom's rich history was the equal of any European state that claimed to have a more established past. Ware unquestionably achieved his goal. By drawing extensively on a wide range of sources, most notably valuable medieval manuscripts, he transformed the way Ireland was viewed. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries he was considered to be the authority on Ireland's heritage.
This essay therefore aims to shed light on his accomplishments while simultaneously revealing further avenues that can be pursued in 17th century Irish book history. Three particular aspects will be examined. First, it will assess his published work, the evolution of his research, and the seemingly neutral stance he employed in his research. In so doing, it argues that his unusual approach to history signalled the beginnings of a slow but gradual shift in the mentalité of the Protestant settler community in the early Stuart period. The changing dynamics of Irish society become even more apparent when considering Ware's library, which is the second item for discussion. His collections were not just the measure of his eclectic tastes. They also, coincidentally, served a wider communal purpose where a diverse group of readers called upon Ware to satisfy their intellectual needs. All this would suggest that the private library in pre-Restoration Ireland had a far greater social and cultural impact than has been previously appreciated. The final aspect relates to the challenges Ware confronted in acquiring manuscripts and printed books. In order to maintain high standards of scholarly research, he was wholly reliant on the cooperation of a variety of individuals. Institutional and clerical libraries could only satisfy his needs up to a point. It was the precious Irish manuscripts in the possession of native Irish families for centuries that Ware was keen to access. Over the course of 40 years, he successfully established and maintained a complex network that criss-crossed ethnic, confessional, and political lines as a means of gathering information and material. That he was able to penetrate these boundaries with ease once again raises fundamental questions about our understanding of early modern society in Ireland. Sustained periods of war and conquest inevitably contributed to a hostile environment but Ware's experiences paint a very different picture in which cohabitation was possible and often prevailed.

2 | SCHOLARSHIP

Ware's investigations are, in many ways, unique to 17th century Irish scholarship. Whereas contemporaries like Ussher, Philip O'Sullivan Beare, and Henry Fitzsimon preferred to focus on polemical texts, Ware sought to present his analysis in a less controversial manner. His findings generally embraced the native Irish contribution over the course of Irish history. No less striking was the absence of criticism directed at Catholics and their religion. So at first glance, his works marked an unusual break in tradition and tone. The research was more balanced, and the language was less divisive. Yet all is not what it seems. Underneath the veneer of impartiality and inclusivity, his publications displayed an unresolved tension where political and religious allegiances conflicted with his desire to examine Ireland in a positive light. Maintaining a balance between the two was by no means easy. Accordingly, there are two ways of looking at Ware's work. On the one hand, he regularly downplayed themes relating to colonial and cultural superiority that were commonly attributed to English commentators on Ireland. Ware was eager to promote the kingdom's rich history to a wider European audience, many of whom were uninformed about the politics of the country's ethnic and cultural composition. On the other hand, he was anxious to uphold Irish Protestant royalist values that were at the core of the New English settler outlook. By way of accommodation, therefore, he included subtle undertones that reflected the views and interests of a small but particular community which he was associated.

Despite the complex political and religious circumstances of early Stuart Ireland, it is to Ware's credit that the tone and content in his books showed remarkable levels of consistency. His first book, published in 1626, catalogued the lives of the archbishops of Cashel and Tuam. This was followed 2 years later by a second study of the bishops of Leinster. An expanded catalogue that included the bishops of the whole kingdom entitled De Praesulibus Hiberniae was produced in 1665. His examination of key manuscripts such as the Annals of Ulster, the Annals of Leinster, and an array of ecclesiastical registers enabled him to trace the episcopal succession of Irish bishops from the early middle ages through the Reformation and up to the 17th century. The catalogues were informative and reasonably detailed, given the scarcity of sources for the medieval period. Above all, the entries for the bishops exhibited a high level of detachment whereby Ware adopted a factual and apparently neutral tone. When he published The Historie of Ireland in 1633, an edited collection of works by 16th century authors Edmund Campion, Meredith Hamner and Spenser, he purposely amended Spenser's text so that "harsher judgements on the native Irish, Old and New English
inhabitants of Ireland” were “less offensive” (Hadfield and Maley, p. xxiv). A similar approach is evident in his fourth book entitled *De Scriptoribus Hiberniae*, a bibliographical and biographical account of the writers of Ireland, which he published in 1639. It examined the contribution of Irish authors and foreign commentators in relation to the history of Ireland. They were treated in a fair and balanced manner without any obvious signs of cultural biases. The primary objective of the work was to promote the kingdom's rich heritage including the accomplishments of native Irish scholars.

The trajectory of Ware's work plainly shows a willingness to present Irish history in a fresh light that was both inclusive and representative of all ethnic groups. By the time he published *De Hibernia Antiquitatis ejus, Disquisitiones* in 1654 (an improved and expanded second edition appeared 4 years later), there was no discernable trace of social, cultural, or religious prejudice. Indeed, it “remains a work of impressive scholarship” (Parry, 2004, p. 387), drawing extensively on rare manuscript sources while providing a detailed and objective assessment of Ireland prior to the Norman invasion. His persuasive defense of the kingdom's antiquity dealt with the development of Irish society, its manners, and customs. For example, he designated a chapter to the habit and dress of the Irish. The reader was informed that “A frize cloak with a shagged border, was the upper garment of the Ancient Irish, which they wore almost down to their heels” (p. 60). This was, he explained, an important corrective to the claims made by Spenser who mistook the cloak as a towel used to wipe hands. There are, indeed, multiple references in *De Hibernia* where Ware challenged preconceived ideas about Ireland and the Irish that had been shaped by unsympathetic commentators in the past. Even in 1656, when Ware returned to editing primary documents such as writings attributed to St Patrick, he resisted any temptation to subvert the texts or its meaning: “What was an ideal opportunity to present St Patrick as a model Irish Protestant was set aside in a bid to offer a reliable and accurate edition of the saint's works” (Empey, 2017b, p. 45).

The absence of any negative content in his published works of the 1650s was no doubt influenced by the fact that Ware was writing in exile. Expelled by Cromwellian forces in April 1649 for royalist sympathies, he was unable to return to Ireland until the climate became more favourable in late 1658. His experiences of exile in both France and England inevitably shaped his views of the Irish historical narrative and the books he published after the Restoration. In 1662, he compiled annals of the kingdom of Ireland in the reign of Henry VIII, followed by an extended annalistic study from Henry VII to Mary in 1664. They completed the cycle of annals for Tudor Ireland, previously commenced by William Camden whose *Annales rerum anglicarum et hibernarum regnante Elizabetha* (Leiden, 1625) covered the reign of Elizabeth I. The aim once again was to show Ireland's complex past in a balanced and conventional framework. Annals were popular in manuscript and print in the 16th century but as D.R. Woolf and Gillespie argue, they were outdated by scholarly standards in the early 17th century (Woolf, 2000, pp. 11–36; Gillespie, 2017, pp. 53–4). It seems quite extraordinary that Ware's works still made an enduring contribution. His *Annales* emphasised the influence of Tudor (possibly English) governance in Ireland but the accounts were still factual and refrained from criticising the rebellious Gaelic Irish. This was a representation of Ireland's recent past that was intended to blend seamlessly with contemporary conventions of European historiography.

 Appeasing a diverse readership market perhaps explains why Ware's approach was so distinctive. But while his perceived “objectivity” presented a radical break from the polemical diatribes that were standard practice in 17th century Irish scholarly writings he ultimately had to concede to the established views of his own community. Closer analysis of Ware's publications show that they were not uncontroversial. His work on the bishops of Ireland was primarily intended to promote the legitimacy of the established church. By continuing the episcopal line from the early medieval period to the 1620s, Ware consciously excluded the post-Reformation Catholic bishops so to present the Church of Ireland as the true heir of the national church. As Alan Ford contends, the catalogues were "identifiably Protestant, indeed, even polemical" (2005, p. 135). Ford's characteristically forceful appraisal is perhaps a little strong but it has merit. The battle for ecclesiological legitimacy was an intensely sensitive issue, as much in Ireland as in continental Europe, and had already been rumbling in scholarly circles for several decades. Ussher's influence aside, Ware was very likely to have been motivated by his own conservative Protestant beliefs that were sympathetic to the idea of the Church of Ireland being the “true church.” His subsequent publications in the 1630s reveal a similar disposition.
The inclusion of Spenser’s “View” in *The Historie of Ireland* incensed Old English Catholics. In the preface of Geoffrey Keating’s influential work *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, the author was outraged that the text of “an ill-wisher of Ireland, Edmund Spenser” was even considered for publication. It was, Keating argued, “a destructive platform laid for the utter subversion of this kingdom” (Gilbert, 1882, p. xiv). That Ware was cognisant of the fact that the “View” would rankle among the Old English was evident when he dedicated the text to the recently appointed lord deputy of Ireland, Sir Thomas Wentworth. More than that, Ware remarked that “the collections (now communicated) doe afford for matter of history and policy” (“The Epistle Dedicatory”). Even *De Scriptoribus Hibermiae*, for all its supposed neutrality, was not entirely free of implicit forms of prejudice. The Irish authors and foreign writers commenting on Ireland may have received equal treatment, but his research was presented in “two books” and divided along ethnic lines. Ware struggled with the prospect of examining native writers alongside their foreign contemporaries. Acknowledging such intellectual parity between native Irishmen and English authors flew in the face of the core values of the settler community. It was inconceivable for defensive-minded Protestant planters, who were a minority ethnic group in early Stuart Ireland, to come to such conclusions. So what appeared to be an unprejudiced account of Irish history was ultimately a work clouded by a fervent Protestant royalist outlook.

Despite the evident tensions in Ware’s investigations, his books were nevertheless well received by his peers. In 1629, Ussher informed the English antiquary, Sir Robert Cotton, that Ware was “an industrious searcher of the antiquities of this countrye” (Boran, 2015, vol. ii, p. 448). Catholic scholars were equally positive in their response to his research. David Rothe, bishop of Ossory, wrote to the Franciscan Luke Wadding in 1631 confessing that “Sir James Ware’s paynes for Dublin, Cassill, and Tuam, and the Cistercian abbayes in print may serve to some sted.” (H.M.C. Franciscan, 1906, p. 57). That Catholics valued Ware’s work on the lives of the Irish bishops, notwithstanding its unambiguous Protestant message, says much about the author’s scholarship and reputation. In fact, the Catholic bishop of Waterford, Patrick Comerford, admitted that Ware’s investigations into the archbishopric of Cashel was cited as the authority in determining a dispute with a troublesome abbot involving an abbey in the diocese (Jennings, 1953, p. 335). Likewise, the Franciscan hagiographer at Louvain, John Colgan, regularly cited Ware’s work on the writers of Ireland in his great masterpiece *Acta sanctorum Hiberniae* (1645), while the historian and priest, John Lynch, asserted that *De Hibernia* was an “admirable work” and praised the “accuracy and extensive erudition of Ware” (Kelly, 1851, vol. iii, pp. 265, 275). Intriguingly, no comments were made about the Protestant slant in these works. Cunningham asserts that “Colgan regarded Irish Protestant antiquarians, such as Ussher and Ware, as reliable transcribers of older sources, even if he would have disagreed with some of their interpretations of the evidence” (Cunningham, 2013, p. 133). It was quite likely that the rest of his Catholic counterparts applied the same approach. Despite his staunchly Catholic views, the prominent Limerick physician, Dr Thomas Arthur, owned no less than three of Ware’s books—one of which may have been given as a present by the author. The subtle biases in Ware’s works were of no concern to his international readers either. The renowned English historian, Sir Henry Spelman, and Dutch humanist scholar, Gerardus Vossius, spoke positively about Ware’s investigations in letters to Ussher (Boran, 2015, vol. ii, p. 774, 778). Thus, it was the quality of the research and not his Protestant prejudices that drove the popularity of Ware’s books and enhanced his national and international scholarly standing.

Irrespective of the political and religious undertones, Ware’s texts are important because they marked a new departure in the exploration of Irish history (and by a second generation New English Protestant no less!). They provide, moreover, clear evidence of the gradual shift in identity among the settler community in the early 17th century whereby the terms “Protestant” and “Irish” were seemingly becoming more acceptable and interchangeable. In the “Epistle Dedicatory” to Wentworth in *De Scriptoribus Hibermiae* Ware wrote: “It is clear that the knowledge of many writers has perished, together with the greater part of their works, since our Ireland has been crushed by internal dissensions ... for what remains, however, it is possible to perceive some measure of the learning of the period from the dawn of Christianity in this island up to the present.” Of course, the reference to “our Ireland” was loaded with political connotations and intended to moderate the lord deputy’s myopic view of Irish society. Granted that Ware’s observation was not made in a cultural vacuum, it is important to take into account of the broader picture. A closer reading of Ware’s publications reveals a growing identification with Ireland. Only 6 years previously Ware quoted the
Roman poet Claudian, "iam cuncti gens una sumus" (now we are all one people), in the preface to Spenser's View. Similarly, the first chapter of De Hibernia conspicuously focused on the names of the island, "Scotia" and "Hibernia." It was deliberately intended to discredit the Scottish writer, Thomas Dempster, who appropriated early medieval Irish saints and claimed them as Scottish based on his simplistic interpretation of "Scotia." Ware went to great lengths to disprove Dempster's wild assertions in his 1639 work on Irish writers but De Hibernia was the first chance to set the record straight by providing the definitive answer on Ireland's ancient name. It was certainly not lost on the Irish reader, especially since he followed in the footsteps of Catholic contemporaries like Rothe and John Colgan who recently castigated Dempster in print.

The marked identification with Ireland, in stark contrast to his parents, reflects a growing affinity among the New English with their Irish background. Nor was Ware alone in this. Ussher, despite his apocalyptic preoccupations, referred to the term "Hibernia nostra" and passionately defended the Irish language as "elegant and rich" in correspondence with his continental colleagues (Boran, 2015, vol. ii, p. 717). Furthermore, he "played an active part in that process of the dissemination of the Gaelic cultural heritage to non-native Irish, which later on would prove to be such an important condition for its very survival" (Leerssen, 1982, p. 58). Prominent politicians like Sir George Carew, Richard Boyle, earl of Cork, and the Donegal planter Sir Basil Brooke showed a deep interest in Irish culture. Brooke is considered to have provided Sir Robert Cotton with the life of St Caillín, which was written in Irish in 1535 (Cunningham & Gillespie, 2012, p. 74). Carew assiduously collected rare medieval manuscripts, especially annals and genealogies, as well as polemical works that were composed by Irish Catholic exiles on the continent. Moreover, in 1618, Tadhg O'Daly wrote a praise poem in Irish and dedicated it to Carew. As Jason Dorsett argues, "the fact that it was addressed to him indicated a surprising involvement in Gaelic culture" (pp. 88–9). Cork, for his part, developed a "conscious attachment to things Irish"—he farmed out his children to Irish wet-nurses to learn the language, and employed Irish bards and musicians in his household (Canny, 1982, pp. 97, 126–8). Although recent analysis by Canny, Patrick Little, and Colm Lennon argue that this was part of a wider policy in consolidating the family's power in Munster, Cork's diary still suggests a degree of appreciation to Irish traditions. Indeed, Little admits that "easy distinctions between Cork's cultural, social, political, religious and financial concerns do not seem to ring true" (2000, p. 152).

There are, besides, numerous examples of members of the settler community displaying personal attachment to their new surroundings, helped no doubt by the fact that Ireland was experiencing unprecedented levels of peace and stability over a 40-year period. From the conclusion of the Nine Years' War in 1603 to the outbreak of rebellion in 1641 diverse religious and ethnic groups could and did coexist with one another. What makes Ware's publications significant within this wider context is that they permit historians to find an alternative means to assess the New English mentalité. Examples of individual hobbies or preferences are by themselves revealing but can often be viewed as the exception to the rule. Ware's works, on the other hand, can gauge the mood of the broader settler community precisely because they appealed to many fellow Protestant settlers who had already begun to identify with their environment and who sought to inform themselves of Ireland's history and culture.

3 LIBRARY

Such changing attitudes are equally apparent when the role of libraries and their social impact is considered. A lot has been made about the rise of antiquarian pursuits in the late 17th century. Improvements in the economy and the emergence of a "commercial network of booksellers and their agents" (Gillespie, 1997, p. 37) bear witness to the increase in private libraries from the 1670s. The popularity of books dramatically changed the traditional reading interests of individuals. Marc Caball's analysis of the libraries of Christopher Sexton of Limerick in the 1630s and Sir John Perceval of Burton, County Cork, in the 1680s is revealing. He observes that as the century progressed the bookshelves of enthusiastic readers and collectors saw a gradual change from devotional literature in favor of entertainment and pleasure. But plentiful as the evidence is for libraries in the later decades, the period prior to
the Restoration is not so well attested. This has not been helped by the paucity of sources. Colmán Ó Clabaigh's reproduction of the Franciscan Library at Youghal (compiled between 1490 and 1523) and Aisling Byrne's comprehensive analysis of two inventories of the library belonging to the earls of Kildare c.1500 constitute the earliest known examples of library catalogues in Ireland. In fact, the overall picture for the 16th century is bleak. Rolf Loeb and Magda Stouthamer-Loeb observe that the survival of catalogues is so "extraordinarily rare" that historians have to be satisfied with fragmentary evidence of book ownership (2011, p. 281).

Thankfully, all is not lost. Book lists, inventories, library catalogues, and correspondence of scholars in the early 17th century are in greater supply. Ussher's collections have inevitably received considerable attention. In 1902, H. J. Lawlor undertook the arduous task of reconstructing Ussher's library before the rebellion of 1641 from four composite lists. This was supplemented by William O'Sullivan's seminal article on the archbishop's collection of manuscripts (in 1956) and Elizabethanne Boran's more recent study of the sources Ussher obtained from his European network. In addition, she assessed the libraries of Luke Challoner and James Ussher between 1595 and 1608. By trawling through fragmentary book catalogues, Boran revealed how their collections were used to augment the resources of Trinity College in the early years of the university's development. The story of Ussher's books came full circle with Barnard's insightful account of the purchase of the archbishop's library in 1657. Only recently have the collections of laymen come under the microscope. Caball's work on the Sexton library and Mary Ann Lyon's investigations into Dr. Thomas Arthur's library are at a relatively early stage but will undoubtedly yield fruitful results. Furthermore, the research of Bara Boydell and Máire Egan-Buffet has shed light on the musical books of the former military governor of Londonderry, Edward, second Viscount Conway, and Killultagh. Conway's Irish library, which contained more than 8,000 books, was also the subject of Daniel Starza Smith's recent analysis on the viscount's acquisition of books. Although Ian Roy's inspection of an inventory from 1643 alluded to an astonishing 4,700 volumes belonging to the viscount, the vast majority of these works were housed in Conway's London residence. The same can also be said for Jason Dorsett's superb analysis of Carew's library. It was a major repository and contained an array of important Irish material, but it too was located in London.

So where does Ware fit into all of this? It was not until 1997, when O'Sullivan masterfully compiled "a finding list" of Ware's manuscripts from items listed in the Catalogus of 1648, that his collections received adequate attention. In so doing, O'Sullivan challenged historians to think harder about issues such as provenance, the circulation of the (manuscript) book, reception history, and the broader cultural impact of books. But while these remarks gave much food for thought his painstaking research on Ware was never pursued in any comprehensive fashion. Ware's collections were impressive by any measure. His manuscript catalogue accounted for a sizeable 93 manuscripts and were divided into five categories: theology; history, politics, and geography; law; poetry; and finally, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics. Omitted from the Catalogus were printed books which formed a large part of his library. The recent reproduction of a number of Ware's bibliographic lists dated between c.1619 and 1638 reveals that his library was far bigger than the Catalogus would lead us to believe (Empey, 2014, pp. 121–5). In addition, the latter pages of his commonplace book, British Library Additional MS 4821, records about 70 manuscripts and printed works that he loaned to friends in 1630 of which only a fraction featured in his catalogue.

Thus, Ware's library was fairly substantial by Irish standards in the early Stuart period. It was certainly one of the larger collections in private hands, reflecting the interests and needs of a distinguished scholar. Nor did the material fail to catch the attention of an inquisitive reading community in a situation where the demand for books exceeded supply. In this context, a great deal of information can be mined from Ware's recordkeeping. There are over 30 people mentioned in his borrowing lists, a practice that sheds much light on the cultural curiosities of the New English community. For example, Ware's brother John was loaned Fynes Moryson's Itinerary while his other brother, Joseph, obtained a manuscript copy of Edmund Campion's "History of Ireland." Thomas Hooke, who was a parishioner of St Catherine's and St James's Church in Dublin, was also loaned Campion's work. The Ulster king of arms, Daniel Molyneux, obtained the work of Giralda Cambrensis, while Sir James Craig, a Scottish undertaker in the Ulster plantation, was issued with a manuscript described as "fragments of the history of Ireland." Such requests reinforce the argument that Protestants, many of whom were second generation Protestants like Ware, were increasingly
conscious of their new environment to the extent that they were actively engaging with Irish history through the medium of print. Furthermore, it could be argued that their active interest was born not out of any intention to arrest their ethnic or cultural superiority at the expense of the seemingly untrustworthy (Catholic) Irish but rather a desire to obtain greater knowledge about Ireland’s past. On this basis it is not unreasonable to suggest that people like Ware and Cork, who had immersed themselves in their surroundings, were not unrepresentative of the new generation of English planters in the early 17th century.

Studying the role of libraries and their holdings is therefore an essential component in exploring the social and cultural worlds of individuals and groups in early modern Ireland. The interconnection between book ownership and lending practices not only highlights the appetite for reading but it also sheds light on the formulation of networks and relationships that are often complex in nature. Ware’s borrowing lists make him almost unique in Ireland in that they reveal the existence of a diverse group of keen book readers, some of whom were prepared to cross supposed confessional lines to satisfy their intellectual curiosities. Crucially, they include people who did not participate in established scholarly circles. Evidence of readers from a nonscholarly or nonelite background is in short supply. For example, Lawlor’s assessment of Ussher’s library contains references to people who requested books from the archbishop. A mere 17 names are mentioned, largely consisting of churchmen, scholars, or men with close links to the University of Dublin. Only three can be classified as members of the laity and even still they held positions of influence: Sir John Clotworthy, a staunch puritan and Ulster planter; Lewis Boyle, Viscount Boyle of Kinalmeaky; and Dr Thomas Arthur, a prominent Catholic physician whose business thrived in Dublin in the 1620s and 1630s. Ussher’s limited engagement with the wider community is striking. In analyzing the archbishop’s network, Gillespie and Cunningham found only two recusant families of middling social status who engaged in loaning manuscripts: Robert Cusack of Gerardstown and William Wolverston of Stillorgan (2004–2005, pp. 85–6). O’Sullivan and Boran come to similar conclusions and demonstrate how reluctant Ussher was in loaning reading materials to those outside the scholarly elite. Others possessing substantial private libraries were probably even more selective. Arthur assembled an impressive 315 items in his library. As a result he was “afforded the opportunity to contribute to the grand enterprise in which manuscripts and information were exchanged between Ussher, Ware and leading Irish Catholic scholars at home and on the Continent” (Lyons, 2016 p. 77). But, like Ussher, there is no evidence that he was willing to share his collections outside this coterie.

Access to institutional libraries was equally challenging for the general reader. Few, if any, enjoyed the same privileges as Ware who could freely visit the library of his alma mater or call upon Ussher to gain entry into cathedral libraries. The library at the Trinity College which, thanks to benefactors in the early 17th century had amassed a healthy number of books, was renowned for restricting visitors. Boran points out that “the stipulations in the statutes concerning the retrieval of books strongly suggest that the users are solely members of the college” (2000, p. 49). Similar constraints seemingly applied to cathedral libraries generally. The establishment of a library in St Finbarre’s Cathedral, Cork in 1629 and St Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny in 1693 relied on clerical donations but with explicit instructions that the books were for their religious colleagues (Boran, 2006, p. 93). Neither did St Mary’s Cathedral library in Limerick open its doors to the wider public. Ware, it appears, was only able to consult its holdings thanks to the intervention of Ussher in 1624. In his study of books borrowed from Christ Church Cathedral in 1607 Gillespie argues that the individuals recorded in the list “had clear links” with the cathedral. So while the cathedral functioned as “an institution which purchased [books] for lending” those who wished to obtain them did not find the process particularly straightforward (Gillespie, 1998a, p.15).

If private owners and institutional libraries were reluctant to loan books, where did interested readers go to satisfy their intellectual curiosities? In the absence of accessible repositories, the impression that they were left in limbo seems inescapable. In this respect, Ware’s records throw significant light on the circulation of reading materials. They show that he was open to lending both manuscripts and books. More than that, they position him as a pivotal middleman for people who were not otherwise privileged to acquire materials that fulfilled their cultural pursuits. Fellow Protestants John and Joseph Ware, as well as Thomas Hooke, have already been highlighted. But other individuals from a nonelite background feature in Ware’s borrowing lists. For example, Thomas Reynolds, possibly a kinsman
of Ware through marriage, borrowed the Annals of Ulster. Patrick Gough, Roger Moore and Henry Kenny, who lived in the Dublin parish of St John the Evangelist, also approached Ware. Gough borrowed manuscripts relating to the lives of St Modwen and St Bridget, Moore acquired the New Testament in Irish (Tiomna Nuadha), while Kenny obtained a work entitled "Inquis [itiones] Jacobi R [egij]s." Other names that appear in the list include "Mr Gerald" and "Mr Lisagh" (probably John Lissagh who attended the 1641 Irish parliament). The former was loaned Isaac Casaubon's De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis (London, 1614) and Lisagh borrowed a manuscript copy of the life of St. Patrick.

It would be a mistake to conclude that Ware was just a facilitator for readers resident in Dublin. He catered for those outside the capital too. For example, Nicholas Loftus of Wexford was given the register of Kilmainham and a manuscript copy of the pedigree of the earl of Ormond. Sir John King, a major landowner in Connacht, secured a loan of Camden's Annales rerum Anglicarum, et Hibemicaeum, while Edward Denny from Kerry was given a manuscript copy of Gervasuis Tilburiensis's "Dialogue on certain observations on the Exchequer." But when all is said and done, the most striking feature of Ware's lending practices was that it extended well beyond the close-knit Church of Ireland community. The reading habits of members of the Catholic laity and, even more remarkably, Catholic clergy, are revealed. Among those recorded is John Rochford from Kilbride in County Meath, who borrowed a copy of the medieval register of Thomascourt on two occasions. Richard Rothe, a Kilkenny merchant, obtained one of Ware's prized manuscripts: the Annals of Leinster. The most surprising participant in this book-loaning club was Thomas Strange (alias Strong), guardian of the Irish Franciscans in Dublin. He was given a number of key manuscripts by Ware, notably the highly sought after Psalter Narran as well as printed works composed by 16th century authors: John Caius, Matthew Parker and Nicholas Harpsfield.

So what is the wider significance of this? In her analysis of Irish libraries, Boran expressed her reservations about the use of "private" and "personal" libraries in the early modern period. This is, indeed, pertinent. She correctly asserts that while the personal library represented the interests of the owner, they could also be "utilized by a communal group" (2006, p. 99). It must be acknowledged, however, that the examples she employs specifically relate to the scholarly elite that was, by any measure, an exclusive club. Trinity College, moreover, may well have subscribed to the European concept of "public utility," but that was not readily achievable in the circumstances of the first half of the 17th century. Herein lies the importance of studying Ware. Firstly, his record keeping is a timely reminder to historians that printed catalogues are not necessarily representative of the owner's total collections. Ware's Catalogus offers a glimpse at his manuscript collection but, curiously, this did not include all the manuscripts that were in his possession. He also continued to acquire sources after he returned to Ireland in 1658. Furthermore, the catalogue omits printed works. Given his scholarly pursuits and his intimate relationship with the king's printers in Dublin it was quite likely that printed material surpassed the number of manuscripts he acquired. The bibliographic lists, which are published, offer a valuable insight into the books he bought in the 1620s and 1630s. The large number of works, both in manuscript and in print, ties into the second point. Ware's sizeable library suggests that Irish and continental sources were in circulation and could be obtained. Although he had all the right connections (Trinity College, Ussher and the king's printers) it nevertheless shows that Ireland was far from the intellectual periphery of early modern Europe. Finally, Ware is a rare example of a private book owner in the pre-Restoration period who let his personal library be used by a diverse group of individuals. Critically, many of these people had no connection with the printing world. This is telling because while his sources were obviously “intended to advance his scholarly curiosity,” it is quite apparent that his expanding library served an unintended secondary purpose whereby members of the laity "looked to Ware to satisfy their intellectual interests" (Empey, 2017a, p. 136). As a consequence, we have a much broader understanding of what people read in Caroline Ireland.

Assembling such a large collection was not achieved overnight and the process of getting printed works and manuscripts presented different challenges. On the one hand was the acquisition of printed books. This usually required
significant financial resources. Although Ware could freely access Ussher's vast library, the state repositories, and institutional libraries, they were not always fully up to date with the latest publications. Nor were they necessarily a guarantee that his book of choice would be purchased. On the other hand was the difficulty of obtaining precious Irish manuscripts. Because of the nature of his research Ware needed to consult sources that were scattered throughout the country and in the possession of individuals who were of a very different confessional and ethnic background. In other words, a network of this kind was chiefly reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of others. What is so remarkable, therefore, is that this reality goes against the general perception of 17th century Ireland being a divided society.

Much has been made of Ussher's connections. The aforementioned work of O'Sullivan and Boran reveals a vast network that extended beyond England and continental Europe to as far as the Levant. Bernard Meehan's account on the formulation of Ussher's manuscript collection is also an important contribution. From a distinctly Irish perspective, the excellent work by Gillespie and Cunningham, in which they chart Ussher's acquisition of Irish manuscripts, continues to be essential reading for those studying the circulation of source material in 17th century Ireland. Ware's friendship network, however, has escaped scholarly attention. Although his contacts were primarily based within the British Isles, not forgetting the Irish Franciscans at Louvain and Rome, his dealings included a considerable number of influential people. Inevitably, there were some overlaps between those who Ware and the archbishop befriended. But outside those clerical and scholarly circles, Ware's network took a life of its own. Of even greater significance was the fact that many were unknown to Ussher. As Protestant primate of all Ireland, not forgetting his regular political and anti-Catholic rhetorical outbursts, meant Ussher found many to be reticent. Ware, by contrast, proved more palatable to both Old English Catholics and native Irish on account of his scholarly reputation and seemingly more moderate political stance.

Examining Ware's network is made considerably more difficult in the absence of correspondence. Whereas Ussher's "republic of letters" offers a fascinating insight into the transmission of sources, there are fewer than 10 letters extant relating to Ware's scholarly activities. Fortunately, his manuscripts have proved more enduring—the majority of which are housed in the British Library and Bodleian Library, Oxford. They fill the void as he occasionally made side notes which referred to individuals who loaned him a document. These crucial references play a pivotal role in establishing patterns of friendship and collegiality. Indeed, the results are particularly arresting.

Ware's ability to gain access to sources initially depended on the strong rapport he enjoyed with his mentor. In fact, it was Ussher who loaned him one of his first manuscripts no later than 1612: an abstract relating to the "book of donation" from the Dublin episcopal register Crede Mihi. Ussher also had at his disposal the Armagh registers of the late 14th and 15th centuries that Ware made extensive use of over the course of his studies. Episcopal registers were an essential part of Ware's investigations into the lives of Irish bishops and Ussher acted as a key intermediary in persuading his fellow bishops to lend diocesan registers to Ware. Sure enough, throughout the 1620s, Ware consulted the registers of Limerick, Raphoe, Elphin, Kilmore, and Clogher. Yet it was also a mark of his growing reputation that the bishops consented. In 1625, Sir Henry Bourchier, earl of Bath, bemoaned the hesitancy among bishops to relinquish registers on account of their importance in documenting the extent of episcopal lands (Dorsett, 2000, p. 155). Ussher also played a vital role in introducing his protégé to established English historians and antiquarians. Ware met Sir Robert Cotton and John Selden while on a visit to England in the summer of 1626. Cotton was founder of one of the largest private libraries in Europe while Selden was renowned for his scholarship on the early Christian church. These lasting friendships ensured that Ware was able to examine many Irish manuscripts that had found their way to England. Joining international scholarly circles opened up huge opportunities, not least befriending some of the leading English historians of the day who were setting new standards in research. Among this group were Sir Roger Tywssden, Sir William Dugdale, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, Roger Dodsworth, and Elias Ashmole, to name but a few.

By the late 1620s, however, it was quite apparent that Ware had established himself. His borrowing records are a testament to this. Indeed, heading the lists was Ussher who sought precious manuscripts such as the Annals of Ulster and Annals of Inisfallen as well as a number of printed books that his young protégé had purchased. Much of the groundwork in forming relationships was helped by Ware's role in the administration. In the early 1620s, he
was working as an apprentice in Dublin Castle whereupon he would succeed his father as auditor general in 1632. It enabled him to negotiate the transmission of manuscripts that were in the hands of government officials. For example, Adam Loftus, Viscount Ely and lord chancellor, provided Ware with the register of Monastrevin, while Sir John King, who held offices in the Irish chancery and hanaper, loaned him the register of the monastery at Boyle (Empey, 2014, pp. 121–2). More significantly, Ware had unlimited access to crucial state archives and enjoyed intimate dealings with Thomas Chetham, keeper of the records in Birmingham Tower, and his father-in-law, Jacob Newman, who was a clerk in the Court of Chancery. His connections to institutional repositories such as Birmingham Tower, Trinity College, and cathedral libraries like Christ Church Cathedral immediately caught the attention of Catholic scholars. Chief among them was Luke Wadding, guardian of the Franciscan Irish College in Rome, who employed his colleague Thomas Strange to act as his agent in Ireland. This was, by all accounts, a fruitful partnership. Whereas Ware could supply state documents that were out of the reach of Catholics Wadding reciprocated by offering to send copies of sources in the Vatican. The trust and friendship that developed between Ware and Strange brought the former into contact two other influential Franciscans: Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and John Colgan. Ó Cléirigh was the chief compiler of the Annals of the Four Masters who, over the course of his studies, made copies of valuable documents housed in Franciscan monasteries dotted around the country. The most famous example was the Liber Hymnorum from the Donegal convent that Ware consulted. That sense of mutual respect and scholarly collaboration was epitomised in 1637 when, according to Cunningham, Ó Cléirigh did some work for Ware when on a visit to Dublin (2014, pp. 291–2). Colgan, on the other hand, never met Ware since he was based at St Anthony’s College in Louvain but as one of the leading hagiographers in his time he was very familiar with Ware’s scholarship. Their shared interests prompted Colgan to send two lists of the lives of Irish saints while the material Ware sent to Wadding most likely went via Louvain to Colgan.

Beyond this, Ware established good relations with members of the laity, many of whom possessed crucial family manuscripts that went back centuries. The exchange of source material between his fellow Protestants like Craig, Denny, and King has already been noted, as has his dealings with prominent Catholics such as the Rothes of Kilkenny, Tieghe McNulty from Down, John Rochford of Kilbride, and Dr. Thomas Arthur. Yet it is a tribute to Ware’s unrelenting pursuit of Irish manuscripts that he also made contact with the Gaelic world. Among those he became friendly with was “Brien Mc Murrogh Roe of Wicklow, who had in his possession the Martyrology of Irish Saints; Edmund O Cruitin from Thomond, who owned the Cashel Psalter; and Conall Mageoghegan from Westmeath, who translated the Annals of Clonmacnoise that contained essential information on the history of the Gaelic lordships on either side of the Shannon” (Empey, 2012, p. 23). With the exception of Arthur and Mageoghegan, none of these individuals had contact with Ussher. Thus, Ware’s network suggests it was not only inclusive but also highly reliant on the assistance of the native Irish. More to the point, it was based on mutual respect and without political or religious prejudices. The primary aim was to promote Ireland’s history—a history that all groups could engage with and identify.

How does this all relate to the broader significance of studying 17th century Ireland? The fact that such networks penetrated religious, cultural, and ethnic boundaries with ease call into question the idea that Irish society was polarised. Of course, historians of the 1640s would lead us to assume that tensions between Protestants and Catholics had been simmering for some time. To some degree that may be true. At the same time, however, the sustained period of peace between 1603 and 1641 presented the opportunity to heal old wounds. The networks showed remarkable levels of cooperation. In his correspondence with Wadding, Strange repeatedly stressed Ware’s friendship and generosity in supplying sources. The Jesuit Stephen White expressed similar sentiments about Ussher. In January 1640, he informed Colgan that the primate “received me with the greatest affability and treated me with candour and unaffectedness... he often invited me to his house, not only to dine... but to everything of his house, even to his most choice library, which is really of great value” (Sharpe, 1991, p. 59). No less striking was the crucial role of Gaelic scholars. As Cunningham and Gillespie have argued “this dependence on scholars from the Gaelic tradition for specialist expertise probably strengthened links across the religious and cultural divides” (2012, p. 75).

These interactions, therefore, paint a very different picture of early Stuart Ireland. Books and manuscripts became a source of contact and the networks that facilitated the process of exchange were reflected by mutual trust and respect. Ware’s contacts plainly show that members of each political group were open to sharing their possessions

…
and overcome any confessional or ethnic barriers. In particular, his network shows that regardless of the atrocities of the 1640s and 1650s it was still possible to rekindle or establish new friendships without prejudice. Despite his brother’s murder by Irish insurgents in 1641 and the rough treatment he endured at the hands of the Cromwellian regime, Ware was still prepared to overlook his personal experiences. He maintained links with Miles Symner who assisted the Cromwellian government as military engineer and then later served as professor of mathematics at Trinity. More significantly he employed and housed the Irish antiquary Dubhaltach MacFirbhisigh in 1665 to make translations of Irish manuscripts in English. At a time when it was all too easy to be influenced by sweeping generalisations about the allegiances of religious and ethnic groups (as his son Robert did), Ware apparently bucked the trend.

5 | CONCLUSION

It is hard not to be absorbed by the critical writings of hard-line political commentators such as Spenser, Barnaby Rich, and O’Sullivan Beare. Their writings suggest a polarised society drawn along confessional and ethnic lines. By focusing on these authors, historians of Ireland follow the conventional argument that these differences were impossible to overcome. This approach, however, fails to acknowledge that the aforementioned commentators were perennial polemicists whose views were never going to change, regardless of any improvement in the political sphere.

Examining Ware’s achievements serves a number of purposes. First, his research reflects a different perspective of Irish scholarship in a century that was in constant flux. He avoided statements that took aim at “idolatrous” religions or supposedly inferior ethnic groups. Instead, Ware presented factual accounts and left it to the reader to make judgment on the content. Where controversy might arise in his texts, he broached the issue in a distinctly subtle manner that was unique among his contemporaries. That his works were allowed go to press (which was heavily censored) is revealing. It suggests that his readers, especially his fellow Protestants, shared similar views of Ireland—a kingdom where Protestants might begin to accept being both “Protestant” and “Irish.” This sense of social and cultural change was no less evident when examining his library, which is the second point. Ware’s willingness to share his books and manuscripts provide a fascinating insight into the reading habits of individuals. Members of the New English community, for example, displayed an interest in Irish history but were also keen to expand their intellectual curiosities. That Catholics, both religious and laymen, featured in Ware’s borrowing lists is no less revealing. It presents a clearer picture of what people in early 17th century Ireland read given the underdeveloped state of the Irish book trade and restrictive nature of institutional and private libraries. Finally, his network challenges preconceived ideas that the various political groupings in Ireland were diametrically opposed to supporting any kind of common endeavor. If anything the friendships and working relationships he developed indicate that the cultural fabric of Irish society was undergoing major transformation—a change that is much harder to detect in any political assessment of the period. The broad spectrum of individuals in his network is impressive by any measure: clergy of the Church of Ireland, New English Protestants, Old English Catholics, native Irish, and even renowned international scholars. Yet the fact that these people were willing to reciprocate, collaborate and cooperate with Ware suggests an engagement with the past and a sense that they too played some part in shaping Irish history.

ENDNOTES

1 My translation. The italics are mine.

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