WOODEN DEVOTIONAL SCULPTURE IN IRELAND, 1100 - 1800

Volume I of II

A Dissertation in
Art History
by
Jennifer Cochran Anderson

© 2012 Jennifer Cochran Anderson

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
The dissertation of Jennifer Cochran Anderson was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Craig Zabel  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Head of the Department of Art History

Elizabeth Bradford Smith  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Brian A. Curran  
Professor of Art History

Charlotte M. Houghton  
Associate Professor of Art History

Benjamin Hudson  
Professor of History and Medieval Studies

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

Wooden devotional sculptures have been at the center of ardent popular devotions in Ireland for many centuries. Like their continental counterparts, these wooden figures act as lesser mirrors of the immaterial archetypes of the saints which they depict; however in Ireland, an increased numinosity is imparted to many of the surviving statues, resulting from their turbulent histories, miraculous survival, and the folk traditions which surround them. Although the earliest extant figures appear to date to the thirteenth century, the sculptures are rooted in pre-Christian figurative traditions which stretch back several thousand years.

This dissertation consists of a catalogue raisonné of all known wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland, including first-hand visual descriptions and reconstructions of the individual figures’ histories. The opening chapters explore the means by which Christian wooden devotional sculpture may have been introduced to Ireland, the figures’ indigenous and continental contexts, implications for Irish spirituality, a discussion of the function, stylistic developments and geographical distribution of known sculptures as well as the continued use and importation of wooden devotional sculpture throughout the Suppression era and beyond.

Twenty-five pre-Dissolution wooden devotional sculptures are currently known to survive in Ireland with a wide geographic distribution across most of the island. When surviving figures from the Suppression era are included, the number of extant wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland rises to forty-three. If one also includes lost wooden devotional sculptures for which we have textual evidence, the total documented wooden
devotional figures in Ireland rises to seventy-five. It is likely that there were once many more.

Many of the wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland were believed to be miraculous. At the Dissolution, these objects were seen as analogous to pagan idols and were targeted for destruction. This not only speaks of the genre’s power within Irish society, but may have inadvertently increased that power by making the surviving figures seem more precious and their endurance miraculous. Figures continued to be imported and commissioned throughout the entire Suppression era. They illustrate both the internationalism of the medieval and early modern eras, as well as the continuity of localized devotion and folk-practices.
CONTENTS

Volume I

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. iii
LIST OF TABLES ...................................................................................................................... xii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................... xiii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................... xxx
INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................... 1
  Outline of Project .................................................................................................................. 1
  Problem ............................................................................................................................... 3
  Evidence ............................................................................................................................... 4
  Historiography: Primary Sources ....................................................................................... 7
  Historiography: Secondary Sources ................................................................................... 9
CHAPTER 1. EXTANT WOODEN SCULPTURES IN IRELAND ............................................. 17
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 17
  Survivals ............................................................................................................................. 17
  Recent Losses ..................................................................................................................... 24
  Conservation and Restoration ............................................................................................ 26
  Construction of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland ................................................. 30
  Polychromy and Adornments ............................................................................................. 35
  Stylistic Development by Century: 13th Century ............................................................ 39
  Stylistic Development by Century: 14th Century ............................................................. 41
  Stylistic Development by Century: 15th Century ............................................................. 45
  Stylistic Development by Century: 16th Century ............................................................. 47
  Stylistic Development by Century: 17th Century ............................................................. 49
  Stylistic Development by Century: 18th Century ............................................................. 50
  Traditions, myths, and miracles ......................................................................................... 52
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 54
CHAPTER 2. AVENUES OF INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 55
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 55
  Pilgrimage as a Means of Artistic Transmission ............................................................... 56
The Twelfth Century High Crosses ................................................................. 64
The Gregorian Reform Movement in Ireland .................................................. 78
The Ostmen ......................................................................................................... 93
Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 101

CHAPTER 3. IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SAINTS, MATERIALITY AND SPIRITUALITY .............................................................. 103
Introduction ......................................................................................................... 103
Pre-Norman Traditions in Wood ...................................................................... 103
Origins and Functions of Continental Figures ................................................... 107
Display and use in Ireland .................................................................................. 120
The sacredness of wood in an Irish context ....................................................... 130
Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 139

CHAPTER 4: DESTRUCTION AND SURVIVAL ...................................................... 140
Sixteenth Century Iconoclasm and Survival ...................................................... 140
Seventeenth Century Revival and Destruction .................................................. 148
Increased Numinosity in the face of Destruction ................................................. 156
Importation and Internationalism ...................................................................... 160
The Eighteenth Century Recovery .................................................................... 166
Destruction in the Nineteenth Century .............................................................. 169
Scholarly Interest in the Late Nineteenth - Mid-Twentieth Centuries ................. 174
Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 175

CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 177
CATALOGUE ........................................................................................................ 180
INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 181
FIGURES FROM THE LORDSHIP PERIOD, 1169 - 1536 ...................................... 187
JCA-L-001: Kilcorban Madonna and Child ......................................................... 187
JCA-L-002: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child ...................................................... 204
JCA-L-003: Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem .................................. 214
JCA-L-004: St. Molaise ....................................................................................... 226
JCA-L-005: Clonfert Madonna and Child .......................................................... 236
JCA-L-006: St. Gobnait ....................................................................................... 246
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-007</td>
<td>St. Molua</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-008</td>
<td>Waterford Nursing Madonna</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-009</td>
<td>Holy Ghost Angel</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-010</td>
<td>Kilconnell Female Head</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-011</td>
<td>Fethard St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-012</td>
<td>Askeaton Nursing Madonna</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-013</td>
<td>Museum Standing Madonna</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-014</td>
<td>Kilcorban St. Catherine</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-015</td>
<td>Holy Ghost St. Stephen</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-016</td>
<td>Holy Ghost Risen Christ</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-017</td>
<td>Museum Pietà</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-018</td>
<td>Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-019</td>
<td>Our Lady of Dublin</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-020</td>
<td>Killoran Madonna and Child</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-021</td>
<td>Killoran St. Joseph</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-022</td>
<td>Unidentified Glendalough Saint</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-023</td>
<td>Fethard Christ</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-024</td>
<td>Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-L-025</td>
<td>Kilcormac Pietà</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-001</td>
<td>Madonna as Star of the Sea</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-002</td>
<td>Our Lady of Waterford</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-003</td>
<td>Harbison Infant Christ</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-004</td>
<td>Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-005</td>
<td>Fethard Holy Trinity</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-006</td>
<td>Our Lady of Limerick</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-007</td>
<td>St. Patrick / Berchán</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-008</td>
<td>St. Dominic</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-009</td>
<td>Multyfarnham St. Francis / Anthony</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-010</td>
<td>St. Louis of Toulouse</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-S-011</td>
<td>Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURES FROM THE SUPPRESSION, 1537 - 1800 .................................................. 435
JCA-AB-007: St. Christopher ................................................................. 655
JCA-AB-008: French Madonna and Child ........................................... 656
JCA-AB-009: Mourning Figure from a Crucifixion .............................. 657
JCA-AB-010: St. Catherine ................................................................. 658
JCA-AB-011: Immaculate Conception ................................................ 658
JCA-AB-012: Spanish Madonna .......................................................... 659
JCA-AB-013: Four Evangelists ............................................................. 660
JCA-AB-014: Unidentified Bishop ...................................................... 660
JCA-AB-015: St. Barbara ................................................................. 661

FIGURES IN THE HUNT MUSEUM COLLECTION ................................... 662
JCA-AB-016: The Hunt Madonna ...................................................... 662
JCA-AB-017: Madonna ................................................................. 663
JCA-AB-018: Madonna and Child ...................................................... 664
JCA-AB-019: Crucified Christ ............................................................. 664
JCA-AB-020: Bust of a Female Saint (St. Barbara/ St. Catherine) ....... 665
JCA-AB-021: Balthazar ................................................................. 665
JCA-AB-022: St. Anne, the Virgin, and the Christ Child .................... 666
JCA-AB-022: St. John the Evangelist ................................................ 667
JCA-AB-023: Christ emerging from a Chalice ..................................... 667
JCA-AB-024: Immaculate Conception ................................................ 668

FIGURES IN BUNRATTY CASTLE ......................................................... 668
JCA-AB-025: St. George and the Dragon ............................................ 668
JCA-AB-026: St. Martin of Tours ....................................................... 669
JCA-AB-027: St. Anne, the Virgin, and the Christ Child .................... 669
JCA-AB-028: St. Catherine ................................................................. 670
JCA-AB-029: Crucified Christ ............................................................. 670
JCA-AB-30: Carved figure ................................................................. 671

APPENDIX C: SELECTED LOST FIGURES .............................................. 672
JCA-AC-001: Lettershendoney Madonna ........................................... 672
JCA-AC-002: St. Maolrúán ................................................................. 672
JCA-AC-003: St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin ......................................... 675
JCA-AC-004: St. Natalis / St. Nadán ................................................................. 677
JCA-AC-005: Mullagh Crucifix ................................................................. 678
JCA-AC-006: Thomastown Madonna ....................................................... 679
JCA-AC-007: Loughrea Madonna .............................................................. 680
JCA-AC-008: St. Clare .............................................................................. 681
JCA-AC-009: Infant Jesus ......................................................................... 681
JCA-AC-010: Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist ....................................... 682
JCA-AC-011: Maynooth Penal Madonna ................................................... 682
JCA-AC-012: Bruff Madonna .................................................................. 683
JCA-AC-013: St. Patrick ............................................................................ 683
JCA-AC-014: St. Peter ............................................................................. 684
JCA-AC-015: St. Paul .............................................................................. 685
JCA-AC-016: St. Brendan ........................................................................ 685
JCA-AC-017: St. Columba ....................................................................... 687
JCA-AC-018: St. Brendan ........................................................................ 687
JCA-AC-019: St. Carrol ........................................................................... 688
JCA-AC-020: St. Ibar ............................................................................... 688
JCA-AC-021: Holy Cross Madonna ......................................................... 689
JCA-AC-022: Our Lady of Trim ............................................................... 690
JCA-AC-023: St. Patrick ............................................................................ 693
JCA-AC-024: St. Avioge .......................................................................... 694
JCA-AC-025: St. Volusius ....................................................................... 694
JCA-AC-026: St. Sineach Mac Dara ......................................................... 694
JCA-AC-027: St. Dominic .......................................................................... 695
JCA-AC-028: Ballyboggan Crucifix ......................................................... 696
JCA-AC-029: St. Gobnait .......................................................................... 696
JCA-AC-30: Trinity .................................................................................. 697
JCA-AC-031: Unidentified Wooden Figure ............................................... 697
JCA-AC-032: Coleraine Madonna .............................................................. 698
APPENDIX D: SELECTED LOST FIGURES OF INDETERMINATE MATERIAL, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN WOOD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-001</td>
<td>St. Ita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-002</td>
<td>Station Island Madonna and Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-003</td>
<td>Castle Ellis St. John the Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-004</td>
<td>Castle Ellis Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-005</td>
<td>Navan Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-006</td>
<td>Kilmore Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-007</td>
<td>Raphoe Crucifix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-008</td>
<td>St. Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-009</td>
<td>Athenry Crucifix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-010</td>
<td>Athenry St. John the Evangelist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-011</td>
<td>Athenry Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-012</td>
<td>St. Dominic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-013</td>
<td>Saint Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-014</td>
<td>St. Werburgh’s Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-015</td>
<td>St. Werburgh’s Crucifix, Madonna and St. John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-016</td>
<td>Christ Church St. Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-017</td>
<td>Dublin St. John the Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-018</td>
<td>Muckross Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCA-AD-019</td>
<td>Clonmel St. Francis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

Volume II

FIGURES
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Wooden Devotional Sculpture in Ireland ........................................................... 19
Table 2: Distribution map of extant, provenanced Pre-Dissolution Irish wooden devotional sculpture .............................................................. 22
Table 3: Distribution map of all extant, provenanced Irish wooden devotional sculpture from 1100-1800 ......................................................... 23
Table 4: Distribution map of all known, provenanced Irish wooden devotional sculpture from 1100-1800, including lost wooden figures ..................................................... 25
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Diagram showing radial cracking and differential shrinkage</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Our Lady of Limerick, photo of damage showing interior box-like structure.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>West face of Muiredach's Cross</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>East face of Muiredach's Cross</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>East face of the Dysert O’Dea Cross</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>West face of the Dysert O’Dea cross</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>West face of the High Cross at Roscrea</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>East face of the High Cross at Roscrea</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>East face of the Doorty Cross</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>West face of the Doorty Cross</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Breac Maedhóg shrine, mid-twelth century</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>St. Manchan’s shrine, mid-twelfth century</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>High Cross in a field west of Kilfenora and a drawing by Fergus O’Farrell with hypothesized sarcophagus attached to the base.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Five bay Romanesque portal, Ardfert Cathedral</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cormac’s Chapel</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Cormac’s Chapel interior</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Relief sculptures at Ardmore Cathedral</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Southern Lunette with the Judgment of Solomon and the Adoration of the Magi</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><em>Adoration of the Magi</em>, lintel of the south portal of Notre-Dame-du-Port, Clermont-Ferrand, France</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>Notre-Dame-la-Brune</em>, originally <em>Saint-Pourçain-Sur-Sioule</em>, Allier, France</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><em>Adoration of the Magi</em>, Pompierre, Vosges, France</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><em>Maiesta</em>, Mont-devant-Sassey, Meuse, France</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>St. Peter’s, Waterford. Numbers indicate phases of construction, as explained by O’Keefe</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Kilpeck Church, clearly showing tripartite construction (plan unavailable).</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Floor plan of the crypt level of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Floor plan of the crypt level of St. Maria im Kapitol, Cologne. This church and Christ Church above both have square transepts within the outer walls of the crypt, and polygonal apses which begin immediately west of the transepts.</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Majesty of St. Foy</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Majesty of St. Foy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>French <em>Sedes Sapientiae</em> from the latter half of the twelfth century, Glencairn Museum, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 31: Chartres badge ................................................................................................... 111
Fig. 32: Gero Crucifix ..................................................................................................... 117
Fig. 33: Detail of Gero Crucifix ...................................................................................... 117
Fig. 34: Cloutie tree near St. Feichin’s well and Fore Abbey, Co. Westmeath (photo: author) ............................................................................................................................. 125
Fig. 35: St. Gobnait’s well, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (photo: author) ......................... 126
Fig. 36: St. Maurlúán’s well, Crossabeg, Co. Wexford (photo: author)...................... 126
Fig. 37: Hodkinson St. James, private ownership, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author). ......................................................................................................................................... 755
Fig. 38: Our Lady of Limerick, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................................................... 756
Fig. 39: Detail of damage suffered by Our Lady of Limerick, February 2011 (Photo: Randel Hodkinson). .......................................................................................................................... 757
Fig. 40: St. Gobnait, St. Gobnait’s Church, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (Photo: author). .. 757
Fig. 41: Joachim and Anna at the Gate, Hunt Museum, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................................................... 758
Fig. 42: Flight into Egypt, Hunt Museum, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author). .... 758
Fig. 43: Deposition, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ...... 759
Fig. 44: Fethard Christ, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI). .................................................................................................................................................. 759
Fig. 45: Our Lady of Youghal, Dominican Church, Youghal, Co. Cork (Photo: Fergal McEoinín) ........................................................................................................................................ 760
Fig. 46: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 761
Fig. 47: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 762
Fig. 48: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 762
Fig. 49: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 763
Fig. 50: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 764
Fig. 51: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). ..................................................................................................................................................... 764
Fig. 52: Altar Frontal from Santa Maria de Taüll, National Museum of Art of Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain (Photo: NMAC). .................................................................................................................... 765
Fig. 53: Tomb figure from Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt). ..................................................................................................................................................... 765
Fig. 54: Tomb figure of a bishop, Corcomroe Abbey, Co. Clare (Photo: John Hunt).... 766
Fig. 55: Effigy of William of Cork, Jerpoint Abbey, near Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt)................................................................. 767
Fig. 56: Madonna and Child from Mosan Region, Belgium, Curtius Museum, Liège, Belgium .................................................................................................................. 767
Fig. 57: Madonna in the tympanum from the centre doorway of the north transept of Chartres Cathedral ........................................................................... 768
Fig. 58: Enthroned Virgin from the south portal tympanum from Donnemarie-en-Montois. ................................................................................................. 768
Fig. 59: Madonna from Ennebakk, Norway ........................................................................................................ 769
Fig. 60: Madonna from Hove, Norway .................................................................................................................. 770
Fig. 61: Madonna from Grong, Norway .................................................................................................................. 770
Fig. 62: Comparison of Kilcorban Child and Athlone Child (Photos: author). ......................................................... 771
Fig. 63: Kilcorban Madonna and Child, during restoration (Photo: NMI). .......................................................... 771
Fig. 64: Kilcorban Child, during process of restoration (Photo: NMI). ................................................................. 772
Fig. 65: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) .................................................................................. 772
Fig. 66: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................. 773
Fig. 67: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................. 773
Fig. 68: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................. 773
Fig. 69: Holy Ghost Child, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................... 774
Fig. 70: Stone effigy of a woman, Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt). ................................................................. 775
Fig. 71: Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................... 776
Fig. 72: Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................... 777
Fig. 73: Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................... 777
Fig. 74: Athlone Madonna, before restoration (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) .............................................................. 778
Fig. 75: Athlone Child, detail of fluted hairstyle (Photo: author) .............................................................................. 778
Fig. 76: Athlone Madonna, detail of draperies (Photo: author) .............................................................................. 779
Fig. 77: Athlone Madonna, detail of draperies (Photo: author) .............................................................................. 779
Fig. 78: Incised grave-slab figure, Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ....................................................... 780
Fig. 79: Incised grave-slab figure, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ............................................................................... 781
Fig. 80: Madonna and Child, French ivory, the Louvre Museum, Paris, France. .................................................. 782
Fig. 81: *St. Molaise*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI) ........................................................................................................ 783
Fig. 82: *St. Molaise*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................ 784
Fig. 83: *St. Molaise*, detail of face (Photo: author) .......................................................... 784
Fig. 84: *St. Molaise*, detail of drapery (Photo: author) .................................................. 785
Fig. 85: *St. Molaise*, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) .......... 786
Fig. 86: Sketch of figure of *St. Brendan*, Caesar Otway ............................................. 787
Fig. 87: No-longer extant *St. Brendan*, (Photo: Dunraven) ..................................... 787
Fig. 88: Sketch of *St. Molaise in situ*, Wakeman ..................................................... 788
Fig. 89: *St. Dionysius*, Rheims Cathedral, France ....................................................... 788
Fig. 90: Two bishops from the west façade of Wells Cathedral, Somerset, U.K. ...... 789
Fig. 91: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K. ......................... 789
Fig. 92: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K. ......................... 790
Fig. 93: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K. ......................... 790
Fig. 94: Effigy of a bishop from Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ............. 791
Fig. 95: *St. Procopius*, St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague, Czech Republic (Photo: Grace A. Cochran) ........................................................................................................... 791
Fig. 96: *St. Procopius*, St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague, Czech Republic (Photo: Grace A. Cochran) ........................................................................................................... 792
Fig. 97: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................................ 792
Fig. 98: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................................ 793
Fig. 99: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ........................................................................................................... 793
Fig. 100: Virgin and Child from Saint-Corneille in Compiegne, France ................. 794
Fig. 101: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author) ............. 795
Fig. 102: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author) ............. 796
Fig. 103: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author) ............. 796
Fig. 104: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author) ............. 797
Fig. 105: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt) ........................................................................................................... 797
Fig. 106: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt) ........................................................................................................... 798
Fig. 107: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt) ........................................................................................................... 799
Fig. 108: Map of the area of the *Turas Ghobnatan* (Map: Eilís Uí Dháiligh) ............ 800
Fig. 109: Entrance to the area of the *Turas Ghobnatan*, inscribed with crosses by visitors (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 800
Fig. 110: View of the area where the Turas Ghobnatan takes place. Gobnait’s grave is in the foreground (Photo: author)................................................................. 801
Fig. 111: View of “St. Gobnait’s house,” (Photo: author)........................................................ 801
Fig. 112: St. Gobnait’s well, (Photo: author)........................................................................ 802
Fig. 113: St. Molua, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)............. 803
Fig. 114: St. Molua, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)............. 804
Fig. 115: St. Molua, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)............. 804
Fig. 116: St. Molua, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)............. 805
Fig. 117: Waterford Nursing Madonna, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 806
Fig. 118: Waterford Nursing Madonna, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 806
Fig. 119: Waterford Nursing Madonna, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 807
Fig. 120: Waterford Nursing Madonna, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 808
Fig. 121: Waterford Nursing Madonna, photo of figure before removal of emulsion layer (Photo: Waterford Museum of Treasures, file record).................................................... 808
Fig. 122: Nursing Madonna and Child between St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Benedict, Prado, Madrid, Spain..................................................................................... 809
Fig. 123: Large alabaster Madonna and Child, Museu Nacional d'Art de Cataluny, Barcelona, Spain ............................................................................................................ 810
Fig. 124 Madonna from Ruskinove, Spiš county, in East Slovakia, Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia ........................................................................................................ 810
Fig. 125: Madonna Lactans, Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona, Spain......................... 811
Fig. 126: Marginal drawing in the Great Parchment Book of Waterford, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford ................................................................. 811
Fig. 127: Holy Ghost Angel, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 812
Fig. 128: Holy Ghost Angel, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 813
Fig. 129: Holy Ghost Angel, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ......................................................................................... 813
Fig. 130: Holy Ghost Angel, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................ 814
Fig. 131: Nino Pisano, Madonna and Child from Santa Maria Novella in Florence..... 814
Fig. 132: Nino Pisano, Angel Gabriel from the Annunciation group in Santa Caterina in Pisa............................................................................................................................... 815
Fig. 133: Wooden angel thought to be from the workshop of Nino Pisano, Victoria and Albert Museum, London............................................................................................................ 815
Fig. 134: Detail of wooden angel thought to be from the workshop of Nino Pisano, Victoria and Albert Museum, London ................................................................. 816

Fig. 135: Kilconnell Female Head, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author) ...................................................................................... 816

Fig. 136: Kilconnell Female Head, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author) ...................................................................................... 817

Fig. 137: Kilconnell Female Head, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author) ...................................................................................... 817

Fig. 138: Fethard St. John the Baptist, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI) ........................................................................................................... 818

Fig. 139: Fethard St. John the Baptist, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI) ........................................................................................................... 819

Fig. 140: Fethard St. John the Baptist, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI) ........................................................................................................... 820

Fig. 141: Fethard St. John the Baptist, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: NMI) ...... 820

Fig. 142: Carving of St. John the Baptist from a French oak chest, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author) ............................................................................. 821

Fig. 143: Figure of Honoratus, left jamb of the left doorway in the west portal, Amiens Cathedral ................................................................................................. 822

Fig. 144: Incised slab of an ecclesiastic, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ................................................................................................. 822

Fig. 145: Askeaton Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 823

Fig. 146: Askeaton Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 823

Fig. 147: Askeaton Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 823

Fig. 148: Jean Fouquet, Virgin and Child of Melun, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Netherlands ............................................................................. 824

Fig. 149: Museum Standing Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 825

Fig. 150: Museum Standing Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 826

Fig. 151: Museum Standing Madonna, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author) ................................................................................................. 826

Fig. 152: Museum Standing Madonna, detail of Child (Photo: author) ...................... 827

Fig. 153: Madonna and Child, Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ................. 827

Fig. 154: Unknown female saint, depicted on a tomb-chest in the sexton’s house of St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt) ......................... 828
Fig. 155: *Kilcorban St. Catherine*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). .......................................................... 829
Fig. 156: *Kilcorban St. Catherine*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). .......................................................... 830
Fig. 157: *Kilcorban St. Catherine*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author). .......................................................... 830
Fig. 158: Figure of St. Catherine from Howth, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt) ........... 831
Fig. 159: Figure of St. Catherine from Duleek, Co. Meath (Photo: John Hunt)......... 831
Fig. 160: Figure of St. Catherine from Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt)...... 832
Fig. 161: Figure of St. Catherine from Lismore, Co. Waterford (Photo: John Hunt).... 832
Fig. 162: Figure of St. Catherine from the Priory of St. Mary, Clontuskert, Co. Galway (Photo: John Hunt). .................................................. 833
Fig. 163: Christ showing the wounds, Gowran, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt). ..... 833
Fig. 164: Christ showing the wounds, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt). .................................................. 834
Fig. 165: *Kilcorban St. Catherine*, pre-restoration (Photo: Catriona MacLeod). ........ 834
Fig. 166: *Kilcorban St. Catherine*, photo taken during restoration (Photo: NMI). .... 835
Fig. 167: *Holy Ghost St. Stephen*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author). .................................................. 836
Fig. 168: *Holy Ghost St. Stephen*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author). .................................................. 837
Fig. 169: St. James Major, Kilconnell, Co. Galway (Photo: John Hunt)................... 837
Fig. 170: Alabaster St. Stephen, Victoria and Albert Museum, London .................. 838
Fig. 171: Alabaster St. Stephen, Victoria and Albert Museum, London .................. 839
Fig. 172: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author). .................................................. 840
Fig. 173: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author). .................................................. 841
Fig. 174: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, detail of upper body (Photo: author). .......... 842
Fig. 175: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author). .................................................. 842
Fig. 176: Risen Christ from Athboy, Co. Meath ...................................................... 843
Fig. 177: Risen Christ from Ennis, Co. Clare ......................................................... 843
Fig. 178: *Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). ................................. 844
Fig. 179: *Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). ................................. 844
Fig. 180: *Museum Pietà*, detail of dead Christ (Photo: author). ............................ 845
Fig. 181: *Museum Pietà*, detail of statue bottom (Photo: author). ....................... 845
Fig. 182: Pietà, Strade, Co. Meath ..................................................................... 846
Fig. 183: *Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................. 846
Fig. 184: *Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ................................................................. 847
Fig. 185: Alabaster St. John the Baptist, Victoria and Albert Museum, London .......... 847
Fig. 186: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). 848
Fig. 187: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). 849
Fig. 188: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). 849
Fig. 189: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author). 850
Fig. 190: *Our Lady of Dublin*, detail showing Madonna without crown (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ........................................................................................................ 850
Fig. 191: *Our Lady of Dublin*, detail showing Madonna without crown (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ........................................................................................................ 851
Fig. 192: 1833 wood-cut of *Our Lady of Dublin* in the Dublin Penny Journal .......... 851
Fig. 193: Pre-1914 photo of *Our Lady of Dublin* before the layers of emulsion were removed .................................................................................................................... 852
Fig. 194: Riemenschneider St. Barbara ........................................................................ 853
Fig. 195: Tilman Riemenschneider, *Virgin and Child*, Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas ................................. 854
Fig. 196: Gregor Erhart, *Virgin of Mercy*, destroyed during the bombings of Berlin in 1945 ............................................................... 854
Fig. 197: Hans Sixt von Staufen, *Virgin of Mercy* ........................................................................................................................................................................ 855
Fig. 198: *St. Edmund*, Henry VII Chapel, Westminister Cathedral ...................... 856
Fig. 199: *Mary Salome and St. Margaret*, Henry VII Chapel, Westminister Cathedral. 856
Fig. 200: Madonna and Child seated figure from Tournai ........................................ 857
Fig. 201: Limestone Madonna and Child group from Brussels ............................ 858
Fig. 202: Madonna and Child from Church of Notre-Dame-Finistère, Brussels, Belgium. .................................................................................................................. 858
Fig. 203: *Killoran Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ................................................................. 859
Fig. 204: *Killoran Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ................................................................. 859
Fig. 205: *Killoran St. Joseph*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ................................................................. 860
Fig. 206: *Killoran St. Joseph*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ................................................................. 860
Fig. 207: *Notre-Dame de Langueur*, Pagny-sur-Meuse, France .......................... 861
Fig. 208: *Unidentified Glendalaough Saint*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................ 861
Fig. 209: *Unidentified Glendalaough Saint*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). ............................................................................................................................ 862
Fig. 210: *Unidentified Glendalaough Saint*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). ............................................................................................................................ 862
Fig. 211: Sts. Peter and Paul, from Strade, Co. Meath. .......................................................... 863
Fig. 212: Apostles from St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny. Co. Kilkenny. .................................. 863
Fig. 213: Sts. Catherine and Peter from Howth, Co. Dublin. .................................................. 864
Fig. 214: St. Peter from the tomb of James Shortals and Katherine Whyte, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author). ................................................................................. 865
Fig. 215: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: NMI). ............................................................................................................................. 866
Fig. 216: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). ............................................................................................................................. 867
Fig. 217: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). ............................................................................................................................. 867
Fig. 218: Print showing Christ on the Cold Stone from the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Etampes, Paris. .......................................................................................... 868
Fig. 219: Prayer-nut showing Christ on the Cold stone from the southern Netherlands. 868
Fig. 220: *Job with his wife and the devil*, capital from Notre Dame des Doms, Avignon, France. ....................................................................................................................... 869
Fig. 221: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: NMI). 869
Fig. 222: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of feet (Photo: author). ......................... 870
Fig. 223: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Church of St.-Nizier in Troyes, France ....................... 870
Fig. 224: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Sommery, France ...................................................... 871
Fig. 225: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Burgos, Spain ............................................................... 871
Fig. 226: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Science Museum, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (Photo: author). .......................................................................................... 872
Fig. 227: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Science Museum, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (Photo: author). .......................................................................................... 873
Fig. 228: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of face (Photo: author). .................... 874
Fig. 229: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of lower body (Photo: author)......... 874
Fig. 230: *Christ on the Cold Stone* from the southern Netherlands. .................................. 875
Fig. 231: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author). ...................................................................................................................... 876
Fig. 232: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author). ...................................................................................................................... 877
Fig. 233: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author). ...................................................................................................................... 878
Fig. 234: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author). ...................................................................................................................... 878
Fig. 235: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................... 879
Fig. 236: Michelangelo, *Pietà* .......................................................................................... 879
Fig. 237: *Pietà*, Sint-Laurentiuskerk, Bocholt, Belgium .................................................. 880
Fig. 238: *Pietà*, Eglise Saint-Etienne in Bütgenbach, Belgium ......................................... 880
Fig. 239: *Pietà*, Hôpital Notre-Dame à la Rose in Lessines, Belgium ......................... 881
Fig. 240: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 882
Fig. 241: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 883
Fig. 242: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 884
Fig. 243: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, detail of angel (Photo: author).......................... 884
Fig. 244: *Madonna and Child*, St. Peter’s cathedral in Worms, Germany ................. 885
Fig. 245: *Madonna and Child*, Ravensburg, Germany .................................................. 886
Fig. 246: *Madonna and Child*, St. Aldegundis Church in Emmerich, Germany ........ 887
Fig. 247: Madonna and Child, Zussdorf, Germany ......................................................... 887
Fig. 248: Madonna and Child, St. Egidien’s Church in Glauchau, Germany............... 888
Fig. 249: Madonna and Child, Colmar, France ............................................................... 888
Fig. 250: Madonna and Child from Lorraine, France, now the Musée National de Moyen Âge, Paris ................................................................................................................. 889
Fig. 251: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................. 890
Fig. 252: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................. 891
Fig. 253: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author) ............................................................................................................. 891
Fig. 254: *Our Lady of Waterford*, detail of Child (Photo: author) ............................... 891
Fig. 255: Germán López, *Virgen del Socorro*, Church of the Jesuit Fathers, Toledo, Spain ........................................................................................................................................ 892
Fig. 256: Germán López, *St. Anne*, Malagón, Spain ......................................................... 892
Fig. 257: Alonsa Cano and Pablo Legot, *Virgen de Oliva*, Santa María de Oliva, Lebrija, Spain ........................................................................................................................................ 893
Fig. 258: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author) .... 894
Fig. 259: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author) .... 894
Fig. 260: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author) .... 895
Fig. 261: Jerónimo Hernández de Estrada, *Madonna and Child*, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain ............................................................................................................. 896
Fig. 262: Juan Martínez Montanéz, *Standing Infant Christ*, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain ............................................................................................................. 897
Fig. 263: *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)........................................................................... 898
Fig. 264: *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)........................................................................... 899
Fig. 265: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). 900
Fig. 266: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). 901
Fig. 267: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author). 902
Fig. 268: Seventeenth century stone panels remounted in the modern Galway Cathedral (Photo: author). ........................................................................................................................................... 902
Fig. 269: a panel, currently set into a wall in the modern Franciscan Friary in Galway 903
Fig. 270: Trinity, Limerick crosier ........................................................................................................ 903
Fig. 271: Rice tomb trinity (Photo: author). .................................................................................. 904
Fig. 272: Tomb panel from Ballynabracky, Co. Meath ................................................................. 904
Fig. 273: St. Werburgh’s church in Dublin...................................................................................... 905
Fig. 274: satin banner from the Rothe House in Kilkenny ............................................................. 905
Fig. 275: *Our Lady of Limerick*, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick (Photo: author).................................................................................................................. 906
Fig. 276: *Our Lady of Limerick*, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick (Photo: author).................................................................................................................. 907
Fig. 277: *Our Lady of Limerick*, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick (Photo: author).................................................................................................................. 907
Fig. 278: Sarsfield Chalice, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick (Photo: Fr. Jordan O’Brien, O.P.). ...................................................................................................................... 908
Fig. 279: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).............................. 909
Fig. 280: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).............................. 910
Fig. 281: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).............................. 910
Fig. 282: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).............................. 911
Fig. 283: *Our Lady of Limerick*, after re-installation following repairs, October 2011. 912
Fig. 284: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author)................. 913
Fig. 285: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author)................. 914
Fig. 286: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author)................. 915
Fig. 287: Photo believed to show a reproduction figure made by Fr. Breen, circa 1929, of the figure of St. Patrick / St. Berchán figure.................................................................................................................. 916
Fig. 288: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author)............................... 917
Fig. 289: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author)............................... 917
Fig. 290: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author)............................... 918
Fig. 291: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author)............................................................................................................. 919
Fig. 292: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author)............................................................................................................. 920
Fig. 293: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author). ........................................................................................................... 920

Fig. 294: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author). ........................................................................................................... 921

Fig. 295: *St. Francis / Anthony* shown brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard Walsh, as illustrated in Conlan’s book......................................................... 921

Fig. 296: *St. Clare* shown brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard Walsh, as illustrated in Conlan’s book......................................................... 922

Fig. 297: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author). ......................................................................................................................... 922

Fig. 298: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author). ......................................................................................................................... 923

Fig. 299: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author). ......................................................................................................................... 923

Fig. 300: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author). ......................................................................................................................... 924

Fig. 301: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).................. 925

Fig. 302: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).................. 926

Fig. 303: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Taylor’s Hill, detail of base (Photo: author) ........ 926

Fig. 304: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).................. 927

Fig. 305: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).................. 927

Fig. 306: Seventeenth century chasuble, Dominican Nuns, Taylor’s Hill, Galway. ....... 928

Fig. 307: Altar frontal by Sr. Margaret Joyce, dated May 1726, Taylor’s Hill, Galway. .... 928

Fig. 308: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Santa Caterina a Formiello, Naples, Italy .................. 929

Fig. 309: Guido Reni, *Immaculate Conception* .......................................................... 930

Fig. 310: Nicola Grassi, *Rosary Mother of God with St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi* ............................................................................................................................... 931

Fig. 311: *Our Lady of Galway*, St. Mary’s on the Claddagh, Dominican Church, Galway (Photo: author)......................................................................................................................... 932

Fig. 312: *Our Lady of Galway*, St. Mary’s on the Claddagh, Dominican Church, Galway (Photo: author)......................................................................................................................... 933

Fig. 313: *Our Lady of Galway*, detail of base (Photo: author)..................................... 934

Fig. 314: Silver crown presented in 1683 by Galway Mayor John Kirwan and his wife, Mary ................................................................................................................................. 934

Fig. 315: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author). 935

Fig. 316: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author). 936

Fig. 317: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author). 937

Fig. 318: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Colegio de las Hermanas de la Cruz, in Valverde del Camino, in Huelva, Spain ................................................................................................................................. 937

xxiv
Fig. 319: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author) ........................................................................ 938
Fig. 320: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author) ........................................................................ 938
Fig. 321: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author) ........................................................................ 939
Fig. 322: St. Andrew on the pediment above the main altar in the church of St. Andrea al Quirinale ........................................................................................................................... 940
Fig. 323: Raphael, *Madonna di Foligno* .......................................................................... 941
Fig. 324: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Madonna and Child appearing before St. Philip Neri* ................................................................................................................................. 942
Fig. 325: Peeter Scheemaeker, *Virgin and Child* in a bank of clouds ......................... 943
Fig. 326: Angelica Kauffmann, *Cornelia presenting her children as her treasures* ......... 943
Fig. 327: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 944
Fig. 328: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 945
Fig. 329: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 945
Fig. 330: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author) ................................................................................................................. 946
Fig. 331: Edward Smyth, *C. Lucas, M.D.*, City Hall, Dublin (Photo: Patrick Lenehan) ................................................................. 946
Fig. 332: Edward Smyth, *Allegorical heads representing the rivers of Ireland*, Custom House, Dublin (Photo: Patrick Lenehan) .................................................................................. 947
Fig. 333: *Small Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Storage (Photo: author) .............................................................................................. 948
Fig. 334: *Small Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Storage (Photo: author) .............................................................................................. 949
Fig. 335: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author) ....................................................................................................................... 950
Fig. 336: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author) ....................................................................................................................... 951
Fig. 337: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author) ....................................................................................................................... 952
Fig. 338: St. James Major, Sint-Pauluskerk in Antwerp, Belgium .................................... 953
Fig. 339: *St. James*, St. Virgil parish church in Rattenberg, Tyrol, Austria .................... 954
Fig. 340: *Adare Deposition*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author). ................................................................................................................................. 955
Fig. 341: *Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill*, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author) .... 956
Fig. 342: *Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill*, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author) .... 957
Fig. 343: *Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill*, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author). .... 957
Fig. 344: *Adare Madonna and Child and Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................... 958
Fig. 345: *Adare Madonna and Child*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 959
Fig. 346: *Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 960
Fig. 347: *Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 960
Fig. 348: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Figures*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 961
Fig. 349: *Kilcorban Crucifix*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 962
Fig. 350: Crucified Christ from St. George’s Cathedral in Cologne, currently in the collection of the Schnütgen Museum, Cologne, Germany ........................................ 963
Fig. 351: *Mullagh Crucifix*, now lost, formerly in Mullagh, Co. Galway (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ........................................................................................................................................ 964
Fig. 352: *O’Donnell Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Church on Station Island, Lough Derg, Co. Donegal ........................................................................................................................................ 965
Fig. 353: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 966
Fig. 354: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 966
Fig. 355: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 966
Fig. 356: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 967
Fig. 357: *Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 968
Fig. 358: *Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 969
Fig. 359: *Tynagh Crucifix*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 969
Fig. 360: *Tynagh Crucifix*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author) ........................................................................................................................................ 970
Fig. 361: *Ballyhaunis Crucifix*, (Photo: Peter Harbison) ........................................................................................................................................ 971
Fig. 362: *Tralee Crucifix*, Kerry County Museum, Tralee, Co. Kerry (Photo: Griffen Murray) ........................................................................................................................................ 972
Fig. 363: *Fethard Madonna and Child*, National Museum of Ireland Storage ........................................ 973
Fig. 364: *Fethard Madonna and Child*, National Museum of Ireland Storage ........................................ 973
Fig. 365: Madonna and Child, Waterford Franciscan Friary (Photo: Catriona MacLeod) ............................................................... 974
Fig. 366: Madonna and Child, Waterford Franciscan Friary ............................................................................................... 974
Fig. 367: St. Clare, Temporary Loan to the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 975
Fig. 368: St. Clare, Temporary Loan to the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 975
Fig. 369: Louvain St. Francis, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 976
Fig. 370: Louvain St. Francis, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 976
Fig. 371: Zurich Madonna, Private ownership by Tim O’Neill, Sandymount, Dublin (Photo: Tim O’Neill) ............................................................................................... 977
Fig. 372: Christ After the Scourge, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 977
Fig. 373: Small Madonna and Child, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 978
Fig. 374: Small Madonna and Child, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 978
Fig. 375: St. Anne, the Virgin and Child, Victoria and Albert Museum, London .... 979
Fig. 376: St. Christopher, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 980
Fig. 377: St. Christopher, Master of Elsloo, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. .... 981
Fig. 378: French Madonna, National Museum of Ireland (Photo: author) ........................................................................ 982
Fig. 379: French Madonna, detail of Child’s foot pressing through fabric (Photo: author) .............................................................. 982
Fig. 380: Mourning Figure, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 983
Fig. 381: Mourning Figure, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 983
Fig. 382: St. Catherine, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 984
Fig. 383: St. Catherine, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author) .................................................................................................................. 984
Fig. 384: Immaculate Conception, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author). .................................................................................................................. 985
Fig. 385: Immaculate Conception, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author). .................................................................................................................. 985
Fig. 386: Spanish Madonna, National Museum of Ireland (Photo: author) ............................................................... 986
Fig. 387: *Four Evangelists*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts
(Phot: author) ................................................................................................................ 987
Fig. 388: *Unidentified Bishop*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts
(Phot: author) ................................................................................................................ 987
Fig. 389: *St. Barbara*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts
(Phot: author) ................................................................................................................ 988
Fig. 390: *Hunt Madonna*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .................. 989
Fig. 391: *Madonna and Child*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .......... 990
Fig. 392: *Madonna and Child*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .......... 991
Fig. 393: *Crucified Christ*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .............. 991
Fig. 394: *Bust of a Female Saint*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .... 992
Fig. 395: *Balthazar*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) ...................... 992
Fig. 396: *Balthazar*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) ...................... 993
Fig. 397: *Balthazar* (incorrectly identified in online files as Caspar), The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the collection of John Hunt...................... 994
Fig. 398: *Caspar* (incorrectly identified as Balthazar in online files), The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the collection of John Hunt...................... 995
Fig. 399: *Melchior*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the
collection of John Hunt .................................................................................................. 996
Fig. 400: *St. Anne, the Virgin and Christ*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) ..... 997
Fig. 401: *St. John the Evangelist*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) ....... 998
Fig. 402: *Christ emerging from a Chalice*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: Hunt
Museum) ......................................................................................................................... 998
Fig. 403: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .. 999
Fig. 404: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Phot: author) .. 999
Fig. 405: *St. George and the Dragon*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: author) 1000
Fig. 406: *St. Martin of Tours*, Bunratty castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: author) ........ 1001
Fig. 407: *St. Anne, the Virgin and Child*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: Bunratty
Castle) ........................................................................................................................ 1002
Fig. 408: *St. Catherine*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: Bunratty Castle) .... 1003
Fig. 409: *Crucified Christ*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: author) .......... 1003
Fig. 410: *Priest*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Phot: author) ....................... 1004
Fig. 411: *Lettershendony Madonna*, discovered at Lettershendony, Co. Londonderry, now
lost ................................................................................................................................ 1005
Fig. 412: *St. Maulrúán*, lost figure, formerly at Crossabeg, Co. Wexford ............ 1006
Fig. 413: St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin, lost figure, formerly located at St. Kieran’s
College, Kilkenny ............................................................................................................ 1007
Fig. 414: *Mullagh Crucifix*, lost figure, formerly at Mullagh, Co. Galway............. 1008
Fig. 415: *Thomastown Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at a convent in Thomastown, Co.
Kilkenny ........................................................................................................................ 1009
Fig. 416: *Loughrea Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at Loughrea, Co. Galway........... 1010

Fig. 417: *St. Clare*, lost figure, formerly at Poor Clares Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway.
....................................................................................................................................... 1011

Fig. 418: *Infant Christ*, lost figure, formerly at Poor Clares Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway. ......................................................................................................................... 1012

Fig. 419: *Hone Christ / St. John*, lost figure, formerly in the private possession of artist Evie Hone, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin. ........................................................................................................... 1013

Fig. 420: *Maynooth Penal Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at the National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare........................................ 1014

Fig. 421: *Bruff Madonna*, lost figure, formerly in private possession, Bruff, Co. Limerick .................................................................................................................................................. 1015

Fig. 422: Lost figure of St. Patrick, formerly located in St. Patrick’s Church, Kilkenny ........................................................................................................................................... 1016

Fig. 423: *St. Brendan*, lost figure, formerly located at Inis Glora, Aran Islands........ 1017
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the Art History Department and to the College of Arts and Architecture of the Pennsylvania State University and for their extended support, to my committee for their many valuable suggestions which have improved the quality and content of this dissertation, and to my dissertation advisor, Elizabeth Bradford Smith for her wealth of knowledge, her patience, and advice.

Numerous individuals have made substantial contributions which have expanded my knowledge of this topic. Ben Hudson has read much of this dissertation in draft form, providing many helpful edits and corrections. Roger Stalley has provided several references, suggestions, introductions to other senior scholars, and encouragement. Niall McKeith of the National University of Ireland in Maynooth, John Rattigan of the Clare Museum, Msr. Cathal Geraghty of St. Brendan’s Cathedral and the Loughrea Diocesan Museum, Griffin Murray of the Kerry County Museum, Hugh Maguire of the Hunt Museum, Eamonn McEneaney and Rosemary Ryan of the Waterford Museum of Treasures, Michael Kenny of the National Museum of Ireland, and Raghnall O’Floinn of the National Museum of Ireland, have all provided me with exceptional access to the collections and files of their museums. The first hand examinations of surviving wooden figures and close readings of the records pertaining to them have been invaluable.

I have been constantly amazed at the lengths that near strangers have gone to aid my research. I would especially like to thank Jennifer Goff, Andy Halpin and Nessa O’Connor, of the National Museum, and Peter Harbison for his suggestions regarding both the figure owned by his mother and for my research in general. Fr. D.P. O’Briain of St. Gobnait’s Parish in Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, Fr. Fergal MacEoinin, O.P., of the
Dominican Fathers of Galway, Sr. Rose O’Neill of the Dominican Sisters of Galway, Timothy O’Neill, Fr. Joe MacMahon, O.F.M. Secretary of the Franciscan Province of Ireland, Sr. Louis of the Poor Clares in Galway, Randel Hodkinson of J. Hodkinson & Sons Church Decorators and Restorers in Limerick, Co. Limerick, Rev. Fr. Prior, O. Carm. of the Dublin Carmelites, Fr. Paul Murphy of Dunhill and Fenor Parish in Co. Waterford, Sr. Redempta Twomey of the Columban Sisters in Dublin, and the administrative staff at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin, have all provided excellent access to the figures and archives within their care, and many have proof-read the portions of this dissertation which pertain to their figures’ histories. I would also like to thank Rev. Dan Carroll of St. Patrick’s Parish, Kilkenny, and John Kirwan, assistant archivist of St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny, for their attempts to track down the whereabouts of sculptures formerly in their institutions’ care, as well as for their on-going interest in my research.

Many administrators and librarians have been exceptionally helpful during the course of my research. I would especially like to thank Christine Butts of the Art History Department at Penn State, Barb Woods and Carolyn Muse, coordinators of the World Campus Program at Penn State, Ken Bergin of the Special Collections Department at the University of Limerick, Emer Ní Cheallaigh, archivist at the National Museum of Ireland, and Donal Fenlan, librarian of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.

Several other individuals have made contributions that I would like to note: Jimmy O’Brien of Galway has acted as my liaison with the Poor Clares when I have been in the United States. Beatriz Hidalgo-Caldas of Trinity College, Dublin, Amber Handy of the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and Giorgios Vlantis of Ludwig-Maximilians
University in Munich have provided translations of texts. Quentin Crowley, Ussher Lecturer in Isotope Analysis and the Environment at Trinity College, Dublin gave advice regarding the scientific dating of wood. Dominic Berridge of County Wexford has provided a plethora of knowledge regarding folklore, oral histories, and published sources pertaining to County Wexford and Noel Hogan has done the same for Adare Co. Limerick. Obviously, any mistakes in this text are my own.

I would also like to thank my international cohort of fellow and former graduate students, whose support has been of immense value: Bea Hidalgo-Caldas, Klara Machinek, Daniel Bellingradt, Caroline Wallace, Heather McCune Bruhn, Tracey Wrobel Hammel, Kelema Moses, and Tony Harpur.

Finally, I am more grateful than words can say to my parents, Patrick and Eileen Cochran, for their support, encouragement and patience, and to the love of my life, Tim Anderson, who proof-read drafts, argued with me, and encouraged me. This endeavor is dedicated to them, to Mary Catherine Orr, who instilled the value of a good education in her grandchildren, and to Gus Medicus who inspired me to love art history.
INTRODUCTION

Outline of Project

This dissertation spans the late medieval and early modern periods in Ireland and includes a study of both native and imported wooden devotional figures in Ireland. It emphasizes the continuity of devotion, use, and importation throughout the period and addresses the migration of ideas, crossing of cultures, and the impact of both localized folk traditions and the internationalism of the late medieval and early modern eras as illustrated by wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland from 1100-1800.

I have compiled a thorough and up to date catalogue raisonné of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland, detailing the current physical conditions of the sculptures and reconstructing the individual histories of each of the known extant wooden figures. Both native and imported figures are included. I have also undertaken several chapters of analysis in order to answer certain fundamental questions about the genre as a whole. Chapter 1 looks at distribution patterns of both the extant and non-extant sculptures, what saints were depicted, and at the evidence for how many figures may have been in Ireland during the late medieval period. Technical aspects about how the figures were made, how they might have appeared with their original polychromy and adornments, as well as the impact of subsequent conservation and restoration attempts is also discussed. This chapter also seeks to highlight significant historical events which impacted the commissioning, importation, destruction, and survival of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland. It discusses stylistic parallels amongst the surviving figures, organized by century, in order to draw attention to evidence of the genre’s stylistic development throughout the entire period surveyed. A chronological approach is taken in order to
group a larger number of figures together for comparison than would examining the sculptures by either region or subject matter. This also allows for an examination of stylistic development and historical impact, the effects of which frequently cross both regional and thematic boundaries.

Chapter 2 examines whether wooden devotional sculpture existed in Ireland prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion. It explores avenues by which the genre could have been introduced to Ireland in the century preceding the invasion and the overall internationalism of the period. In Chapter 3, I discuss the origins, use, and meaning of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland and Europe at large. An emphasis is placed on the interconnectedness of the materiality and spirituality in these sculptures through examinations of the relationships between relics and images, the place of wooden figures in liturgical dramas and local religious patterns, as well as the sacredness of wood in an Irish context. It is also proposed that indigenous holy well traditions made Ireland especially receptive to the adoption of continental-style wooden devotional sculptures.

Chapter 4 seeks to highlight themes of destruction and survival throughout the Suppression era and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Evidence for iconoclastic movements which specifically targeted devotional sculptures is discussed, as is evidence for the increased numinosity of the genre in the face of its destruction. The effects of the seventeenth century revival on wooden devotional sculpture are discussed, as are patterns of importation and the over-all internationalism of Ireland during the Suppression era. The gradual recovery of the eighteenth century is explored as well as the destruction of figures following the emancipation of the Catholic Church in Ireland during the nineteenth century.
Problem

Throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, wooden religious figures inspired passionate devotion across every level of Irish society. Due to the thoroughness of the iconoclastic sweeps of the island in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ultramontanism of the nineteenth century, and the ravages of time and weather, this visual tradition has been irrevocably ruptured at several points. Yet a handful of the medieval and early modern figures, as well as the oral histories and religious traditions associated with them, have managed to survive.

For at least seven hundred years, these statues have been intimately integrated into the religious lives of the Irish people. They serve as conduits to the godhead and as the focal points of prayer and devotion. As a genre, they are inimitable illustrators of the changes that have occurred in Irish Christianity over the past millennium. The traditions surrounding these sculptures have roots in pre-Christian religious beliefs, and maintain a link to the medieval, early Christian, and even pre-Christian past. Due to the perilous physical state of many of these figures, they are now extremely threatened. Eleven figures documented as recently as the 1940s are now missing; this represents a loss of more than twenty percent of the genre which had survived until that time. The previously unpublished Hodkinson St. James (Fig. 37) survived a major fire in December 2010, just a few months after I documented it for this catalogue and the figure known as Our Lady of Limerick (Fig. 38) also suffered significant, though thankfully, not irreparable, damage when the statue was attacked by a vandal and broken into pieces in February 2011 (Fig. 39).\(^1\)

\(^1\) Nick Rabbits, “Shock and disgust after statue is smashed by vandals at Limerick church,” *Limerick Leader*. 

3
The many oral and folk traditions surrounding the sculptures are also in danger of perishing. Some figures, such as St. Gobnait (Fig. 40) from Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, have remained more or less continuous use, but the traditions surrounding other figures documented by MacLeod in the 1940s have already perished, and no memory remains of them in the local population. Unless the religious traditions and oral histories of these figures are documented, they will be irrevocably lost to the increasing secularization and urbanization of Irish culture.

Prior to beginning this project, very little was known about the current whereabouts and condition of surviving wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland. Exact numbers of extant figures were not known. No catalogue raisonné had ever been compiled detailing the current conditions or individual histories of the surviving figures. Wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland had not been significantly re-evaluated since the 1940s and an updated attempt to place the figures within their greater Irish and European contexts was needed. Through a detailed and comprehensive survey of both extant and non-extant wooden devotional figures in Ireland, this study seeks to address these issues.

Evidence

This was a genre of art that must have once comprised hundreds of figures. A statute from the Synod of Cashel, held at Limerick in 1453, states that every church should have at least a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a cross, and a statue of the


Although Catriona MacLeod included many of the figures, she did not endeavor to be comprehensive, particularly in regards to Suppression era figures. The length of her descriptions and rigor in reconstructing the histories of each of the individual varies a great deal.
Patron of the Church.³ The annals make frequent reference to wooden devotional figures and the miracles wrought by them. Reformation-era records, explored in Chapter 4, suggest that these figures were specifically targeted by the iconoclasts because of the ‘idolatry’ they inspired. There are accounts of several of the lost figures’ ability to work miracles, and similar beliefs persist today about many of the surviving sculptures. A few figures have remained in more or less continuous use in annual feast day celebrations or are brought to the beds of the sick for their curative powers. Surviving figures represent a variety of Irish saints, popular pan-European saints, many figures of the Madonna and Child, Christ, and the Trinity. By and large, the wooden figures depict the same saints that are frequently found in the other genres of religious art in Ireland and on the continent. They are the remainders of what was once an important and widespread tradition across Britain and Ireland, making it imperative that the figures are preserved, catalogued, and studied.

It has commonly been supposed that the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s ushered in a period of destruction and decline from which wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland never recovered.⁴ However evidence indicates that at the same time older figures were being hidden to save them from the iconoclastic sweeps conducted by the Dissolution commissioners and later by the parliamentarian soldiers, many new

³ This statute states, “Quod in singulis ecclesiis ad minus habeantur tres imagines, sanctae beatae Mariae virginis, sanctae cruces, et patroni loci, in cujus honerem ecclesia dedicator; necnon et vas honestum consecratum pro corpore Christi.” The legislations made at this synod only applied to Munster, but similar holdings were likely found all across the island, given the distribution of known figures. John Begley, The Diocese of Limerick Ancient and Medieval (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, Ltd., 1906), 431.

⁴ Most notably by Catriona MacLeod, who states, “Being widely distributed and fragmentary [the surviving wooden figures] are insufficient to give evidence of continuous development. They indicate, however, that such an art was practiced in Ireland until its arrest in the sixteenth century.” Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Medieval Madonnas in the West,” Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 105 (1945), 169.
figures were being imported or commissioned to replace those that were lost and damaged. This caused the High Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes to order in 1593 that all ships coming from abroad be searched and that all “copes, vestments, chalices, idols, crosses and other superstitious relics” be seized. When figures of foreign manufacture and those from the Suppression period are taken into account, the number of surviving figures nearly doubles. The geographic distribution of the sculptures also becomes much broader than was previously evident. Prior research indicated that figures survived only in rare individual instances or in small “hoards” of sculpture, but these isolated pockets did not give a clear indication of how prevalent the genre of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland once was.

Despite their apparent significance, most studies of Irish art history either exclude the figures entirely, or make pejorative assumptions about the quality of the works that do survive. Other authors acknowledge the significance of the genre, but neglect to integrate the figures into their studies, perhaps owing to a lack of modern scholarship on the topic. As recently as 2007, the Knight of Glin and James Peill dismissed the figures as “a few

---


6 See distribution maps in Chapter 1, pp. 22-25.

7 According to MacLeod, “So far Irish medieval statuary in wood has been neglected, owing largely to the scarcity of existing specimens… unlike the sculpture in stone, which is most plentiful in the Anglo-Norman cities, the wooden figures survive mainly in such remote and poor districts as Ballyvourney, Inishmurray, and East Galway, where no doubt inaccessibility and the devotion of the people saved them from destruction. Being widely distributed and fragmentary they are insufficient to give evidence of continuous development.” MacLeod is only partially correct in this statement. Many of the figures have been preserved by their remote locations and the ardent devotions of local people. However many others have survived in urban and even distinctively Anglo-Norman cities and locals. Additionally a much broader and complicated picture emerges when all of the figures are looked at and survivals from the Suppression era are taken into account. MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 169.
undistinguished painted wooden effigies.”\textsuperscript{8} Such dismissals make it clear that a re-evaluation of the genre is warranted.

**Historiography: Primary Sources\textsuperscript{9}**

The earliest accounts of wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland appear in the extant ecclesiastical annals, and generally document either miracles wrought by figures, or the destruction of particularly well-known wooden figures. For example, both the Four Masters and the *Annals of Ulster* record that in the year 1381, the image of the Madonna at Kilmore miraculously spoke.\textsuperscript{10} In 1397 the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* recorded that Hugh Mac Mahon regained his sight after fasting at the shrine of *Our Lady of Trim*.\textsuperscript{11} According to the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* and the *Annals of Connacht*, an image of the Trinity at the monastery on Trinity Island in Lough Key was accidentally burned by a candle carried by the canon’s wife in 1466.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{9} Ireland has suffered great losses in regards to primary source material. Not only were many ecclesiastical records destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the subsequent centuries of suppression, a significant amount of Ireland’s civil records were also lost during the Irish War for Independence. Both the Custom House in Dublin and the Public Records office were burnt in 1921 and 1922 respectively, taking with them many valuable records of Ireland’s past. Thankfully, some of the now missing records were quoted or published during the great antiquarian movement of the nineteenth century.


\textsuperscript{11} O’Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, IV, 1447

Occasionally references to wooden devotional sculpture can be found in other contemporary documents. In 1462, King Edward IV (reigned: 1461-1470, 1471-1483) made a grant to the abbot and convent of Our Blessed Lady of Trim,

…to establish a wax light to burn perpetually before the image in the church; and four wax lights to burn before same during the Mass and Anthem of Our Lady, in honor of God and said Lady, for the good estate of Edward, his mother, Cecilia, and his children and for the souls of their progenitors and ancestors.\(^{13}\)

Throughout the Suppression era, calls for the destruction of certain famous wooden figures and pejorative descriptions of native practices surrounding wooden devotional sculpture abound in the literature and official correspondences of the Protestant ascendency. Describing *Our Lady of Trim* to Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485-1540), Dissolution Commissioner Thomas Alen wrote in 1537,

Seche papistes, ypocrites, and wurshippers of idolles, that they were not indited; whereat my Lord of Dublin, Mr. Tresorer, and the Maister of Rolles were veray angrie. Howbeit they could not remedie it. They threw wold not come in the chapel, where the Idoll of Trym stode, to thintent they wold not occasion the people; not withstanding, my Lord Deputie, veray devoutely kneleng befor Hir, hard thre or fower masses.\(^{14}\)

In 1717, Richardson described the figure of *St. Gobnait* (Fig. 101) from Ballyvourney, Co. Cork as a “rank idol,” and in 1834 an anonymous author described a

\(^{13}\) This documented is quoted by both Hardiman and in a footnote in MacCarthy’s version of the *Annals of Ulster*. I have not been able to locate the original and presume that it was destroyed by the fire at the Public Record Office in 1922. James Hardiman, ed., *A Statute of the Fortieth Year of King Edward III, enacted in a Parliament held in Kilkenny, AD 1367 Before Lionel Duke of Clarence* (Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1843), 50-51; MacCarthy, *The Annals of Ulster*, 62-63.

\(^{14}\) *State Papers of Henry VIII* 3 (London: The Library of Doctors Commons, 1834), 103.
worshiper at St. Molaise’s shrine (Fig. 88) on Inishmurray as “truly a pagan, as if the image before which she prostrated herself were denominated Mars or Bacchus.” 15

Catholic accounts from this same period understandably focus on the miracles wrought by the sculptures and the retribution dealt out by God and the saints in return for damage done to their images. In 1538, the Annals of Ulster state that “through the miracles of God and Catherine” an English captain was killed for burning the monastery and relics of Down and stealing a figure of St. Catherine. 16 In 1621, O’Sullivan Beare wrote that after attacking the Catholic Church in Castle Ellis, Co. Wexford and despoiling the shrines of two figures, Hugh Allen (the Protestant bishop) was seized with such terrible pain that he beat himself against the stone floor of the church until he died. 17

**Historiography: Secondary Sources**

Apart from Du Noyer’s short “Note on St. Gobnat’s Effigy, Ballyvourney,” dated to 1855, 18 and Cantwell’s equally brief “Notes on the Fethard Carvings” published in 1874, 19 no accounts devoted solely to wooden devotional sculptures were published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and none at all which attempted to address the entire genre. In almost all cases, short accounts of surviving wooden figures from the

---


17 Philip O’Sullivan-Beare, *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae* (Dublin: John O’Daly, 1850), 139.


late medieval and early modern periods are contained within larger antiquarian studies, including Thomas Lacy’s *Sights and Scenes in our Fatherland* (1863) which contained a detailed account of the pattern surrounding a non-extant figure of *St. Maolrúán* (Fig. 412), and William Carrigan’s *The Histories and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory* (1905) who wrote about the now destroyed *Thomastown Madonna* (Fig. 415) and the still extant figure of *St. Molua* (Fig. 113). Generally speaking these antiquarian accounts provide extremely valuable descriptions of folk traditions and practices surrounding the figures, many of which have now ceased, but they do not contain detailed explanations of the figures’ appearances or conditions.

Between 1945 and 1947, Catriona MacLeod wrote the most extensive documentation of surviving wooden devotional sculpture to date, publishing the results of her master’s thesis research in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*. MacLeod’s series of six *J.R.S.A.I.* articles grouped the surviving wooden

---


21 For information on the detailed histories of each of these figures, see: Figures from the Lordship Period, *St. Molua*, section 6, p.255; Appendix C, *St. Maolrúán*, p.672; and Appendix C, *Thomastown Madonna*, p.679.

22 Catriona MacLeod, *Wooden figure sculpture in Ireland until the seventeenth century*, (Master’s thesis, University College Dublin, 1944); Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Medieval Madonnas in the West,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 105 (1945), 167 – 182; Catriona MacLeod “Medieval Wood Figure Sculptures in Ireland: The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 105 (1945), 195 – 203; Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 106 (1946) 89 – 100; Catriona MacLeod, “Some Medieval Wooden Figure Sculptures in Ireland: Statues of Irish Saints,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 106 (1946), 155 –170; Catriona MacLeod “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 77 (1947), 53-62; Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 77 (1947), 121-133. In 1968 an encyclopedia entry was written by MacLeod on the wooden devotional figures, but this entry does little more than re-hash information from her *J.R.S.A.I.* articles from
devotional figures works by both region and subject matter. The first to be published, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” prefaces her discussion of wooden devotional sculpture by calling attention to representations of the human form in pre-Invasion Irish art. MacLeod can be seen to be searching for the hand of the native craftsman in the medieval wooden devotional sculpture, while still acknowledging the “Norman and therefore Continental models” for the figures. Failing to find a distinctively Irish character in most of the surviving wooden figures, MacLeod acknowledges such an approach in Irish stone sculpture of the same period and makes some successful stylistic comparisons between the surviving stone and wood carvings. MacLeod largely ignores comparisons with other extant genres of art and avoids any attempt to place the figures in their greater European contexts. Her writing is sensitive and nuanced, although it tends to carry a nationalistic undertone – seeking to justify the study of a neglected genre of art from a largely ignored period of Irish history. This type of approach was de rigueur for the mid-twentieth century in order to justify the study of practically anything from the Lordship period, which was inextricably linked in popular imagination to the rule of the foreign invaders. Irish art historians in the first few decades after the establishment of the Irish Free State were preoccupied with a desire to discover what it was to be Irish. This frequently meant rediscovering the arts and culture of the period before the Anglo-Norman invasion to the preclusion of anything that came after.

MacLeod’s description of the physical condition, histories, and traditions of the individual sculptures vary greatly in terms of their length and detail. Even so, sixty years twenty years prior. Catriona MacLeod, “Religious Wood Sculpture,” Encyclopedia of Ireland, Victor Meally, ed. (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1968), 318-319.

23 MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 168.
later many of the stories documented by MacLeod seem to have disappeared from the local memory and an alarming number of sculptures that she documented have been lost or destroyed. Without MacLeod’s studies, our knowledge of these bygone traditions may have been completely lost, yet it is regrettable that each of the figures which survived in her time was not treated with equal care. MacLeod’s examinations of figures from the Suppression era (contained in her 1947 articles “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” and “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,”) are very brief. In a few cases, MacLeod seems not to have examined the figures in person. This is especially notable in her description of the Adare Madonna and Child (Fig. 344), which she describes as “almost life-sized” and compares with a ship’s figurehead. Additionally she misidentifies the wood of which the Adare St. Joseph is carved as Scots pine.\(^{24}\) In actuality the Adare Madonna and Child, at only 97 centimetres high (excluding the base), is much smaller than life-sized, and only St. Joseph’s repaired right arm (not pictured in MacLeod’s illustration) is visibly carved of pine. Additionally, MacLeod’s notes indicate that she only “investigated by correspondence and photographs” the figures of St. Molaise (Fig. 85), and the now missing figures: the Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist (Fig. 419) and the Thomastown Madonna (Fig. 415).\(^{25}\) Owing to the significant changes made to the figure of St. Molaise since its acquisition by the National Museum (Fig. 81), and to the fact that both the figure owned by Evie Hone and the Thomastown Madonna are now missing, it is especially regrettable that MacLeod’s published descriptions were not recorded first hand.

\(^{24}\) MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 130-131.

\(^{25}\) Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished papers, Box 50, National Museum of Ireland Art and Industry Archives, Dublin, Ireland.
MacLeod published twice more on wooden devotional sculptures, centering on individual works that were discovered after her initial series of articles. Appendix V of Butler’s *The Friars of Fethard* (1975) was written by Catriona MacLeod, in which she described the *Fethard Madonna and Child* (Fig. 363). Twelve years later, MacLeod published her final article on wooden devotional sculpture, focusing on the *Askeaton Madonna* (Fig. 145) from Co. Limerick, in the edited volume, *Studies on Figurative Art in Ancient Ireland*. This final study contains an especially sensitive and nuanced description and analysis of a singular wooden devotional sculpture, representing the culmination of a life’s work.

Several other authors provided accounts of individual figures in the decades following the 1940s, but their writings are largely derivative of MacLeod’s work. Canice Mooney gives brief descriptions of a few figures which are associated with Franciscan foundations in his series of articles, “Franciscan Architecture in Pre-Reformation Ireland,” published between 1955 and 1957. Mooney appears to have personally observed the sculptures that he discusses, but does not provide detailed descriptions or analyses. Patrick Egan, also writing in the 1950s, compiled a catalog of the Clonfert Diocesan Museum’s collection, including entries for the wooden figures in that

---


collection, in which Egan virtually repeats MacLeod. Duignan and Killanin mention the locations of several wooden devotional figures in the 1967 *Shell Guide to Ireland*, but as this was intended to be a tour book and not a work of scholarly analysis, understandably little time is devoted to documenting and describing them. Bradley mentions several wooden devotional figures briefly in comparison to the Ballyhale Madonna. The most valuable published works since MacLeod include Peter Harbison’s analysis of a small figure owned by his mother of the Infant Christ (Fig. 258), Mary Deevy’s discussion of the costume and ring-pin worn by the *Kilcorban St. Catherine* (Fig. 155), and Helen M. Roe’s catalogue of depictions of the Trinity in Ireland. This last is especially useful in its contextualization of the *Fethard Trinity* (Fig. 265), enabling comparisons to be made with many divergent art forms and artworks across the island. Several locally produced booklets and pamphlets have been amongst the most valuable documentation of current and past traditions surrounding individual wooden devotional sculptures. Amongst the most informative of these are Eilís Uí Dháiligh’s *Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney*, Fr.


35 Eilís Uí Dháiligh, *Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney* (Locally published pamphlet, no date or publisher given).

The staggering scope of Colum Hourihane’s 1984 doctoral dissertation, *The Iconography of Religious Art in Ireland 1250-1550, and a Catalogue of Architectural Sculpture, Metalwork, Wooden Sculpture, Seals, Alabasters, Mural Paintings and Miscellanea*, precluded any kind of detailed analysis of wooden devotional figures. In many cases he seems not to have viewed the sculptures in person, relying heavily on MacLeod’s earlier work. Even so, Hourihane’s dissertation provides a valuable list of extant wooden sculptures and their whereabouts at the time of his writing, persuasive arguments for the re-dating of certain sculptures, and adds a few statues to the corpus of known extant wooden figures. Hourihane’s most significant contribution to the study of wooden devotional figures in Ireland is the beginning of the genre’s contextualization amongst other fields of Irish art via their inclusion in the catalogue.

Wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland have been in urgent need of scholarly attention. This is important not only for the preservation of a whole genus of art objects, but also because they provide an essential link in the comparative study of continental-insular artistic exchange in late medieval Europe. Far from being an isolated society, Ireland in the medieval and early modern periods was deeply intertwined politically, economically, and religiously with the rest of Europe. These figures are unique

---


illustrators of issues of internationalism and religious ritual in Ireland throughout much of
the eight hundred years of British colonial rule. More than this, however, these devotional
figures form a crucial part of the larger interdisciplinary fabric of folklore, history, art and
devotion that marked European religion in the period.
CHAPTER 1. EXTANT WOODEN SCULPTURES IN IRELAND

Introduction

Before the commencement of this investigation, wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland had not been the subject of a serious and comprehensive study for sixty years, and because many figures had been in private ownership at the time of their last publication, it was not known what figures still survived, where, or in what condition. In order to answer fundamental questions regarding the use, meaning, and initial ingress of this type of sculpture, the scope and prevalence of the genre has to first be addressed. So too do certain technical questions regarding how the statues were made, what they originally looked like, and whether stylistic developments and commonalities amongst the traditions and mythologies could be observed throughout the genre. Whereas the catalogue raisonné found at the end of this volume answers many of these questions as they pertain to individual sculptures, generalizations about the genre as a whole are made here in order to root the arguments laid out in subsequent chapters in the objects themselves.

Survivals

Twenty-five wooden devotional sculptures survive in Ireland which date to the Lordship period, from approximately 1169 to 1536. Of these twenty-five figures, eleven represent the Madonna (nine figures of the Madonna and Child, two of which are nursing

---

39 The Lordship of Ireland was granted to Henry II of England (r: 1154-1189) under the auspices of Church reform in 1155, by a papal bull now known as the Laudibiliter, however it would be ten years before Henry would act on it. For the purposes of this study, the period beginning with the Anglo-Norman invasion in 1169 will be seen as the start of the Lordship period and the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII in 1536, and its accompanying waves of persecution and iconoclasm, will be seen as its end. It was also at about this same time that Henry VIII (r: 1509-1547) declared Ireland a full kingdom under the British crown.
Madonnas, and two Pietàs); three figures depict indigenous Irish saints; six international saints; three sculptures of Christ represented independently of the Madonna; and two unidentified figures. These twenty-five extant figures have a wide geographic distribution across most of the island (Table 2), with significant clusters of figures in Waterford and in the very center of island, where the counties of Galway, Roscommon, Offaly and Westmeath meet. No figures are currently known to be extant from Ulster.

Figures continued to be imported and commissioned throughout the Suppression era, and by the end of the sixteenth century the smuggling of ecclesiastical objects into Ireland

40 The cluster of surviving figures in Waterford mainly come from the collection of the Holy Ghost Hospital, located at the Franciscan Grey Friars Abbey in Waterford. Although the friary was officially dissolved in 1540, it passed into the possession of the wealthy merchant, Henry Walsh, in 1542. In 1544, King Henry VIII granted Walsh a charter for the establishment of an alms-house within the old abbey. This charter stipulated that it be called the Hospital of the Holy Ghost, that Walsh and his successors were to be its masters, and most importantly for the preservation of this wooden figure, that Walsh and his successors had the power to nominate Catholic priests to celebrate masses there. This charter enabled the friary to remain inhabited throughout the successive waves of persecution, giving its religious objects the opportunity to survive. McEneaney, “Politics and devotion in late fifteenth-century Waterford,” 46; MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” 99-100.

41 The Lettershendoney Madonna from Co. Londonderry was discovered in the late 1980s, but has gone missing since its publication in 1993 and is now considered lost. I am hopeful that this figure will be relocated in the future.
Table 1: Wooden Devotional Sculpture in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thirteenth Century</th>
<th>Sixteenth Century Post-Dissolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Kilcorban Madonna and Child  
  • Holy Ghost Madonna and Child  
  • Athlone Madonna | • Our Lady of Waterford  
  • Harbison Infant Christ |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fourteenth Century</th>
<th>Seventeenth Century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • St. Molaise  
  • Clonfert Madonna  
  • St. Gobnat  
  • St. Molua  
  • Waterford Nursing Madonna  
  • Holy Ghost Angel  
  • Kilconnell Female Head | • Madonna as Star of the Sea  
  • Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure  
  • Fethard Holy Trinity  
  • Our Lady of Limerick  
  • St. Patrick / St. Brochan  
  • St. Dominic |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fifteenth Century</th>
<th>Eighteenth Century</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Fethard St. John the Baptist  
  • Askeaton Nursing Madonna  
  • Museum Standing Madonna  
  • Kilcorban St. Catherine  
  • Holy Ghost St. Stephen  
  • Holy Ghost Risen Christ  
  • Museum Pietà  
  • Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist | • Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony  
  • St. Louis of Toulouse  
  • Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill’s, Galway  
  • Our Lady of Galway  
  • St. Anne Teaching the Virgin  
  • Marino Nursing Madonna  
  • Navan Crucifix |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sixteenth Century Pre-Dissolution</th>
<th>Figures of Indeterminate Date or Importation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Our Lady of Dublin  
  • Killoran Madonna and Child  
  • Killoran St. Joseph  
  • Unidentified Glendalough Saint  
  • Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone  
  • Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone  
  • Kilcormac Pietà | • Small Museum Pietà  
  • Hodkinson St. James  
  • Madonna of Taylor’s Hill, Galway  
  • Adare Madonna and Child  
  • Adare St. Joseph  
  • Kilcorban Crucifixion Group  
  • Tynagh Crucifix  
  • Ballyhaunis Crucifix  
  • Tralee Crucifix |
CHAPTER 1. AVENUES OF INTRODUCTION AND FERTILE GROUND

Recently Found Figures

- Fethard Madonna and Child
- Franciscan Madonna and Child, Waterford
- Knocktopher St. Brendan

Acquisitions of Figures from 1100-1800 in the Post-Suppression Era

- Louvain St. Clare
- Louvain St. Francis
- St. Assicus
- Zurich Madonna
- Christ After the Scourge
- Small Madonna and Child
- St. Christopher
- French Madonna and Child
- Mourning Figure from a Crucifixion
- St. Catherine
- Immaculate Conception
- Spanish Madonna
- Four Evangelists
- Unidentified Bishop
- St. Barbara
- The Hunt Madonna
- Madonna, CG 001
- Madonna and Child, CG 003
- Crucified Christ, BM 007
- Bust of a Female Saint, HCM 002
- Balthazar, HCM 010
- St. Anne, the Virgin and the Christ Child, MG 039
- St. John the Evangelist, MG 041
- Christ emerging from a Chalice, MG 042
- Immaculate Conception, HM 2002.097
- Bunratty St. George and the Dragon
- Bunratty St. Martin of Tours
- Bunratty St. Anne, the Virgin and Christ Child
- Bunratty St. Catherine
- Bunratty Crucified Christ
- Bunratty Unidentified Figure
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lost Figures of Indeterminate Material</th>
<th>Lost Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lettershendoney Madonna</td>
<td>• St. Maolrúán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin</td>
<td>• St. Natalis / St. Nandan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mullagh Crucifix</td>
<td>• Thomastown Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loughrea Madonna</td>
<td>• St. Clare, Poor Clare’s, Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Infant Jesus, Poor Clare’s Galway</td>
<td>• Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maynooth Penal Madonna</td>
<td>• Maynooth Penal Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bruff Madonna</td>
<td>• St. Patrick, Kilkenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Peter</td>
<td>• St. Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Paul</td>
<td>• St. Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inisglora St. Brendan</td>
<td>• Inistiogue St. Columba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clare Island St. Brendan</td>
<td>• Clare Island St. Brendan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Carroll</td>
<td>• St. Carroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Ibar</td>
<td>• St. Ibar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holy Cross Madonna</td>
<td>• Holy Cross Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Our Lady of Trim</td>
<td>• Our Lady of Trim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lough Derg St. Patrick</td>
<td>• Lough Derg St. Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Avioge</td>
<td>• St. Avioge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Volusius</td>
<td>• St. Volusius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Sineach Mac Dara</td>
<td>• St. Sineach Mac Dara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cork St. Dominic</td>
<td>• Cork St. Dominic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ballyboggan Crucifix</td>
<td>• Ballyboggan Crucifix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kilgobinet St. Gobnat</td>
<td>• Kilgobinet St. Gobnat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lough Key Trinity</td>
<td>• Lough Key Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lough Ree Unidentified Wood Figure</td>
<td>• Lough Ree Unidentified Wood Figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coleraine Madonna</td>
<td>• Coleraine Madonna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lost Figures of Indeterminate Material</th>
<th>Lost Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• St. Ita</td>
<td>• Station Island Madonna and Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Castle Ellis St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>• Castle Ellis Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Castle Ellis Madonna</td>
<td>• Navan Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kilmore Madonna</td>
<td>• Raphoe Crucifix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Downpatrick St. Catherine</td>
<td>• Downpatrick St. Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Athenry Crucifixion Group</td>
<td>• Athenry Crucifixion Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Athenry St. Dominic</td>
<td>• Athenry St. Dominic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Martin, St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin</td>
<td>• St. Martin, St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Madonna, St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin</td>
<td>• Madonna, St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Werburgh’s Crucifixion Group</td>
<td>• St. Werburgh’s Crucifixion Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Christ Church St. Catherine</td>
<td>• Christ Church St. Catherine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dublin St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>• Dublin St. John the Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muckross Madonna</td>
<td>• Muckross Madonna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clonmel St. Francis</td>
<td>• Clonmel St. Francis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Distribution map of extant, provenanced Pre-Dissolution Irish wooden devotional sculpture

had reached such proportions that the High Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes ordered that all ships coming from abroad be searched and all “copes, vestments, chalices, idols, crosses and other superstitious relics” should be seized.\textsuperscript{42} When surviving figures from the Suppression era (1536 – 1800\textsuperscript{43}), and known lost figures believed to

\textsuperscript{42} Charles McNeill, “Harris Collectanea de Rubis Hibernicis”, \textit{Analecta Hibernica} 6 (1934), 427.

\textsuperscript{43} The era of suppression of the Catholic Church technically lasted in Ireland until 1829 when the Church was officially emancipated by the Catholic Relief Act; however a new era of Catholic tolerance began with the passage of Act of Union by parliaments in both Britain and Ireland in the year 1800.
Table 3: Distribution map of all extant, provenanced Irish wooden devotional sculpture from 1100-1800

have been carved of wood are incorporated into the statistics, an increasingly complex picture emerges. In total forty-three wooden devotional sculptures from the period from 1100-1800 are extant in Ireland.\(^4\) This number includes the twenty-five Pre-Dissolution figures previously mentioned, plus an additional fifteen figures which survive from the Suppression era (Table 2), and three which are believed to date to the medieval or early

\(^4\) This number excludes the figures of indeterminate date or importation.
modern eras which were not viewed. If lost wooden devotional sculptures from 1100-1800, for which we have textual evidence, are added to the number, the total documented wooden devotional figures in Ireland rises to seventy-five (Table 3). There are also an additional seventeen lost images without documentation of their material (but which may have been wood) of which I am currently aware, and another nine figures for which either their date of commissioning or importation could not be determined. Therefore, at its most narrowly defined, there is evidence for the existence of seventy-five wooden devotional figures from the period spanning the years 1100-1800. At its most broadly defined, there is evidence for as many as one-hundred-and-one, although it is likely that there were once many more.

**Recent Losses**

Eleven figures documented by Catriona MacLeod in the 1940s have been lost or destroyed. Two figures, *St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin* (Fig. 413) and *St. Natalis / St. Nadan*, were misplaced during the dispersal of the St. Kieran’s College collection in Kilkenny in the early 1980s. A figure of *St. Maolrúán* (Fig. 412) was stolen from the home of its owner in the early 1990s and several others (*Mullagh Crucifix*, [Fig. 414]; *Thomastown Madonna*, [Fig. 415]; *Loughrea Madonna*, [Fig. 416]; the figure of *St. Clare*, [Fig. 417] and the figure of the *Infant Christ*, [Fig. 418]; both formerly belonging to the Poor Clare's in Galway) have been lost from the churches or convents where they were formerly kept. The figure of *Christ* or *St. John the Baptist* owned by artist Evie Hone (Fig. 419) has been missing since her death in 1955 (although much of her belongings ended up in the collection of the Hunt Museum, this particular statue did not).
Table 4: Distribution map of all known, provenanced Irish wooden devotional sculpture from 1100-1800, including lost wooden figures

The *Maynooth Penal Madonna* (Fig. 420), formerly in the collection of the National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, was unable to be located on two different visits to the museum in 2010 and 2011. Like the figure of *St. Maolrúán*, the *Bruff Madonna* (Fig. 421) was also in private ownership when MacLeod wrote about the sculpture in 1947. It belonged to the Healy family in Bruff, Co. Limerick. Neither the

---

45 It seems not to be on display or in the museum’s vault (although I was unable to personally verify whether it was amongst the items in the vault).
figure nor the Healy family is currently known in that area. Although there is some hope that at least a few of these figures will resurface, there is a greater probability that many of them are permanently lost. Several of the lost figures were carved in a provincial manner, making it more likely that some of them may have been thrown away when their ages and former significance were forgotten.

Conservation and Restoration

Several surviving figures were conserved and restored by Catriona MacLeod and others in the decades following her publications.\textsuperscript{47} According to museum labels at the Loughrea Diocesan Museum, both the \textit{Kilcorban Madonna} and the \textit{Kilcorban St. Catherine} were restored by MacLeod during the 1940s / 1950s. This is corroborated by photographic evidence in the National Museum’s records.\textsuperscript{48} The waxy appearance of the \textit{Athlone Madonna}, when compared with photographs found in MacLeod’s papers (Fig.\textsuperscript{46} MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 57.

\textsuperscript{47} Conservation records are missing for the large majority of surviving figures, many of which appear to have been restored in some way since their last publication. The lack of documentation regarding this work has been a great hindrance in their study. Prior to the foundation of the conservation department in the 1990s, individual curators at the National Museum undertook conservation measures as they saw fit, and may or may not have documented those actions. Several records kept by the National Museum which are marked as conservation files only contain photos of the figures before, during and after the conservation, but lack all other documentation. The National Museum has tracked down proper conservation records for only three of the figures, the \textit{Fethard Christ}, the \textit{Fethard St. John the Baptist}, and the \textit{Fethard Holy Trinity}, with complete analysis having been recorded only for the \textit{Fethard Christ}. These are apparently the only wooden figures which have been conserved since the advent of the National Museum of Ireland’s conservation department.

Often I relied upon photographic evidence, corroborated by correspondence between the National Museum of Ireland and various individuals, to determine what conservation and restoration work might have been carried out. In several cases it seems that the most recent restorations, conducted in the mid-twentieth century, involved the removal of modern layers of paint to reveal the older polychrome underneath. Where repaints were carried out, they rarely cover the entire figure and are largely sympathetic to the carving and to the extant medieval polychrome. The National Museum’s correspondence also documents that the restorations often involved treatment and conservation of the wood. It is certain that this was much needed at the time that it was done, and for several figures it is needed again.

\textsuperscript{48} Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished papers, Box 51, National Museum of Ireland Art and Industry Archives, Dublin, Ireland.
74), seems to be the product of the removal of several layers of paint and consolidation of the wood.\textsuperscript{49} The \textit{Clonfert Madonna} has had at least several layers of modern paint removed, and possibly some reconstruction of the face.\textsuperscript{50} After the National Museum acquired the wooden sculpture of \textit{St. Molaise} in 1949, the figure was extensively reconstructed by sculptor Gabriel Hayes.\textsuperscript{51} The three Fethard figures have been conserved multiple times since they first came to the National Museum in 1932. Similar evidence exists for many of the extant figures chronicled by MacLeod.

Regrettably, several of the figures have been over-restored. \textit{St. Molaise’s} face is almost entirely a modern creation, as is that of the \textit{Kilcorban Child}. Indeed, the faces of many of the figures conserved by MacLeod are overly smooth and completely covered in modern paint, replete with cartoonish painted features. The focus on facial reconstruction in many of the surviving wooden figures is understandable, not only in relation to the general trend towards over-restoration in the mid-twentieth century, but also in the context of the figures’ continuing use as devotional objects. The profound psychological effect of having a complete face through which one could direct his or her devotions perhaps justifies the faces’ over-restoration, especially of those figures which remain in an ecclesiastical context. They are primarily objects of use, privileged above their function as artworks. If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then the painted eyes and restored visages allow the devotee a window towards that which he or she worships.

\textsuperscript{49} See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, \textit{Athlone Madonna}, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{50} See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, \textit{Clonfert Madonna}, p. 236.

The penchant for restoration in the mid-twentieth century may seem lamentable today, but the conservation that was undertaken at that time was undoubtedly needed. Many figures were treated for insect infestation, wood was consolidated, and old layers of paint were stabilized. MacLeod’s removal of modern layers of polychrome in an appropriate manner led to the conservation and display of the much older layers underneath modern paints which coated many of the figures. Sculptures restored by less professional methods, including *Our Lady of Dublin* (Fig. 193) and the *Waterford Nursing Madonna* (Fig. 121), lost their original layers of polychrome which came away when thick over-paints of white emulsion were removed.52

In many instances, conservation and technical analysis of the figures is desperately needed again. Some of the figures appear never to have been conserved. This is certainly the case for the unusually large collection of wooden devotional figures at the Waterford Museum of Treasures. All of these appear to be completely covered by modern house paint. Some have large, crude plaster reconstructions replacing missing limbs. Others are beginning to flake and crumble in their cases, making evident their imminent need for reconsolidation and other conservative measures. Still other figures, which may have been conserved in the past, are in desperate need of these measures again. Nearly all of the wooden devotional figures in the care of the Clonfert Diocesan Museum show evidence of active dry-rot and wood worm. Their conservation is not only vital to the survival of some of the oldest and most significant extant wooden devotional figures, but also to the continued survival of the collection of early modern liturgical

vestments, which is displayed in the same cases, and is likewise in contact with the deteriorating, and possibly insect-infested, figures.

Technical analysis of the wood and pigment of surviving figures ought to be carried out in all cases. This is especially desirable for the figures within the National Museum of Ireland’s collection, as that institution now has a permanent conservation department. Only one of the surviving figures, the Fethard St. John the Baptist, has undergone modern technical analysis.\(^5\) Two other figures, the Fethard Christ and the Fethard Holy Trinity have had pigment analysis conducted by University College London in 1997, but the records regarding that work are incomplete.\(^5\) We must also consider the likelihood that MacLeod’s statements as to wood-types may in some instances prove inaccurate. Our Lady of Limerick was found to be carved of pine during repair work conducted in 2011, rather than oak as MacLeod had originally published.\(^5\) The Adare St. Joseph was published as Scots pine,\(^5\) but only the replaced arm is visibly carved of that wood. Museum file records of other figures are frequently at odds with each other over the wood-types of specific figures. Only microscopic analysis can clear


\(^{\text{55}}\) E-mail from Randel Hodkinson, Church Decorator and Restorer, J. Hodkinson and Sons Church Decorators and Restorers, Limerick, Co. Limerick, dated January 22, 2012. According to Mr. Hodkinson, “The most interesting thing we learned was that the statue was made of pine, not oak as had been believed for many years. The sections of the statue were dowelled together and when it fell from the Altar all these joints gave way. We repaired it the same way as it had been constructed, with timber dowels, although we had to put in a lot more, than had been there originally. The pieces were then glued and clamped together. Some areas had to be filled and sanded smooth to match original. We also repaired the gesso paste with which the entire statue is covered, prior to repainting.”

\(^{\text{56}}\) MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 130-131.
up these ambiguities. Finally, the stylistic dating of several figures has varied widely amongst scholars. In order to establish a firmer timeline of stylistic development, scientific dating of the sculptures ought to also be carried out for as many of the figures as possible.

**Construction of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland**

The earliest extant wooden devotional figures, the *Kilcorban Madonna* (Fig. 46), the *Holy Ghost Madonna* (Fig. 65), and the *Athlone Madonna* (Fig. 71) all have backs that are flat and hollowed. This trait is retained by most wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland until about the fifteenth century. This was done to reduce drying and cracking as the heartwood and sapwood expand and contract at different rates. The inner rings of the tree make up the heartwood, whereas the outer rings of the tree comprise the sapwood. The sapwood generally holds more moisture, and therefore expands and contracts at a greater rate, because it had live storage cells to carry water at the time that the tree was felled. The inner heartwood does not expand and contract nearly as much because the storage cells were dead and clogged with resins at the time that the tree was cut down.\(^{57}\)

---

Through drying and seasoning, the expansion and contraction of the outer sapwood can be reduced by removing the water from the outer cells, however these cells will now be hollow, rather than filled with gums and resins, like the heartwood. These hollow cells will still expand and contract at a greater rate with changes in temperature and humidity, than will the heartwood, which will hardly change at all.\(^{58}\) Oak, the most common wood utilized in the extant Irish figures, is a dense and strong material, however the heartwood and sapwood will still expand and contract at different rates. The difference in these expansion and contraction rates will cause radial cracking if the heartwood is not removed (Fig. 1). Removing the heartwood, leaving only the outer layers of seasoned sapwood, allows the layers of carved wood to expand and contract at a more even rate and reduces the likelihood that radial cracks will develop in the finished sculpture.\(^{59}\)

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 34.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
The construction of later, larger scale devotional sculpture became considerably more complicated than the compact carving of many of the earlier figures. Figures like *Our Lady Limerick* (Fig. 275), *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure* (Fig. 263), and the two Rosary Madonnas from Galway (Fig. 301 - Fig. 311) are made of many smaller pieces, joined together in such a way as to appear almost seamless. These figures likely have a hollow, box-like core comprised of several boards. This can be seen in photographs of *Our Lady of Limerick* when the figure was being repaired in 2011 (Fig. 2). Projecting details, like the draperies, feet, arms, hands, and the putti are then attached to the hollow core via nails or wood dowels. Many of these figures may be made of cheaper softwoods as has been observed in the figure of *Our Lady of Limerick*, which is carved of scots pine overlaid with a thick gesso under its polychrome.

![Our Lady of Limerick, photo of damage showing interior box-like structure.](image)

Fig. 2: Our Lady of Limerick, photo of damage showing interior box-like structure.
The predominant use of oak in the construction of most of the surviving medieval figures is in many ways expected. Oak is a very common material for continental figures in the medieval period, so it stands to reason that imported figures dating to the period before the Suppression would be carved of oak. There is also ample evidence for the availability of oak in Ireland down to about the year 1600.

Another material that is used in the construction of some of the earliest surviving Irish figures is bog oak. The *Athlone Madonna* (Fig. 71), *St. Gobnait* (Fig. 101), and the *Waterford Nursing Madonna* (Fig. 117) are all possibly made of bog oak. The term ‘bog oak’ does not necessarily connote that the wood itself is oak. Bog oak is a term used to describe any wood removed from a bog which has been semi-fossilized after being submerged in a bog for hundreds or thousands of years; it is generally very dark and heavy. According to the Irish Peatland Conservation Council, the most common types of wood found preserved in Irish bogs are Scots pine, oak and yew. There is some very intriguing evidence that Irish bog oak was sometimes exported as a raw material for continental wooden devotional sculptures and other objects for ecclesiastical use.

In 1935, Adolf Mahr reprinted in English a short note that had originally been published in the *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* in 1933 by Louis Demaison:

60 In northern Germany, France, Burgundy and the Netherlands, oak and sometimes walnut were used. Limewood and pear were frequently used, in addition to oak, in other areas of Germany. Baxandall, 27.

61 Aalen, 163, 233. For a discussion of the availability and types of wood available in Ireland during the medieval and early modern eras, see: Chapter 3: p. 103.

In documents of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period mention is frequently made of the “wood from Ireland” ("bois d’Irland"). Victor Gay, in his *Glossaire archéologique* (Vol. I, p. 165), gives the following definition (translation): --

“Resinous wood of conifers, the name of which appears to be applied indiscriminately to fir, larch, cypress or even cedar timber. Its main substances were held to be indestructible… Wood of this kind was in frequent use in the period we are dealing with. The most rare species were devoted to precious purposes, e.g., frames for portable altars, &c., but the basins and other similar receptacles to be mentioned later were certainly made of fir wood.”

This definition is, in the writer’s opinion, absolutely inaccurate. The numerous texts reproduced in the *Glossaire* all prove that the “wood from Ireland” was very much sought for and that it was employed principally for articles of luxury… This kind of timber served for the construction of furniture, cradles, statues, altar frames, paneled work, doors and windows of mansions and castles. At the commencement of the sixteenth century “wood from Ireland” was procured from Abbeville and Saint Valery for the construction of the stalls of Amiens Cathedral.

No one of the cases quoted appears to admit the use of fir. In any case, one would not have used for work of such a class one of the commonest kinds of timber, which, moreover, is anything but indestructible… it is significant that “wood from Ireland” and oak wood are frequently referred to together in the documents. It appears that there is a certain connection between them…

V. Gay realizes himself that the Statutes of Abbeville of 1508 make a clear distinction between the holy images made of oak wood and those of “Irish wood” and that fir is ruled out as it is to all intents and purposes unfit for such kind of wood-carving… Actually the “wood from Ireland” was a sub-fossil wood, compact, very hard and of dark colour, supplied by the oak trees which became embedded during the past in the Irish peat bogs… which rendered it practically insect-proof and very resistant against other destructive agencies, resulted in its being very much in demand. It was, therefore, a very important article of export… The use of “Irish wood” was so widespread during several centuries that there ought to be preserved today a good many relics made of it…

Since much bog oak began as scots pine, it is possible that both M. Demaison and M. Gay are correct in their assessments of the type of wood intended by the phrase ‘bois d’Irland’.

---

Polychromy and Adornments

Wooden devotional figures in Ireland, as on continental Europe, were enhanced with vibrant polychrome and gold leaf. In many cases over-paints of modern colors or thick layers of white wash and emulsion cover over the original polychrome. In other cases, the original polychrome is only visible the crevices of the carving, the rest having been worn away in the intervening years. In several cases, including Our Lady of Dublin and the Waterford Nursing Madonna, layers of emulsion were improperly removed in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, causing the layers of medieval and early modern polychrome underneath to be destroyed. Our Lady of Dublin is now covered with dark wood-stain, more in keeping with a nineteenth / early twentieth century aesthetic than the white-washed features that it had when discovered, or the brightly painted sixteenth century visage that it once presented.

The gesso is likely comprised of various chalks, including gypsum or calcium carbonate, suspended in animal sizing. Theophilus, a monk writing in the first half of the twelfth century, gives instructions for making gesso composed of these elements, and recommends painting wood with two or three layers, and then sanding it smooth, using rough rushes (called shave-grass) and then allowing the gesso covered wood to thoroughly dry in the sun.\(^\text{64}\) On some of the earlier surviving Irish figures, a layer of either red lead priming, or perhaps bole (a reddish clay usually applied before water gilding), can be seen underneath the polychrome. Remnants of gold leaf can be seen on the hair, veil and crowns of the earliest figures, including the Athlone and Kilcorban Madonnas, as well as on the belts and throne of the Athlone Madonna and the V-shaped

collar of the *Kilcorban Madonna’s* dress. In both cases, the Child’s gown is painted white, with remnants of red polychrome clinging to the V-shaped collar on the *Kilcorban Child’s* garment. Both Madonnas wear garments painted in red and blue. These colors were likely made by suspending cinnabar (for the red), folium (a pigment obtained from the plant *turnsole*, which depending on the level of acidity that it was exposed to, could appear red, purple or blue), or ceruse (a white color made from lead), in linseed oil and gum resin. Flesh colored paint was more complicated. The base color was produced by mixing ceruse burnt to a yellowish-tan color, mixed with white ceruse and cinnabar. Over this, shadows were painted using prasinus (burnt ochre) mixed in with the lighter flesh color, already used as the base. Finally, a small amount of cinnabar would be mixed with the flesh base color to blush the cheeks, mouth, chin, and other areas. Highlights could be applied to certain areas by mixing more ceruse in with the flesh base-tone. Theophilus recommended that all layers of polychrome be applied three times.

Only one medieval Irish treatise on painting survives, and it provides very little information. This fourteenth century account is found within the *Ó Cianáin Miscellany*, NLI MS. G2 and NLI MS. G3, in the collection of the National Library of Ireland. The manuscripts contain a collection of poetry and prose copied from other sources. The short passage, written in Irish, relating to polychromy (folios 20r – 22r), gives guidelines for

---

65 Ibid., 40-41.
66 Ibid., 41-42.
67 Ibid., 32-33.
68 Ibid., 14-17.
69 Ibid., 33.
the colors to be used on images of Christ and the apostles. Carney interprets this section as pertaining to the painting of manuscripts and murals. However, there is no evidence in the text itself to suggest that these same image choices could not also apply to wooden devotional sculpture. In translation, this text reads:

Christ: dark brown hair and a long curly, forked beard.
Peter: completely grey and a very small beard.
Paul: bald in front, black.
Andrew: wavy black hair and a long beard.
James, son of Zebedee: long black hair and a long beard.
John: wavy black hair and no beard whatsoever.
Philip: completely red having a beard.
Bartholomew: long curly black hair and a long beard
Thomas, moreover, with long dark hair and a long beard
Matthew: dark curly hair and no beard whatsoever.
James son of Alpheus: long black hair and a long beard.
John the Baptist: black curly hair, and a long beard
Thaddeus: a red beard and grey tresses
Simon: lapidatus
Stephen: lapidatus.
Marcus: dormivit.

Amongst professionally produced wooden devotional sculpture, the figures were likely polychromed by professional painters, and not the sculptors. We know this to be true amongst the later figures produced on the continent.

---

71 Ibid., 134-135.
72 It seems likely that these painters would have belonged to guild. Evidence for a guild system in Dublin stretches back to the twelfth century, with a charter granted by Prince John, Lord of Ireland, in 1192 for the existence of Dublin guilds. In 1226, craftsmen as well as merchants were admitted to the Dublin Guild Merchant. A single painter was admitted to the guild merchant in that year. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, evidence exists for the existence of profession-specific guilds, including a painters’ guild and one consisting of carpenters, masons, joiners and helliers (slaters or tilers). It was necessary to be a member of a guild in order to practice these crafts professionally. J.T. Gilbert, ed., Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland from the Archives of the City of Dublin ... 1172–1320, Rolls Series no. 53 (London: HMSO, 1870), 82; and Philomena Connelly and Geoffrey Martin, eds., The Dublin Guild Merchant Roll c. 1190–1295 (Dublin: Four Courts,1999), vii, 508.
Not everyone who can hew a block of wood is able to carve an image; nor is everyone who can carve it able to outline and polish it; nor is he that can polish it able to paint it; nor can he that is able to paint it complete it with the final touches. Each one of these in working upon an image, can do no more than that with which he himself is familiar, and, if he tries to do more, he will only ruin his work.74

None of the surviving wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland have reliquary receptacles, nor do the extant figures carry any indication of having once been covered by repoussé, as can be seen on some of the earliest surviving continental figures. In Ballyvourney, Co. Cork I was told by the parish priest that their fourteenth century wooden figure of St. Gobnait (Fig. 101) is locally believed to be a replica of an original “made entirely of gold.” This seems unlikely; perhaps the story is indicative of a vague memory of this, or an earlier figure, once having been covered with gilding or repoussé. Catriona MacLeod reported that “the gold and jewels were taken from the shrine” belonging to a figure known as Our Lady of Trim (attacked first in the sixteenth century and preserved until the seventeenth century), but I know of no prior source that supports this statement. It is therefore only with extreme reservation that we should picture the Irish figures as more than gilded and brightly polychromed, although in one seventeenth century account, an Anglican bishop is recorded as having “stolen the ornaments” of two


74 This passage was written not in a technical treatise, but was rather used as a metaphor in a spiritual tract to illustrate harm done to Christian souls by unskilled guidance. San Juan de la Cruz, “Living Flame of Love” III.49, in The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross, ed. and trans. E. Allison Peers, (London, 1935) , 89; and Kasl, 33.
figures from Castle Ellis.\textsuperscript{75} There is no firm evidence to suggest that they were ever bejeweled.

**Stylistic Development by Century: 13th Century**

Although Catriona MacLeod did not believe that it was possible to trace the development of wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland,\textsuperscript{76} if one organizes the surviving figures chronologically, some broad stylistic conclusions can be drawn. The figures’ historical contexts can also help to explain and support these conclusions. Three figures survive in Ireland which can be dated stylistically to the thirteenth century, the *Athlone Madonna* (Fig. 71), the *Holy Ghost Madonna* (Fig. 65), and the *Kilcorban Madonna* (Fig. 46).\textsuperscript{77} All three figures are hieratic depictions of the enthroned Madonna and Child, typical of the *sedes sapientiae* type common in Europe at this time. All three are associated with Anglo-Norman mendicant establishments, suggesting that the friars may have brought figures with them, although it is not yet possible to determine definitively whether they were imported or locally-carved.

Following the conquest of Ireland, Henry II (r: 1154-1189) and later his son John (Lord of Ireland: 1189-1216) gradually divided Ireland into feudal fiefs run by Anglo-Norman nobles, who brought with them their own culture and artistic tastes. It was largely due to the Anglo-Norman conquest that the Gothic style was introduced to Ireland,\textsuperscript{78} and it may have been partially through their influence that the genre of wooden

\textsuperscript{75} O’Sullivan Beare, *Historae Catholicae Iberiae* II, Ch. XVIII, 138.

\textsuperscript{76} MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 169.

\textsuperscript{77} See Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period: *Kilcorban Madonna*, section 6, p. 187; *Holy Ghost Madonna*, section 6, p.204; and *Athlone Madonna*, section 6, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{78} Stalley, “Irish Gothic and English Fashion,” 194.
devotional sculpture also spread through Ireland.79 By 1230, ten Irish sees were held by Anglo-Norman bishops, at least six of whom began major construction projects.80 Dublin became a major center of English architecture. The current nave of Christ Church Cathedral (dedicated to the Holy Trinity) was built between 1216 and 1234,81 and St. Patrick’s Cathedral was under construction at the same time.82 The hall of the royal castle in Dublin was built between 1243-1245.83 Veritable armies of craftsmen trained in English methods of architecture, sculpture and design were needed to execute such projects. As Stalley points out, “Between 1200 and 1250 there must have been an almost constant flow of experienced masons making the voyage across the Irish Sea and by the middle of the century the Early English style was de rigueur throughout the island, from New Ross in the south-east to Ardfert in the west.”84 It is not difficult to imagine, therefore, that English fashion in church furnishings could also have become popular, and due to the influx of craftsmen, readily available. Wooden devotional sculpture carved in an English mode, possibly like the Holy Ghost Madonna, may have been included in those English imported, or English influenced, church furnishings.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to draw many conclusions about the genre as a whole in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from so few surviving figures. It is certainly very

79 This by no means is meant to suggest that the Anglo-Normans were the only possible vehicle of introduction for this genre of art. The figures could also have been introduced via pilgrimage, the connections of the Scandinavian Ostmen, or through the efforts of the indigenous Gregorian reform movement in twelfth century Ireland, or via multiple avenues, as discussed in Chapter 2.

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 205.
83 Ibid., 206.
84 Ibid., 207.
interesting to note that all three of these figures are associated with Anglo-Norman mendicant establishments. There is also a fairly wide geographic distribution between the *Holy Ghost Madonna* from Waterford and the *Kilcorban* and *Athlone Madonnas*, both from the center of the island. That all three come from Anglo-Norman areas does not necessarily suggest that all wooden devotional figures from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are likely have come from Anglo-Norman churches. These figures, like many later sculptures, seem to survive because of their association with the powerful families at the time of the Dissolution, many of which had Anglo-Norman roots. Because these extant late thirteenth century figures had powerful protectors during the initial onslaught of the dissolution, they survived. Others, which may have been preserved in less protected establishments were presumably less fortunate, although without textual evidence or further proof, we will never know.

**Stylistic Development by Century: 14th Century**

Seven figures survive in Ireland which are dated to the fourteenth century. These figures include two standing figures of the Madonna and Child, one of which is an image of the *Madonna Lactans*, one depiction of an international saint, three Irish saints, and one unidentified female saint. The larger number of surviving figures dated to this century may indicate an increased popularity of the genre, or an increase in the level of wealth amongst the middle classes, who might have commissioned these objects. The earliest surviving written references to wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland also dates to the fourteenth century. According to the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, Hugh Mac

---

Mahon regained his sight in 1397 after fasting at the shrine of *Our Lady of Trim*.\(^{86}\) That *Our Lady of Trim* was a wooden figure is made evident by one tale of her destruction, in which the sculpture was chopped up to make a fire in 1641.\(^{87}\) Another figure, called the *Madonna at Kilmore*, miraculously spoke in 1381, according to both the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* and the *Annals of Ulster*,\(^{88}\) although it cannot be stated with certainty that this figure was carved out of wood. An image of St. Catherine from the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Dublin was despoiled by a clerk in 1310,\(^{89}\) although the material of this figure, too, is in doubt.

In the fourteenth century, the footprint of surviving wooden devotional figure spreads, with significant clusters beginning to form around the city of Waterford and in the center of the country, at the juncture of the counties of Galway, Roscommon, Offaly, and Westmeath. Figures also survive singly in counties Kilkenny, west Cork and Inishmurray, an island off the coast of Co. Sligo. The earliest surviving wooden devotional sculptures of Irish saints date to the fourteenth century, and include depictions of *St. Gobnait* (Fig. 101), *St. Molaise* (Fig. 81), and *St. Molua* (Fig. 113).\(^{90}\) The attributions of these three statues are based on tradition rather than iconography, since none of them hold any kind of identifying object. All three sculptures of indigenous saints come from rural parishes, and little about their early history is known.

\[^{86}\] O'Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters*, 751.

\[^{87}\] Gilbert, *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641-1652* I, 32.

\[^{88}\] O’Donovan, *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters* IV, 681; MacCarthy, 9.

\[^{89}\] Mac Carthy, 625.

\[^{90}\] See: Catalogue, *Figures from the Lordship Period, St. Gobnait*, p. 246; *St. Molaise*, p. 226; and *St. Molua*, p. 255.
The commissioning of figures of Irish saints indicates that wooden devotional figures in the fourteenth century were also being widely utilized by the Gaelic community, or that the Anglo-Irish community had begun adopting the use of Irish saints. The fourteenth century saw an increased intermingling of the two communities, a resurgence in the power of the native Irish, and a shrinking of the English demesne.\(^91\)

Amongst other matters, the Irish parliament of 1297 legislated that the English residing in Ireland not adopt Irish manners of dress, customs, or language.\(^92\) The maintenance of the lordship depended on the English of Ireland preserving their Englishness and their sense of being separate from the indigenous people that surrounded them.

By the mid-fourteenth century intermarriage seems to have been common, and resulted in a diluted or hybrid identity amongst their progeny. In 1346, the Irish government requested that Edward III (r: 1327-1377) outlaw marriages between the two peoples without special license, and in 1366 the Statutes of Kilkenny were passed. These statutes, which forbade intermarriage, fosterage, adoption of Irish children by the English, required those of English descent to speak English and to dress in English fashion, were largely ineffectual.\(^93\) As Duffy points out, people raised within an Irish milieu could not be made more English via legislation, even if they did, to some degree, retain an English identity.\(^94\) The degree of intermingling between the native Irish and the Anglo-Irish that these records record facilitated the transmission of artistic fashions,


\(^{92}\) Curtis and McDowell, 32-38.


\(^{94}\) Duffy, 148.
modes of depiction, subject matter, and genres of art between these two populations, making it nearly impossible to look at most wooden figures and identify them as having come from an indigenous or Anglo-Irish establishment.

Many of the extant wooden devotional sculptures from the fourteenth century are long, narrow carvings, and unlike the earliest surviving figures, the heights of the fourteenth century figures vary from seventy-six centimeters high to as much as one hundred and fifty two centimeters. All depict standing figures, and many have torsos which are so thinly carved that they appear almost plank-like. This is the case for the Clonfert Madonna (Fig. 97), and the figures of St. Molaise and St. Molua. Although not quite so plank-like, the figure of St. Gobnait has a flat and deeply hollowed back. The back of the Waterford Nursing Madonna (Fig. 117) is flattened and uncarved, but not hollowed out. This was likely because of the choice of bog oak for the material which is a partially petrified wood that does not expand and contract in the way that even seasoned hardwoods will. Only the Holy Ghost Angel (Fig. 127) seems to have been carved fully in the round, although the figure is much damaged by decay. As discussed in that figure’s

---

95 Many Anglo-Irish lords patronized Gaelic bards and poets. The third earl of Desmond (b. 1335-d. 1398) is said to have been one of the finest poets in Irish of his generation (although as Duffy points out, the only verses which survive by him are written in French). Architecture influenced by that of England (and the continent) was executed in the fourteenth century, yet retained certain Irish features, particularly in the relative plainness and deliberate simplicity of the structures and the incorporation of particular indigenous features, like the dumbbell pier. T.E. McNeill, “Church building in 14th Century Ireland and the ‘Gaelic Revival,’” The Journal of Irish Archaeology 3 (1985/86), 62; James Lydon, The Lordship of Ireland in the Middle Ages (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd., 1972), 184-185; Duffy, 147-148; Gearóid Mac Niocaill, “Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla’, Studia Hibernica 3 (1963), 7-59.

96 Discounting the Kilconnell Female Head, because the majority of the figure has been lost.

97 See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, Clonfert Madonna, p. 236.


99 See: Chapter 1, p. 33.
catalogue entry, the *Holy Ghost Angel* is believed to be an imported Italian figure, possibly a depiction of the Angel Gabriel from an Annunciation scene.\textsuperscript{100}

Three extant figures dated to the fourteenth century, *St. Molaise* (Fig. 85), *St. Molua* (Fig. 116), and the *Kilconnell Female Head* (Fig. 135) have been constructed in a head-on-pike design in which the head is carved on a long, pike-like neck that is set into the collar of the figure’s torso. This construction can also be seen in the drawings and photograph of the lost *St. Brendan* (Fig. 86 and Fig. 87).\textsuperscript{101} A late fourteenth century figure, *St. Procopius* (Fig. 95), currently on display at the St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague, displays what may be a similar mode of construction.

The two extant standing Madonnas from the fourteenth century, the *Clonfert Madonna* (Fig. 98) and the *Waterford Nursing Madonna* (Fig. 119), share several similarities, particularly in the treatment of the Christ-Child in both figures. The Children both gesture towards their mothers with affection while the Madonnas’ engagement remains completely with the viewer. Both Madonnas remain proportionately long and narrow as seems to be typical of other surviving fourteenth century in Ireland.

**Stylistic Development by Century: 15th Century**

Eight figures survive in Ireland which are datable to the fifteenth century. These are the *Fethard St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 138), the *Askeaton Madonna* (Fig. 145), the *Kilcorban St. Catherine* (Fig. 155), the *Holy Ghost St. Stephen* (Fig. 167), the *Holy Ghost Risen Christ* (Fig. 172), the

\textsuperscript{100} See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, *Holy Ghost Angel*, p. 281.

unprovenanced Museum Standing Madonna (Fig. 149), and the Museum Pietà (Fig. 178). Three of the eight figures come from the collection of the Holy Ghost Hospital in Waterford, as did the Holy Ghost Madonna and the Holy Ghost Angel previously discussed.

The fifteenth century in general seems to be a time of increased ecclesiastical growth and prosperity in Ireland. The Observant movement was reviving the mendicant foundations, and more than ninety new houses were founded in the fifteenth century. The Franciscan Friary at Askeaton was founded in either the late fourteenth century or early fifteenth century and significant ruins dating mostly to the fifteenth century survive to this day. The beauty and tenderness with which the Askeaton Nursing Madonna was carved reflects the significance of this foundation. The chapel at Kilcorban, from which the Kilcorban St. Catherine comes, was taken over by the Dominicans in 1446. It was likely from the early period of this Dominican foundation that the sculpture dates, having been either brought with them from their mother house at


103 Lydon, 260.


105 There is some ambiguity as to what precisely was the foundation date. Differing dates (1389 and 1420) appear in the following sources: printed margin note in Luke Wadding, Annales Minorum, in quibus res omnes trium Ordinum a S. Fransico institutorum ex fide ponderosius asseruntur, calumniat praeclare quaeque monumenta ab obliuione vendicantur, , XV., xviii, 145; O’Donovan, Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Year 1616 IV, 1420.1, 843 and Sir James Ware, The Antiquities and History of Ireland, (Dublin: A. Crook, 1705), 103. Westropp speculates that 1389 may represent the foundation and 1420 the completion, or perhaps the latter date could refer to the commencement of a significant addition. Thomas J. Westropp, “Notes on Askeaton, County Limerick. Part I. The History, A.D. 900 to 1579,” in J.R.S.A.I., Vol. 33, No. 1 (March, 1903) 33.

106 Gwynn and Hadcock, 225.
Athenry, or commissioned/donated within the first few decades after their arrival at Kilcorban.

Most of the surviving fifteenth century wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland are between fifty and one hundred centimeters high. The only exceptions are the Holy Ghost Risen Christ, approximately 162 centimeters high, and the Fethard St. John the Baptist, which measures 164 centimeters high. The quality of the carvings varies a great deal. The Holy Ghost Risen Christ has survived in a highly damaged state. Both arms are crudely carved replacements that have been inserted into large, awkwardly placed plaster sections. The feet and base, also replacements, are attached to the broken stumps of the legs of the original sculpture. There is a gap between the replacement feet and the break in the original sculpture. What remains of the original sculpture is carved in a provincial nature. The Askeaton Madonna also has been damaged; the polychrome and many portions of the wood are missing or significantly decayed. However in contrast to the Holy Ghost Risen Christ, what does survived evidences a sophisticated carving. The draperies on the Madonna’s full skirts and cape are deeply undercut. The faces are beautifully and sensitively rendered, and small details, including the lacing of the Madonna’s bodice and the areola of her exposed breast, are delicately and naturalistically rendered.

Stylistic Development by Century: 16th Century

There are nine extant sixteenth century wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland, seven of which are thought to come from the period prior to the Dissolution and two that are believed to come after. The seven pre-Dissolution sixteenth century figures extant in Ireland show a lot of contact with continental styles and influences, perhaps mediated
through England. *Our Lady of Dublin* (Fig. 186) and the Killoran figures (Fig. 203 and Fig. 205)\textsuperscript{107} appear to be imported works. The Englishness of Dublin in the beginning of the sixteenth century is particularly reflected by *Our Lady of Dublin* and the Killoran figures have been compared with early sixteenth century French sculpture.\textsuperscript{108} The *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone* (Fig. 226) appears to date from the early sixteenth century. The modelling of the chest is reminiscent of a figure from the southern Netherlands from c. 1480-1500 (Fig. 230) and the pose, hairstyle and delicateness of the figure is similar to another example found in the church of St.-Nizier, in Troyes, France (Fig. 223), dated to about the same time. The *Kilcormac Pietà* (Fig. 231)\textsuperscript{109} appears to be an Irish work, which, like the *Fethard Christ* shows a keen awareness of continental artistic trends. The *Glendalough Saint* (Fig. 208) is very similar to several extant Irish stone figures (mainly from tombs) from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Although the seven early sixteenth century figures likely represent a mix of imported and native work, the two figures which come from the post-dissolution period in the sixteenth century appear to be imported.\textsuperscript{110} Both are also associated with stories which make clear their foreign origins. The foreign attributions of these figures help to make evident the dependency of the Irish Catholic Church on foreign trade and connections in the wake of the Dissolution for the maintenance of the their religious material culture – connections, which must of necessity have circumnavigated Protestant


Britain. Throughout the entirety of the Suppression, these figures evidence continued independent contact and trade with the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, France and Italy.

Stylistic Development by Century: 17th Century

Like the sixteenth century, the seventeenth century was also a period of considerable turmoil and included a period of relaxed restrictions against practicing Catholics in Ireland, known as the Catholic Revival (1603-1641), the formation and destruction of the Confederation of Kilkenny (1642-1649), and Cromwell’s violent reconquest of the island (1649-1653).

Six wooden devotional sculptures survive in Ireland from the first half of the seventeenth century. These figures of the Madonna as Star of the Sea (Fig. 240), the Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure (Fig. 263), the Fethard Holy Trinity (Fig. 265), the Kilkenny St. Dominic (Fig. 288), the figure of St. Patrick / St. Berchán (Fig. 284) from Clonsast, Co. Offaly, and Our Lady of Limerick (Fig. 275), range greatly in scale. The two largest figures, the Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure and the Fethard Holy Trinity, are both life-sized and Our Lady of Limerick is nearly life-sized, whereas the figures of the Madonna as Star of the Sea, St. Dominic and St. Patrick / St. Berchán are much smaller. The figure of St. Patrick / St. Berchán is approximately 45 centimetres high and the figure of St. Dominic is about 105 centimetres high. The size of some of the larger figures gives some indication of the comparative stability of the seventeenth century Catholic Church in Ireland. The artists and patrons of such large scale artworks must have intended a permanent location for them, from which the sculptures were not expected to be often moved. All of the indigenous wooden devotional sculpture which

survives from the seventeenth century lacks the fluttering, expressive drapery folds typically seen in earlier figures, and all of the figures have a certain stiffness of expression and small erratic drapery folds. *Our Lady of Limerick* and the *Madonna as Star of the Sea* are the only extant seventeenth century figures that seem to have been imported.

It is unclear if any of the extant figures in Ireland date to the latter half of the seventeenth century, although the figure of *St. Patrick / St. Berchán* is a possibility. Many of the religious fled Ireland during Cromwell’s time, and if they returned, fled again at the edict of expulsion in 1698. These were not circumstances which encouraged the commissioning or importation of new sculpture. Despite the absolute horrors and atrocities of the parliamentarian conquest of Ireland, the massive numbers of deaths and accompanying destruction of material culture, many wooden devotional figures survived, and the commissioning and importation of figures resumed by the early eighteenth century.

**Stylistic Development by Century: 18th Century**

Figures in Ireland from the eighteenth century demonstrate an awareness of continental artistic trends, and may often be imported works themselves. Images of St. Anne teaching the Virgin Child became popular in the eighteenth century, partially because of the familiar and intimate dimension between the two figures as depicted in these works, but also because of their relationship to the enlightenment ideals of the age.

The two Rosary Madonnas in Galway (Fig. 301 and Fig. 311) date either to the late

---

112 MacLeod has speculated that the two Rosary Madonnas in Galway and the *Marino Nursing Madonna* may also date to late 1600s, but I am not in agreement with MacLeod on these dates. MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 123-124. See: Catalogue, Figures from the Suppression Era, *Rosary Madonna, Taylor's Hill*, p. 523; *Our Lady of Galway*, p. 537 and *Marino Nursing Madonna*, p. 566.
seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries and their dramatic presentations, swirling draperies and dynamic poses are indicative of the baroque style. The two wooden figures seem most likely to have been imported and may be of Italian or Spanish origin. Nothing is known about the early history of the *Marino Nursing Madonna* (Fig. 319), which was purchased from an antiques dealer on Aungier Street in Dublin sometime before 1928. Like the Galway Rosary Madonnas and *Our Lady of Limerick*, the theatrical presentation of the *Marino Nursing Madonna* is typical of the late baroque style. The figure may have been carved in Ireland, or perhaps imported during the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, there seems to be little attempt at subterfuge in the commissioning of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland, as is made evident by the commissioning and subsequent exhibition of the *Navan Crucifix* (Fig. 327). This beautiful life-sized figure of the crucified Christ was carved by sculptor Edward Smyth in 1792. It is the only surviving wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland for whom the artist is known. A public notice regarding the commissioning and public display of this figure was published on the 9th of August, 1792 in the *Dublin Evening Post*. In this newspaper notice we have not only a valuable record of the public reception of the *Navan Crucifix*, but also evidence for changing attitudes towards Catholicism and its material culture at the end of the Penal era.

---

113 Ibid.

Traditions, myths, and miracles

Many of the figures, both before and after the Dissolution, were believed to be miraculous. Both the *Annals of the Four Masters* and the *Annals of Ulster* record that in the year 1381 the image of the Madonna at Kilmore spoke.\(^\text{115}\) An Act of Parliament from Drogheda in 1460 talks of a miracle performed by the figure of the Madonna at Navan in which both sight and speech were returned to a man after he had been mutilated by his enemies.\(^\text{116}\) For some of the non-extant figures, the belief that they were miracle-working may have made them particular targets for the iconoclasts’ swords. Evidence for iconoclastic measures and accounts of post-Dissolution miracles is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Certainly, many more figures were destroyed than survive. By the fifteenth century, the prevalence of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland is made evident by an edict from the Synod of Cashel, held at Limerick in 1453, which states that every church should have at least one statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a cross, and a statue of the Patron of the Church.\(^\text{117}\) Although this synod legislated only for the southern area of the island known as Munster, one has to imagine, especially given the distribution patterns of the extant figures, that churches all across the island would have similar holdings. Assuming that each church in Ireland by the fifteenth century had on average three figures (supposing that larger establishments may have owned more and small


\(^{116}\) Hardiman, 50-51;

\(^{117}\) Begley, 431.
establishments may have owned less), the pre-Dissolution genre of wooden devotional sculpture must once have comprised many hundreds of figures.

Many of the figures are associated with semi-miraculous discovery myths. Most are implausible and definite dates or identities of persons involved are rarely given. In 1929, a series of letters between T. Shea and Adolf Mahr, then Keeper of Antiquities at the National Museum, state that the *Kilcorban St. Catherine* (Fig. 155) was said to have been discovered alongside the *Kilcorban Madonna and Child* (Fig. 46) in the hollow of a tree, sometime years prior.¹¹⁸ Yet Ambrose Coleman (who did not mention the figure of St. Catherine) wrote about the *Kilcorban Madonna* in 1902 without discussing this story, suggesting that he was either not aware of the story, or perhaps had some reason to discount it.¹¹⁹

The three Fethard figures, all near life-size, are said to have been buried in order to preserve them through the Suppression,¹²⁰ yet they do not show the amount of decay one would expect to find in figures long buried. If the story about the Fethard figures is true, then they could have been buried for only a very short amount of time. In a similar vein, the sculpture known as *Our Lady of Dublin* (Fig. 186) is said to have been preserved, half burned and hollowed out for use as a hog trough.¹²¹ However, there is no evidence of burning on the wood, and relatively little decay – certainly much less than

---

¹¹⁸ T. Shea to a Mr. Mahr, 12 September 1929, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

¹¹⁹ It is also possible that the myth of their discovery did not come into being until after the time of Fr. Coleman’s publication.

¹²⁰ Cantwell, 18-20.

one would expect to see on a piece of timber that had been kept in the conditions described. Instead, this story, originally told to the antiquarian George Petrie by unknown persons, was probably an attempt to explain the figure’s flat and hollowed back. In an era where it had been forgotten that most medieval wooden statues were flat-backed and hollowed to lessen their weight and prevent radial cracking, an explanation was likely desired for why the figures of the Madonna and Child were thus carved.

Conclusion

Wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland were once a popular and widespread genre of art found across the entire island of Ireland. The majority of surviving figures from the late medieval period have flat and hollowed backs to accommodate for the expansion and shrinking of wood and to prevent radial cracking. Suppression era carvings frequently evidence more sophisticated construction techniques involving the use of multiple pieces of wood doweled together under thick layers of gesso paste. Most figures were brightly and elaborately gilded and polychromed, but little evidence exists to support the notion that they were once covered in gems or gold repoussé. When the figures are grouped chronologically, some indications of stylistic and thematic development can be seen amongst the surviving artworks and in many cases these changes can be linked to significant historical events concurrent with the commissioning of these sculptures.
CHAPTER 2. AVENUES OF INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Whether or not continental-style, Christian wooden devotional sculptures existed in Ireland prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion is still a matter of some debate. In The History and Topography of Ireland, written in 1187, Gerald of Wales states that a crucifix in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity opened its mouth and spoke in the years before the Anglo-Norman invasion. When Richard de Clare’s (b: 1130-1176) army came to Dublin, the citizens of the city tried to flee with the cross but it became impossible to move, so that it could not be taken from the church.\textsuperscript{122} In another instance, Gerald refers to images of St. Ciarán of Glendalough which depict the saint with a blackbird in his hand\textsuperscript{123} but the medium of both the Dublin crucifix and the images of St. Ciarán are unstated.\textsuperscript{124} Compellingly enough, Gerald does refer to “other relics in wood of the saints”\textsuperscript{125} within a discussion of crozier staffs preserved as relics, but the specific objects to which Gerald refers is left to the reader’s imagination.

Despite romantic ideas to the contrary, Ireland was not an isolated culture prior to the beginning of the Anglo-Norman invasion. Dublin was a major center of foreign trade and the Ostmen who lived there maintained close contact with Scandinavia and Britain.

\textsuperscript{122} Gerald of Wales, The History and Topography of Ireland, trans. Thomas Forrester, ed. Thomas Wright (Cambridge, Ontario: Publications Medieval Latin Series, 2000), II. XLIV-XLVI, 58;

\textsuperscript{123} Gerald of Wales, II. XXXIII, 52.

\textsuperscript{124} It is possible that metal crucifixes were in use throughout the pre-Invasion period in Ireland Raghnall Ó Floinn documents fifteen metal crucifixion figures of a Romanesque type, most of which are unable to be firmly dated because they are unprovenanced. The earliest datable appears to be of circa 1200. Raghnall Ó Floinn, “Irish Romanesque Crucifix Figures,” ed. Etienne Rynne, Figures from the Past, Studies on Figurative Art in Christian Ireland (Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin: The Glendale Press, 1987), 168-188.

\textsuperscript{125} Gerald of Wales, III. XXXIII, 82.
Pilgrims both left and came to Ireland on pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{126} The Irish Church, much like the Church elsewhere in Europe, was swept by the Gregorian Reform movement in the twelfth century. In general, it can be said that the Irish both before and after the invasion were aware of, and participated in, many of the cultural and artistic movements that swept the continent. Although they will be considered singly in this chapter, as Arthur Champneys suggested,\textsuperscript{127} it was likely through a variety of avenues that the transmission of images occurred, rather than via a single channel. In the following sections, several possible modes of introduction for the continental-style Christian wooden figures will be explored.

\textbf{Pilgrimage as a Means of Artistic Transmission}

Pilgrimage could be one effective communicator of ideas between Ireland, England and the continent. Pilgrims had most likely been leaving Ireland to go on continental pilgrimages since the dawn of Irish Christianity. The most popular early pilgrimages were to Rome and Jerusalem. Dicuili (active c. 825), an Irish monk and geographer at the Carolingian court, relates in his \textit{De mensura Orbis terrae}, that the Irish monk, Fidelis, told him the story of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem by himself and a group of Irish laymen and clerics. During this pilgrimage, they also visited Egypt and saw the “seven barns that Joseph built,” (the pyramids).\textsuperscript{128} This trip, according to Harbison, was likely to have occurred before 767.\textsuperscript{129} In 1080, the \textit{Annals of Inisfallen} record that Ua

\textsuperscript{126} For a good general history of Ireland prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion, see: Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, \textit{Early Medieval Ireland 400-1200} (New York: Longman Group, 1995).

\textsuperscript{127} Arthur Champneys, \textit{Irish Ecclesiastical Architecture with some notice of similar or related work in England, Scotland and Elsewhere} (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd, 1910), 91-92.

Cinn Fhaelad, “king of the Déisi,” went to Jerusalem, presumably on pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{130} The earliest documented Roman pilgrimages in the Irish Annals date to the tenth century, although evidence in the early Christian Lives suggests that the Irish may have been going on the Roman pilgrimage for several centuries prior.

The popularity of the Roman pilgrimage is evident from a countercurrent against it found in the Irish hagiographies. St. Samthan taught that God could be found in Ireland as well as Rome. St. Finnian desired to see Rome, but an angel convinced him that the same rewards could be found in Ireland. Seven trips to the fair of Coemgen could substitute for one trip to Rome.\textsuperscript{131} Although these Lives all center on early Christian saints, they were compiled from the ninth – fourteenth centuries and may say more about the popularity of the Roman pilgrimage in the time that they were written than in the times to which they refer. The emphasis found in these stories on staying in Ireland, rather than traveling to Rome indicates the popularity of the Roman pilgrimage. Ten eleventh century pilgrimages from Ireland to Rome are recorded in the annals, as are two twelfth century Roman pilgrimages. There were likely many more pilgrimages made during this era than were documented; the annals tend to only record pilgrimages which resulted in the traveler’s death.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} Peter Harbison, \textit{Pilgrimage in Ireland, the Monuments and the People} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press), 29.

\textsuperscript{130} Seán Mac Airt (ed.), \textit{The Annals of Inisfallen} (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), AI1080.3, 235.


\textsuperscript{132} Harbison, \textit{Pilgrimage in Ireland}, 30-31.
As in the rest of Europe, Irish pilgrims also traveled to Santiago de Compostela. By the end of the twelfth century, many pilgrims bound for Santiago would book passage on the wine merchant ships bound for Bordeaux that frequently left the ports of Waterford and Limerick.\textsuperscript{133} As early as 1216, a hospice for travelers was founded in Dublin to provide accommodation while pilgrims waited for their ships to sail. Although in later periods it became more profitable for ship owners to take pilgrims from Ireland and England the entire way to Corunna by sea; in the twelfth century it seems that most Irish pilgrims were still taking the overland route from Bordeaux, through southwestern France and northern Spain.\textsuperscript{134} While walking this route, they were likely to have passed through Belin, St. Sever, Ostabat and St. Jean Pied de Port. From there, Irish pilgrims would have continued along the Camino Francès and stopped at Pamplona, Burgos, and León amongst others in northern Spain.\textsuperscript{135} Surely, in many of these churches pilgrims encountered venerated \textit{maestae} and \textit{sedes sapientiae}, which may have influenced the commissioning and importation of wooden devotional figures in Ireland.


\textsuperscript{134} Stalley points out that in the twelfth century, Hereford cathedral in England gave its canons sixteen weeks to make the trek. This generous amount of time is more appropriate to the arduous overland route, than the relatively quick sea-route commonly taken in later centuries. Stalley, “Sailing to Santiago,” 398.

\textsuperscript{135} Vera and Hellmut Hell, \textit{The Great Pilgrimage of the Middle Ages, The Road of St. James of Compostela} (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1966), 40 – 53. The twelfth century Pilgrim’s Guide contained within the \textit{Codex Calixtinus} admonishes pilgrims to visit the relics of several saints along this route, including those of St. Severinus in Bordeaux, Charlemagne’s warriors in Belin, St. Domingo along the road between Najera and Redecilla, Sts. Facundus and Primitivus, and St. Isadore in León. William Melczer, \textit{The pilgrim’s guide to Santiago de Compostela} (New York: Italica Press, 1993).
That Irish art was being influenced by the Roman pilgrimage has been well established by several scholars. Many have compared the carvings of figural high crosses to those on early Christian sarcophagi and have viewed them as the harbingers of the Romanesque style elsewhere in Europe. Six of the ten scenes which appear on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (Fig. 3) also appear on Muiredach’s cross (Fig. 4 - Fig. 5). The architectural elements of the crosses and the sarcophagi, including angle moldings, engaged shafts, and arches are also similar. The dramatic shift seen in these high crosses from non-figural ornament to didactic figurative programs occurred during the ninth and tenth centuries, at the same time as the rise in popularity of the Rome pilgrimage documented in the Lives. According to Verkerk,


137 For their function as precursors to the Romanesque style elsewhere, see: Roger Stalley, “European Art and the Irish High crosses,” 135-158; and Porter, 3.


139 Ibid., Verkerk, 11.
The primary objective of the Irish pilgrim, indeed, of almost all pilgrims, was to venerate the relics of the apostles and martyrs in Rome. Sarcophagi played a prominent role in the display of those relics; often it was not the bodies of the saints themselves that were viewed, but the sarcophagi that contained the bodies. One of the pilgrim’s primary experiences of the churches in Rome was seeing the sarcophagi that lined the walls of the basilicas and mausolea. Early Christian sarcophagi were often reused, eventually containing much later burials, especially those of important figures…With the relics themselves hidden from view, the defining visual imprints of these Roman relics would have been the sarcophagi that housed them.  

Fig. 3: Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus

140 Verkerk, 13-15.
Fig. 4: West face of Muiredach's Cross
Fig. 5: East face of Muirdach's Cross
Several scholars have speculated that the transmission of these sculptural elements arrived via the Ireland’s connections with the Carolingian court through a number of objects, particularly ivories, which may have entered Ireland in the ninth century. However, not a single Carolingian ivory has been found in Ireland, the fashion for ivory bookcovers was never copied in Ireland, nor is there any other evidence that suggests Irish monasteries were in possession of Carolingian ivories.\textsuperscript{141} Stalley contends that these images may have been transmitted via imported Roman panel paintings,\textsuperscript{142} whereas McNab suggests that drawings of Roman sarcophagi may have been used as memory aids in constructing the Irish crosses.\textsuperscript{143}

The iconographic and stylistic similarities between figural high crosses and early Christian sarcophagi allow the crosses to act as substitutions for the Roman pilgrimage. That the Irish high crosses could function in this manner is made evident in the Life of St. Berach. According to this Life, Berach made the sign of the cross over his disciple Colmán’s eyes after which they and their companion, Ciarán Máel, experienced a vision of Rome. Rather than continuing on to Rome as Colmán had intended, he, Berach, and Ciarán Máel erect a church and two crosses on the site, dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul. Significantly, the Life goes on to say that for the pilgrim, visiting these crosses is the same as traveling an equal distance along the road to Rome.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 146.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 148-149.

\textsuperscript{143} McNab, “Early Irish Sculpture,” 164-171.

The artistic response to the Roman pilgrimage evident in the Irish high crosses occurs within a distinctly Irish idiom. Non-figural crosses had already been in use for several centuries and have also been linked with pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{145} They are not merely copying the sarcophagi, but adapting the imagery to suit their own purposes within their own cultural context. Similarly in the late medieval period, wooden devotional sculptures were adapted from their original uses on the continent via their incorporation into existing local patterns and holy well traditions in Ireland.\textsuperscript{146} These pre-existing devotional practices provided a fertile ground for the reception of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland.

**The Twelfth Century High Crosses**

A major change in high cross imagery may be linked to the twelfth century reception of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland. Many high crosses in the twelfth century appear very different from their predecessors. Rather than displaying complex iconographic programs like those associated with the Roman pilgrimage discussed above, several twelfth century examples have only one or two large figures carved in high relief on each face of the cross, with one, or perhaps two, didactic scenes below and Urnes-style, Scandinavian-influenced interlace in abstract or zoomorphic patterns in the marginal areas similar to that seen on reliquaries of the time.

\textsuperscript{145} Peter Harbison, *Irish High Crosses* (Drogheda, Ireland: Boyne Valley Honey Company, 1994), 12.

\textsuperscript{146} See: Chapter 2, p. 122.
This type of imagery can be seen on High crosses at Downpatrick, Dysert O’Dea (Fig. 6 - Fig. 7), Tuam, Roscrea (Fig. 8 - Fig. 9), Kilfenora, Mona Incha, and Cashel.\textsuperscript{147} Most include a figure of Christ clothed in a long robe in the center of the cross-head on one face, and a large carving of an ecclesiastic on the obverse.\textsuperscript{148} The Doorty Cross (Fig. 10 - Fig. 11) is somewhat different from the other examples in that the faces of the cross on both sides are exclusively carved in large scale, high relief figure sculpture. On the western face a Crucified Christ / Christ in Majesty can be seen in the cross head, with a horse and rider depicted below. On the east face, an ecclesiastic wearing a miter and holding a crosier occupies the cross-head with two didactic scenes below: one which shows two figural busts being attacked by a bird and the other a pair of hooded figures holding crosiers. The sides of the cross are predominantly decorated with animal interlace.

The figures in the cross-heads seem to be more closely related to free standing devotional sculpture than to the figures in didactic programs seen on earlier crosses. These twelfth century carvings are at the point of almost breaking free of the crosses entirely, necessitating that some elements be carved from separate blocks and then attached via mortise-and-tenon joints. This can be seen on the Dysert O’Dea cross, on which the right arm of the ecclesiastic appears to have been separately carved. Leask suggested that mortise holes found on the top of the surviving arm of the high cross at Cashel may have also held small figures,\textsuperscript{149} whereas Harbison speculates that an arm-


\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
shaped reliquary or vessel for holy water or blessed oil might have been inserted, from which pilgrims could bless themselves.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{149} Harold Leask, “St. Patrick’s Cross, Cashel, Co. Tipperary: an inquiry into its original form,” \textit{Journal of the Royal society of Antiquaries of Ireland} 81 (1951), 14-19

Fig. 6: East face of the Dysert O'Dea Cross
Fig. 7: West face of the Dysert O’Dea cross
Fig. 8: West face of the High Cross at Roscrea
Fig. 9: East face of the High Cross at Roscrea
Fig. 10: East face of the Doorty Cross
Fig. 11: West face of the Doorty Cross
The similarities between wooden devotional sculptures and these stone carvings may be found more in their formal characteristics than in their utilization. High crosses of this style seem to be largely confined to sites that have been linked to the Gregorian reform. In relation to the Doorty cross at Kilfenora, Harbison suggests,

The uppermost ecclesiastic is perhaps best interpreted not as the specific local saint or bishop, whose crozier was of the drop-headed variety, as we know from a thirteenth century incised slab in chancel of Kilfenora cathedral, but as the embodiment of a newly instituted episcopacy. The latest Continental style of the figure’s crozier and the gesture of pointing down towards two ecclesiastics with more traditional croziers may symbolize Kilfenora’s elevation to diocesan status and its confirmation of the authority of the Church of Rome over the old Irish monastery, which we can presume to have existed on the site before the creation of the bishopric.151

Yet, there is something almost intangibly devotional in these solitary, large-scale, high-relief figures, with their static poses and eternal staring eyes. Fergus O’Farrell has suggested that these images of ecclesiastics may depict St. Malachy of Armagh,152 which in light of the present study of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland is an attractive hypothesis. Indeed, the relationship between indigenous saints and the earlier crosses is well-established. The site where St. Finnian was born was marked with a cross called “Finnian’s Cross.”153 Crosses mark the sites of saints’ miracles and other places associated with them.154 Crosses were also frequently named for Irish saints, including Coemgal, Colum Cille, Brigit, Sechnall and Eogan, all in Armagh, and at Kells the cross

151 Ibid., 108.
154 Verkerk, 22.
is inscribed with the names of St. Patrick and St. Colum Cille. Rather than being depicted on the earlier crosses, the Irish saints may have been linked to the biblical deeds and precursors which are pictured on the High crosses, as Verkerk states, “local typological manifestations of biblical and apostolic heroes.”

In light of this interpretation, the figures on the twelfth century crosses could be more readily viewed as depictions of Irish saints, rather than anthropomorphic representations of ecclesiastical authority, as Harbison suggests. This is also reinforced by the link between the twelfth century high crosses and reliquaries. In the marginal areas of the high crosses, engraved patterns of interlace resemble that of finely wrought metalwork, seen in the marginal areas of the Breac Maedhóg shrine (Fig. 12) and the St. Manchan’s shrine (Fig. 13), both dated to the mid-twelfth century. The crosses resemble large-scale reliquaries, which also include devotional images. Fergus O’Farrell has suggested that the western-most high cross at Kilfenora may have had the sarcophagus of a saint placed against its shaft (Fig. 14), evidenced today only in the remnants of a gable at the bottom of the cross. Harbison seems to agree with this assessment.

In much the same way that pilgrims from Ireland and all over Europe left their homes and traveled the world to visit the shrines and relics of the saints at Santiago de Compostella, Rome and elsewhere, pilgrims also traveled Ireland to visit indigenous

155 Ibid.

156 The Urnes-style interlace design represents another recent, imported element incorporated into the high cross iconography. Harbison, “The Otherness of Irish Art in the Twelfth Century,” 106-107.

pilgrimage sites, including the high crosses. In their large-scale, high-relief, and solitary presentation the figures on twelfth century high crosses appear similar to the wooden devotional sculpture that we know to come from early in the following century. The association of the twelfth century high crosses with relics and reliquaries reinforces this view of the stone high cross figures as primarily devotional, and therefore relates them much more closely with wooden devotional sculptures than with architectural or didactic figural stone carvings in other contexts.
Fig. 12: Breac Maedhóg shrine, mid-twelfth century

Fig. 13: St. Manchan’s shrine, mid-twelfth century
Fig. 14: High Cross in a field west of Kilfenora and a drawing by Fergus O’Farrell with hypothesized sarcophagus attached to the base.
The Gregorian Reform Movement in Ireland

Continental-style wooden devotional sculptures may have also been introduced to Ireland via the Gregorian reform movement, with which the twelfth century high crosses were also linked. The late eleventh and early twelfth century in Ireland, as in the rest of Europe, was a time of cultural, religious, political and economic renewal. The Gregorian Reform movement sought to resolve the Investiture Controversy and eradicate various abuses. Many of the issues in need of reform in Ireland were the same as those on the continent, namely simony, lay investiture and clerical celibacy. St. Bernard in his *Vita Malachiae* describes the Irish Church thus,

But the thoroughly evil custom had arisen through the diabolical ambitions of certain powerful men that the holy see [of Armagh] was held by hereditary succession. They allowed none to be consecrated bishop except those that were of their own tribe and family. Nor did this abominable succession merely endure for a short time, but this wickedness persisted for fifteen generations! An evil and adulterous generation had entrenched itself by this depraved custom... Before Celsus there had been eight married men who were never ordained, but they were at least literate. This is why there existed those circumstances of which we spoke above and they held for all of Ireland: a total breakdown of ecclesiastical discipline, a relaxation of censure, a weakening of the whole religious structure. Hence cruel barbarity was substituted for Christian meekness; as a matter of fact paganism was brought in under the label of Christianity. For a thing unheard of from the very beginning of Christianity occurred: bishops were changed without order or reason and they were multiplied at the whim of the metropolitan until one Episcopal see was not satisfied with one bishop, but almost every single church had its own bishop.  

Similar condemnations of the Irish Church arise out of the letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1070 to 1089, and Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury

---

from 1093 to 1109. Addressed to the kings of Munster, Turlough (d. 1085) and his son Murtagh (ruled 1086-1116) and their clergy, these letters spoke of the need for the elimination of simony, reformation of marriage law, proper administration of the sacraments and that bishops should only be consecrated to a fixed see. In addition to these ills, the organization of the Irish church was also seen as being in need of reform. It was wholly unlike that of the continent. Rather than consisting of a system of sees and dioceses, great monasteries with a lay-chief administrator controlled church property and jurisdiction. Called a *comarba* (meaning ‘heir’), this abbot-like position was often held by hereditary right from the tenth century.

In response to this situation, the Gregorian Reform movement can be said to have formally spread to Ireland in the year 1101 with the assignment of the country’s first papal legate, Máel Muire Ua Dúnáin. This also opened a new era of papal-Hiberno relations and marked the beginnings of a much closer relationship between the Church on the continent and the Church in Ireland. Also in 1101, the first Gregorian reform synod in Ireland was called at Cashel. Amongst the issues addressed at this and subsequent Gregorian Reform synods at Rath Bresail in 1111 and the Kells-Mellifont synod of 1152, were general moralizing strictures against simony, lay investiture, regulating usury and tithe, and concerning marriage law, comparable to those on the continent, as well as the

---


gradual diocesan organization of the island into a system of four episcopal sees made up of multiple dioceses under the primacy of Armagh.\(^{163}\)

The link between the introduction of the Gregorian Reform movement to Ireland and the introduction of the Romanesque style of architecture has been well established by Tadgh O’Keefe and others.\(^{164}\) The earliest surviving Romanesque structure in Ireland is the west façade portal of Ardfert Cathedral, in Co. Kerry (Fig. 15), built circa 1120. Ardfert had recently been granted diocesan status after having been denied it in 1111.\(^{165}\)

The decision to construct a five-bay portal in the Romanesque mode at this time was likely not coincidental. The façade acted as a very visible symbol of both Ardfert’s new diocesan status as well as their participation in the on-going reform movement. Cormac’s Chapel (Fig. 16 - Fig. 17), constructed in 1127-1134 at the seat of the Gregorian Reform movement in County Tipperary, acted as a kind of epicenter of this new architectural idiom, a ‘big bang’ that was imitated shortly afterwards in several other Irish churches.

\(^{163}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{164}\) The Romanesque style seems to have been introduced to Ireland at around the same time as the Synod of Rath Breasail and came into particular prevalence coinciding with the synod of Kells-Mellifont. In addition to these temporal coincidences, there are also geographical coincidences. The seat of the reformation movement in Ireland was at Cashel, Co. Tipperary on a piece of land donated unconditionally to the church by the King of Munster, Murtagh Ua Briain in 1101, on which was built the seminal piece of Hiberno-Romanesque architecture, Cormac’s Chapel, in 1127 - 1134. Several authors have suggested that coincidence of the introduction of Romanesque architecture with the floret of Gregorian Reform in Ireland both temporally and geographically is illustrative of a “conscious articulation of the spirit of reform.” Tadhg O’Keefe, “Romanesque as metaphor: architecture and reform in early twelfth-century Ireland,” Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne, Alfred P. Smyth (ed.), (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999) 315; Aubrey Gwynn, S.J., “The First Synod of Cashel, 1101,” The Irish Church in the 11th and 12th Centuries, ed. Gerard O’Brien (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1992) 156; Roger Stalley, “Irish Gothic and English Fashion,” The English in Medieval Ireland: Proceedings of the first joint meeting of the Royal Irish Academy and the British Academy, Dublin 1982, ed. James Lydon, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1984) 68; Aubrey Gwynn, “Saint Malachy and the See of Armagh, 1127-37,” in The Irish Church in the 11th and 12th centuries, ed. Gerard O’Brien (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1992) 214; and Peter Harbison, The Golden Age of Irish Art: The Medieval Achievement 600-1200 (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1999), 301.

\(^{165}\) O’Keefe, “Romanesque as metaphor,” 316.
constructed mid-century. Although the chapel’s small scale and steeply pitched roof are reminiscent of the indigenous ecclesiastical architectural tradition, its stone construction, elaborate portal, towers, barrel vaulting and various sculptural details look to England and the continent for their inspiration. As O’Keefe comments, “The building’s interior is wholly alien to Irish architectural tradition, and visitors to it must have experienced its non-Irish character even more profoundly than we do today.”

It seems possible that wooden devotional sculptures could have been introduced at the same time as Romanesque architecture, especially when considered in conjunction with the large scale figures found on twelfth century high crosses already discussed. Free-standing wooden devotional sculpture also became immensely popular on the continent during the twelfth century. There are fewer than ten continental examples extant that can be firmly dated before this time, but hundreds which survive from the twelfth century alone in Europe. The early twelfth century arrival of the Gregorian reform movement in Ireland therefore also coincides with the flowering of wooden devotional sculpture in continental Europe.

166 O’Keefe, “Romanesque as metaphor”, 316.
167 Harbison, The Golden Age of Irish Art, 301.
168 O’Keefe, “Romanesque as metaphor”, 316.
169 See Chapter 2, p. 17.
That stone sculptors working in Ireland were looking toward the continent for inspiration is evident in other surviving twelfth century architectural stone sculpture. At Ardmore Cathedral in Co. Waterford several stone relief figures survive (Fig. 18).  

During the Gregorian reorganization of the Irish Church, Ardmore claimed episcopal status in 1152 at the Council of Kells. However, when the list of bishoprics was named at this council, Ardmore’s status was listed as doubtful. This may have provided a programmatic reason for the inclusion of overtly Romanesque elements in the building of the church in order to assert their status and association with the reform movement. Figural sculptures in a twelfth century architectural context were extremely rare in Ireland. Most twelfth-century Irish churches were decorated with foliate or geometric designs. According to McNab, the few historiated capitals to be found in Ireland are associated with Cistercian foundations whose architecture always remained distinct from indigenous Irish construction and looked towards the continent for its models. The proximity of Ardmore to Lismore may also be significant. Malachy of Armagh, who was closely allied with the reform, settled at Lismore in 1127 and caused a large number of churches to be built there, none of which survive.

171 The figures have been moved from their original positions. McNab speculates that they could have been moved from a western portal, or perhaps from one of Malachy or Armagh’s nearby stone constructions at Lismore. Susan L. McNab, “The Romanesque Sculptures of Ardmore Cathedral, Co. Waterford,” Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 117 (1987), 50-68.

172 Only two other extant twelfth century Irish churches with relief figural sculpture survive, at Raphoe and Kilteel.


174 This also raises the possibility that the Romanesque figures could have been brought from the ruins of one of these other churches. Being associated with Malachy and the Gregorian reform, however, the same arguments could be made for these nearly coeval churches.
Fig. 15: Five bay Romanesque portal, Ardfert Cathedral
Fig. 17: Cormac’s Chapel interior

Ardmore Cathedral, a stone construction which includes other Romanesque architectural elements, is believed to have been completed in 1203, likely placing its major dates of construction between 1152 and 1203. This indicates that Ardmore Cathedral was influenced by either the pre-Norman Gregorian reform movement, or by the Anglo-Norman invaders, who quickly penetrated this area of County Waterford. Either way, the surviving stone sculptures show indications of continental Romanesque influence.\(^{175}\)

\(^{175}\) The inclusion of figural sculpture, the contrapposto stances depicted, clothing and drapery styles, and programmatic interrelations are all very continental in influence. For a much more thorough
Especially intriguing for the purposes of our current study are the carvings in the southern lunette (Fig. 19). The Judgment of Solomon can be seen in the upper register. Solomon is shown on the left in profile, enthroned, and holding out a sword. Two women approach him, wearing long, pleated garments and plain outer cloaks. The woman closest to Solomon holds out a baby towards him, while the woman behind extends her arms imploringly. King David can be seen seated on the right, playing his harp.\textsuperscript{176} In the lower register, the Adoration of the Magi has been carved. The Madonna and Child have been carved on the left. The Madonna is seated frontally, with the Child supported on her right knee. To their right, slightly elevated, is a four-legged animal, carved in profile, which may be a cow. The three figures of the magi process towards the Madonna and Child from the right. All three are carved in a similar manner, in long robes with triangular skirts where faint pleating can still be seen. They each carry their gift in their left hand, and hold another object, which appears almost plant-like, in their right hand. Behind these three figures is another, smaller carved figure, which is much damaged. McNab believes that it may depict Joseph.\textsuperscript{177}


\textsuperscript{177} McNab believes that the figures of the Magi may not depict the Magi at all, but rather figures from the Passion of Christ. I do not find her arguments regarding this programmatic change convincing. McNab, “The Romanesque Sculptures of Ardmore Cathedral,” 64. O’Keefe also believes that the programmatic layout of the lunettes is original. O’Keefe, \textit{Romanesque Ireland}, 223-224.
Fig. 18: Relief sculptures at Ardmore Cathedral

Fig. 19: Southern Lunette with the Judgment of Solomon and the Adoration of the Magi
The depiction of the Madonna and Child at Ardmore Cathedral, although much worn, shares some similar features with the earliest surviving *sedes sapientiae* wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland. Like the *Kilcorban Madonna* (Fig. 46), the *Athlone Madonna* (Fig. 71) and the *Holy Ghost Madonna* (Fig. 65), the Ardmore Madonna is shown enthroned, seated frontally with the Child on her knee. She wears a veil and crown, and the remnants of pleating can still be made out on the skirt of her gown. A shoe peeks out from her skirts at the very bottom, as can be seen on the surviving wooden figures.

Ilene Forsyth has written extensively regarding the artistic and textual evidence for the incorporation of wooden devotional *sedes sapientiae* images into the *Officium Stellae* liturgical dramas on the continent. In doing so, she compared wooden *maestae* with stone sculptures similar to the representation of the Adoration of the Magi at Ardmore. On the lintel of the south portal of Notre-Dame-du-Port in Clermont-Ferrand, an Adoration of the Magi is carved in which the depiction of the Madonna and Child is almost identical to an extant wooden *maesta*, known as *Notre-Dame-la-Brune*, originally from nearby *Saint-Pourçain-Sur-Sioule*, in Allier (Fig. 20 - Fig. 21). Another pair of stone / wood *maestae* can be found in northern France at Pompierre in Vosges and Mont-devant-Sassey in Meuse (Fig. 22 - Fig. 23). According to Forsyth, this tympanum appears to be a depiction of a liturgical drama in which actors portraying the Magi offer their gifts to a wooden sculpture, rather than to a living mother and child.¹⁷⁸

---

One wonders if a similar comparison could have been made between the stone Madonna and Child depicted at Ardmore and a no longer extant wooden figure.\textsuperscript{179} This may also account for the difference in scale between the much larger Magi and the smaller Madonna and Child. The programmatic link between the Adoration of the Magi and the Judgment of Solomon may also help to reinforce the view of this Madonna and Child as a stone rendering of a wooden \textit{sedes sapientiae} figure. The Madonna in these types of images acted as the Throne of Soloman, the seat of wisdom, upon which Christ sat. By juxtaposing these two scenes, this meaning is reinforced and Soloman can be see to be looking forward to Christ, as the eternal wisdom. Likewise, the Madonna was understood to be descended from the house of David and Soloman.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{179} A similar suggestion has been made for a figure of the Madonna which appears on the fifteenth century Rice tomb at Waterford Cathedral. Rae suggests that the stone figure may have been based on a specific wooden figure, one that was from Picardy or an English adaption of a Picardy figure. Edwin Rae, “The Rice Monument in Waterford Cathedral, \textit{Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy} 69C (1970), 3-14.

\textsuperscript{180} McNab, “The Romanesque Sculptures of Ardmore Cathedral,” 66.
Fig. 20: *Adoration of the Magi*, lintel of the south portal of Notre-Dame-du-Port, Clermont-Ferrand, France

Fig. 21: *Notre-Dame-la-Brune*, originally *Saint-Pourçain-Sur-Sioule*, Allier, France
Fig. 22: *Adoration of the Magi*, Pompierre, Vosges, France.

Fig. 23: *Maïesta*, Mont-devant-Sassey, Meuse, France.
Regardless of whether the wooden depictions of the Madonna and Child were ever used in continental-style liturgical dramas in Ireland, the stone depiction of a Madonna and Child at Ardmore seems similar to extant wood carvings of the same subject. The dates of the construction of Ardmore Cathedral make it difficult to determine whether the stone relief sculptures pre- or post-date the Anglo-Norman invasion. McNab outlines three main phases of construction of the cathedral, the first of which comprised the earliest structure which can be seen in the lower portions of the walls extending from the chancel arch, east. The second phase included the first nave extension, which finished just east of the present north doorway. The third and final phase expanded the church westwards to its present size. O’Keefe makes a convincing argument that this third phase of building was not a third phase at all, but rather a much later reconstruction, above foundation level, which he speculatively dates to the seventeenth century. O’Keefe still dates the figures to the twelfth century, however, suggesting that they were reset during the seventeenth century reconstruction. McNab also contends that the sculptural groups were moved from their original location, but still assigns their date to her final phase of building. O’Keefe and previous authors have

---

181 No textual evidence has yet come to light of enactments of the *Officium Stellae* in twelfth century Ireland. However owing to the huge losses in the written record, it is not precluded from possibility. For the most complete compilation of sources for both secular and liturgical drama in Ireland, see: Alan J. Fletcher, *Drama and the Performing arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland, a repertory of sources and documents from the earliest times until c. 1642* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001).


183 O’Keefe bases this assessment on the evidence of a stone set into a buttress which is inscribed with the number 16. He believes that the rest of the date has been obscured. O’Keefe, *Romanesque Ireland*, 223.

placed the completion of construction of the cathedral and the carving of the stone figures to the end of the twelfth century, whereas McNab argues that the end of construction may date to the early portion of the thirteenth century, placing it firmly within the Lordship period, after the coming of the Anglo-Normans.\textsuperscript{185}

The Ostmen

Another possible avenue of introduction for the wooden devotional sculptures to Ireland is via the connections of the Scandinavian Ostmen. The Vikings made their first documented landfall in Ireland in 795, just off the coast of Antrim, in the northeast of the country.\textsuperscript{186} By 841, the Vikings were no longer merely making landfall, raiding, plundering, burning, and leaving, but had become a major presence and colonizer who made Dublin their main center. The Ostmen (or “east men”), as they called themselves, established their own towns, mainly along coastal areas of the island. In some cities, including Dublin and Cork, a small native population was already residing in the area in the years preceding the Vikings’ arrival. In other places, like Waterford and Wexford, the Vikings founded completely new cities.\textsuperscript{187}

Norse Dublin was a market town, supported by commerce and trade. Manufactured goods, raw materials, and slaves were exported by the Ostmen through Dublin’s harbour. In exchange, luxury items including amber, jet, pottery, tin, and wine were imported. The inhabitants of Dublin also traded with their Irish neighbours, forming an economic web of activity including the trade of goods and materials between Norse

\textsuperscript{185} McNab, “The Romanesque Sculptures of Ardmore Cathedral,” 53-55.

\textsuperscript{186} John O’Donovan, ed., \textit{Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters,} year 790 (rectè 795), 397.

Dublin, other Scandinavian towns in Ireland, continental Europe and farther afield, and the Irish themselves. Norse traders attended Irish fairs, and evidence suggests that some Irish came to the markets held in Norse towns.¹⁸⁸ These dynamic trade-ties in the period before the Anglo-Norman invasion make the Scandinavian Ostmen a possible importer of wooden devotional sculpture in the twelfth century.

Indeed, we already know that this type of importation was happening in other Scandinavian areas along the same trade routes. Sweden and Norway both preserve an unusual amount of medieval wooden devotional sculpture, long held to have been directly influenced by English devotional sculpture.¹⁸⁹ Andersson suggests that English sculptors may have been living in Norway and training Norwegian artists.¹⁹⁰ In the twelfth century, the Cistercian monasteries Lyse Kloster in Bergen and Hovedöya Kloster in Oslo were founded with motherhouses in York and Lincoln, respectively. Norway was culturally connected with Ireland and Britain from about the year 800 via the trade routes

¹⁸⁸ Mary Valante, “Dublin’s economic relations with the hinterland and periphery in the later Viking age,” Medieval Dublin I, ed. Seán Duffy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000) 69-83; and Mary Valante, The Vikings in Ireland, Settlement, trade and urbanization (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 14, 52-53, 151-160. An eleventh century tract in the Metrical Dindsenchas documents the awareness of both parties about what went on in the in the fairs and markets of the other, “The Gentiles of the Gaels held often time with great acclamation a fair, without law, without sin, without deed of violence, without impurity. Three busy markets in the land, the market of food, the market of livestock, the market of the Greek foreigners, where were gold and fine raiment. The slope of the horses, the slope of the cooking, the slope of the women met for embroidery; no man of the host of the noisy [Gaedil] boasted of them nor reviled them.” Edward Gywn, The Metrical Dindshenchas (pt. III) 11, Todd Lecture Series (1913).

¹⁸⁹ This idea was first proposed in Aron Andersson, English influence in Norwegian and Swedish figure sculpture in wood, 1220-1270 (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1950). Although this book predominantly deals with the thirteenth century, the author views trends that had been occurring during the twelfth century as reaching their apex in the thirteenth.

¹⁹⁰ Because only one extant Romanesque figure in wood is currently known to survive in England, both Andersson and later Blindheim use images from illuminated manuscripts, copper-alloy crucifix figures and stone relief figures to establish the relationship between Norwegian painted wood figures and those from England. As in Ireland, no textual sources in Norway or Sweden from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries mention wooden devotional sculpture. Martin Blindheim, Painted Wooden Sculpture in Norway, c. 1100-1250 (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1998),7.
which carried merchants, goods and adventurers between Norway, the Orkneys, western Scotland, and Ireland, as well as further south to the French coasts for the wine trade. In 1223, a formal trade agreement was made between the English King Henry III (r: 1216-1272) and the Norwegian King Håkon Håkonsson (r: 1217-1263), which Blindheim states was one of the first between independent countries.\textsuperscript{191} The English Rolls also record a number of embassy ships sailing to and from England and Norway.\textsuperscript{192} Two counties in the Småland region of Sweden paid tribute to St. Thomas à Becket’s shrine in Canterbury in 1271, and Andersson suggests that Scandinavian pilgrimage to the shrine was probably frequent.\textsuperscript{193} In Sweden, Andersson points to the number of English bishops appointed to Swedish sees from the twelfth-fourteenth centuries,\textsuperscript{194} and suggests that they may have also imported English craftsmen for the artistic workshops which were attached to cathedrals in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although he sees the English influence on Swedish art as having been largely mediated through Norway.\textsuperscript{195}

Twelfth century Scandinavian art echoes that of Ireland in other ways; its wooden churches were being replaced by stone churches built on the European Romanesque model, there was intensive building activity and increased commissioning of church furniture. Also, like Ireland, no wooden devotional sculptures are known from an earlier

\\textsuperscript{191} Blindheim, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{192} Twenty royal embassies were sent to England from Norway and an unknown number were sent back between the years 1220-1259. Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{193} Andersson, \textit{English influence in Norwegian and Swedish figure sculpture in wood, 1220-1270}, 97.

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 96.

period. The earliest surviving sculptures of this type date to the mid-twelfth century and the earliest figures significantly pre-date any textual references.\textsuperscript{196}

Evidence suggests that the Scandinavians in Ireland were also looking towards Britain. In the eleventh century, a merchant colony was founded from Dublin at Anglesey, in order to conduct more direct trade with England.\textsuperscript{197} The trading ports of Bristol and Chester also traded directly with Ireland. In the eleventh century, Dublin’s king, Sitruic, maintained a close relationship with the Danish king, Cnut. This relationship was likely founded on the benefits of trade, Cnut’s occasional need for additional soldiers and ships, and Sitruic’s need for a powerful ally.\textsuperscript{198} The Norwegian diocese of Sodor extended as far south as the Isle of Man. The church of St. Bride (Brigit) just outside of the western walls of London, is believed to have served an Irish mercantile community living there in the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{199}

The Ostmen in Ireland maintained their own bishoprics, closely allied with Canterbury.\textsuperscript{200} When Ireland was organized into a system of sees and dioceses at the Synod of Rath Breasail in 1111, only the Hiberno-Scandinavian see of Dublin refused to recognize the primacy of Armagh. This was likely due to the close relationship between Dublin and Canterbury. Dublin was pointedly ignored at Rath Breasail, and its area was subsumed into the diocese of Glendalough – a particularly remarkable fact in light of

\textsuperscript{196} Andersson, \textit{Medieval Wooden Sculpture in Sweden, II}, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{197} Valante, \textit{The Vikings in Ireland}, 152.


\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 324.

\textsuperscript{200} Watt, 6-10.
Dublin having been a diocesan center for fifty years. A letter survives from 1121, ten years after the Synod of Rath Breasail, allegedly from all the townspeople and clergy of Dublin, to Archbishop Ralph d’Escares, bishop of Canterbury, which makes the close ties of Dublin and Canterbury evident and the animosity between Dublin and Armagh explicit. It states that, “the bishops of Ireland are very jealous of us, because we are unwilling to be subject to them but wish to be always under your rule.” Indeed, one theory as to why Laudabiliter, the papal grant of 1155 giving the lordship of Ireland to the English crown, was issued involves Canterbury’s jealously of the loss of primacy over Dublin, following the Kells-Mellifont synod in 1152.

From 1074 until 1152, Dublin was subject to Canterbury, and each of its bishops was consecrated by the archbishop of Canterbury. At their consecration, an oath of allegiance was also taken. The first of these Dublin bishops, Patrick, recited the following oath in 1074,

> Whoever rules over others must not think it beneath him if he himself is subordinate to others; but rather let him humbly show to those who are appointed over him, in all things and for the love of God, that obedience which he wishes to receive from his own subjects. Wherefore I, Patrick, who have been chosen to rule Dublin, the capital city of Ireland, do hand to thee, my reverend father Lanfranc, primate of Britain and archbishop of the holy church of Canterbury, this charter of my profession; and I promise that I shall obey thee and thy successors in all things which pertain to the Christian religion.

---

201 Watt, 18.
202 Ibid., 18.
203 Ibid., 36-37.
According to Watt, Dublin received help from Canterbury in the form of consecrations, advice, instructions, and the gifts of books and church ornaments. Although the specific gifts were not recorded, Canterbury Archbishop Anselm (d.1109) admonished Dublin’s bishop, Samuel, for disposing of books, vestments, and other church ornaments that were not his own property.205 One wonders if some of those church ornaments could have been wooden devotional sculptures.

That the Hiberno-Scandinavian church was looking eastward is evident in other ways as well. Two partially surviving structures, St. Peter’s in Waterford and the crypt-level of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity (Christ-Church) in Dublin look outside of Ireland for their models. St. Peter’s church has a tripartite plan with an English Romanesque style apse (Fig. 24), which O’Keefe compares to that of Kilpeck, in Herefordshire, England (Fig. 25) and St. Mary’s church, on Tanner Street in Winchester, England, where Bishop Malchus of Waterford (consecrated 1096) was trained. O’Keefe suggests that St. Peter’s, Waterford dates to the first quarter of the twelfth century.206

O’Keefe compares the layout of the crypt-level of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, to eleventh century Lotharingian crypts, such as can be seen in several churches around Cologne (Fig. 26 - Fig. 27) and suggests that it likely dates to the early-to-mid eleventh century.207 In these churches, as in Christ Church, the apses are very short compensated by the length of the western arms of the crypts, unlike those of English and

---

205 Watt, 219.


207 O’Keefe, Romanesque Ireland, 102.
Norman Romanesque crypts. The site of Christ Church Cathedral was first consecrated c. 1030 at the behest of Sitruic, king of Dublin from 989 – 1042, for Bishop Donatus, who was later buried to the right of the high altar in church. Descriptions of Donatus’ burial place and the layout of the crypt level of the church coincide enough to suggest that the crypt level of the current cathedral is the original one, and imposts used on piers which support the groin vaults of Christ Church’s crypt level compare well to other pre-Norman churches near Dublin – that of Kilkenny and Palmerstown. O’Keefe and Stalley both suggest that Sitruic would have seen stone churches on the continent while on pilgrimage to Rome in about 1028. Due to the accordance between Lotharingian crypts and that of Christ Church, O’Keefe queries whether Sitruic may have passed through that area on his way home from Rome and is believed to have obtained a martyrology from Cologne while traveling there.

All of this evidence when taken together argues that the Hiberno-Scandinavian church of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was looking outside of itself and out of Ireland, both to England and the continent. With strongly established external and internal trade ties and known production of devotional figures in Scandinavia, Britain, and the continent, the Ostmen are good candidates for having imported and disseminated wooden devotional sculpture to Ireland in its earliest period.

---

208 Ibid., 101.


210 O’Keefe, Romanesque Ireland, 102. Many of O’Keefe’s arguments were pointed to by Stalley. He questions if, “the late Romanesque work at Christ Church [was] determined by an earlier building” and if “sections of the crypt [could] go back before 1100.” Stalley, “Construction of the medieval cathedral,” 66-67. Ó Riain also suggests that Sitruic obtained a martyrology from Cologne on this same trip. Pádraig Ó Riain, “Dublin’s oldest book? A list of saints ‘made in Germany’,” ed. Sean Duffy, Medieval Dublin V (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 67-69.
Fig. 24: St. Peter’s, Waterford. Numbers indicate phases of construction, as explained by O’Keefe.

Fig. 25: Kilpeck Church, clearly showing tripartite construction (plan unavailable)
Fig. 26: Floor plan of the crypt level of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

Fig. 27: Floor plan of the crypt level of St. Maria im Kapitol, Cologne. This church and Christ Church above both have square transepts within the outer walls of the crypt, and polygonal apses which begin immediately west of the transepts.

Conclusion

It is not known precisely when, or by whom, wooden devotional sculptures were first introduced to Ireland. It was likely through a variety of means and sources that the figures were first brought to that island, not confined only to the few possibilities discussed here. People, ideas and goods were highly mobile in the twelfth century and, as
will be discussed in the following chapter, indigenous traditions provided fertile ground for the reception of such images. Both the Augustinian canons and the Cistercians established monasteries in Ireland during the twelfth century with motherhouses on the continent;\textsuperscript{211} they may have brought devotional sculptures with them. Gerald of Wales makes a few allusions in his \textit{Topographia Hibernica} that cause the reader to wonder if he were referring to wooden devotional sculpture in pre-Norman Ireland.\textsuperscript{212} No pre-Norman sources have yet been found that explicitly discuss wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland; the earliest reference in the annals to wooden devotional figures does not occur until the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{213} This however, does not mean that the figures could not have been introduced in the decades preceding the invasion. Or, the earliest figures which survive may indeed be the earliest figures that were carved and commissioned in Ireland. Wooden devotional sculptures could have been introduced by the Anglo-Norman invaders, who settled across the island and must have brought their own culture, devotional practices and objects with them. What is known for certain is that wooden devotional figures survive in Ireland which date to first few decades following the Anglo-Norman invasion.


\textsuperscript{212} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The History and Topography of Ireland}, II. XXVIII, XLIV-XLVI, XXXIII, 52, 58, 82.

CHAPTER 3. IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SAINTS, MATERIALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Introduction

Like the Roman-influenced Irish high crosses discussed in the previous chapter, wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland were a transliteration of a mainland visual tradition into an Irish context. Continental-style wooden devotional sculptures were commissioned or imported to Ireland from at least the thirteenth century. In order to better understand the function and significance of these figures, this chapter will begin by exploring pre-Norman traditions in wood, followed by a brief study of the origins and uses of wooden devotional figures on the continent. We will then transition into a discussion of wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland. Special emphasis will be placed on the interrelatedness of the sculptures’ materiality and spirituality. Although the formal aspects of the Irish carvings are similar to continental examples, the use of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland was quickly adapted to suit local tastes and folk practices. This resulted in a hybridization of the tradition that was uniquely Irish, regardless of whether native-carved or imported figures were utilized.

Pre-Norman Traditions in Wood

Looking at the modern Irish landscape today, one would not suppose that as recently as a few centuries ago the island was heavily wooded. In 1600, approximately an eighth of the island was still covered by woodland. In essence, the modern-day pastoral landscape is a human artefact. The landscape alteration began in the prehistoric


\[215\] Ibid., 163.
period by farmers via felling, burning and animal grazing, and was continued into the historical period through continuing tillage and pastoralism, clearance by the British to facilitate safe communication between settlements and as military protection from the Irish rebels or “wood-kernes”. There is evidence during the Lordship period for woodmanship, in effect the “cropping” of wild trees and regulating deforestation particularly in the area around Dublin. This practice illustrates that wood was regarded as a valuable commodity. Irish wood was exported all across Europe. In the seventeenth century a drastic clearance of Ireland’s forests for the timber trade occurred, in order to provide fuel for numerous small-scale iron smelting furnaces, particularly in England and Scotland. The result was an Ireland nearly totally denuded of her woodlands by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In Ireland, less than one percent of one percent of all surviving artefacts from the first millennium C.E. are made of wood, yet wood seems likely to have been the primary material used by people in this era because it was abundant and easily worked. Documentary sources from the writings of Bede, Cogitosus, and Adomnán provide

216 Ibid., 34.

217 Ibid., 164.


219 Ibid.

220 Ibid. 226.

evidence for a strong pre-Norman woodworking tradition in Ireland. The material itself was considered sacred in the pre-Christian era, an association which seems to have continued well into the medieval period. There is evidence for carpentry techniques in the construction of some of the stone high crosses and in the architecture of some of the surviving stone churches of this and later periods. The most important evidence is

---


Artistic representations of carved wooden furniture are found in the Book of Kells and on the high crosses. These depictions indicate that highly detailed and beautifully carved examples of wooden furniture were known to the illuminators and sculptors of the period between c. 700 – 900 C.E. This evidence is also supported by surviving specimens of carved Irish furniture from later centuries which can be seen to have their stylistic roots in the furniture that is depicted in the manuscripts and the high crosses. The Book of Kells, c. 750-810, provides some of the most detailed depictions of opulent furniture. John Teahan, *Irish Furniture and Woodcraft* (Dublin: Country House and the National Museum of Ireland, 1994), 10.

223 See: Dorothy Kelly, “The Heart of the Matter: Models for Irish High Crosses,” *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 121 (1991). For textual references to wooden high crosses, please see: Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, iii. 23 (W.G. Collingwood first suggested that the cross mentioned by Adomnán in this instance must have been made of wood. W. G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927)). Adomnán in his *De Locis Sanctis* records a “tall wooden cross” that had been erected in the river Jordan at the spot of Christ’s baptism, Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. and trans. D. Meehan (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), 86-87. Eddius writes of a wooden cross erected at Oundle to commemorate an event in St. Wilfrid’s life, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 142-143; Bede wrote about Oswald’s Cross, a wooden cross which had stood for nearly a hundred years at the time of Bede’s writing, Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Myners (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) iii, 2. Possible depictions of wooden high crosses have also been found incised on stone slabs are dated to the early eighth century and show ringed crosses, some of which have stake-like butts. The only possible relic of a wooden high cross that has been found to date is a wooden boss that was found during the Wood Quay excavations in Dublin.

224 See: Peter Harbison, “Early Irish Churches.” in *Die Iren und Europa Im Früheren Mittelalter* 2, ed. Herangaegen von Heinz Löwe (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 618-629. The Irish hagiographies contain many references to wooden ecclesiastical architecture. St. Samthanne the Virgin lived during the eighth century, and according to her Life, she desired “to build a church of smoothed timbers.” *Vita Sancte Samthanne Virginis*, vi, in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* 2 (1910) ed. and trans. Charles Plummer, 254. In the Life of St. Mochua, it states: “During that time the most holy man Kyennanus began to build a stone
provided by the surviving wooden artefacts themselves. The Wood Quay excavation in Dublin yielded about one hundred and fifty carved and decorated wooden objects from the Viking era. Many of these objects retain insular characteristics while incorporating elements reminiscent of Viking taste from the western Scandinavian colonies. Many also echo styles current in southern England. They range greatly both in terms of purpose and intricacy of carving. Many are utilitarian objects with simple incised decoration, but others are elaborately carved and seem to be the products of a long and sophisticated woodworking tradition. Still many other even earlier objects have been found preserved in bogs and crannogs across Ireland.\textsuperscript{225} James Lang stated that Viking-era wooden objects excavated from Wood Quay in Dublin demonstrate both a continuing native tradition, and a “receptive eye to compatible, neighbouring art.”\textsuperscript{226} This same receptive eye can also be seen operating in the adoption and adaptation of continental-style wooden devotional sculptures two centuries later.

\begin{flushright}
\textit{church for the Lord; because until that time churches in Ireland did not used to be constructed out of stone.” Vita Sancti Mochua Abbatis de Tech, viii, in Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae 2 (1910) ed. and trans. Charles Plummer, 187. In the eleventh or twelfth century text of the Life of St. Moling, Goban Sair turned upside down a dairthech that he had made, and “not a plank of it started from its place, nor did a joint of any of the boards move from the other…” (this act should be read as miraculous as most such structures measured about 10’ x 15’). In George Petrie, \textit{The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland, Anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion}, trans. Royal Irish Academy (1845) 141. At Killevy, St. Monenna built a church “of hewn planks in the manner of the Irish people.” Conchubrani \textit{Vita Sanctae Monennae}, ed. M. Esposito, \textit{Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy} 12C (1910), 237. As late as the twelfth century, some churches in Ireland were still being constructed of wood. According to St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s Life of St. Malachy of Armagh, a church was constructed at this time at Bangor in Co. Down “made of smoothed planks, closely and strongly fastened together – Irish work, not devoid of beauty.” Petrie, \textit{The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland}, 125. For a more in depth discussion of wooden churches in Ireland see: Chapter 2, p. 136.


\end{flushright}
Origins and Functions of Continental Figures

The earliest wooden devotional sculptures on continental Europe date to the late ninth century, and originate in southwestern France. They seem to have been originally designed to be reliquaries and their construction consists of a carved wooden core overlaid with repoussé metal work and sometimes elaborately encrusted with jewels and filigree. Often referred to as “majesties” in contemporary literature, the oldest surviving sculpture of this type is the very famous figure of St. Foy of Conques (Fig. 29). The general appearance of the figure that we have today largely conforms to Bernard of Angers’ description, written in the eleventh century,

> It is made of the finest gold and becomingly adorned with gems delicately and carefully inserted on portions of the garments… the band about the statue’s head also displays gems and gold. She wears golden bracelets on golden arms and a low golden stool supports her golden feet. Her throne is made in such a way that only precious stones and the best gold are to be seen there. Also, above the tops of the supports that project upward at the front, two doves made of gems and gold adorn the beauty of the whole throne.²²⁷

²²⁷ Bernard of Angers, I.16, 81. The doves were replaced at some point in the statue’s history with the rock-crystal globes which can be seen there currently.
Free-standing wooden devotional sculpture began to flourish in continental Europe after the year 1100. According to Ilene Forsyth, fewer than ten extant sculptures of this type can be dated with any certainty before that time, but hundreds of figures from
the twelfth century survive.\textsuperscript{228} Even allowing for the caprices of time and weather, these numbers indicate a significant blossoming of the genre in the 1100s.

Although many different saints were depicted, by far the most prolific type of wooden devotional sculpture on continental Europe in the twelfth century portrays an enthroned, front-facing Madonna with the Christ Child seated on her lap (Fig. 30). This type of image represents the Madonna as the \textit{sedes sapientiae}, or seat of wisdom. Although compositionally simple, the underlying iconography is rich and complex. The Madonna and Child are depicted in a sort of double-enthronement in which the Madonna is seated and the Child is enthroned in the lap of his mother. The Madonna was continuously compared to both the throne of Solomon (literally the seat of wisdom) and thus sits as a representation of the Old Testament holding the incarnation of the New Testament in her lap as well as the throne spoken of by Isaiah in \textit{Isaiah, 6:1} where he states that in a vision he saw “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.”\textsuperscript{229} The Madonna symbolically represented the Church, and Christ shows himself here enthroned as head of the Church. The Madonna and Child were also meant to be viewed as the Logos and Theotokos (the Word and the God-bearer), emphasizing the divine nature of both.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{228} Forsyth, “Magi and Majesty”, 215.


\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 29.
Fig. 30: French *Sedes Sapientiae* from the latter half of the twelfth century, Glencairn Museum, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania.

In Western Europe, images of the Madonna and Child as the *sedes sapientiae* and other statues of saints were almost always made of wood, carved in the round, and most were about a meter in height. They seem designed to be portable. Contemporary texts state explicitly that the figures were carried in processions. Bernard of Angers, writing in the early eleventh century, describes such an event, in which the figure of *St. Foy* was carried through the streets of Conques,
Once in a famine (I don’t know what caused it), the revered image in which the holy martyr’s head is preserved was carried out-of-doors in a huge procession. It happened by chance that a man coming toward the procession passed by very near to the statue. When he saw the effigy radiant with glowing reddish gold and blazing gems, he was blinded by a cloud of greed and said, “Oh, if only that image would slip from the shoulders of the bearers and fall to the ground…”

Another text, dating to the early twelfth century, mentions a day which was designated for processing through Utrecht with a figure of the Madonna and a twelfth century pilgrimage badge from Chartres seems to show such a figure being borne on a litter, as if in a procession (Fig. 31).

Fig. 31: Chartres badge

Textual sources help us determine where these sorts of images were kept and how they were displayed within the church. Hugh of Poitiers described a series of events in

---


the early 1160s relating to a wooden *sedes sapientiae* after the fire at the church of the Madeleine in Vézelay, France,

For in the crypt which rises above the tomb of the blessed beloved Mary Magdalene, by chance such a fire broke out that even the tie-rods… burned. The wood-statue, however, of the blessed Mary, Mother of God suffered nothing at all of the fire, but was somewhat blackened. Moreover, the silken phylactery which hung around the neck of the image of the Child Jesus contracted no odour of smoke nor did it change in colour in lesser or greater degree… [they] placed the statue with the aforesaid relics of the saints upon the main altar… and then when afterwards they attempted to return the statue to the crypt of the sepulchre of the Beloved of God, such a crowd of people gathered, wishing to kiss it, or even touch it, that they were scarcely able to replace it in its original place in the presence of all.\(^{234}\)

From this account, we can determine that the figure was kept on an altar, first in the crypt, and later on the main altar of the church. We can also witness a cult-like devotion to the image, no doubt that this was in large part inspired by the many relics found within the figure following the fire, but also in the manner which the Child was before dressed with a silken phylactery. The figure’s imperviousness to fire is by no means unique on the continent or in Ireland. During a fire at Châtillon-sur-Loire around the year 1030, burning embers fell on an altar but did not harm a figure of the Madonna displayed there. Similarly, in Ireland, the *Athlone Madonna* (Fig. 71) was believed to be miraculously preserved when the Poor Clares convent in Galway was burned several centuries later in 1641 by Cromwell’s soldiers:

Devouring all the provisions of ye poor sisters and making their sport and laughter of the alters, pictures, ornaments and sacred things which were therein… they lastly set fire to the convent and burnt it with all that was therein, onely [sic.] that God preserved miraculously the tabernacle in which the most Blessed Sacrament was when they prayed before it… and likewise an old image of Our Lady, both made of wood.\textsuperscript{235}

As Forsyth points out, the devotion shown to these sculptures – including the conviction in their miraculous preservation from fire – “seems based on a belief in the statues as being more than mere simulacra fashioned to serve a didactic or commemorative purpose. It recalls the relationship between image and prototype assumed in the Eastern icon.”\textsuperscript{236}

In fact, evidence for this type of reading of devotional images was used to justify the existence of religious imagery from the eighth century, when in the aftermath of a ban on religious imagery in 726 by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III and the ensuing iconoclasm that resulted in the East,\textsuperscript{237} St. John Damascene wrote the \textit{Fountain of Wisdom}, the third book of which contained a chapter on the defense of images,

\begin{quote}
But since some find fault with us for worshipping and honouring the image of our Saviour and that of our Lady, and those, too, of the rest of the saints and servants of Christ, let them remember that in the beginning God created man after His own image. On what grounds, then, do we shew reverence to each other unless because we are made after God's image? For as Basil, that much-versed expounder of divine things, says, the honour given to the image passes over to the prototype. Now a prototype is that which is imaged, from which the derivative is obtained… Often, doubtless, when we have not the Lord's passion in mind and see the image of Christ's crucifixion, His saving passion is brought back to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{235} \textit{Annals of the Convent, Poor Clares, Galway.}

\textsuperscript{236} Forsyth, “Magi and Majesty,” 217.

remembrance, and we fall down and worship not the material but that which is imaged: just as we do not worship the material of which the Gospels are made, nor the material of the Cross, but that which these typify. For wherein does the cross, that typifies the Lord, differ from a cross that does not do so? It is just the same also in the case of the Mother of the Lord. For the honour which we give to her is referred to Him Who was made of her incarnate. And similarly also the brave acts of holy men stir us up to be brave and to emulate and imitate their valour and to glorify God. For as we said, the honour that is given to the best of fellow-servants is a proof of good-will towards our common Lady, and the honour rendered to the image passes over to the prototype...

The belief in the effect of this translation of devotion from image to saint or godhead would have been strengthened by the incorporation of relics into the devotional carving, as we know was commonly done with the earliest figures, designed as reliquaries. Bernard of Angers, in writing about the majesty of St. Foy, makes this point in the eleventh century,

Since reverence to her honors God on high, it was despicable of me to compare her statue to statues of Venus or Diana... no room was left for argument as to whether the shaped image of Sainte Foy ought to be held worthy of veneration, because it was manifestly clear that he who criticized the statue was punished as if he had shown disrespect to the holy martyr herself. Nor did any doubt linger as to whether the image was a foul idol where an abominable rite of sacrifice or of consulting oracles was practiced. The image represents the pious memory of the holy virgin before which, quite properly and with abundant remorse, the faithful implore her intercession for their sins. Or, the statue is to be understood most intelligently in this way: it is a repository of holy relics, fashioned into a specific form only because the artist wished it. It has long been distinguished by a more precious treasure than the ark of the Covenant once held, since it encloses the completely intact head of a great martyr, who is without doubt one of the outstanding pearls of the heavenly Jerusalem.


Bernard of Angers, 1.14, 79.
The incorporation of relics into an image designed to look like a saint or godhead could easily lead to a conflation of depicted body (wooden devotional figure) and actual body (as reflected by a relic). Both wooden figures and relics act as lesser mirrors of the immaterial archetypes of the saints which they depict. Relics simply sit on a higher rung of this ladder, as they participate more directly in the saint’s being. The association with relics changes wooden devotional figures from lifeless carvings into objects that participate in the essence of the saints themselves.

That this meaning is retained by wooden devotional figures which do not physically contain relics is made evident by the Gero Crucifix (Fig. 32 - Fig. 33). Thietmar of Merseberg, writing at the beginning of the eleventh century states,

> At [Archbishop Gero’s] command, the crucifix which now stands above his grave, in the middle of the church, was artfully fabricated from wood. When he noted a split in its head, he did not presume to heal it himself but rather relied upon the healthy remedy of the highest artisan. He took a portion of the body of the Lord, our unique comfort in every necessity, and a part of the health-bringing cross, and placed them together in the crack. Then prostrating himself, he tearfully invoked the name of the Lord. When he arose, he found that the damage had been healed through his humble benediction.²⁴⁰

This passage makes it evident that the contemporary understanding of the Gero Crucifix was that its material was comprised not only of polychromed wood, but also the sacred elements of the consecrated host and a piece of the True Cross.²⁴¹ Yet, when the

---


²⁴¹ Annika Fischer, in a paper presented at Kalamazoo in 2005, discusses the materiality of the Gero Crucifix, specifically its association with relics. She first outlined this line of arguments as related to the materiality of the Gero crucifix. Annika Fisher, "**True Cross and Real Presence**: the Veracity of the
Gero Crucifix was undergoing restoration in 1976, scholars were surprised to discover that there was no reliquary receptacle in the figure whatsoever – this despite the fact that exact dimensions (15cm x 15cm x 10cm) had been published by Paul Clemen in 1937 and repeated in many sources thereafter. This discovery led several scholars to conclude that the sculpture currently known as the Gero Crucifix is not the same one referred to by Thietmar of Merseberg.


243 Dendrochronological dating of the corpus performed in 1976 suggests that that tree from which the Christ figure is carved was felled in the year 976. This date makes it plausible that carving that we have come to know as the Gero Crucifix is the one described by Thietmar of Merseberg. Schulze-Senger, Matthäi, Hollstein, and Lauer, 39-44.
Fig. 32: Gero Crucifix

Fig. 33: Detail of Gero Crucifix
A closer reading, however, makes it evident that the inclusion of a reliquary receptacle was never intended. Rather, the relics were miraculously infused into the physical form of the sculpture itself. The depicted body, infused with the body of Christ (present via transubstantiation in the host), itself becomes the body of Christ. Christ’s body and his true cross transform the depiction of the crucifixion into the crucifixion itself, occurring perpetually in our physical presence. Infusing a devotional sculpture with a relic-like meaning, even when relics are not present, seems to result from a need to explain and excuse popular devotional practices surrounding these figures.

Bernard’s initial disgust with the ‘foul idol’ of St. Foy and subsequent apologetic excuse for its veneration makes evident this feeling of impropriety.

The infusion of devotional sculpture with the essence of the saints themselves is reinforced by their possible utilization within liturgical dramas. As has already been noted, surviving figures from the twelfth century appear designed to be portable. They were carried in processions and Ilene Forsyth makes a strong argument that carvings of the Madonna and Child were likely placed at the center of the Officium Stellae, reenacted on the Feast of the Epiphany. In this role, the statues accepted offerings and homage in the dramatization of Adoration of the Magi. The inclusion of the devotional sculptures, imbued with a relic-like presence, served to place the actual saint at the center of the re-enactment.

---


245 Forsyth, “Magi and Majesty,” 217.

246 Ibid.
One text of the *Officium Stellae* from eleventh century Nevers, France, is sufficiently detailed as to give us a sense as to how the image of the Madonna and Child might have been used. The drama was performed after Matins but before the mass on Epiphany. The three magi were played by clerics. The play begins with the magi appearing before the main altar. They then began to process towards another actor, playing Herod, and likely seated near the entrance to the choir. The magi ask Herod about the Christ Child and then commence following a star (which Forsyth says is hung on a string) towards other clerics, dressed as midwives. The midwives ask who the magi are seeking, and they answer that they seek the Christ Child. The directions in the play then state that the midwives point the magi towards an image and say, “Behold, here is the Child whom you seek,” (“Ostendentibus, illis Imaginem dicant: ECCE PUE R ADEST QUEM QUERITIS”).

Another text from Rouen, dated to the fourteenth century, makes this even more explicit. As in earlier texts, the magi meet in front of the main altar, follow the star through the choir, and proceed to the nave, meeting the midwives in front of the Altar of the Cross. In reference to this altar, the fourteenth century text refers to, “the statue of Mary previously placed upon the Altar of the Cross.” The magi arrive, state the subject of their search, and the midwives draw back a curtain, saying, “Behold, here is the Child, whom you seek,” (“et Magi, Stellam ostendentes, ad Ymaginem Sancte Marie super Altare Crucis prius positam cantantes pergant… Tunc duo dalmaticati aperientes cortinam dicant: ECCE PUE R ADEST QUAM QUAERITIS”).

---

247 Ibid., 220-221.
In these liturgical dramas, the dramatic moment is the revealing of the Madonna and Child made manifest by a devotional image. These plays both utilized and reinforced the conflation between actual body, depicted body, and spiritual presence inherent in the wooden devotional images on the continent. Through the use of wooden devotional figures, the Madonna and Child themselves, rather than actors, were placed at the center of these liturgical dramas.

**Display and use in Ireland**

Like their continental counter-parts, the relatively small scale of the earliest surviving figures in Ireland, most around a meter in height, suggests that they were designed to be portable. From the evidence, we know that wooden figures in Ireland were likewise placed on altars, in niches or ledges within the church, at least in the later periods. That some of the figures were kept on altars is apparent from textual sources. O’Sullivan Beare states that figures of St. John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary were pulled down from the altar in their church in Castle Ellis in the early seventeenth century.\(^{249}\) A nineteenth century account of an eighteenth century chapel, built on Fish Lane in Limerick City, states that the figure of *Our Lady of Limerick* was set up in a shrine prepared at the epistle-side of the altar.\(^{250}\) Unfortunately there is very little proof for where the figures were kept in the churches at the earliest periods of production, but since continental figures seem to have been kept on altars, as were figures in Ireland.

---

\(^{248}\) Ibid.


during the Suppression, it seems reasonable to suggest that they may also have been kept on altars in earlier periods. Figures may also have been kept in specially constructed niches within the walls of their churches, much as they are today. Canice Mooney describes extant niches which may have been used to hold wooden devotional sculpture in churches at Castledermot, Co. Kildare, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath and at Adare Friary, in Co. Limerick.  

The backs of most of the figures from the entire time period studied are either flat and hollowed, in the earliest figures, merely flattened, or fully carved, but in considerably less detail than the fronts of the figures. This evidence all combines to suggest that the backs of the figures were not meant to be seen with any kind of regularity. In cases where the back is completely flat, or flat and hollowed, it seems evident that the carving was intended to be placed against a wall. This is further supported by the very shallow profile of several of the figures, including that of St. Molua (Fig. 116), St. Molaise (Fig. 82), the Fethard St. John the Baptist (Fig. 140), the Fethard Holy Trinity (Fig. 265), and the Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone (Fig. 221).  

Unfortunately, little evidence of liturgical drama survives in Ireland. As is the case with other ecclesiastical documents, much was likely destroyed during the Dissolution and Suppression. The earliest extant evidence is the Dublin Corpus Christi list of 1498.  

---

251 Mooney, “Franciscan Architecture in Pre-Reformation Ireland (Part II),” 131.  
used in the drama. The skinners, house carpenters, tanners and needle-workers were
responsible “for the body of the camel and Our Lady and Her child well costumed with
Joseph to lead the camel and Moses with the Children of Israel and porters to carry the
camel.” The strainers and painters were specifically instructed to “paint the head of the
camel” leading one to believe that the rest of this grouping was not carved, but
consisted of tableaux vivants portrayed by actors. A slightly later reference, dating to
1603, refers to a Corpus Christi play that took place in Kilkenny, but again, no reference
to wooden devotional sculpture is made.  

Much more evidence exists for wooden devotional sculpture being incorporated into
into other feast day processions, not dissimilar from that described by Bernard of
Anger. In Ireland, these feast day processions become known as patterns or patruns,
after the ‘patron’ saint. In most cases, the pattern began with prayers at the church,
followed by a procession during which a figure would be carried to a nearby holy site,
most often a holy well dedicated to that saint. The figure would then be set up by the
well, and reciting a proscribed set of prayers, the faithful would then walk the holy site in
a specific pattern, visit stations, and drink from the well. If a tree or bush is located
near the well (sometimes called a ‘cloutie tree’), it is customary to tie a rag to the
branches or hammer a nail or coin into the tree (  

---

253 Dublin City Archives, CI/2/1, (The Chain book), fols. 56 verso – 57 recto. As quoted in
Fletcher, Drama and the Performing Arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000).


256 Generally speaking, in Ireland holy ‘wells’ are most often springs.

In cases where the wooden devotional figure was considered to be miracle-working, the devoted might also have pressed their limbs or other objects to the sculpture in hopes of receiving a cure or other blessing from the saint.

It is the utilization of holy wells and cloutie trees which sets Irish practice apart from continental. The great majority of these sites are in the countryside, and according to Eamonn Kelly, there may be as many as three thousand holy wells in Ireland. Of the five hundred and sixteen wells surveyed by Carroll, three hundred and three were dedicated to saints, fifty-five to the Madonna, forty to God or Christ, and one hundred and eighteen to individuals or a specific ailment (such as joint well or eye well). The pattern day most often coincides with the saint’s feast day, but may also occur on an important Christian festival, such as Easter or Epiphany. The saints’ wells are most often dedicated to indigenous Irish saints, rather than international saints and many may have pre-Christian origins. This is likely the case when a pattern coincides with an important seasonal festival, particularly harvest time. These patterns have been linked in

258 Ibid., 14.
259 Although this may sound like a highly superstitious local tradition, it is not unlike practices associated with other, more international, saints. Examples of related practices include the blessing of throats to ward off disease on the feast day of St. Blaise, or the wearing of devotional scapular by Catholic laity in return for the Sabbatine privilege, which consists of the early liberation from purgatory by the Virgin Mary on the Saturday following the wearer’s death. Joseph Hilgers, "Sabbatine Privilege," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 1 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13289b.htm (accessed on 20 Jun. 2011).
several instances to the festival of Lugnasad,\textsuperscript{263} including Ireland’s most famous pilgrimage, Croagh Patrick. According to both Ó Giolláin and Logan, most of the patterns which occur between St. Mary Magdalene’s day (July 22\textsuperscript{nd}) and the feast of the Assumption on the 15\textsuperscript{th} August seem to involve Christian attempts to replace Lugnasad.\textsuperscript{264} Peter Harbison sites an instance in Co. Limerick of a well dedicated to St. Molua (meaning ‘my Lua’), where he states that pagan predecessor was Lugaid. Harbison states that this example shows a clear occurrence of name transfer from the pre-Christian past.\textsuperscript{265}

In fact, one of the surviving wooden devotional figures in Ireland depicts this same St. Molua\textsuperscript{266} (Fig. 113), and is still kept within its home parish in rural Co. Kilkenny. Nothing is currently known about the pre-Suppression origins of this figure. The chapel in Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny where this figure is kept is near the former site of a monastery founded by this very saint, which he used to visit on his way to and from Limerick. A holy well nearby, Thubbermolooa, was also associated with the saint.\textsuperscript{267} The small parish of Killaloe is in fact named for the saint, its Irish name being Cill-da-lua,
meaning Church of (saint) Lua. The figure, which during the Suppression was in the keeping of the Hayden family -- its *airchinnech*\(^{268}\) -- was brought to the holy well as part of a traditional pattern, once a year on the saint’s feast day, where pilgrims were able to view it.\(^{269}\) This well was destroyed during road repairs in 1760 and the religious pattern involving the figure of Molua and the now-destroyed well soon disappeared.

Fig. 34: Cloutie tree near St. Feichin’s well and Fore Abbey, Co. Westmeath (photo: author)

\(^{268}\) Meaning ‘leader’ or ‘superior’.

Fig. 35: St. Gobnait’s well, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (photo: author)

Fig. 36: St. Maulríán’s well, Crossabeg, Co. Wexford (photo: author)
Similar relationships between wooden devotional figures and pattern day practices have been documented in several instances, including the figures of St. Maolrúán from Crossabeg, Co. Wexford, St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin from Ballyhale, Co. Kilkenny, and St. Natalis / St. Nadan from Kilmanagh, Co. Kilkenny. The Fethard figures, depicting John the Baptist (Fig. 138), Christ on the Cold Stone (Fig. 215), and the Holy Trinity (Fig. 265) were exhibited to the public on Trinity Sunday every year as part of a local pattern in Fethard, Co. Tipperary.\(^{270}\) The Waterford Nursing Madonna may have been incorporated into a religious pattern dedicated to the Virgin Mary that was still being held near the Reisk church in the mid-nineteenth century.\(^{271}\) The figure of St. Patrick / St. Berchán (Fig. 284) currently at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin may also have been placed at the center of a local pattern in Clonsast, Co. Offaly.\(^{272}\)

In a few selected instances, the ancient patterns have survived to the present day. In the small parish church of Ballyvourney, Co. Cork a fourteenth-century figure of a local saint, Gobnait, is preserved (Fig. 101). The saint’s pattern day is held twice yearly on February 11\(^{\text{th}}\) (Gobnait’s feast day) and Whitsunday (the feast of the Pentecost). On the pattern day, the figure is displayed in the church and the faithful use a cloth tape to take what is known as St. Gobnait’s Measure. People take the fabric and run it around the statue in various ways, most frequently folding it into a cross and pressing it to the figure.\(^{270}\)


\(^{271}\) “There is a large and much frequented graveyard attached to this church, and patterns are held at it on the second festival of the B.V.M. occurring in Autumn.” Michael O’Flanagan, *Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Waterford Collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey* (Hand typed transcription of the Letters in the National Library of Ireland Collection, 1928), ref. 40, 21.

\(^{272}\) Letter between John Raftery and Fr. Breen, C.C., Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow on 20 June, 1944. (Unpublished) NMI file IA.539.47.
It is believed that this tape will help to ward off disease in the coming year. Gobnait’s pattern day is extremely popular. Fr. D.P. O’Briain, the parish priest in Ballyvourney, related to me that on days when St. Gobnait is displayed he holds three masses, all of which are fully attended.273

Following the measure, the religious pattern, called the *Turas Ghobnatan*,274 is usually undertaken in an area associated with the saint’s well, grave and the ruins of two medieval churches a little outside of the town of Ballyvourney. During this pattern, *rounds* are made during which the devotee walks in a proscribed circular pattern around various stations at the site, while reciting a number of Our Fathers and Hail Marys, followed by a prayer recited in Irish asking for Gobnait’s intercession.275 The saint’s pattern day remains relatively unchanged since it was first documented three hundred years ago by John Richardson.

In 1717, Richardson gives one of the earliest documented accounts of the figure and its religious pattern, he writes,

273 Interview with D. P. O’Briain (May 2010).

274 It seems that the form of the *Turas Ghobnatan* has changed slightly from MacLeod’s account of it, during which time pilgrims made rounds on their knees (as was also documented 300 years ago by Richardson), rather than walking, and the little figure of St. Gobnait was brought to the pilgrimage site itself, and set up on the mound believed to be Gobnait’s grave. MacLeod also recounts that, “Pilgrims kissed the statue, rubbed aching limbs to it, tied handkerchiefs about its neck to be worn afterwards as a preventative against sickness.” MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints,” 165.

275 The prayer recited is as follows: “Go mbeannaí Dia dhuit, a Ghobnait Naofa, Go mbeannaí Muire dhuit agus beannaim féin duit, Is chugat a thánag a’ gearán mo scéal leat, A’s a d’iarraidh mo leigheas or son Dé ort.” Translated, it reads: “May God and Mary bless you, O Holy Gobnait, I bless you too, and come to you with my complaint. Please cure me for God’s sake.” This version of St. Gobnait’s prayer in Irish, as well as its English translation is taken from Eilís Uí Dháiligh’s small pamphlet on Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney, available locally in that parish. This version of the prayer in Irish differs slightly from the one transcribed by Catriona MacLeod in the 1940s and from yet another one inscribed on the base of a stone statue carved by Seamus Murphy, which was erected on the hill where the *Turas Ghobnatan* takes place. According to Uí Dháiligh’s pamphlet there are several different versions of this prayer owing to it having been passed down initially as an oral tradition from father to son. Uí Dháiligh, *Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney*, 25-27.
An Image of Wood, about two Foot high, carved and painted like a Woman, is kept in the Parish of Ballyvorny, in the Diocese of Cloyn, and County of Cork; it is called Gabinet. The Pilgrims resort to it twice a Year, viz. on Valentine’s-eve, and on Whitfun-Thursday. It is set up for their Adoration, on the old ruinous Walls of the Church. They go round the Image thrice on their Knees, saying a certain number of Paters, Aves, and Credos. Then they say the following Prayer in Irish, A Gabinet tabhair flán aon Mbliathan fhin, agas fábhál fhin o gach Geine & ford Egruas, go specialta on Bholgagh, that is, O Gabinet, keep us safe from all kinds and sorts of Sicknes, especially from the Small Pox. And they conclude with killing the Idol, and making an Offering to it every one according to their Ability, which generally amounts in the whole to Five or Six Pounds. This image is kept by one of the Family of the O’Herlehy’s, and when any one is sick of the Small Pox, they lend for it, Sacrifice a Sheep to it, and wrap the Skin about the sick Person, and the Family eat the Sheep. But this Idol hath now much lost its Reputation, because two of the O’Herlehy’s died lately of the Small Pox. The Lord Bishop of Cloyn, was pleased to favour me with the Narrative of this rank of Idolatry, to suppress which, he hath taken very proper and effectual Methods.276

This small figure of St. Gobnait is much revered and protected in her home parish, where it is treated as if it were a relic of the saint herself.277 After several years of persuasion, the parish priest permitted me to closely examine the carving. I was told that the sculpture is locally thought to be over a thousand years old. The local view of the wooden statue as a relic was driven home to me when I was examining it. While looking at the figure’s back, I touched a hollowed out portion of the wood. The priest immediately chastised me, saying that I “should not touch her there”! In this action – part of a modern, living tradition with roots in medieval Christianity – a true merging between depicted body, relic, and living body of the saint is made evident. The wooden figure, like that of St. Foy and the Gero Crucifix on the continent, is not an inanimate object;

276 Richardson, The Great Folly of Pilgrimages in Ireland, 70-71.

277 Interview with D. P. O’Briain, Ballyvourney parish priest, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (May 2010).
instead it embodies the physical, living presence of the saint. By placing the wooden devotional figure at the center of the pattern, (in much the same way that sedes sapientiae images were incorporated into the Officium Stellae on the continent) the saint herself, rather than a representational image, is placed at the center of the religious tradition.

Very little evidence from the medieval era for patterns survives, likely owing to the huge losses of ecclesiastical documentation during the Suppression. However, both Adamnán and Gerald of Wales refer to holy wells, though not specifically to patterns. Archaeological evidence at some well and pattern sites dates back to the first – fifth centuries CE, although not many of these sites have been excavated for religious reasons. The figure of St. Molua, mentioned already, is said to have been discovered in a holy well. Although the forms of the wooden devotional figures in Ireland are similar to those elsewhere in Europe, their incorporation into pre-existant religious patterns and their association with holy well rituals evidence a hybridization of the tradition, which seems to have had its roots in pre-Christian votive practices.

The sacredness of wood in an Irish context

Many pre-Christian wooden votive figures have been found at watery sites all around the Celtic world. In Ireland, a few anthropomorphic sculptures, dated to about the first millennium B.C.E. have been discovered in bogs. Similar figures have been found


in Britain at Ballachulish, Argyllshire, Scotland and in Teigngrace, Devon. Most compellingly, thousands of wooden Gallo-Roman votive figures have been discovered at the site of a thermal spring at Source de la Roche in Chamalières, France, while a few hundred statues have been found at Sources de la Seine, most of which are dated to between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. There may be as many as three thousand holy wells in Ireland, several of which have been associated with both extant and none extant wooden devotional sculptures.

Tadgh O’Keefe speculates that wood could have carried an iconographical meaning in the pre-conquest period. Evidence for the sacredness of wood, especially when used in an ecclesiastical context, can be found in several early medieval sources. Indeed, the pre-Christian Celts were animists who worshipped elements of nature. Trees, wells, springs, and the sea were all regarded as the dwellings of divinity. The *Dindshenchas*, or “Lore of Places” preserved traditional stories about nature and places.

---

282 The dating of such figures is complicated by the possibility that bog wood may have been used, thereby making the material significantly older than the sculptures themselves. Bryony Coles conducted AMS radiocarbon dating on several surviving figures from Britain and Ireland and came up with dates that ranged from about 3000 B.C.E. to about 350 B.C.E. The two Irish figures analyzed by Coles were from Ralahan Co. Cavan and Lagore, Co. Meath. The Ralahan figure was dated to approximately 1096-906 B.C.E. and the Lagore figure to approximately 2135-1944 B.C.E. The discovery of more recent pre-Christian votive figures in other Celtic contexts may suggest that such figures continued to be used for many centuries. Bryony Coles, “Anthropomorphic Wooden Figures from Britain and Ireland,” Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 56 (1990), 315-333.

283 Ibid.


and makes frequent mention of sacred woods and trees. Regarding the meaning of wood during the pre-Christian era, Míceál Ledwith makes an interesting point that could

288 The earliest of these texts date to the eleventh century, but are believed to have their roots in much older oral traditions. That trees were associated with spirits is made explicit in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, “Samain night with its ancient lore was occasion for new and merry custom: it was learned in deserts, in oakwoods, from spirits, and fairy folk.” Gywn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas* (pt. III), 277; or elsewhere,

“They cast the wealthy generous king into a tedious long disease, full seven times fifty nights, as long as the union that brought them to him lasted. Caírpre of the troops called for his rhyming [...] druid, Bicne by name, a cheerful man, loved of all. He said to this strict druid: ‘Now shall I never thrive unless thou rid me of the bird-flock that holds my strength in thrall.’ ‘From what quarter do they call, the fierce birds that set thee, my fair friend Caírpre? in what wise do they assail thee?’ ‘Westward they assail’, said Caírpre; ‘from the east they approach, from the bright sunrise; exceeding fiercely they call.’ ‘Then let there be brought to me this muster, complete: a tree from each well-grown wood, a limb prolific for propagation.’ The dauntless druid chanted against them many a spell, as is told here at all times, but found no tree to avail. ‘The wood of Frosmuine, look ye, with its palisade of shrub, hew it down and search it!’ said the druid with his rhymes. So they found him a spindle-tree from the fruit-laden brake, without long waiting for the worthy man who gets it. The mighty druid, well pleased, chanted over it without delay, and straightway healed his trouble and his honour. That tree was borne aloft, diffusing patriarchal perfume, and it checked the birds and their singing, be sure!’ Since every rite hath prevailed, ‘from our wonted good day's work comes the name of noble Érerus.' Hence shall men utter the riddling appellation (be it seen!) Irarus of the onset, from the healing of Caírpre, 'tis certain. To its lord was bequeathed (a word that oblivion wastes not) that he should understand clearness of judgements when he ate of its fruit. So runs profitably the legend unimpaired, from the tale of the tangled thickets: know ye its certainty?”

Edwyn Gwyn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas* (pt. IV), Todd Lecture Series (1913), 212-217. The *Renne Dindshenchas* also contains several ‘magical accounts of trees and woods, Gaible son of Ethadon son of Nuada of the Silver Hand, stole a bundle of twigs which Ainge the Dagda’s daughter had gathered to make a tub thereof. For the tub which the Dagda had made (for her) would not cease from dripping while the sea was in flood, but not a drop was let out of it during the ebb. He hurled a cast of that bundle from Belach Fualasacach and (in the place where it alighted) a fair wood grew thereout. Hence it is now (called) Fid nGaibli, ‘Gaible’s wood’.

And elsewhere:

Crem Marda abducted a daughter of Lugaid king of Leinster. Aillenn was her name and Ailbe the name of her lapdog. And Aillenn, being in Crem’s possession, died of shame, and through her grave grew an apple tree which is called ‘Aillenn’s Apple tree’. And after her died her lapdog, and up through him a yew tree grew. Of this is said ‘the Yewtree of Baile’ that is Ailbe by transposition of letters, as is said ‘The Apple tree of lofty Aillenn, the Yewtree of Baile — little profit. Though their lays are uttered rude men understand them not.’

easily be adapted to wooden objects in a Christian context: “the tree is an obvious symbol of death and resurrection in the cycles through which it passes in the seasons of each year.”

The tree list contained within the eighth century legal tract, *Bretha Comaithchesa*, subdivides Irish trees into four catagories of seven species each ordered according to their nobility. These four catagories are: *airig fedo* (“nobles of the wood”, including oak, hazel, holly, yew, ash, scots pine, and apple), *aithig fedo* (“commoners of the wood”, including alder, willow, whitethorn / hawthorn, rowan / mountain ash, birch, elm, and wild cherry), *fodla fedo* (“lower divisions of the wood”, blackthorn, elder / bore-tree, spindle-tree, white-beam, *arbutus / strawberry tree*, aspen, and juniper), and *losa fedo* (“bushes of the wood”, bracken, bog-myrtle, gorse / furze, blackberry / bramble, heather, broom, and wild rose). Most trees from which it would be possible to carve a wooden figure belong to the two highest orders, *airig fedo* and *fodla fedo*, and the most common

289 Ledwith also seems to be referring to the concept of the ‘world tree” common to several Indo-European religions. Míceál Ledwith, “Theology Forum: Celtic Religion II,” *The Furrow* 30, No. 5 (1979), 298.

290 For a complete explanation of these classifications, see: Fergus Kelly, “The Old Irish Tree List,” *Celtica* 11 (1976), 107-24.

291 The Irish word contained in the *Bretha Comaithchesa* for yew is “ibar”. This is also the name of a saint from Begerin, Co. Wexford. A figure of this fifth century saint survived there 1682, when it was destroyed by iconoclasts. According to both Hore and MacLeod, locals used to take oaths upon the statue. It is also interesting to yews were once common to small islands, like Begerin once was. See: Appendix C, p. 689. Kelly, “The Old Irish Tree List,” 110.

292 According to Fergus Kelly, the place of the whitethorn was taken in a later legal text by the aspen, and the whitethorn seems to have been regulated to the *fodla fedo*. Kelly, “The Old Irish Tree List,” 114.

293 The word used in the test is “idath”, which Kelly tenetively identifies with the wild cherry. There is some ambiguity surrounding this appellation, however. Kelly, “The Old Irish Tree List,” 116.

294 What tree is meant by the Irish word “findcholl” is also not certain. Kelly, “The Old Irish tree List,” 118.
material used for such figures, oak, belongs to the highest order of nobility, that of the airig fedo. This is logical, however, since the nobility of trees seems largely to have been regulated by their economic importance, which was inherently tied to usefulness.  

The nobility accorded to certain species of wood was also accorded to those who worked with it. The mid-eighth century law tract Uraicecht Becc deals largely with the concept of rank, and ascribes nemed, status or privilege, to those who possesses a dan, or craft, art or profession. Wood-workers possessed more nemed than other craftsmen. According to Fergus Kelly, the most basic meaning of nemed is ‘sacred, holy’ and the use of this word suggests that “the privileges of rank were originally sustained by religious feelings as well as respect for wealth and power.” Those who possess nemed also have special legal privileges. Uraicecht Becc describes the woodworker’s status, and the ways in which a woodworker could gain more nemed through the practice of his craft. The information that we can glean from Uraicecht Becc essentially comes from two different sources; the mid-eighth century text itself, and the eleventh or twelfth century glosses. This is very valuable because not only do we get information about the woodworker’s status and the objects that he made in the early middle ages, but also as to how that status and objects changed throughout the following three or four centuries.

---

295 Ibid., 108.


297 Kelly, Guide to Early Irish Law, 61-63.

298 Ibid., 9.

299 MacLean, 137; Kelly, Guide to Early Irish Law, 61-62.

300 MacLean, 137.
One of the main transitions that this text illustrates is the transition for the *sáer*, or wright, from a woodworker in the original text, to a craftsman who could also work in stone in the later glosses. This reflects the transition in Irish society from the predominant use of wood, to an increasing use of stone.\(^{301}\) This evidence is also supported by inscriptions on several of the extant remnants of stone high crosses, such as that on a granite cross-shaft at Delgany in Co. Wicklow which carries the inscription: “ODRAN SAIR”.\(^{302}\) If wrights were also carving the elaborately sculpted high crosses, one wonders if they may have also carved the earliest Christian free-standing wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland.

The *sáer* was at the head of an elaborate workshop system. He was at once both a ‘dependent professional’ and a ‘noble-dignitary’ because as a woodworker he could enter into the ranks of the nobles through his craft. The *sáer* who built a *dron-dairthech*, that is, a firm or substantial wooden oratory or church, was accorded the status of *aire déso*, ‘lord of vassalry’, which was the lowest rank of the nobility.\(^{303}\) Those who worked in yew-wood, the most common material for domestic utensils, millwrights, ship builders, blacksmiths, copper and bronze workers, as well as jewellers who worked in gold and silver, were all accorded the same social status. However, the woodworker could advance even higher within the ranks of the nobility – to the rank of *aire ard*, or ‘high lord’. This is in contrast to the metal worker who could not advance higher than the rank of ‘aire déso’.\(^{304}\) This is a potent comment upon the value of a woodworker’s skill in

\(^{301}\)Ibid., 128.  
\(^{302}\)Ibid., 129.  
\(^{303}\)Ibid., 131.
Ireland during the early Middle Ages, that he could climb higher socially than the makers of the exquisitely fine metal work that we know to have come from this period.

The importance of wood as a material in pre-conquest Ireland is evident in other ways. In the annals the distinction between wooden churches and those of stone is made by the old Irish words *dairthech*, meaning literally ‘house of oak,’ and *damliac*, or, stone church. Generally speaking, churches built of wood pre-date stone churches in Ireland, although as O’Keefe points out, churches of both types were built there from about 900 to 1100. Excavations of rural areas have revealed the post-holes from some of these wooden oratories, many of which were small, simple structures. In larger ecclesiastical centers, the buildings were likely more sophisticated. *Hisperica Famina* (dated somewhere between the mid-seventh to the mid-ninth century) makes this evident in the detail paid to the material and construction of the chapel,

Do you hew the sacred oaks with axes,  
In order to fashion square chapels with thick beams?

And then further in lines 546-560:

About the Chapel

This wooden oratory is fashioned out of candle shaped beams;  
it has sides joined by four-fold fastenings;  
the square foundations of the said temple give it stability,  
from which springs a solid beamwork of massive enclosure;  
it has a vaulted roof above;  
square beams are placed in the ornamented roof.  
It has a holy altar in the centre,

---

304 Ibid., 132.


On which the assembled priests celebrate the Mass. It has a single entrance from the western boundary, which is closed by a wooden door that seals the warmth. An assembly of planks comprises the extensive portico; there are four steeples at the top. The chapel contains innumerable objects, which I shall not struggle to unroll from my wheel of words.  

The emphasis on wood as a material for ecclesiastical construction in Ireland is evident in several other early medieval sources. Cogitosus’ Life of St. Brigid also gives a very detailed description of the interior of a seventh century church at Kildare. Its interior board walls were “painted with pictures and covered in wall-hangings.” A church built by Aidan at Lindisfarne was described by Bede in the eighth century as “after the Irish method, not of stone but of hewn oak, thatching it with reeds.” Indeed, Irish hagiographies are full of references to wooden ecclesiastical architecture. Amongst others, references occur in the Life of St. Samthanne the Virgin (eighth century, at the earliest), the Life of Mochua, St. Bernard of Clairvaux’s Life of St. Malachy of Armagh (twelfth century), the Life of St. Moling of St. Mullin’s in Co. Carlow (eleventh/twelfth century), Life and Miracles of St. Modwenna (seventeenth century referencing earlier sources), the Martyrology of Donegal (seventeenth century, referencing earlier sources).

---


312 Petrie, The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland, 141.
sources), and the *Rule of Tallaght*. Wooden churches were being constructed in Ireland as late as the twelfth century. In his *Life of St. Malachy*, St. Bernard of Clairvaux described a church as “made of smoothed planks, closely and strongly fastened together – Irish work, not devoid of beauty.” Bernard also places an emphasis on the Irish people’s ideological resistance to the use of other materials for ecclesiastical construction. In 1140, Malachy of Armagh, a papal legate and major proponent of pre-invasion Gregorian reform in Ireland, built a large stone church constructed along continental lines in Bangor, Co. Down:

Malachy thought a stone oratory should be built at Bangor similar to those he had seen erected at other places. And when he began to lay the foundations the natives were all amazed, because no buildings of that kind were to be found in the region. That good-for-nothing [the son of the man to whom Malachy had rendered the possessions of the monastery at Bangor] was not amazed, however but highly indignant. From that indignation he conceived sorrow and brought forth iniquity. He became a whisperer among the people, now disparaging [Malachy] in private, now openly blaspheming [him], pointing to the foolishness, being horrified at the novelty, greatly bemoaning the expense... ‘My good man, what are you thinking in bringing such a novelty into our area? We are Irishmen not Frenchmen.’

Roger Stalley points out that this story was recounted by St. Bernard to illustrate the hostility and conservatism which sometimes confronted the reform movement. It may also indicate an ideological significance associated with wood in an ecclesiastical setting that was being lost during the reform in the adoption of stone ecclesiastical construction.

---


315 St. Bernard of Clairvaux, XVIII.61, 77.

Conclusion

The materiality and spirituality of wooden devotional figures are inextricably linked. The conflation of depicted body and actual body was aided by the early incorporation of relics into continental wooden figures, which physically placed a piece of the saint’s body into its rendered form. The association between relic and image continued long after the reliquary function of figures such as these ceased. In Ireland, the selection of wood, a material which was already imbued with a sense of sacredness, may have enhanced the numinosity of the wooden devotional sculptures, even though none of the surviving wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland have reliquary receptacles. The relatively small scale and portability of wooden devotional sculpture in its earliest period facilitated their incorporation into indigenous religious ritual and liturgical drama. These practices both drew upon and reinforced this fusing of identity between sculpture and saint. It was also these same elements which would later lead to the targeting of these images by iconoclasts and reformers.
CHAPTER 4: DESTRUCTION AND SURVIVAL

Sixteenth Century Iconoclasm and Survival

The dissolution of the monasteries and suppression of the Catholic Church in Ireland was undoubtedly catastrophic in its disruption of medieval religious traditions and in its destruction of religious material culture. In 1536 and 1537, several acts were passed by the Irish parliament which fundamentally changed the country’s ecclesiastical structure and created the Church of Ireland. The two most important of these acts were the Act of Supremacy of 1536 which placed the king of England at the head of the Irish church and the Acts Against the Authority of the Bishop of Rome in 1537, which renounced the pope’s authority and accepted the king’s. 317

In the winter of 1538-1539 the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, George Browne, began a campaign against images that led to the destruction of many of the most famous wooden figures and relics. These objects were seen as analogous to pagan idols, rather than as devotional aids. All together about fifty shrines in Ireland, mostly in the Pale and the southeast, were attacked. 318 The iconoclastic campaign in Ireland echoed a similar campaign in England, which had begun the previous winter. Commissioners in England were sent out into the country in order to seize statues, roods, images, relics, and shrines at the heart of ardent popular devotions. 319 A miraculous talking crucifix, known as the

317 At first these acts had little overall impact at the local level. Very little was changed until 1538 when Archbishop Browne of Dublin passed the ‘form of the beads’ (which included instructions to clergy on what to pray for, and clear statements of Henry VIII as head of the church), and the ‘New Injunctions,’ which discouraged superstitious practices such as pilgrimages and the veneration of saints shrines and relics. These ‘New Injunctions’ laid the groundwork for Archbishop Browne’s campaign against images in 1538-1539. Lennon, 134-137.

318 Ibid., 137.
Rood of Grace, from Boxley Abbey in Kent was brought to London and publically shown to be a fake. It worked by puppetry, “certain engines and old wire, with old rotten sticks in the back of the same.”^320 Unofficial outbreaks of iconoclasm also occurred in tandem with Cromwell’s official campaign in England, the most devastating of which ended in the destruction of the shrine of St. Thomas à Beckett at Canterbury in September of 1538.

The full-scale Suppression and Dissolution of the Monasteries in Ireland began in July of 1539 and continued into 1540. Monks and clerics were dispersed and sometimes killed,^321 images were smashed, and properties were transferred to the crown or laymen, often local lords.^322 When orders were first given for the suppression of the Irish religious houses in 1539 they also included specific instructions for destroying devotional figures. The commissioners were told to,
Investigate, inquire, and search where, within the said land of Ireland, there are any notable images or reliques (sic.) to which the simple people of the said lord king were wont to assemble superstitiously and as vagrants to walk and roam in pilgrimage, or else to lick, kiss or honour, contrary to God’s honour; and the same to break up and remove and so to carry off entirely with all the things pertaining, annexed and adjoined thereto, they should utterly abolish them, that no such mockeries should from thenceforward be visited in the same land or dominion of Ireland.323

A figure of St. Catherine from Downpatrick in Co. Down is recorded by the Annals of Ulster as having been destroyed in 1538 by the “Saxon Justiciary” when they attacked and also burned the monastery of Down.324 The Raphoe Crucifix was also destroyed during this year,325 as was the Kilmore Madonna,326 the Ballybogan Crucifix,327 and as mentioned above by the Four Masters, possibly the famous Our Lady of Trim.328

The specific targeting for destruction of devotional images in Ireland during the Dissolution is evident in the example of Our Lady of Trim. The figure had been noted as miracle-working since 1397, when, the Four Masters record, Hugh Mac Mahon regained his sight after fasting at the figure’s shrine. The figure’s renown in the fifteenth century


324 See: Appendix D, St. Catherine, p. 704; MacCarthy, III, 625.

325 See: Appendix D, Raphoe Crucifix, p. 704; O’Donovan, Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters IV, 751;

326 See: Appendix D, Kilmore Madonna, p. 704; O’Donovan, Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters IV, 681;

327 See: Appendix C, Ballybogan Crucifix, p. 697; MacCarthy, III, 625;

can be seen in 1462 when the English monarch, King Edward IV had perpetual candles burned in front of the figure for the souls of himself, his mother, and his children. During the Dissolution, a letter from dissolution commissioner Thomas Alen to Thomas Cromwell, recounts that the dissolution commission initially hesitated before destroying the figure,

Seche papistes, ypocrites, and wurshippers of idolles, that they were not indited; whereat my Lord of Dublin, Mr. Tresorer, and the Maister of Rolles were veray angrie. Howbeit they could not remedie it. They threw wold not come in the chapel, where the Idoll of Trym stode, to thintent they wold not occasion the people; not withstanding, my Lord Deputie, veray devoutely kneleng befor Hir, hard thre or fower masses.329

The targeting of this particular figure for destruction is made explicitly clear in a letter from Protestant Archbishop George Brown to Thomas Cromwell in 1538, in which Brown states, “There goithe a commen brewte amonges the Yrish men, that I entende to ploke down Our Lady of Tryme.”330

Despite the destructive zeal of the dissolution commissioners, many wooden devotional figures managed to survive the initial iconoclastic onslaughts of the Suppression in the sixteenth century. Several figures were hidden by people within their homes throughout the Suppression. The Dillon family is believed to have preserved the Athlone Madonna (Fig. 71) from the dissolution until the seventeenth century, when it likely passed into the possession of the Poor Clares.331 The figure of St. Molua (Fig. 113)


331 See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, Athlone Madonna, p. 214. This speculation and line of reasoning was first laid out by MacLeod in “Medieval Madonnas of the West”, 179.
was kept by the Hayden family of Co. Kilkenny during the Suppression, possibly after having been hidden and subsequently rediscovered in a local holy well.\footnote{332} The \textit{Askeaton Madonna} (Fig. 145) was in the possession of the Combha family of Turbrid, Co. Limerick in the nineteenth century.\footnote{333} The Caddell family of Harbourstown, Co. Meath preserved the \textit{Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone} (Fig. 226) for more than two hundred and fifty years, following the sack of Harbourstown by Parliamentary soldiers in the seventeenth century.\footnote{334}

Other figures were saved by the uneven application of the Dissolution. By the end of the fifteenth century, the area in which the English were able to exercise any kind of authority in Ireland had mainly constricted to a fortified area around Dublin (known as the Pale), Waterford and the southeast, and the first waves of the Dissolution did not have much effect beyond these regions.\footnote{335} According to Lennon, by the end of Henry VIII’s reign in 1547 only about half of the monasteries and friaries in Ireland had been dissolved, and wealthy patrons, particularly in the west, were sometimes able to protect a religious community by receiving the titles to their properties, but allowing the monks or friars to continue in residence.\footnote{336} Brendan Bradshaw estimates that as few as ten percent of monasteries outside of crown lands were dissolved in the 1530s and 1540s.\footnote{337}


\footnote{333} See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, \textit{Askeaton Madonna}, p. 305.

\footnote{334} See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, \textit{Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone}, p. 418.


\footnote{336} Lennon, 142. A similar situation could be observed in England. According to Eamon Duffy, a sort of restraint had been placed on the reform movement in England until Henry VIII’s death. Although some of the Catholic ‘abuses’ had been abolished in England during Henry VIII’s reign, the use of rosaries, and the blessing of bread, water, and candles were still retained in the liturgy. Catholic Masses were still held in many parish churches. In the summer of 1547 following the death of the king, articles and
Stalley contends that religious practices likely continued with little change at the local level west of the Shannon, and that the new construction of mendicant buildings likely continued in Connacht beyond the 1530s.\textsuperscript{338} Owing to the protection of the earls of Clanricarde, The Franciscan Friary of Roserilly in Co. Galway thrived well past the Dissolution. A ditch and wall were constructed around the friary in 1574 and repairs were undertaken to both the church and convent in 1604.\textsuperscript{339} The Dominican Friary in Sligo remained undissolved until 1642.\textsuperscript{340} In 1565 following the crown’s policy of “Surrender and Regrant,” the lord of Sligo, Donnell O’Connor – known as the O’Connor Sligo – performed homage to Lord Deputy Henry Sydney. During this act of homage, the O’Connor Sligo agreed that Queen Elizabeth was his liege lady and sole ecclesiastical authority.\textsuperscript{341} Two years later O’Connor accompanied Deputy Sydney back to England, during which time the formal surrender and regrant occurred. Part of the text of a letter that O’Connor received from Elizabeth before he returned to Ireland read,

\begin{quote}

injunctions were issued that repeated and radicalized those which had been originally issued in 1538. The new injunctions ordered that all images which had been “abused” be destroyed. The definition of abuse was extended to even include the simple act of censing an image and the definition of ‘image’ was extended to include any depiction of a saint, regardless of its medium or propensity towards abuse. Permissable images were now only to include those which allowed for no other use than remembrance. The burning of candles before such images were forbidden. The clergy were urged not only to destroy images within their churches, but also to encourage their parishoners to do likewise with the images in their homes. Eamon Duffy, \textit{The Stripping of the Altars, Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-1580} (New Haven: Yale University Press), 448-451.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{339} Ibid., 9.


\textsuperscript{341} O’Rorke, I, 118.
Lastly, we let you to understand that upon his humble and reasonable request, wee are well contented that the howse of the Freyerie of Slego, wherein, he sayeth, the sepulture of his ancestors hayth bene, shall be so preserved, as the Friars thear, being converted to secular priestes, the same howse may remayne and contynue as well for the sepulture of his posteritie, as for the maytenance of prayer and service of God.\textsuperscript{342}

The implication of this statement is that in 1567, some thirty years after the beginning of the Dissolution and Suppression, the largest ecclesiastical establishment in the urban centre of the region – the Dominican Friary in Sligo town – was yet undissolved and by authority of the queen, it was to remain undissolved (the assertion that it was staffed with secular priests is suspect). The fact that a much larger ecclesiastical establishment had thus far survived provides some evidence that smaller churches in remote regions of Connacht and Ulster may also have escaped the Reformation’s initial onslaught, and survived well into the seventeenth century.

The protection of other powerful lords helped to preserve further monasteries, and consequently their church furnishings and devotional sculptures. The Burkes of Pallas, under the protection of their relatives, the earls of Clanricarde also seem likely to have preserved the \textit{Kilcorban Madonna} (Fig. 46).\textsuperscript{343} The Desmonds protected the Askeaton friary in Co. Limerick, from which the \textit{Askeaton Nursing Madonna} (Fig. 145) comes, until the loss of their power in 1579 and the \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna} (Fig. 117) may have been saved by the le Poer family, Barons of Dunoil, in Co. Waterford. The \textit{Red Council Book}, the book of the Privy Council in Ireland and dated to 1541-3, reportedly contained a note of concordat for the “not suppressing” of Kilconnell in the Diocese of

\textsuperscript{342} As quoted by O’Rorke, I, 123.

\textsuperscript{343} O’Heyne, 259.
because according to Mooney, “almost all of the nobles of the country have erected burial places for themselves in the church.” These circumstances allowed the abbey to survive and remained inhabited by the Franciscans long into the seventeenth century, a fact which probably contributed to the survival of the Kilconnell Head (Fig. 135).

In other instances, unsuccessful appeals were made by the local gentry for the preservation of their churches. This was the case for St. Mary’s Abbey in Dublin, the richest Cistercian monastery in Ireland, from which Our Lady of Dublin (Fig. 186) is said to have come. Both the abbot and the Lord Deputy of Ireland wrote on St. Mary’s behalf, asking that the abbey be exempt from the general Dissolution. The appeal was denied and St. Mary’s was surrendered to the Crown in October of 1539. The abbey was first converted to a munitions warehouse, and in 1543, became the residence of the Earl of Desmond during the parliamentary sessions. Around the year 1583, the church was used as a horse stable by the Earl of Ormonde. It is not known how Our Lady of

---

344 The Red Council Book, the book of the Privy Council in Ireland and dated to 1541-3, has long been considered lost, although a copy of its table of contents was preserved in the papers of Sir William Ussher, and published in the Historic Manuscripts Commission, 15th Report, appendix, III. 274 under the date of 1541. 2. Jan. 6. Sir William Ussher, “A Table to the Red Council Book,” Historic Manuscripts Commission, 15th Report, appendix, III. 274.


346 Donough Mooney, a Franciscan friar writing in the early seventeenth century, states, ‘the convent and church to this day remain complete in all their parts, the glass in the windows unbroken, the ceiling uninjured, and the paintings in good condition.’ It was not until around the time of the Battle of Aughrim in 1691 that most of the monks were forced to abandon the monastery, and went to live in a neighbouring bog, although it appears that at least some remained until the early nineteenth century. Donough Mooney, “Tractatus de provincia Hiberniae,” ed. B. Jennings, Analecta Hibernica, 6 (1934), 56-8. An English translation of the text is given in a series of articles published in the Franciscan Tertiary, IV-VIII (1893-8); Francis Joseph Bigger, “The Franciscan Friary of Killconnell” in Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society 2, No. i (1902), 16.

347 Stalley, The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland, 244.

348 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 56; Ronan, 171-172.
Dublin was preserved through this history; although at some point it was covered over in a thick layer of white emulsion\textsuperscript{349} and the Child’s lips appear to have been deliberately shorn off (Fig. 188). The figure later was displayed in the Mary’s Lane Chapel in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{350}

**Seventeenth Century Revival and Destruction**

As the initial tribulations of the Dissolution in Ireland waned, the English crown was left with the difficult problem of to whom to entrust Ireland’s administration. Since the initial invasion in the twelfth century, these duties had traditionally fallen to the descendants of the old Anglo-Norman conquerors. This presented a problem in the seventeenth century. To James I (r: 1603-1625), the retention of Catholicism by the Anglo-Irish ascendency was intolerable. Fully steeped in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century ideology regarding the divine right of kings – which included, to his thinking, the divine right to oversee the Church – the king considered any adherence to the Pope of Rome as representing a divided loyalty on the part of his subjects, and, in effect, treasonous.\textsuperscript{351} Beginning in 1609, a new English speaking, Protestant planter class was brought in from Scotland and England to fill the administrative void in Ireland.\textsuperscript{352}

\textsuperscript{349} Thick layers of emulsion, or white-wash, covered many of the surviving figures and may have been intended to make the carvings more palatable to reformers, while still allowing the figures to survive. The white washing of images painted on church walls in England is well known. For a more thorough account of this practice in English parish churches, please see: Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 128-130.

\textsuperscript{350} As quoted by Nicholas Donnelly, *Roman Catholics: state and condition of R.C. chapels in Dublin, both secular and regular, A.D. 1749*, (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1904), 12. I have not had the opportunity to go to the British Library to view the manuscript personally.

\textsuperscript{351} Conor Ryan, “Religion and State in Seventeenth Century Ireland,” in *Archivium Hibernicum* 33, (1975) 123.

Yet, from period from 1603 to 1641, it seemed that the Catholic Church in Ireland was beginning to reassert itself. In 1603, after six decades of dissolution and suppression and the devastating effects of the Anglo-Spanish War, what was left of the Catholic Church in Ireland was extremely disorganized and weak. From the 1590s, Pope Clement VIII (r: 1592-1605), in an attempt to appease Queen Elizabeth I of England (r: 1558-1603) and thereby begin political negotiations with her administration, mainly appointed apostolic vicars to Ireland rather than naming bishops. This pattern was also seen elsewhere in Reformation Europe, in instances where countries had an official protestant religion, but also a small but tolerated Catholic minority. Apostolic vicars provided for the organization and pastoral care of minority Catholics, without antagonizing Protestant governments.

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, Archbishop Peter Lombard of Armagh, one of only a small handful of bishops sitting in Irish sees, began to urge Rome that it was safe to begin appointing diocesan bishops. By 1630, there was again a Catholic bishop in every Irish see. Visible expansion of the Catholic Church in Ireland can be seen in the expanding numbers of lesser clergy as well. In 1618, Donncha Mooney counted one hundred and sixty Irish Franciscans living both in Ireland and abroad; five years later there were three hundred members and in 1644, Carlo Invernizzi believed that there were a thousand Franciscans in Ireland. Between 1630 and 1637, the number of

353 Brian MacCuarta, Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland, 1603-41, (Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2007), ii.
355 Ibid.
parish priests within the diocese of Tuam increased from thirty-four to fifty-seven. In the Elphin diocese, the number of parish priests increased from thirteen to forty-two between the years 1625 and 1637. Amazingly, in 1635, David Rothe, bishop of Ossory, stated that his diocese was actually overstuffed.\textsuperscript{357}

This growth is also reflected in artistic patronage. The explosion of commissions of silver plate in Ireland in the early seventeenth century has been well published,\textsuperscript{358} and surviving inventories of Franciscan plate and other possessions, handed over to patrons of the friars after the 1698 edict of expulsion, give a detailed look at the wealth of several seventeenth century friaries.\textsuperscript{359} Fine vestments survive from this period as well, as do five extant wooden figure sculptures. Most are believed to be indigenous carvings but only one, the Kilkenny \textit{St. Dominic} (Fig. 288), is carved in a truly provincial style. The two largest figures, the \textit{Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure} (Fig. 263) and the \textit{Fethard Holy Trinity} (Fig. 265) are both life-sized; the scale and lack of transportability of these two figures reflects the relative stability of the Catholic Church in Ireland in the first half of the seventeenth century.


\textsuperscript{357} Ibid., 58.

\textsuperscript{358} See: J.J. Buckley, \textit{Some Irish altar plate : a descriptive list of chalices and patens, dating from the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, now preserved in the National Museum and in certain churches} (Dublin: Falconer, 1943); Ida Delamer and Conor O’Brien, \textit{500 years of Irish silver : an exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland} (Bray, Co. Wicklow: Wordwell in association with the National Museum of Ireland, 2005); and John Teahan, \textit{Irish Silver} (Dublin: Folens, 1976), amongst many others.

\textsuperscript{359} Inventories of altarplate once held by the Franciscan friaries of Kilconnell, Co. Galway; Meelick, Co. Galway; Killeigh, Co. Offaly; and Donegal survive. Most of these objects were produced between 1600 and 1650. According to Małgorzata Krasnodebska-D’Aughton, of the seventy objects enumerated, only seven extant pieces can be identified with certainty. Małgorzata Krasnodebska-D’Aughton, “Piety, Patrons and Prints: Franciscan Altar Plate, 1600-1650” \textit{History Ireland} 16, No. 3 (May - Jun., 2008), 34-37.
No doubt many more figures dating to the seventeenth century once existed than are currently extant. The violence of the War of the Three Kingdoms from 1641-48, immediately followed by the parliamentarian conquest of the island from 1649-1653, and succeeded by the ‘Cromwellian settlement’ thereafter, were some of the most devastating events in Irish history, and consequently for Irish material culture. Surviving oral histories suggest that these twelve years saw the destruction of many more wooden

---

360 The War of the Three Kingdoms began as a native Irish insurrection in Ulster instigated by the fear that further colonial plantation by English and Scottish settlers begun in the earlier part of the century would lead to their total dispossession. These feelings were heightened by the virulent anti-Catholic Puritan movement sweeping through the English parliament at the time. The goal of the movement was to protect their lands from further usurpation and plantation, full citizenship within the kingdom, and full toleration for the Catholic faith. However the extreme violence of the movement, resulting in deaths of somewhere between ten and twenty-five percent of the settler population of Ulster in just the first months of the war, caused the New English to react by expropriating more Catholic lands and to more stringently enforce the recusancy laws, which punished those who did not participate in Protestant services. These laws affected not only the native Irish, but the Old Catholic Anglo-Irish ascendancy as well. The end result was that both the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish (who were traditionally very distrusting of each other) were forced into an uneasy alliance, which in May 1642 became the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny. The aim of this confederacy was to gain full rights of citizenship and retain possession of their lands through the legal recognition of Catholicism. The Catholic Confederacy maintained that they remained loyal to the crown and that their religion should have no effect on their relationship with their government. Eventually the conflict came to be drawn more along political lines (royalist / parliamentarian) than religious lines (Catholic/ Protestant). James Scott Wheeler, *Cromwell in Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, Ltd., 1999), 8-13; Jane Ohlmeyer, “The War of Religion, 1603-1660,” Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 163; Ryan, “Religion and State in Seventeenth Century Ireland,” 125-126.

361 The strength of the royalist cause in Ireland, supported by both the new English and Scottish planter class, as well as by the old Anglo-Irish ascendancy, was seen as a significant threat to the new English republic. Shortly after executing King Charles I, the Rump Parliament resolved in February and March of 1649 to make the total conquest and subjugation of Ireland a priority. Oliver Cromwell was selected as commander of the Irish expedition, and in August of 1649, it began. Within the first few months of the parliamentarian expedition, over fifty percent of the royalist army in Ireland was killed or defected. After a brief winter break during which time troops on both sides rested and Cromwell received two fresh regiments from England, Cromwell began campaigning again at the end of January 1650. He intended to force what remained of the royalist army into Kilkenny and Connacht and trap them there. By the end of his two month winter campaign, the royalist forces had been pushed back against Connacht. Wheeler, 62, 81, 98, 124-129, 145-146.

362 Galway, the last major town still in Irish hands, was surrendered in May of 1652. During the previous dozen years, more than a third of the population of the island was killed either by war, starvation, or plague. In the settlement that followed, approximately 3,000 Catholic landowners forfeited their land and moved themselves and their households to Connacht. Wheeler, 222-223, 229.
devotional figures than had been destroyed during any other event following the Dissolution and Suppression of the Monasteries.

At first glance, an iconoclastic campaign would seem to be antithetical to Cromwell’s initial attempts to win Irish hearts and minds. In December of 1649, the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland held a synod at Clonmacnois, during which the bishops declared that it was essential for Catholics to remain united against Cromwell, whom they claimed intended to exterminate the Catholic religion. Cromwell’s response was swift. He issued a public letter in which he denounced the statements made in the Clonmacnoise declaration. He placed the blame for the conflict not on differences of religion, but rather on the violently broken union between Ireland and England which occurred with the massacre of the Ulster settlers in 1641. In matters of religion, Cromwell stated that he would not cause the people to suffer for their religious beliefs, “but shall endeavour to walk patiently and in love towards them, to see if at any time it shall please God to give them another or a better mind.” Nevertheless, Cromwell stated that he would not allow

363 The success of the parliamentary troops was founded on a clear strategy embarked upon from the beginning of the expedition. Cromwell and his commanders would offer favourable terms to cities that surrendered right away, and forbade his troops from stealing food or supplies, in an attempt to win Irish hearts and minds. However, if a city or town did not surrender right away, it would be dealt with mercilessly. The point was made at the siege of Drogheda, at the beginning of the conflict. Parliamentary and royalist troops met and battled there. The royalists lost the battle and withdrew into the town, but were unable to raise the drawbridge before the parliamentary soldiers entered. The fleeing royalists were pursued through the town, until they took refuge in the steeple of St. Peter’s Church. No quarter was offered, and Cromwell ordered that the pews be piled underneath the steeple and set on fire. Many were killed and the rest were shipped to Barbados. It was during the aftermath of this battle that the *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone* is said to have been mutilated by parliamentary soldiers during the sack of Harbourstown. Wheeler, 82, 86-87; See: Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, p. 418.

364 Wheeler, 122; Denis Murphy, *Cromwell in Ireland: A History of Cromwell’s Irish Campaign* (Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1897), text of the proclamation to be found in appendix ix, 411-23.


366 Ibid., 8-9.
the exercise of the Mass wherever he takes notice of it, nor would he allow the clergy to “seduce” the minds of the people.\textsuperscript{368} To the Catholic hierarchy, he says, “You poison [the people] with your false, abominable and antichristian doctrine and practices. You keep the word of God from them; and instead thereof give them your senseless orders and traditions.”\textsuperscript{369} There seems to be in Cromwell’s statements a clear, and perhaps convenient, divide between how he views the clergy and how he views common Catholics.

The wooden devotional sculptures could be seen as instruments of the clergy in perpetuating these “senseless orders and traditions.” They certainly were seen as such by the commissioners of Henry VIII a century earlier.\textsuperscript{370} The abiding opinion of the English hegemony during the early modern period seems to have been that the Irish were a simple people deluded by the corrupt ecclesiastics of a debased church. It may well be that the iconoclasts believed that they were aiding the Irish people by breaking up the instruments of their delusion.

That such an iconoclastic campaign occurred in tandem with the civil war in England is well documented.\textsuperscript{371} Parliament took the issue seriously and passed several pieces of iconoclastic legislation in the 1640s. In January 1641, the same year that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{367} Ibid., 17.
\item \textsuperscript{368} Ibid., 16-17.
\item \textsuperscript{369} Ibid., 14.
\item \textsuperscript{370} McNeill, “Accounts of sums realised by sales of chattels of some suppressed Irish monasteries,” 11–13.
\end{itemize}
iconoclastic riots broke out in London and elsewhere,\textsuperscript{372} it was proposed that commissioners:

\begin{quote}
Be sent into all the Countries, for the defacing, demolition, and quite taking away of all Images, Altars, or Tables turned Altarwise, Crucifies, superstitious Pictures, Monuments, and Relicts of Idolatry, out of all Churches and Chapels.\textsuperscript{373}
\end{quote}

In the spring of 1643, parliament ordered a burning of images taken from Somerset House and St. James’s Palace.\textsuperscript{374} In August of 1643, the ordinance quoted above was finally passed by both houses. It called for the iconoclastic reformation of churches and required not only that religious objects be taken away and destroyed, but also that they be defaced.\textsuperscript{375}

Defacement seems to be a more personal and violent act than the simple removal and destruction of images. It is also precisely this type of iconoclastic damage that can be seen in some of the Irish figures, particularly the \textit{Killoran Madonna and Child} (Fig. 203) and \textit{St. Joseph} (Fig. 205) who have had their faces violently and deliberately shorn off. The image of \textit{St. Dominic} (Fig. 289) belonging to the Kilkenny Dominicans is believed to have had its face and arms removed by the bayonet of a parliamentarian soldier.\textsuperscript{376}

Furthermore, the \textit{Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone} (Fig. 227) is said to have had its head cut off by parliamentarian soldiers, and the arm of the \textit{Clonfert Madonna} (Fig. 98)

\textsuperscript{372} Spraggon, 65.


\textsuperscript{374} Spraggon, 72-73.


\textsuperscript{376} A placard in a glass case next to the figure at the Dominican residence in Kilkenny recounts this tradition.
was also alleged to have been chopped by an iconoclast’s sword when parliamentarian soldiers pillaged the cathedral. Figures like the Kilcormac Pietà (Fig. 231) are locally believed to have been buried in order to hide and preserve them from the iconoclastic soldiery.  

In addition to the deliberate iconoclasm which seems to have accompanied the parliamentarian conquest, there is no doubt that many wooden figures were also destroyed in the scorched earth policy that followed the initial clashes and conquests. In April of 1651, the English decided to embark upon a scorched earth strategy to battle the bands of guerrillas which continued to rise up and attack English outposts. Commanders were ordered to demolish any shelters within two miles of garrisons. Hostile areas were identified and declared free-fire zones, in which any person or building could be destroyed without cause. These areas included large parts of the counties of Tipperary, Waterford, Wicklow, Carlow, Queens and Kings Counties (modern county Laois and Offaly), Kilkenny, Cork, Limerick and Wexford. Everyone was ordered to abandon their homes in these areas or be killed and have their livestock and property confiscated. Many village churches were destroyed (without regard to their contents) by the parliamentarians in order to prevent them from being used as shelters by the guerrillas. The church at Dunhill, with which the Waterford Nursing Madonna may have been associated, was blown up by Cromwell’s men in 1649, and in 1651 the citizens of

---

377 MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West”, 181.

378 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval figure Sculpture in Ireland,” 62.

379 Ibid., 212-213.

Galway decided themselves to level the Dominican church to prevent it from being captured and used as a battery from which English forces could attack the town.  

**Increased Numinosity in the face of Destruction**

The focus on destroying devotional sculpture during both the Dissolution and the Parliamentarian Conquest speaks of the genre’s power within Irish society, and may have inadvertently increased that power by making the surviving figures seem more precious and their survival miraculous. Stories of super-natural retribution for the damage or destruction of a figure become especially common as persecutions worsened during the seventeenth century. In 1621, O’Sullivan Beare wrote that the Protestant bishop, Hugh Allen, attacked the Catholic church in Castle Ellis and despoiled the shrines of two figures, a Madonna and a figure of St. John the Baptist, to whom the church was dedicated. Bishop Allen stole the sculptures’ ornaments and caused the two figures to be pulled down from the altar. Almost immediately, Allen was seized with violent pains, and raging, fell to the ground. He beat his body against the stone floor until he died.

Although the annals record that the figure of Our Lady of Trim was destroyed circa 1538, an account from the seventeenth century maintains that the figure was hidden and preserved by the Hamons family until the invasion of the Parliamentary troops more than a hundred years later:

> At this verie time the Irish bethought to garrison Trim, pursuant thereto all Westmeath forces and the Reyllies from the countie of Cavan marched thither, those had some inklinge that Coote was

---

381 Coleman, 71-72.

382 O’Sullivan Beare, *Historae Catholicae Iberniae*, 139.

383 The *Annals of the Four Masters* record that Our Lady of Trim was destroyed in 1537 while the *Annals of Ulster*, as well as the *Annals of Connacht*, and the *Annals of Loch Cé* state that the figure was burned in 1538. See: Appendix C, *Our Lady of Trim*, p. 691.
thither comeinge, though makinge the best speede they could, Sir Charles Coote arrived firste and had the towne without one blowe; the weather beinge somewhat could, whereof Sir Charles complained, and comaunded a fire to be made (he lodged in Mr. Laurence Hamons house), fuelle verie scarce there; his son Ricc Coote… hitted vpon a great ancient portraiture, or image of Our Blessed Lady engraven in wood, kept with great veneration in the same house since the suppression of holy churche in Henry the 8 his time, which young Coote caused to be cutte and cloven in sunder, to make fire thereof for his father against his comeinge in. Butt God Allmight, the righteous judge, did not prolonge the punishment of this impietie, for as soone as Sir Charles thought to enjoy the benefitt of that transformed-diuiine fire, worde came to him that the Irish alreadie intred the towne; starting fourth, trompett sounded, and drum beaten, all ran to the allarum, beinge verie late in the eveninge. Sir Charles was shott, or otherwise wounded, and makeinge as much examination in this behalf as reasonablie I might, could never learne how or by whom he soe wounded, how ever, it beinge mortall, he was conuoyed to his lodging deade… see how he payed for his firinge that night, sure he gau an account in hell of it, for thither he receaued his ticket that night: this is the end of this tirant.\textsuperscript{384}

The threat of divine retribution for the destruction or removal of a figure persisted into the modern and contemporary periods. During the nineteenth century, many repeated attempts to remove the figure of \textit{St. Maolrúaín} (Fig. 412) from its parish, were met with miraculous interference. When someone attempted to carry the figure over the River Slaney such bad storms and weather arose that the river was unable to be crossed. The man then attempted to cross by bridge at Enniscorthy but could not induce the horse that drew the cart which carried the figure to cross.\textsuperscript{385} In 2003 when I was researching the same figure, I spoke with its owner, Mrs. Philomena Mythen (now deceased), and the local parish priest. Both informed me that the figure of \textit{St. Maolrúaín} had been stolen

\textsuperscript{384} Gilbert, 32.
\textsuperscript{385} Lacy, 457-458.
from Mrs. Mythen’s home in the early 1990s and told me of the many horrible things which had befallen the sculpture’s owner and her family since the figure was stolen. They attributed these misfortunes to the owner’s inability to protect the carving.

The increased numinosity of the figures is also evidenced by another common theme in their associated stories, that of their miraculous preservation. Local tradition also asserts that the Kilcormac Pietà was buried in a bog in 1650 in order to preserve it from Cromwell’s soldiers. It is said to have remained there anywhere from fifty to more than one hundred and fifty years, depending on the version of the story. Yet, the figure (miraculously) shows almost no evidence of decay. The Triumphalia Chronologica Monasterii Sanctae Crucis in Hibernia contains a lengthy account of a figure of the Holy Cross Madonna which was fantastically recovered in 1604 by some fishermen three years after being sunk on a ship off the west coast of Ireland. Wakeman relates that the figure of St. Molaise (Fig. 81) was stolen from its church and carried out to sea by boat. It was then thrown overboard and used as a target for rifle and pistol practice and left out at sea. Miraculously, the next morning, it was found in its normal place in the church. Perhaps these discovery stories were devised to remove the owners’ culpability from having hidden and preserved the figures. Or, these discovery myths may have come into existence out of a need to explain the extraordinary survival of such carvings.

Surviving wooden figures were frequently held to be miraculous in other ways as well. The Holy Cross Madonna was hidden for a time in a granary, where it preserved the

---

386 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval figure Sculpture in Ireland,” 62.
388 W.F. Wakeman, “Inis Muireadaich, now Inismurray, and Its Antiquities”, in JRSAI, 17 (1885-86), 223.
grain from rats and mice. In 1638, a small piece of the wood from the figure was taken to a man with a swollen jaw. The fragment was applied as a compress and healed the man of his pain. Also in the seventeenth century, O’Heyne stated that frequent miracles were worked through the Kilcorban Madonna, although he did not state what these miracles were. The Athlone Madonna was believed to have been miraculously preserved from fire in 1641. The figure of St. Gobnait is believed to be able to ward off sickness and disease. Mason mentions a no-longer extant wooden figure from Saint’s Island, Lough Ree upon which people would swear, believing that if they swore falsely on it, they would die. According to Westropp, any man who lifted the figure of St. Brendan from Inishglora three times could benefit women in child-birth. Archdall states that that a miracle-working image of the Madonna was said to have been preserved in Muckross, though it is not clear from his account if the figure was still extant in Archdall’s time or what those miracles were. Although the stories in Ireland are not unique, the proliferation of such stories is significant. A people who had been violently deprived of many material elements of their religious culture could easily come to imbue the few surviving objects with more importance than might otherwise have been warranted.

389 Ibid.
390 O’Heyne, 259.
391 From the Annals of the Poor Clares convent, Galway.
392 William Shaw Mason, A statistical account, or parochial survey of Ireland, drawn up from the communications of the clergy II (Dublin: Hibernia-Press Office, 1816), 440.
393 T. J. Westropp, “A Study in the Legends of the Connacht Coast, Ireland,” Folklore 28 (1917), 205.
394 Archdall, 303.
Importation and Internationalism

Devotional figures continued to be imported throughout the Suppression. The smuggling of ecclesiastical objects into Ireland had reached such proportions that by 1593 the High Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes ordered that all ships coming from abroad be searched and all “copes, vestments, chalices, idols, crosses and other superstitious relics” should be seized. Our Lady of Waterford (Fig. 251) and the Harbison Infant Christ (Fig. 258), both dating to the second half of the sixteenth century, appear to be imported works from Spain. The importation of Our Lady of Waterford has been specifically associated with a Cistercian monk, Father Nicholas Fagan, but the Harbison Infant Christ, may have been smuggled into the country by other means.

The Harbison Infant Christ was once attached to a now missing figure of the Madonna. Short chop marks, presumably to separate the Child from a Madonna figure, can be readily observed on the Child’s bottom (Fig. 259). This small figure belongs to Mrs. Sheelagh Harbison, the mother of art historian, Peter Harbison. According to Prof. Harbison, local tradition asserted that the figure was believed to have come from one of the wrecks of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and that it was found in a sand dune along the beaches of Liscannor, Co. Clare, or perhaps from Spanish Point, Co. Clare. The Annals of Loch Cé record that,


396 Fr. Fagan was the bishop-designate of Waterford, but died in 1617 before he could be consecrated. See: Rev. W. P. Burke, “Our Layde of Ynislaunaght,” Journal of the Waterford and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society I (1894-95), 92.

397 Harbison, “A Sixteenth Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” 37; and in conversation with author, November 2010.
Spaniards came to Erinn, a very great fleet; and eight or nine of those ships were wrecked in Mumha and Connacht; and Saxons killed all who were not drowned of the crews of those ships that were wrecked; and it is not possible to reckon or tell all that were drowned, and all that were slain in that fleet, on account of their number, and the quantity of the spoils got, of the gold and silver, and of every kind of treasure besides.\textsuperscript{398}

According to Lawrence Flanagan, between twenty and twenty-four ships of the Spanish Armada wrecked off the coast of Ireland;\textsuperscript{399} however, despite the \textit{Loch Cé} account, these ships were not likely laden with mercantile goods and ecclesiastical objects – they carried an invading army. The Spanish Armada had sailed from Lisbon with intent of meeting up with the army of the Duke of Parma in order to invade and conquer England, but had been driven off-course by storms and the English fleet.\textsuperscript{400} Although it is possible that the \textit{Harbison Infant Christ} came from one of the Armada ships, it is far more likely one of the many religious statues smuggled into Ireland in the second half of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{401}

Although Ireland has typically been viewed as being on the very outskirts of Europe both geographically and culturally, as an insular nation its port cities were hubs of trade and communication. Ships from Spain, England, France and Portugal set up large scale fishing operations off the western and southern coasts of Ireland. In September 1534 from the Basque province of Guipúzcoa alone, fifteen ships totaling 1230 tons were

\textsuperscript{398} Hennessy, 1588, 487

\textsuperscript{399} Lawrence Flanagan, “The Irish Legacy of the Spanish Armada,” \textit{Archaeology Ireland} 2 (1988), 145.

\textsuperscript{400} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{401} Haribison, “A Sixteenth Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” 40.
preparing to leave, or were already away, on fishing expeditions to Ireland. These fishing ships also carried on an extensive import and export business between Ireland and the continent, bringing iron, wine, saffron, sword blades and other freights; and leaving not only with Irish fish, but also with hides and leather. Although official trade with Spain tapered off during the Anglo-Spanish war, trade ships from other countries could also have been smuggling devotional figures and the other “superstitious relics” with which the High Ecclesiastical Commission was concerned in 1593.

In the seventeenth century, the restoration of Catholicism as the state religion in the Low Countries drew many Irish immigrants. The southern Netherlands, and especially the city of Ostend, was the commercial center of the Continent. It marked the crossing point of the economies of the Dutch Republic, England and France, and its political ties with Spain facilitated trade with the Iberian Peninsula and its colonies further afield. Irish Catholic merchants who had been expelled from their homeland set up powerful and lucrative trade networks, linking Ireland with the continent via Ostend. Anthonie Carew, a merchant of Irish butter, hides and tallow originally from Waterford, was even appointed mayor of Ostend for nine years. Dominicus Lynch, also originally from Waterford, headed his family’s extensive trade business from the Netherlands, importing wine and brandy to Ghent and Bruges from Nantes and Bordeaux, and regularly sold Irish cargos of butter, salmon and hides, brought from the Irish ports of


403 Ibid., 14-15.


405 Ibid., 33.
Youghal, Cork and Waterford. Any of the many Irish merchants living in the Catholic Southern Netherlands, with their extensive trade ties, especially with other Catholic countries, could have been smuggling religious objects on their cargo ships back into Ireland. The *Holy Cross Madonna* may have been one such smuggled wooden devotional sculpture. This figure was fantastically recovered in 1604 by fishermen three years after being sunk on a ship off the west coast of Ireland. It was eventually brought to the Holy Cross Monastery, in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. In 1640, a layman, Patrick Sarsfield, is believed to have imported (illegally) the figure of *Our Lady of Limerick*, which he presented to the Dominican convent of St. Savior’s, along with a silver-gilt chalice (Fig. 278).

Irish smuggling is well known, particularly from the second half of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century. Entrepôt centers, such as the Isle of Man, emerged from which large cargo ships could unload their freight, and smaller boats could carry the wares to their final destinations on the Irish coast. The Dublin County seaport, Rush, was frequently used for the importation of illicit objects. Many of these importations were of legal items, such as tobacco, tea, and brandy, but were intended to circumnavigate high tariffs. It is possible that small stashes of religious objects could also have been included in these shipments.

406 Ibid.


408 Hartry, 169-177.


Smuggling’s costs were high, however, compounded by the risk of discovery and seizure. Additionally, smugglers only trafficked goods into the country – rarely out – meaning that money could only be made on one end of the voyage. This would elevate the cost of the freight. In the instance of wooden devotional sculptures, there was another, likely cheaper, method of importation: personal transportation by private individuals, clerics and other religious persons traveling between Ireland and the continent. *Our Lady of Waterford*, already mentioned, is believed to have been imported from Spain by a Cistercian monk, Father Nicholas Fagan. In fact, all throughout the Suppression, Irish religious were frequently traveling to and from the rest of Europe.

Nearly all of the Irish Dominicans in the seventeenth century were trained on the continent, and trips between Ireland and the continental Europe were frequent. A convent of Irish Dominican friars was established circa 1623 in Louvain for the training and preservation of Irish Dominicans, followed later in the century by colleges in Lisbon, Burgos, and Rome. St. Anthony’s College in Louvain was established in 1607 for the education of Irish Franciscans. When Parliamentary troops conquered Galway in April of 1652, both the Poor Clares and the Dominican Nuns fled to convents across Spain. From 1630, a small number of French and Belgian Carmelites came to Ireland to educate

---

411 There was some wool smuggling out of Ireland in the sixteenth and first half of the eighteenth century, but this had all but vanished by 1750. Ibid., 151.

412 Fr. Fagan was the bishop-designate of Waterford, but died in 1617 before he could be consecrated. See: Burke, “Our Layde of Ynislaunaght,” 92.

413 O’Heyne, 277; Ó Héideáin, 25.


novitiates. In 1698, all of the Catholic clergy were banished from Ireland, and fled to convents and monasteries across the continent. The Dominican Fathers of Galway escaped to France, but even following their return from expulsion Ó Héideáin speculates that of the fourteen members listed in 1735, only four were in residence, while the rest were at various places on the continent. In March of 1717, eight Dominican nuns left Galway; six of the sisters went to Dublin and two to Brussels. Later that year, six of the community went to Madrid and sought refuge at various convents. At least two lived out the rest of their lives in Spain, dying in 1749 and 1767.

Throughout the Suppression, dynamic communication and travel is evident between the Irish Carmelites and those on the continent. In 1649, letters from two Irish Carmelites survive in Renne evidencing their education in the area. An Irish Carmelite is found working as a chaplain to the Irish soldiers in the employ of the Duke of Parma in 1703. Remarkably, in 1704 novitiates were sent from France and Spain to be educated in Ireland. The acquisition of the figure of *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin* (Fig. 315) by the Dublin Carmelites may be attributable to the close relationship between the Irish Carmelites and those in Spain, where the majority of Irish Carmelites were sent to be

---


417 O’Heyne, 159-165; Ó Héideáin, 30.

418 O’Neill, 23.


According to O’Dwyer, on July 12, 1738 a Commissary General was
appointed in Spain to manage the affairs of the Irish.\(^\text{422}\) A letter in the archives at Renne
stated the extreme need for ecclesiastical objects in Ireland during the eighteenth century,

> It is absolutely necessary for the religious who go to Ireland to
have the altar ornaments (missal, charts, candlesticks, etc.) and
cloths, as such things are not found in that country… some books
also, because one should not hope to find any there.\(^\text{423}\)

Many of the wooden devotional figures which survive from the Suppression era
seem likely to have been imported directly as a result of these continental ties. The figure
of *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin* and the two Rosary Madonnas in Galway (Fig. 301 - Fig.
311) are the best candidates for these types of importations.\(^\text{424}\) The *Multyfarnham St.
Francis / St. Anthony* (Fig. 291) and the *St. Louis of Toulouse* (Fig. 297) in Dublin may
have been brought by the Franciscans from Louvain.\(^\text{425}\)

**The Eighteenth Century Recovery**

The worst of the persecutions were over by the early eighteenth century, although
the penal laws still continued to be sporadically and unevenly implemented throughout
most of the century. The Dominican Nuns at Galway were dispersed several times in the
early part of the century, but quickly returned to their convent. A letter from 1714 written

\(^\text{421}\) Archives of the Order Rome, Spain 1728-88, II as quoted by O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order
in Post-Reformation Ireland,” 266.

\(^\text{422}\) Ibid.

quoted by O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order in Post-Reformation Ireland,” 265.

523; *Our Lady of Galway*, p. 537.

511; *St. Louis of Toulouse*, p. 517.
by an imprisoned priest, Fr. Thomas McDermott, states that the sisters had been expelled from their convent three times during the two months that he spent in a Galway jail.\textsuperscript{426}

The last dispersal of the Dominican Fathers in Galway occurred in 1744, although according to Ó Héideáin, “it caused the brethren… no more trouble than to get out of the house, leaving some cakes and wine for the sheriffs, until the token search was over.”\textsuperscript{427}

Many religious orders re-established churches during the eighteenth century, complete with decorations and church furniture. Several of the surviving wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland dating to the eighteenth century were commissioned or imported for such establishments. A description written in the nineteenth century recounts the appearance of one of these churches, the Dominican chapel on Fish Lane in Limerick City,

About 1735, they settled down immediately at the rere [sic.] of a house belonging to the Roche family, in Mary Street. Here, they built a chapel, over which they made a dwelling, or small convent, the entrance to which was in Fish Lane. It was called the Friary of Fish Lane. This chapel was erected immediately behind Mr Roche’s house, and as it were, under cover of the same, as can be seen at the present day. Doubtless this was arranged for the purpose of escaping the rigour of penal laws, at that time in full force. The chapel was a parallelogram about sixty feet long, and thirty broad. It was decorated in rather good taste. There were galleries all round, supported by accurately elaborated Corinthian pillars. The altar consisted of an entablature supported by columns of the same style. The painting over the altar was a crucifixion.\textsuperscript{428}

\textsuperscript{426} Hugh Fenning, \textit{The Irish Dominican Province 1698-1797} (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1990), 76-77.

\textsuperscript{427} Ó Héideáin, 30.

\textsuperscript{428} Dr. Carbery, O.P., Bishop of Hamilton, Ontario and former prior of the Dominican monastery in Limerick, writing in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (death date 1887), \textit{Chronological Account of the Dominican Convent, Limerick}, (Limerick, 1867) as quoted by Coleman (O’Heyne), 58.
Bishop Carbery goes on to give a lengthy account of a seventeenth century figure called *Our Lady of Limerick* in the Fish Lane Chapel.

The only article of furniture belonging to the original church of St. Saviour that was to be found in this chapel, was the oak statue of the Virgin and Child, which was made in Flanders in the early part of the seventeenth century, and which, after the final destruction of that church was buried in the ground for nearly a century. As soon as the fathers had their new place of worship completed, they brought their dear old statue of our Lady, and set it up in a shrine prepared at the Epistle side of the altar, where it continued to be an object of tender devotion to the faithful, who were ever alive to the pious traditions of the *Fathers of the Rosary*, as the Dominicans were then frequently called. It is said that many great graces were obtained from God by the pious clients of Mary, who made their devotions before this shrine.\(^{429}\)

In Dublin during the late 1730s, the Carmelite Order moved from their relatively small and modest establishment in Cornmarket to Ashe Street, where a new Carmelite monastery, church, and school were opened.\(^{430}\) Another chapel, St. Michan’s, sometimes known as Mary’s Lane Chapel, was built in Dublin circa 1700. A description of this church, and the figure of *Our Lady of Dublin* within it, survives from 1749,

“In St. Mary’s Lane is a parochial chapel; whose jurisdiction extends from one side of Boot Lane to one side of Church Street, inclusive. It was built by subscription obtained by solicitation of Dr. Cornelius Nary. ‘tis a large and irregular piece of building. The altar-piece is a painting of the Annunciation of B.V.M. and on the Epistle side stands a large image of B.V. with Jesus in her arms, carved in wood, which statue before the dissolution belonged to St. Mary’s Abbey.”\(^{431}\)

\(^{429}\) Ibid.

\(^{430}\) P. R. McCaffrey, *The White Friars, an outline of Carmelite history with special reference to the English speaking provinces*, (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1926), 438.
It seems that while still acting cautiously, religious orders in eighteenth century Ireland felt that there was enough of a respite from persecutions to establish large-scale churches. By the end of the century, there seems to have been no attempt at subterfuge, whatsoever. A notice regarding the completion of the Navan Crucifix was published in the Dublin Evening Post, and the figure was exhibited at the Dublin Museum on Mary Street prior to going to its permanent home at the Catholic church in Navan.\footnote{Leask, “Some Less Known Works of Edward Smyth, Sculptor,” 74-75. The text of this notice is given in Catalogue: Introduction, p. 51.}

Although the suppression of the Catholic Church in Ireland technically lasted until 1829, with the passage of the Act of Union in 1800 both the Irish and British Parliaments agreed that the Test Act would be repealed; effectively ending institutionalized discrimination against Roman Catholics. Prominent, permanent churches were built across the island, religious patterns were practiced in the open, and several of the figures which had survived the destruction of the Suppression were brought out of hiding as the fervor surrounding their cults grew. These miraculously surviving figures were the relics of still living medieval religious traditions which survived, and at some points thrived, in spite of the many attempts to eradicate them.

**Destruction in the Nineteenth Century**

Threats to the continued survival of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland did not cease, however, with the emancipation of the Catholic Church in 1829. As Irish Catholics began to practice more openly during the nineteenth century, the popularity of pattern days grew and the celebrations surrounding them became more boisterous. Fairs and festivals grew up around these pattern days. Drinking, quarreling and faction-fighting

\footnote{Donnelly, 12. I have not had the opportunity to go to the British Library to view the manuscript personally.}
became especially pernicious problems at the fairs and very often resulted in the deaths of participants. During these faction-fights, groups of men would begin fighting and beating each other with sticks or shillelaghs, often with little provocation. The death and violence which began to accompany the celebration of the saints’ feast days quickly caused the Church to bring an end to local patterns which had survived for centuries,\(^\text{433}\) causing many of the wooden figures which were associated with them to fall into disuse.

According to the *Ordnance Survey Letters for County Wexford*, a pattern was discontinued around 1810 at Kilcaven “in consequence of a man having been killed at it during a quarrel.”\(^\text{434}\) Also in Co. Wexford, the fair of Cloch Ámainn, held on the feast of St. Barnaby on June 11\(^\text{th}\), became infamous for its faction fights,

> Let anyone who doubts the truth of this attend at the green of “Sweet Clahaman” on the 11\(^\text{th}\) of June an’ it’s there where he’ll see the fightin’ that’ll do his heart good. Tents, torn down for the wattles with which they are constructed, disappearing on all sides; tables and forms “flitterin’ asunder”, for the same purpose; pots, pans, kettles, jugs, decanters, tumblers, pewther [sic.] pints, and baken [bacon] an’ pullets, flying in all directions form but a small portion of the amusement of the scene. In one corner may be seen the poor piper, with half a dozen of the boys, “fightin’ for the bare life” over his prostrate carcase [sic.], and “threadin’ the very puddin’s out of him.”\(^\text{435}\)

Many Catholic churches in Ireland reacted to this violence by ending the patterns with which the fights and festivities had become associated. In some cases, the patterns


\(^{435}\) Phillip Herbert Hore, *History of the town and county of Wexford from the earliest period to the rebellion of 1798, comprised principally from ancient records and the state papers in the Public record offices of London and Dublin, the mss. In the British museum, and the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Dublin II*, ed. Philip Hore, (Dublin: E. Stock, 1900), 27-40.
may already have been considered unsavory for other reasons. The extremely localized patterns at holy wells with wooden ‘idols’ of uncanonized Irish saints set up beside wells or rag-tied sacred trees undoubtedly smacked of paganism, troubling some members of the Catholic clergy. This caused a parish priest in the nineteenth century to violently attack the figure of St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin (Fig. 413). Hogan states,

A grotesque figure, about four feet high, carved as a bishop in pontifical, and was intended to represent the patron saint, was carried in procession round the graveyard. On one occasion, Father Charles Kavanagh, the late P.P. and a rather primitive old gentleman, was so enraged with the tomfoolery of the proceedings, that he mutilated the face of the statue with his walking stick, after which the ‘Patron’ was discontinued for some years. This same statue, with its nose broken off, is now lying on the first-floor of the old castle. The present P.P., Archdeacon O’Shea… observes the ‘Patron’ festival according to its primitive simplicity, as a day of solemn worship, and abolished forever the nonsensical ceremonies of the ‘ould patron’ of St. Martin, about which I have been hearing for as long as I have been able to remember.  

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some scholars also mistook the surviving wooden devotional sculptures for pagan votive figures. The tone of such accounts is frequently condescending and reminiscent of nineteenth century anthropological accounts. About the figure of St. Maolrúán (Fig. 412), Lacy wrote in 1863, “Whether this remnant of antiquity be of Pagan or Christian origin, it is much regretted that it did not fall into other hands than those of the simple and unsophisticated people, whose repeated dressings and floral decorations must have occasioned it more or less deterioration.” As late as 1929, a letter from T. Shea to National Museum Director, Adolf Mahr, discusses the pagan overtones of the Kilcorban Madonna (Fig. 46) and St. Maolrúán.

---

436 John Hogan, *Kilkenny: The Ancient City of Ossory, the Seat of its Kings, the See of its Bishops, and the Site of its Cathedral* (Kilkenny: P.M. Egan, 1884), 44-45.

437 Lacy, 458.
Catherine (Fig. 155), and the figures of the Madonna (Fig. 353) and St. John the Evangelist (Fig. 357) from the Kilcorban Crucifixion,

They are religious figures but I could see no unmistakable sign of Christianity about them. The priest thought they belonged to the Dominican Abbey of the vicinity but I am certain they did not… It is more probable that they are non-christian [sic.]. One female *(Is this a war goddess) figure is holding a sword, the other has a small laughing old man – (not a child) in her lap. The carving is crude, big-bellied and undignified. Another figure is that of a man with a Chinese-looking moustache and a beard, dressed in a long robe with long hair and no tonsure. This does not represent a monk or a priest – except that it may be a Druidic one. The fourth figure is that of a female in the attitude of prayer: the face has a good expression. When I pointed out the peculiar characteristics to the priest, he was willing to admit that the dress and features and the carving are not christian [sic.] as we know the Christian period [all emphasis original].

The presumed paganism of the wooden devotional figures and the traditions surrounding them had long bothered the Protestants of Ireland. About the figure of St. Molaise (Fig. 81), an anonymous author wrote in the Protestant Penny Journal,

This disgusting idol stands upright before the degraded worshippers, in the full gaze of the priests of that church, which modern liberalism, in the exercise of a spurious charity, scruples to denominate idolatrous… The old woman in Inismurray, expecting sympathy and relief from the object of her worship, in a calamity in which disregard of the law, and love of whiskey had involved her, was as truly a pagan, as if the image before which she prostrated herself were denominated Mars or Bacchus.

These attitudes, from within and outside of the Church, coupled with the ultramontanism of the time may have led to the abandonment and destruction of ancient

438 T. Shea to Adolf Mahr, 12 September 1929, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

439 “A Visit to Inismurray,” 67-69.
wooden devotional sculptures in the nineteenth century. From the mid-nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in Ireland became increasingly ultramontane in the face of Protestant proselytization and as Rome sought greater control over the Catholic Church in Ireland, which it believed threatened to become ungovernable. Paul Cullen, as primate of the See of Armagh and later as Ireland’s first cardinal, sought to bring the Irish Church (which in his view had been growing wild throughout the long Suppression) more fully into line with Rome.

The ultramontanism of the nineteenth century is evidenced by the Synod at Thurles, Co. Tipperary in 1850, called by Cullen, and the second national Synod at Maynooth in 1875. The primary purpose of the two synods was to reform the Catholic Church in Ireland and to ensure that it conformed in every way to Roman practice. This included the eradication of many folk traditions which had grown up around the administration of the Sacraments, moving these significant ecclesiastical events back into the churches and out of parishioners’ homes, where they had been practiced in secret throughout the Suppression.

Throughout the 1850s, missions were held in nearly every parish in Ireland and new devotional exercises were introduced that were of predominantly Roman origin, intended to replace localized indigenous religious practices, such as the use of holy wells.

---

440 One tactic frequently used in the wake of the Great Famine was known as ‘souperism.’ Protestant evangelicals would offer soup to the starving in exchange for their conversion. In other instances, employers would refuse employment to the parents of children who did not attend a Protestant Sunday school. Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the Shaping of Modern Catholicism* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Press, 1983), 170.

441 Bowen, 166.


and the observance of patterns. These devotional practices included the saying of the rosary, novenas, devotion to the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Conception, as well as the use of more conventional pilgrimages, shrines, and processions. Although there are obviously many overlaps with traditional folk patterns, the older Irish practices were viewed as pagan and profane, while the new observance of holy days were seen as more solemn affairs, as is made evident by Hogan’s account of the parish priest’s attack on the figure of *St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin*.

These new ‘Roman’ practices also included the use of images and devotional aids blessed by priests, who had recently acquired that ability from Rome. In parishes across Ireland, new devotional sculpture was acquired and many fine wooden examples from the nineteenth century survive to this day. This demonstrates that it was not the use of wooden devotional figures that came under attack in the nineteenth century Irish church, but perhaps the crudeness of some of the earlier carvings and the unorthodox fervor associated with the indigenous traditions, which led to cries of paganism. As evidenced by Shea’s 1929 letter to Mahr, these attitudes remained current into the first few decades of the twentieth century.

**Scholarly Interest in the Late Nineteenth - Mid-Twentieth Centuries**

Almost as soon as the old wooden devotional figures began to pass into disuse, late nineteenth and early twentieth century antiquarians became interested in their study. Du Noyer (1855), Wakeman (1883 and 1886), Hogan (1884), Hore (1900), Harris (1938), and many others recorded short accounts of the quickly eroding traditions which

---

444 Larkin, 644-645.

445 Larkin, 645.
surrounded the figures. Without these histories no doubt many would now be completely forgotten. Yet, there seemed to be almost no interest in these objects as works of art until Catriona MacLeod’s study in the 1940s. Her address of the figures in an art historical context not only highlighted the folk-traditions surrounding many of the figures, but also looked at some of the more formal and stylistic aspects of the carvings. She began to examine the figures as a genre of art, rather than isolated cult objects. Following MacLeod’s publications, scholars began to look at the surviving figures as rare survivals of late medieval art, rather than as the superstitious relics of a simple, rural people.

Positive attention from the scholarly community, and from MacLeod in particular, also led to the public resurfacing of several figures which were still in private hands in the mid-twentieth century. These figures include the *Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist* (Fig. 419), the *Bruff Madonna* (Fig. 421), *St. Patrick / St. Berchán* (Fig. 284), and possibly also the *Glendalough Saint* (Fig. 208) and the *Askeaton Madonna* (Fig. 145). Sixty years later, in the absence of any scholarly attention, two of those figures (*Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist*, the *Bruff Madonna*) are now considered lost. A third, the figure of *St. Patrick / Berchán*, had been donated to St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin but all traces of the figure’s history had been forgotten. The Cathedral’s personnel had no idea how old the figure was or that it had been published by MacLeod in the 1940s.⁴⁴⁶

**Conclusion**

The cataclysmic decision by secular authorities to dissolve the Catholic Church destroyed many religious traditions in the Isles. In Ireland, the resultant cultural break is frequently cited as the dividing point between the medieval and early modern worlds.

⁴⁴⁶ MacLeod, “Mediaeval Statues from the 17th Century,” 129-130.
Yet, the medieval visual tradition of wooden devotional sculpture has proven incredibly resilient. The intimate relationship between viewer and icon contributed both to the popularity of the figures but also made them targets for the Reformation. The iconoclasts, in turn, by breaking these images inadvertently sowed the seeds for their preservation, by elevating the surviving figures to a relic-like status. Not until the relaxing of restrictions and changing attitudes of the nineteenth century were many of the figures abandoned. Yet, even in the contemporary world, small enclaves exist where figures and their accompanying traditions and oral histories still remain. Such sculptures afford the opportunity to reach a better understanding of a pre-modern relationship between the faithful and devotional images. In a constantly changing world, the resiliency of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland maintains a link to its medieval past.
CONCLUSION

Wooden devotional sculptures have been at the center of ardent popular devotions in Ireland for many centuries. They serve as mediators and focal points through which prayer is directed to the godhead. Like their continental counterparts, these wooden figures act as lesser mirrors of the immaterial archetypes of the saints which they depict; however in Ireland, an increased numinosity is imparted to many of the surviving statues, resulting from their turbulent histories, miraculous survival, and the folk traditions which surround them.

Although the earliest extant figures appear to date to the thirteenth century, the sculptures are rooted in pre-Christian figurative traditions which stretch back several thousand years. Wooden votive figures have been found at watery sites, including bogs, springs, and wells, in Ireland and across the Celtic world. The association between Christian wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland and traditional patterns, many of which are held near holy wells and sacred trees, harken back to the ancient past. There may be as many as three thousand holy wells in Ireland, the majority of which are dedicated to indigenous Irish saints, or to the cure of a particular ailment. Archaeological evidence at some well and pattern sites dates to the first through fifth centuries CE, although many have not been excavated for religious reasons.

It is not known precisely when, or under what circumstances, Christian wooden devotional sculptures first entered into use in Ireland, although several factors during twelfth century combine to suggest that it was the most likely period of initial ingress. These factors include the advent of the Gregorian reformovement in Ireland and its connection to iconographically significant architecture and sculpture; a change in high
cross iconography away from didactic depictions towards large-scale, solitary depictions of ecclesiastics; an increase in continental pilgrimage; a concurrent increase in the popularity of this type of image on the continent; and the dynamic international trade-ties and ecclesiastical connections of the Scandinavian Ostmen in Ireland.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, the Irish annals make frequent reference to wooden devotional figures and the miracles wrought by them. By the fifteenth century, a synod in Limerick stated that every church should have at least three statues: one of the Madonna, one of the crucified Christ, and one of the patron saint of the Church, implying that the genre once encompassed hundreds of figures. Although previous studies indicated that the sculptures only survived individually in remote locations or in small groups of statues, when figures of foreign manufacture are taken into account, an increasingly complicated picture emerges. Twenty-five pre-Dissolution wooden devotional sculptures of both indigenous and foreign manufacture are currently known to survive in Ireland. They have a wide geographic distribution across most of the island (Table 2), with significant clusters of extant figures originating around the urban center of Waterford and in the very center of island, where the counties of Galway, Roscommon, Offaly and Westmeath meet.

The commissioning and importation of wooden devotional sculptures did not end with the iconoclastic outbreak of the Dissolution in the sixteenth century. When surviving figures from the Suppression era are included, the number of extant wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland rises to forty-three (Table 3). If one also includes lost wooden devotional sculptures for which we have textual evidence, the total documented wooden devotional figures in Ireland rises to seventy-five (Table 4). It is likely that there were
once many more. The geographic distribution for these seventy-five sculptures shows that although many figures existed singularly in small towns and other remote locations, many others also once existed at large urban-centers, including Dublin, Galway, and Waterford, as well as at significant sites of pilgrimage, such as Lough Derg.

During the medieval and early modern periods, many of the wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland were believed to be miraculous. At the Dissolution, these objects were seen as analogous to pagan idols and were targeted for destruction. Yet many wooden devotional figures managed to survive this, and later, iconoclastic attempts to destroy them. Several figures were hidden by private individuals or protected by powerful families throughout the Suppression. The focus on destroying devotional sculpture not only speaks of the genre’s power within Irish society, but may have inadvertently increased that power by making the surviving figures seem more precious and their endurance miraculous. Figures also continued to be imported and commissioned throughout the entire Suppression era, as necessary tools through which the clergy could minister to the faithful. They illustrate both the internationalism of the medieval and early modern eras, as well as the continuity of localized devotion and folk-practices, some of which survive to this day.

It should be noted that this field is still very much in flux and despite all efforts to be comprehensive, it is hoped for and expected that additional statues will continue to be uncovered. Previously unknown wooden devotional sculptures may come to light and figures thought lost may reappear. These will undoubtedly increase our understanding of this genre.
CATALOGUE
INTRODUCTION

The catalogue is organized into three sections that reflect the two main eras of artistic production and importation of wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland prior to 1800: the Lordship Period (1169 – 1536) and the Suppression Era (1536 – 1800), and a third grouping of figures for which it was not possible to determine whether they were manufactured or imported prior to the year 1800. The entries are arranged chronologically within each section, by either date of commissioning or suspected importation. A chronological approach is taken in order to better situate each of the figures within their historical contexts, allowing a variety of figures across different regions and subject matters, but which share similar stylistic traits, to be located nearer to each other in the catalogue. Each catalogue entry contains visual description and analysis (sub-sections 1-4), a discussion of the figure’s iconography (sub-section 5) and documentation of the figure’s history and current use (sub-section 6). A short bibliography (sub-section 7) is also given for each entry. Lengthy visual descriptions are included to supplement the visual record in order to create an exhaustive account of the current conditions of these rapidly disappearing and degenerating carvings.

While this catalogue endeavours to be comprehensive, it is expected that additional figures will continue to be uncovered, due to the disregard paid to this genre of art by scholars in the past, and the challenges involved in documenting what has turned

447 The only exception is the Madonna as Star of the Sea, from the Black Abbey in Kilkenny. This figure is stylistically dated to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, however tradition ascribes its importation to the mid-seventeenth century. As is demonstrated in the comments section of that figure’s entry, the traditional story of it having come from Archbishop Rinuccini’s ship-mast is likely not true, especially when coupled with the early stylistic date of the carving (See: Figures from the Suppression, Madonna as Star of the Sea, section 6, p. 440). Nevertheless, because of the tradition ascribing its importation to the post-Dissolution era, the sculpture’s catalogue entry is placed at the beginning of the Figures from the Suppression Era section.
out to be a surprisingly large and widespread genre of art. Even many museums are not aware of all of their current holdings. Statues have been found that were kept by individuals, in parishes, cathedrals, and in small diocesan and county museums. Many figures in private hands were discovered through word-of-mouth and even some in museum collections were only discovered after I crawled through back rooms, dusty shelves and dank basements. Although I made every effort to locate, view and document each extant wooden devotional sculpture from the advent of the genre to 1800, it would not be surprising if more were uncovered in the future. Three figures which came to light after my most recent research trip to Ireland in the autumn of 2011 are included in Appendix A.

Appendix B includes a list of wooden devotional figures in Ireland that date to the period studied, but which are believed to have been imported after the year 1800. Incomplete or non-existent acquisition records greatly complicate matters and in most cases we cannot know with any kind of certainty how – or under what circumstances – many of these figures entered the country. This ambiguity led to an accusation in 2003 that many of the artworks collected by John and Gertrude Hunt (which now form the core collection of the Hunt Museum in Limerick) were acquired illegally through the purchase of Nazi-looted art. The validity of these accusations was never proven and the official

---

government inquiry was eventually closed due to lack of evidence. Simply put, the Hunts did not keep acquisition records and no person stepped forward to claim any of the supposedly looted items from the Hunt Museum collection.

Very little in the way of acquisition records also exist for many of the figures within the National Museum of Ireland’s collection, in the year 1948 alone, at least one-hundred-and-ninety-seven objects failed to be catalogued. Where acquisition records do exist, they frequently provide very little information. This is certainly the case for the Romanesque Spanish Madonna (Fig. 386). According to the National Museum’s register, this early thirteenth century figure entered the collection in 1936 through a donation by the Marquis MacSwiney of Mashanaglass, Co. Cork. No clues are given in the register as to how the marquis could have acquired the statue, however Diarmuid O Murchadha's Family Names of County Cork states that the marquis was born on the continent and spent several years serving the papal court (for which he was granted his title). It seems likely that the Marquis MacSwiney acquired the Spanish Madonna, along with the Burgundian stone Madonna that he also donated to the National Museum in the same year, while living in continental Europe. Similar lines of speculation have been undertaken for several figures in order to supplement scanty records.

A discussion of iconography for each entry is included in order to more firmly establish the identity and in some cases the dating of the figures. When the provenance of

---


a particular figure is incontrovertibly foreign, speculations have been made as to where the figure may have been carved; although, “Is it Irish?” is perhaps the question most frequently asked in regard to these statues, answering where and by whom a figure was carved only tells us the very beginning of the story. In a sense, all of the figures included here are Irish – through hundreds of years of use, devotion and attachment. Each contributes to our understanding of this genre, both in historical terms and as a living tradition.

Additionally, the question, “Is it Irish?” can be a dangerous one which may lead to pejorative assumptions about Irish craftsmanship. If a figure was carved in a rudimentary or provincial style, it was previously assumed to be Irish, but if it were finely carved it was almost invariably assumed to be of foreign manufacture. Although one might agree that a figure which is carved in a primitive way is not likely to have been imported (and therefore of probable local manufacture) the reverse cannot be assumed about well-wrought figures. There seems to be no reason why high-quality figures could not have been made in Ireland throughout the entire eight hundred year period surveyed. Beautiful figural works of incontrovertibly Irish craftsmanship survive in stone, in silverwork, as well as in wooden furniture. Why not in wooden devotional sculpture? If the skilled workers necessary to make these other artworks existed in Ireland, surely some of them could also carve a wooden figure.

The catalogue and appendices are limited to free-standing, wooden devotional sculpture. For this reason some beautiful wooden carvings are excluded, including the panel of *Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate* (Fig. 41) and the carving of the *Flight into Egypt* (Fig. 42) from the Hunt Museum, the *Entrance into Jerusalem* and
Crucifixion panels from Bunratty castle, as well as the Deposition from Adare (Fig. 43). These sculptural groups all appear to have been imported to Ireland after the emancipation of the Catholic Church and so no long-term traditions or histories of use are associated with them. More importantly, however, the primary purpose for carvings such as these seems inherently different than that of a devotional sculpture. These carvings seem to be primarily didactic; they offer a window onto a biblical scene, rather than a personal encounter with the Madonna, Christ, or saint and they often have too many figures to allow the viewer to enter into a personal, contemplative relationship with the subject.

After some debate and in an effort to control the size of this catalogue, it was decided to exclude devotional figures which are fashioned out of other materials. Of these excluded works, perhaps the most important and well-known figure is Our Lady of Youghal (Fig. 45). This small ivory figure has inspired the same type of local devotion given to many of the wooden figures, and its discovery story also bears striking resemblance to many of the “tropes” told about the wooden figures. In 1644 Madame de la Boullaye le Gouz wrote,

In the Dominican Convent [at Youghal] there was an Image of the Virgin, formerly held in the greatest veneration in Ireland, which arrived there in a miraculous manner. The tide brought a piece of wood on to the sands opposite the town, which several fishermen tried to carry off, the wood being rare in the country, but they could not move it; they harnessed ten horses to it without effect, and the reflux of the tide brought it near the Dominican convent. Two monks raised it to their shoulders and put it in the court-yard of the convent; and the prior had in the night a vision that the

---

452 I was able to view these two relief panel but was not permitted to photograph them, as they are not currently on display.

453 John T. Paoletti expands upon this idea of the sacral presence in devotional sculpture in his article, “Wooden Sculpture in Italy as Sacral Presence,” Artibus et Historiae 13, No. 26 (1992), 85-100.
image of our Lady was in this piece of wood; which was found there. So say the Catholics, who have still a great devotion towards it; but the Dominicans having been persecuted by the English settlers carried it elsewhere.  

This type of discovery story is common amongst the preserved wooden devotional sculptures and similar accounts are observed within the catalogue entries for Our Lady of Dublin (p. 447), the Kilcorban Madonna (p. 187) and the Harbison Christ-Child (p. 462), in addition to several others. The exclusion of devotional sculptures in other materials is not a comment on worth of study; they deserve their own scholarly examination.

---

JCA-L-001: Kilcorban Madonna and Child (Fig. 46-Fig. 51)

1. **Location:** Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. **Date:** Early-mid 13th century

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. 92 cm (approximately).

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: Single block, a small section (about 4 cm) just below the Madonna’s left elbow appears to have been broken off and then reattached. The hand and the rest of the forearm remained intact when this section broke because the hand solidly connects with the side of the cape.

   (d) dowel holes: There are two visible. One in the broken stump of Mary’s right arm, and one in the break just before the Christ Child’s right shoulder.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: There are traces of gold-leaf on the Madonna’s crown and hair, as well as on the V-shaped collar of her dress. Her face is fully painted with a flesh tone. This polychrome is cracking in places, especially on the upper forehead and is missing entirely from the bridge of the Madonna’s nose. Black crescent-shaped eyebrows which follow the

---

All identifications of the type of wood used are as previously published, confirmed by my own observations of grain, color, and weight when possible. In order to have a definite identification of the type of wood used, microscopic analysis would need to be conducted.
craved brow ridge are each painted in a single line. The sclerae of the figure’s wide eyes are painted white and the irises are each painted blue encircling a black pupil. There is a white dot of reflected light painted on top of the iris and pupil on each of her eyes. Her cheeks are flushed a carmine-coloured red. Her lips are painted so dark a red that they almost appear black, but a brighter red shows through from underneath this layer. All of the paint on her face looks much thicker than the rest of the polychrome and seems to be much more modern. There are remnants of dark blue polychrome on the torso of her dress. Her cloak is brown, but traces of carmine still cling to the cloak in places. Her extant hand has some flesh-coloured polychrome left on it, but it is of a different colour, and seems much older than that on the face. Over the entire piece are traces of white, possibly gesso or old emulsion, and some of the red-lead priming is visible. The colouring of Christ’s face is the same as his mother’s, but his hair is painted brown. His robe is cream with a red V-necked collar. The throne is painted a very dark colour, possibly black, although the lighting makes it difficult to tell. The painted details around Christ’s eyes are smudged, and appear different than in MacLeod’s photographs.

(f) general condition: The Madonna’s right arm has been broken off from just below the elbow, a dowel hole indicates a repair was attempted to it. On her other arm, in almost the same place, a small section (about 4 cm) of the wood was broken out but seems to have been fitted back in. Two small
stubs underneath the bottom of the Child’s robes are all that remain of his feet. Both of his arms are missing from just before the beginnings of his shoulders. A dowel hole in the left side indicates that there was an attempted repair made to at least this side. The top of the Madonna’s head is missing, apparently from decay. A poor plaster repair was attempted. The whole figure has evidence of rot and decay. This is especially prevalent at the back and bottom of the carving, as well as on the top of the throne. According to the museum label the figure was restored by MacLeod in the 1940’s / 1950’s. This claim is backed up by photographic evidence in MacLeod’s papers in the National Museum.456 No further written evidence of these restorations have been found in either the National Museum Records or in MacLeod’s personal papers.

4. Description:

(a) head: The top of the Madonna’s head has been damaged by decay, and a plaster repair, which has been painted dark brown, has been laid over top of this. This plaster repair could also possibly be thick gesso or emulsion, it is difficult to determine. Below the missing top of the head are the remnants of a thick crown. The width of it varies from between about a centimetre to 2.5 cm, depending upon how much of the top of the head remains extant in that particular section. Patches of gold leaf still cling to the crown. The Madonna’s hair, which lies close to the side of her head and neck, falls behind her shoulders. It is crimped into accordion-style

456 Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished papers, Box 51, National Museum of Ireland Art and Industry Archives, Dublin, Ireland.
waves, and also has remnants of gold leaf. The portion of her forehead which shows beneath her crown is quite short, the distance between her crown and her brow is only about 2.5 cm. The rest of her face, from below the brow, is quite long. The painted black crescent-shaped eyebrows follow the lines of her slightly upraised carved brow, which is situated above large, archaic eyes. The eyes bulge and there is some indication of lids in how the flesh rises to meet the white of the open eye, although the eyelids do not have sharply defined lines. The Madonna’s nose is long and thin. The nostrils are daintily carved, a feature which is marred by large black splotches of paint which have been daubed inside them. The Madonna’s mouth is tiny and her thin lips smile gently. The chin is long and pointy and the jaw-line is angular. Her neck is wide and long, and ends in the V-necked collar of the Madonna’s dress.

(b) body: The V-shaped collar of the Madonna’s dress is about 2.5 cm wide and large patches of gold leaf still cling to it. Her shoulders are very narrow. Her cloak flares out from behind the collar of her dress, and stands above her shoulders. There are traces of brown, red, and white (possibly gesso) polychrome on the cloak.

The Madonna’s cloak is pulled across her lap from the left to the right underneath her broken right arm (left side), the red-lead priming of the wood shows through in several places. On the right half of the figure no clear delineation is made between the cloak and the dress. The cloak falls from her wide-spread knees and ends at its lowest point about 10 cm
from the bottom of the figure, and rises on the right-hand side to about 20 cm from the bottom of the statue. Between her knees falling to the bottom of her cloak, are two long loopy folds that are almost – but not quite – V-shaped. The wood below the line of the cloak is too rotted and decayed to ascertain any details and large chunks of wood from the bottom of the figure are missing.

The folds on the Madonna’s torso fall in rippling vertical ridges and flounce out slightly over the flat band of her belt. The belt is situated just above the small bulge of her stomach. The same undulating folds continue underneath the belt over her stomach. There is no indication of breasts whatsoever. The sleeves of the Madonna’s dress cling tightly to her arms. The figure’s right arm is jaggedly broken just below the elbow and a small dowel hole in the stump indicates that an attempt at repair was made. The arm would have been outstretched and either held an object or was gesturing towards the Christ Child that sits between his mother’s divided knees. The Madonna’s extant hand rests on her knee. This hand is rather flat and the fingers all seem to be about a joint too long.

The profile of the statue is very narrow. Both Mother and Child seem to lean forward expectantly. The sides of the Madonna’s cloak fall in small, repetitive loopy folds. Mary sits on a low throne with no back, although her cloak seems to imitate a chair back. The actual rendering of the thrown is nothing more than a thick vertical board that the Madonna sits upon.
The back of the statue is flat and there is much evidence of decay. A long crevice which has been filled in with plaster runs from the back of the head down most of the length of the torso. The back is hollowed from where the throne begins to the bottom of the figure. This hollow is rather shallow at the top and gradually becomes deeper towards the bottom of the statue, while the carving of the figure tapers towards the bottom. The back is unpainted.

(c) Christ Child: The Christ-Child sits between the Madonna’s divided knees. He is carved from the same block of wood as the Madonna. His torso and head are carved in the round. The Child’s face is chubbier than his mother’s, but with similar features. The flesh tone on his face is of the same thick paint as on the Madonna’s face, however, the paint on the Child’s face obscures the way that facial features were carved. His eyes are carved large and archaic like the Madonna’s. The carved line of his brow is higher and more crescent-shaped than the painted eyebrows. Christ’s tiny mouth has the same gentle smile as his mother, but the paint of the bottom lip makes it appear much thicker than the carving. His chin is long in comparison to the rest of his face. His forehead, not being cut-off by a crown, is proportionately higher than the Madonna’s. The hair is cut high on his forehead and low over his ears, as Macleod describes, in “fluted ripples” around his entire head\(^{457}\). The top of the head is smooth.

\(^{457}\) Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Medieval Madonnas in the West,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 105 (1945), 172.
The neck of the Christ-Child is thick and long and ends in the same sort of V-necked collar as on the Madonna’s gown. The Child’s collar, however, falls slightly lower than that of the Madonna and it is painted bright carmine red. The remnants of paint that are on his robe are cream. The figure’s torso and legs are very long – his proportions are those of a small adult, not a child. His arms are missing from just before the shoulders, giving the sculpture a very narrow appearance. There is a dowel hole in the stub of his right shoulder, evidencing an attempted repair. The Christ Child leans forward and slightly to the right. Although his arms are now missing from the shoulders, it can be surmised from other depictions in the Romanesque mode that his right arm was likely raised in blessing and that he held either a book or an orb in his left. His legs are also widely splayed like those of his Mother, and his thighs are much shorter than his long shins. The Christ-Child’s robe flares out in a flat bell-shape against his mother’s gown, from his hips to either side of his divided legs. Underneath the bottom drapery of his robe are two stubs where his feet must have broken off.
5. **Identification of the subject:** This is a hieratic depiction of the Madonna and Child. The Madonna is shown enthroned, her legs widely splayed with the Christ-Child seated between them. The Child is fully clothed and both figures face the viewer.

This type of front facing, enthroned Virgin and Child has its iconographical origins in Byzantine art. In Romanesque and Gothic art, the Madonna and Child came to be shown as they are depicted here, in a sort of double-enthronement. The Madonna is shown enthroned in a chair and regal. The Child is enthroned in the lap of his mother. The Madonna was compared to the throne spoken of by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1) continuously from Early Christian times through the medieval period, citing the passage where Isaiah states that in a vision he saw “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.” The Child’s depiction as a small adult, rather than as an infant is, as Forsyth states,

Pertinent to his portrayal as a sovereign who assumes his high majesty in ascending the throne, which is, in this case, the figure of Mary. As a throne she is subordinate to him, yet as his mother she embodies the lineage of the house of David whence the Saviour... inherits the rights of an earthly king.

The Madonna was also often described in terms of the throne of Solomon, and thus sits as a representation of the Old Testament holding the incarnation of the

---


460 Ibid., 23.
New Testament in her lap.\footnote{Ibid., 26.} The Madonna was also frequently used as a symbol of the church, and the Child with his usual gesture of benediction with the book or orb in his hand shows also his status as head of the church, on which he is here enthroned.\footnote{Ibid., 23.} Another dimension to images of this sort is that of the male and female. As Forsyth points out,

> The statue combines the male and the female figures in one image… the Godhead with his Church. Male and female provinces interlock as do the figures… In claiming a seat for himself in the Virgin, Christ takes possession of her not as male possesses female, but as Christian divinity possesses the earth and his Church.\footnote{Ibid., 29.}

In depictions such as this, Christ and the Virgin must also be understood as the \textit{Logos} and \textit{Theotokos}, thus illustrating not only the human nature of both, but also their divine natures, a view supported by the Council of Ephesus in 431\footnote{See: John Chapman, "Council of Ephesus," \textit{The Catholic Encyclopedia}, Vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05491a.htm (accessed 13 Apr. 2011)} and the Council of Chalcedon in 451.\footnote{In the Council of Chalcedon, the doctrine of Christ’s fully human nature, denied by Eutyches and the Monophysites, was decided upon. In the fifth session of that council, in October 451 a specific dogmatic decree was issued, stating, “We teach . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” These two natures are, of course, Christ’s fully human and fully divine natures. See: Francis Schaefer, "Council of Chalcedon," \textit{The Catholic Encyclopedia} 3 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03555a.htm (accessed 13 Apr 2011).} Christ represents the Divine Wisdom made flesh, and the Madonna, as his mother, the bearer of the wisdom or as these images were
sometimes referred to in contemporary writing the *sedes sapientiae* – the Seat of Wisdom.\textsuperscript{466}

6. Comments:

**History**

Little is known about the figure’s early history. The *Kilcorban Madonna and Child* would already have been old, and possibly venerated, when the Dominicans took over the chapel at Kilcorban in 1446.\textsuperscript{467} Both Coleman\textsuperscript{468} and MacLeod\textsuperscript{469} suggest that they might have brought it with them from Athenry, however it is also possible that figure was already *in situ* at the Kilcorban chapel when the Dominicans took it over. Reputedly, the Madonna and Child was found together with the figures of St. Catherine and the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist from the crucifixion group – now also in the Clonfert Diocesan Museum – in a hollow tree at some point during the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{470} Semi-miraculous stories such as this, however, are common to many of the medieval Irish wooden figures and perhaps should not be taken too literally. The first documented account of the *Kilcorban Madonna and Child* comes from the

\textsuperscript{466} Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom*, 24.


\textsuperscript{469} Catriona Macleod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 175.

\textsuperscript{470} T. Shea to a Mr. Mahr, 12 September 1929, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
seventeenth century when O’Heyne writes that Tiege MacKeogh, bishop of Clonfert,

…gave his soul to the Creator, in 1687, and lies buried in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, called Kilcorban. Before the ruin of our country this chapel belonged to Athenry abbey, and the statue of the Blessed Virgin, which is devoutly venerated there, is preserved in the noble family of the Burkes of Pallis. The frequent miracles which God works through this statue of the Blessed Virgin continually confirm Catholics in the true faith and devotion to the Queen of Heaven. It is probable that our venerated bishop, from his profound devotion to the Holy Mother of God, wished to be buried there.471

The next account of the Kilcorban Madonna was written in 1762, when de Burgo refers to the figure as the “Devotissima Deiparae Imago,” but this is the last that we hear of the figure until the early twentieth century. Ambrose Coleman, writing in 1902, states,

There are three wooden statues, belonging in former years to this chapel [Kilcorban], which are still held in great veneration by the people. They are the statue of Our Blessed Lady, referred to by O’Heyne, a statue of St. Peter and another of St. Paul, all about two feet in height. In O’Heyne’s time, the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and perhaps the others were in the keeping of the Burkes of Pallis. Within recent years, they are preserved under lock and key in the sacristy of the parish church and are exposed for veneration only on the feast of St. Laurence, the patron saint of the parish. The people have always shown the greatest devotion to these statues. It


472 F. Thomas de Burgo, Hibernia Dominicana (Cologne: 1762), 342, 344.
is not improbable that they belonged in ancient times to the monastery in Athenry…

MacLeod believes that O’Heyne misidentified the Madonna and John the Evangelist figures from the Kilcorban Crucifixion group as Sts. Peter and Paul. I find this doubtful, even if those two figures had become disassociated with the carving of the crucified Christ. Both figures are considerably smaller than two feet, and even if the heights had only been estimated at a glance, one would not mistake them for being of comparable size to the significantly larger Kilcorban Madonna. Additionally, the figure of the Madonna is obviously feminine and no ecclesiastic (as O’Heyne was) would mistake the painting of “B.V.M.” on the base of the figure as indicating anything other than “Blessed Virgin Mary”. The figures of Sts. Peter and Paul mentioned by O’Heyne may be lost figures, which had survived until the 18th century, when O’Heyne was writing.

If one believes that the figures of the Madonna and St. Catherine were found in a hollow tree during the nineteenth century, then they would have had to have been hidden at some point after 1762, at a time when the waves of iconoclasm had already subsided. There is no apparent reason why they would have been hidden in such a manner.

The Kilcorban Madonna is also discussed alongside the first recorded of the appearance of the Kilcorban St. Catherine in 1929 in a series of unpublished

---

473 Coleman, 87.

474 Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculptures in Ireland, the Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 75, No. 4 (1945), 203.
letters between a Mr. T. Shea, associated with the National Museum and Adolf Mahr, then keeper of antiquities at the Museum. It was in these letters that the first recorded mention of the figures discovery in a hollow tree is made. Writing to Mahr, Shea states,

I made a discovery yesterday which may turn out to be very interesting. While questioning a farmer (in Portumna) about a ruin he informed me that some years ago four figures were found in the hollow of a large tree and that they were in the possession of the parish priest. I went to the clergyman… he kindly allowed me to see the figures which were placed behind the altar in the church. Two are about two feet high and the other two about one foot… The priest thought they belonged to the Dominican Abbey of the vicinity...\textsuperscript{475}

Coleman never mentions the myth of the figures’ discovery in the tree. This suggests that he was either not aware of it, or perhaps had some reason to discount it. It is possible that the myth of their discovery did not come into being until after the time of Fr. Coleman’s publication. Discovery myths, such as that associated with the Kilcorban Madonna are common to several of the medieval Irish wooden figures. In the example of the discovery myth of the Kilcorban figure, if it was hidden in a hollow tree in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, it could only have been there for a negligible amount of time. Wood does not long endure under such circumstances, and the Kilcorban Madonna is not sufficiently decayed for it to have spent a long amount of time within the hollow of a tree.

\textsuperscript{475} T. Shea to Adolf Mahr, 12 September 1929, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
Whether the story of the *Kilcorban Madonna*’s discovery is myth or not, what is known for certain is that by 1902 the figure was kept at St. Lawrence’s in Tynagh, Co. Galway.\(^{476}\) It remained there, exposed only on the feast day of St. Lawrence until 1930 when it and the *Kilcorban St. Catherine* were loaned to the National Museum.\(^{477}\) These two figures were displayed in National Museum for eleven years, after which they were returned to Tynagh.\(^{478}\) In 1957 the Clonfert Diocesan Museum at St. Brendan’s Cathedral in Loughrea, Co. Galway was established, and the figures were presented to it by the Very Rev. B.M. Bowes, P.P., V.F.\(^{479}\)

**Dating and Comparisons**

In the sequence of extant wooden figure sculpture in Ireland, this appears to be one of the earliest extant figures. Both the Madonna and Child are quite rigid and hieratic. From other carvings in a similar mode, it can be surmised that the Child most likely held his missing right hand up in a gesture of blessing and held a book or an orb in his left. The Madonna possibly gestured outwards with her no longer extant hand, as is seen on some latter Romanesque carvings, or held an orb, if the Child in fact held a book.

---

\(^{476}\) Coleman, 87.

\(^{477}\) Bernard Bowes to Dr. Mahr, 5 June 1930, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

\(^{478}\) Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished Notes, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

Several aspects of the *Kilcorban Madonna* seem to indicate a date in the early thirteenth century. Although a hieratic approach is maintained in the pose and iconography, drapery details seem to indicate some early Gothic influence. Gone are the sinuous folds common to Romanesque art, as can be seen on the *German Madonna* (Fig. 392) from the Hunt Museum, and on the Spanish figures from the Santa Maria de Taüll altar frontal dated to about 1200 (Fig. 52). Instead, long, repetitive loopy folds can be seen between the Madonna’s knees and on the sides of her skirts. Similar folds can be seen on many thirteenth century carvings in both Ireland and the rest of Europe. Examples of this can be seen on thirteenth century tomb figures from Christchurch in Dublin (Fig. 53), Corcomroe Abbey in Co. Clare (Fig. 54), and in an effigy at Jerpoint in Co. Kilkenny of William of Cork, who died in 1266 (Fig. 55). A mid-thirteenth century oak Madonna from the Mosan region in Belgium (Fig. 56) has not only similar drapery folds to *Kilcorban Madonna*, but also shares many common features of dress, facial expression and even very similar accordion-style hair emerging from a filet crown. Similarities between the *Kilcorban Madonna* and the *Mosan Madonna* illustrate that Irish sculptors were aware of artistic fashion in continental art, and were producing works with similar traits.

The *Kilcorban Madonna and Child* does not seem to show a direct relationship with any of the other extant Irish medieval wooden figures. In a general way, there are some commonalities between it and the *Holy Ghost*.

---

480 John Hunt, *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture 1200-1600: A study of Irish tombs with notes on costume and armour* 1 (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974) 72.
Madonna and Child (Fig. 65), as well as with the Athlone Madonna (Fig. 71), but these are mostly in the hieratic nature of the approach rather than a reflection of direct influence from one of these figures to another. Additionally, the convention of the cape having been pulled across the seated Madonna’s lap was a common one and can be seen in several early Gothic examples from France, including a figure of the Madonna in the tympanum from the centre doorway of the north transept of Chartres Cathedral, dated 1205-10 (Fig. 57), and an enthroned Virgin from the south portal tympanum from Donnemarie-en-Montois, dated to 1220-30 (Fig. 58), amongst many others. The most intriguing examples of this convention, however, come from Norway. In Norwegian sculpture of the mid-thirteenth century, several figures of the seated Madonna and Child (Fig. 59 -Fig. 61) show the Madonna’s cape having been pulled across her lap underneath the Child in a very similar manner to the Kilcorban Madonna. Andersson has successfully demonstrated that the wood sculpture of Norway and Sweden was heavily influenced by contemporary English work. The many similarities in pose, dress and facial expression between the Kilcorban Madonna and the Norwegian examples shown here may suggest that this model of the Virgin and Child had its origins in English sculpture, which was then translated both into Scandinavian and Irish work.

MacLeod’s statement that there is between the Kilcorban Madonna and the Athlone Madonna, “a definite facial likeness comparable to a family

---

likeness,” does not seem accurate. The Kilcorban figure’s pointy chin, high cheek bones, and wide archaic eyes are quite different from those of the *Athlone Madonna*, which has much smaller eyes, very little indication of cheek bones and broad chin. There is however, a definite likeness in the faces of the Athlone Child and the Kilcorban Child (Fig. 62), but this likeness may not be original.

**Restorations**

According to the museum label, restoration work was carried out on the figure in the 1940’s or 1950’s. However, I have been unable to locate any records of this restoration, beyond a series of photographs from Catriona MacLeod’s papers. This photographic evidence suggests that several layers of more modern polychrome were removed to reveal some of the medieval polychrome (Fig. 63 - Fig. 64). Where repaints were carried out, they follow the line of the carving and are generally sympathetic to the older polychrome. Unfortunately, however, some of the mid-twentieth century restorers’ penchant for reconstruction is evidenced in this carving. From the pre-restoration photographs, it can be seen the damage to the Child’s face was so extensive as to have nearly erased its features. It would seem, therefore that the current face of the *Kilcorban Child* is largely a reconstruction by MacLeod. Given that she already saw a resemblance between the faces of the *Athlone Madonna* and the *Kilcorban Madonna*, it is possible that she modelled the face of the *Kilcorban Child* on the face of the *Athlone Child*, but because no records were kept of the restoration, this is in part conjecture.

---

482 MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 181.
7. Bibliography:  Glin (2007), 8; Cochran (2004), 31-38, 76-83; F. Kelly (1989/1990), 36; Bradley (1987), 264, 266, 270; Hourihane (1984), 990-991; O’Dwyer (1979), 43; MacLeod (1968), 318-319; Barrett (1961), 21-22; Egan (1956-57), 63-65; MacLeod (1945), 169-176; Raftery (1941), 167; Mahr (1932), 167; Coleman (1902), 87; de Burgo (1762), 342-344; O’Heyne (1706, reprinted 1902), 258-259;

JCA-L-002: Holy Ghost Madonna and Child (Fig. 65 - Fig. 69)


2. Date: 13th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H. 80 cm, W. 22 cm

(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Single block

(d) dowel holes: There are none apparent from the front, but a metal loop can be seen emerging from the back of the figure. This is currently used to affix the Holy Ghost Madonna and Child to the back of its display case.

According the museum’s curator, Eamonn MacEaneney, the loop was attached before Waterford Museum of Treasures acquired the sculpture483.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Putty-coloured paint covers entire figure, in places

483 Interview with the author, March 2004.
dark brown polychrome shows through.

(f) general condition: This figure is very damaged from decay and has many small wood worm holes. The top of the Madonna’s head is no longer extant and her hair has been eaten away by decay. This is especially evident on the right side. There is some damage to the Madonna’s forehead and much of her nose is gone (Fig. 67 - Fig. 68). The top of the left shoulder is quite damaged as well. The right arm is missing from just above the elbow to the wrist; the wrist and hand are extant and still rest on her knee. There are two deep cracks on the left side of the figure towards the back, just below the curve of her cloak. There is another long crack between the Madonna’s legs, which is filled in with thick polychrome. The base is very much decayed and the feet are nearly gone. A large section is missing from the bottom of the base, approximately 13 cm high. The arm on this side is intact, but very much decayed. The top of the Christ Child’s head is gone as well as his left eye and much of his nose (Fig. 69). His right arm is missing and his left arm is marred by rot. There are some small areas of decay on his left foot.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna’s head is long and ovular. On either side of the Madonna’s face are very deteriorated sections of wood that were once carved as hair and perhaps a veil. Ridges and indentations can be seen, perhaps indicating that it was once carved in an ‘accordion-style’ similar to that of the Kilcorban Madonna. The raised, flattened top of the head
suggests that this now damaged area may have been carved into the shape of a filet crown. The hair falls behind the figure’s shoulders and covers her ears. The forehead appears short in comparison to the rest of the figure’s face.

The *Holy Ghost Madonna’s* large and wide-open eyes are shallowly carved and obscured by many layers of paint. The lids are not rendered, but the outlines of the outer borders of the eyes are clearly incised. The iris and pupil have not been carved and the eyes are set in very close to the nose. The nose is long and marred by decay; the tops of the nostrils are gone, as is the tip of the nose and much of the right side. The space between the nose and the lips is long and with a lightly incised philtrum. The vermilion border of the Madonna’s upper lip is not carved, but she has a very full lower lip. Her chin is long, and the jaw-line is strong and angular. The head sits atop a thick, pillar-like neck.

(b) body: The Madonna’s gown is very plain. Her simple rounded collar meets the base of her neck, and a plain, wide belt cinches the tunic at her waist. There are long, undulating, vertical folds on the figure’s torso and skirts and only the slightest indication of breasts. Over this tunic, the Madonna wears a cloak which falls over her left shoulder. A portion of it is missing from decay. On the other side of the figure, only her gown shows in the front, but behind her the cloak stands up, imitating a high chair back behind her right shoulder. Her shoulders are narrow. The Madonna’s sleeves cling tightly to what remains of her arms. Her right arm is missing.
from just above the elbow to the wrist but the wrist itself, as well as the hand, are still intact and rest on her right knee. The Madonna’s left arm is so damaged by decay that few details can be made out. It is with this left hand that she holds her cape which helps support the Christ Child who sits on her knee.

The Madonna’s waist is positioned high above the seat of her chair and the distance from the Madonna’s hips to her knees is much too short in proportion to the rest of the figure. This suggests that the figure may have been intended to be placed above the viewer’s head. The sculptor could have shortened the figure’s upper legs to prevent the knees from blocking the viewer’s sight of the body of the figure, and the more natural length of the lower legs, the portion of the carving most directly in the viewer’s line of sight, would appear completely in keeping with the rest of the carving when the torso was shortened with perspective. This technique was known from the late 13th century in Italy in the work of Giovanni Pisano, and was frequently used by Donatello in the 15th century.\textsuperscript{484} The Madonna’s legs are widely parted. Most of the drapery folds are long and vertical; however, there is one fold on the left side towards the bottom which becomes a ‘rippling-ribbon’ style fold. It is very difficult to tell anything about the very bottom of the drapery or the

Madonna’s feet because they are so badly decayed. The feet would have faced straight out, but it is impossible to tell anything else about them.

(c) Christ-Child: The diminutive figure of the Christ-Child sits on his mother’s left knee. He has the proportions of a small adult. The Christ Child looks out slightly to the right. Much of his tiny head is gone, and the features are marred by decay. The top of his head, including his left eye, is missing. His nose is worn away, as is much of his extant right eye. The Child’s intact features resemble those of his mother. He has a long, ovular face and angular jaw-line, although his cheeks are fuller than those of the Madonna. The vermilion line of his upper lip is not carved, but he has a very full lower lip, much like his mother. The Child seems to smile, but the Madonna’s expression is much more sombre.

The Christ Child’s hair completely covers his ears but other details about its style are undeterminable due to the degree of deterioration in this part of the sculpture. His head sits on a long, pillar-like neck. The Child’s torso is very flat and long. The collar of his garment is round and meets the base of his neck. His tunic is in the same style as the Madonna’s. The folds are carved in shallow, undulating, vertical folds. His left arm is much deteriorated from rot, but the hand resting upon the knee is still discernable. His other arm is missing from just before the shoulder.

The Christ Child’s lap is very shallow and his knees are slightly splayed with a fold of his garment hanging between them. His feet dangle
from underneath his robe, the details of which have been obscured by decay.

(d) back: The back of the entire piece is flat and deeply hollowed out; it was clearly meant to be placed up against a wall.

(e) base: The base appears to be rounded on the top, like the top half of a sphere.

It is now very decayed and damaged by rot.

5. Identification of the Subject: This is a hieratic depiction of the Madonna and Child derivative of Byzantine art, known as the *sedes sapientiae*, or Seat of Wisdom.\(^{485}\) The Madonna is shown enthroned, her legs widely splayed and the Christ-Child is seated on her left knee. The Child is fully clothed and both figures face the viewer. (For a more complete explanation of this motif, see Catalogue, *Figures from the Lordship Period*: “The Kilcorban Madonna”, section 5, pp. 194).

6. Comments:

History

The *Holy Ghost Madonna and Child* comes from the collection of the Holy Ghost Hospital in Waterford, and seems to be the earliest of the six wooden figures from that collection. The survival of this statue, as well as the other figures from the Holy Ghost Hospital, is unusual in a city so subsumed within the sphere of English influence, where the iconoclastic onslaugths were likely to have been most thorough. The explanation for this lies in an aberration in the history of the

suppression of the monastic houses in Ireland during the Reformation. The Franciscan Grey Friars Abbey in Waterford was dissolved in 1540; however in 1542 a rich merchant of the city, Henry Walsh, obtained possession of the abbey. The Walsh family was both politically active in the city and long-time patrons of the Franciscans. Two years later, Henry VIII (r: 1509-1547) granted a charter to Henry Walsh for the establishment of an almshouse in part of the abbey. The stipulations of this charter were that it should be called the Hospital of the Holy Ghost, that Walsh be its master and his successors afterwards, and that Walsh and his successors had the power to nominate Catholic priests to celebrate mass there. This enabled the abbey to remain inhabited throughout all the successive waves of persecution and gave the religious objects therein the opportunity to survive. The Holy Ghost Madonna and Child remained in the possession of the Holy Ghost hospital, and were moved with the hospital when it was decided to erect a new building in 1882. In 1994 it was acquired, along with the other figures from Holy Ghost, by the Waterford Museum of Treasures.

It seems unlikely that so many figures of such varying date and style would have been associated with one church. It is perhaps more than coincidence that many of the surviving figures can be identified as patron saints of Pre-Reformation churches in Waterford. This theory has been suggested by Eamonn MacEneaney, director of the Waterford Museum of Treasures, in his “Politics and devotion in late fifteenth-century Waterford,” in Art and Devotion in Late Medieval Ireland, Rachel Moss, Colman O Clabaigh and Salvador Ryan, eds., (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006) 46.


487 Catriona MacLeod, “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” in Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 106 (1946) 99-100.
Devotion in Late Fifteenth-Century Waterford and is borne out by some of MacLeod’s own theorizing in her unpublished notes. Thus, this figure of the Madonna could well have originated there at the Franciscan Abbey established in 1240 by Sir Hugo Purcell, the figure of the Risen Christ from the Dominican friary of St. Saviour, the St. Stephen from St. Stephen’s leper hospital, and the alabaster St. Catherine from the Augustinian Priory of St. Catherine. It could have been the continued, blatant practicing of the Mass at the former friary that prompted the Waterford Church of Ireland bishop, Marmaduke Middleton to say in 1580 that “the citizens were stiff-necked and incorrigible Papists. Friars remain among them, there was massing in every corner with the public wearing and use of rosary beads the churches were full of images.” Knowing that the Holy Ghost hospital had been granted such special dispensations, it could have been that the people who had secreted away these precious figures later brought them to the hospital for safekeeping.

Comparisons

The singular rippling-ribbon style fold on the bottom of the Holy Ghost Madonna’s left profile echoes the bottom-side draperies of a carving found in the 1886 excavation of the chapter house of Christchurch in Dublin. This stone effigy of a woman (Fig. 70) is thought by Hunt to either have been imported from the

---

488 McEneaney, “Politics and Devotion”, 46-47.


west of England, or possibly carved by a west of England sculptor in Ireland, and is dated to the early thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{491} The long vertical folds found on the majority of the \textit{Holy Ghost Madonna}'s gown are also very like those of the Christchurch effigy. Due to the extent of damage to the bottom portion of the Waterford Madonna, it is impossible in most places to determine the treatment of the bottom of the draperies; perhaps the rest of the bottom draperies were treated in a similar manner to those of the Christchurch effigy. This may indicate some English influence on the piece. The supposition of English influence is also borne out by the circumstances of the foundation of the Franciscan friary in Waterford, if the \textit{Holy Ghost Madonna} did indeed originate there. This friary was established by Sir Hugo Purcell, an Anglo-Norman lord and grandson of one of the original invaders, in the year 1240.\textsuperscript{492}

Some superficial comparisons may also be made to the \textit{Kilconnell Head} (Fig. 135), although the \textit{Kilconnell Head} is in an even more decayed state than the \textit{Holy Ghost Madonna}. In profile, they share similar clearly cut angular jaw-line and pointy chins. Their facial proportions are very similar, and the carving of the mouths and the set of the eyes are also comparable. The heads and remaining features are similar enough to warrant remark; however evidence suggests that despite its worse condition, that the \textit{Kilconnell Head} may be nearly two hundred years later than the \textit{Holy Ghost Madonna}. (For a more complete explanation of

\textsuperscript{491} John Hunt, \textit{Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture 1200-1600: A study of Irish tombs with notes on costume and armour} 1 (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974), 134.

\textsuperscript{492} O'Donovan, \textit{Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland}, 1240.
the dating of the Kilconnell Head, see Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period: “The Kilconnell Head”, section 6, p. 286).

Physical Condition

The Holy Ghost Madonna has come down to us in a much damaged state. From the extent of decay throughout the figure it would seem that at some point in its history it was exposed to the elements for an extended period of time. It lacks, however, the evidence of deliberate mutilation seen in so many of the other Irish medieval figures. If this piece did in fact originate in the Franciscan abbey at Waterford, the establishment which sheltered it throughout the successive waves of iconoclasm under the name of the Holy Ghost Hospital, this would explain its total escape from the hands of the iconoclasts. It is much in need of conservation. The many layers of modern paint ought to be removed in order to uncover the medieval polychrome, and the wood should be treated so as to prevent any further decay.

1. **Location:** Poor Clare Monastery, Nun’s Island, Galway

2. **Date:** Mid-Late 13th century.

3. **Technical details:**
   
   (a) dimensions: H. 91.5 cm
   
   (b) type of wood: Bog oak
   
   (c) number of blocks: One.
   
   (d) dowel holes: None visible.
   
   (e) evidence of polychrome: The faces of the *Athlone Madonna and Child* are thickly painted with modern polychrome. This polychrome is noticeably different than when the figure was first published by MacLeod in 1945 (Fig. 74). A warm flesh tone is used for the skin, the cheeks and lips are blushed with mauve, the sclera are painted bright white and the eyes are a saturated midnight blue under thinly painted black eyebrows. The ground of the faces of both mother and child are completely smooth, whereas the texture of the rest of the surface of the sculpture is rough and worn. This implies that a coat of gesso or perhaps thin plaster has been applied to the wood underneath the modern paint.

   Very little original polychrome is evident on the figures, but some small amounts still remain within the crevices of the carving. There are remnants of gold-leaf on the Madonna’s crown and veil as well as on both
the Madonna and Child’s belts and on the throne. Traces of blue polychrome, aged to a colour so dark that it appears almost black, can be seen in the folds of the Madonna’s cloak and small amounts of red are evident on her skirt. Flecks of white paint can be seen in the lower draperies of the Child’s tunic. Despite these few remaining traces of the figures’ original polychrome, the overwhelming colour of the statue is the dark brown of the bog oak that it is carved from. The slightly waxy appearance of the sculpture may be due to the reconstituting process that the figure is believed to have undergone by Catriona MacLeod in the 1950s.

(f) general condition: The figure is very damaged. There are many cracks and the entire surface of the figure (excluding the face and neck) is rough. The Poor Clares believe that the figure was submerged in the bog for a time in order to preserve it during the Dissolution. There are no woodworm holes visible or any active rot. The wood has a waxy appearance which may be the result of it having been reconstituted by MacLeod during her tenure at the National Museum of Ireland, although no clear records of that exist. The Madonna’s left arm and both of the Child’s arms are missing. The left feet of both the Madonna and Child are missing, although the right feet of both are still intact.
4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a long ovular face surmounting a long, columnar neck. The high, thick band of the Madonna’s fillet sits on top of her head, and her long, wavy hair, parted in the middle of her forehead, emerges from underneath it and cascades over her shoulders. Traces of gold leaf remain on both the crown and hair. The texture of the wood on both the crown and hair is quite rough, perhaps due to it having been submerged in a bog, as believed by the Poor Clares, or its having been exposed to the elements at some point in the figure’s history. In contrast to the rest of the figure, the texture of the face and neck are quite smooth and covered over with modern polychrome. Because of this modern paint, it is difficult to tell how much of the face and neck are part of the original carving and what maybe modern restoration work. Due to the smooth texture and relative lack of damage, one wonders if the majority of the face is a plaster reconstruction or perhaps had been sanded down and re-carved at some point in the past.

The Madonna has a high, smooth forehead over delicately arched brows. The deep-set eyes are carved with both upper and lower lids. The bridge of the figure’s nose emerges from the brow and is very thin, ending in a narrow tip with fully carved nostrils on either side. No philtrum is carved above the small smiling mouth. Her mouth is closed and both the upper and lower lips appear to be carved. The chin is long and the jawline is very square and strong.
(b) body: The Madonna has a long and slender body. She sits on a low throne, only the sides of which are visible. The Christ Child sits on her left knee and is held by her left hand on his lap. The Madonna wears a scoop-necked tunic that is belted at the waist and carved in long vertical folds beginning at breast-level. These folds disappear under her belt and re-emerge below, continuing across her lap until they disappear under the cloak which emerges in a long free standing loop from behind her right arm and is draped across her knees. The folds of the cloak falling over the Madonna’s legs to the bottom of the statue are quite different from the straight vertical folds of the tunic. The folds on the cloak consist of many decorative, highly stylized ribbon and zig-zag folds. There are long loopy folds on either side of the figure’s legs, reminiscent of those seen on the Kilcorban Madonna. The crevices contain remnants of both red and blue paints, giving the impression that at one time the lining may have been painted a different colour than the top of the cloak. One has to imagine that the combination of highly stylized, decorative drapery folds and bright colours would have made this figure very visually dynamic in its original state.

(c) throne: Due to the degree of damage found on this portion of the figure, it is difficult to determine precisely what the throne may have looked like in its original state. Only the low sides of the throne are visible. These sides each appear to consist of plainly carved, plank-like sections which emerge from the base of the sculpture. The tops of these planks are each
surmounted by three rolls of wood, rather like three baguettes stacked on top of each other. Traces of gold leaf can still be seen on the throne.

(d) back: The figure has a flat and hollowed back beginning at the back of the head and continuing down the length of the figure. The depth of the torso is especially shallow.

(e) Christ Child: The carving of the Christ Child is very similar to that of his mother. He has an oval face with a strong jaw-line and prominent chin. His head sits atop a long, columnar neck. The Child’s hair is very similar to that of the _Kilcorban Child_, consisting of many sausage-curls radiating out from the crown of the Child’s head (Fig. 75). Remnants of gold leaf can be seen clinging to his curls. He does not wear a crown. His facial features are a near mirror image to those of the larger figure; however, the Child’s nose seems to be worn away. Like the Madonna, the texture of the Child’s face and neck is much smoother than that of the rest of the carving, suggesting that underneath the modern polychrome the wood has either been sanded, or may be, in part, a plaster reconstruction. The painting on the Child’s face appears to have been done with less care than can be seen on the Madonna’s face: the left eye is significantly smudged and the light mauve colour on the lips overflows the carved lines. The Child’s tunic is very similar to his mother’s, with a scooped-neck, long vertical folds ending in a few ribbon folds at his feet and belted at the waist. Both of the Child’s arms are missing from the shoulders and the
damage appears to have been sanded smooth at some point. Only his little right foot is extant and it appears to be wearing a sandal.

5. Identification of the subject: This is a hieratic depiction of the Madonna and Child derivative of Byzantine art, known as the *sedes sapientiae*, or Seat of Wisdom.\(^{493}\)

For a more complete explanation of this motif, see Catalogue, *Romanesque Figures*: “The Kilcorban Madonna”, section 5, p. 194.

6. Comments:

**History**

As is the case with the majority of medieval devotional sculpture in Ireland, the origins of the *Athlone Madonna* have been lost to intervening centuries. The first reference to this wooden Madonna emerges from an account of the War of the Three Kingdoms in 1641. Soldiers came to Athlone to suppress the rebellion happening and stayed at the Poor Clares’ Convent for three days,

> Devouring all the provisions of ye poor sisters and making their sport and laughter of the alters, pictures, ornaments and sacred things which were therein… theyLastly set fire to the convent and burnt it with all that was therein, onely [sic.] that God preserved miraculously the tabernacle in which the most Blessed Sacrament was when they prayed before it… and likewise an old image of Our Lady, both made of wood.\(^{494}\)

---


\(^{494}\) *Annals of the Convent, Poor Clares, Galway*, 1641, 9. As quoted by MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas of the West”, 177. I was not permitted access to the cloistered area of the convent in order to view the annal myself.
The Poor Clares had been at their little monastery in Athlone, called Bethlehem, for ten years when it was burnt in 1641. In fact, the sisters had only arrived in Ireland in 1629, when seven Irish Poor Clares, who had joined the order in Belgium, returned to their home country to establish a monastery there. They came first to Dublin, but their cloistered way of life, unique in Ireland, drew a lot of attention and they were forced to move west. This small group of nuns were eventually given refuge in a remote area on the shores of Lough Rea, near Athlone, Co. Galway, by the Dillon family.⁴⁹⁵

The *Athlone Madonna* was already several centuries old and perhaps already locally revered at the time that the Poor Clares acquired the statue. It seems most likely that the *Athlone Madonna* came to the sisters via the Dillon family. Several centuries earlier, in 1241, Sir Henry Dillon built the Franciscan monastery in Athlone,⁴⁹⁶ which was re-established at Killinure under George Dillon, during a temporary lull in the suppression of the Catholic Church in 1626.⁴⁹⁷ This same George Dillon was the uncle of the Poor Clare’s abbess, Cisely Dillon. Due to the close connections that the Dillon family had with both the Athlone Franciscans and the Poor Clares, it seems possible that the *Athlone Madonna* could have originated at the thirteenth century Franciscan Monastery in

---


Athlone, passed into the keeping of the Dillon family during the Dissolution\textsuperscript{498} and then was given to the Poor Clares a century later when their monastery was established near Athlone.\textsuperscript{499}

After the Bethlehem convent was burnt, the families of many of the nuns petitioned the Provincial Franciscans for permission to found a new Poor Clare convent in Galway. Permission was granted and in 1642 a small convent was founded there. Despite the troublesome times, the convent continued to grow and in 1649 the sisters established a much larger one on what is now called Nun’s Island, in Galway City.\textsuperscript{500} Presumably the \textit{Athlone Madonna} was brought with the Poor Clares through each of these moves.

Oliver Cromwell’s forces began their re-conquest of Ireland very soon after the Poor Clares were granted their convent on Nun’s Island. Galway held out against Cromwell’s forces longer than any other city, but finally surrendered, weakened by the plague which had arrived through its ports from Spain. The sisters remained at their convent throughout both the Cromwellian siege and the siege of the city by plague, but were forced to flee after the Galway was surrendered. Many of the sisters took refuge with relatives, and many more fled to Spain.\textsuperscript{501}

\textsuperscript{498} The lands in Athlone that were formerly held by the Franciscans passed into the possession of the Dillon family during the Dissolution. Gilbert, 135.

\textsuperscript{499} This speculation and line of reasoning was first laid out by MacLeod in “Medieval Madonnas of the West”, 179.

\textsuperscript{500} Concannon, “Historic Galway Convents”, 441.

\textsuperscript{501} Ibid., 442.
A vague recollection persists amongst the sisters today of the Athlone Madonna having been hidden for a time, submerged in a bog, “or possibly Lough Rea” as was recounted to me during an interview with Sr. Louis of the Galway Poor Clares in April 2010. MacLeod also documented a similar story in 1945, when she was told that “at the time of the destruction of the convent in the seventeenth century, the statue was ‘in the lake’. ”502 The figure is sufficiently decayed that it could have spent some amount of time submerged in water. MacLeod took the story of the figure’s submersion to mean that the Athlone Madonna was hidden following the burning of the Bethlehem monastery, but since the sisters were quickly re-established in Galway after their convent was burned and a contemporary story exists of how the Madonna survived the burning of the monastery which makes no mention of its submersion, perhaps this story makes more sense a decade later, when the Poor Clares were forced to flee their convent at Galway. Instead of the Madonna having been submerged in Lough Rea, she could have instead been hidden in the Corrib River, which then surrounded Nun’s Island.

Although by 1672 the Poor Clares had reestablished their community at Nun’s Island503 following the restoration of the monarchy, the proceeding decades were equally tumultuous. The Jacobite Wars again displaced the sisters around 1690 and when they returned to Galway roughly a year later, they were not able to return to their old home, but instead rented a large house elsewhere in the city.

502 MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West”, 179.

503 Abbess Gabriel Martyn, who had previously fled to Spain, died at Nun’s Island in that year. Concannon, “Historic Galway Convents”, 444.
Presumably, the *Athlone Madonna* was carried with them. Even in this new residence, the sisters were not left undisturbed. They were raided several times, until 1740, when the sisters were finally granted five acres on the site of their former home at Nun’s Island.  

In 1823, roughly concurrent with the emancipation of the Catholic Church in Ireland, a larger piece of land on the island was granted to the Poor Clares and their current residence was built.  

**Current Traditions**

That this small community of nuns survived two centuries of unremitting oppression is remarkable, and that the sisters managed to preserve and carry with them an ancient statue carved of very heavy bog oak is even more amazing. The figure continues to be treasured by the Poor Clares today. Sr. Louis described “Our Lady of Bethlehem”, as the sisters call her, as “very much alive and very much a part of our lives”. The figure is displayed in an alcove outside of the sisters’ chapel where they pass by her every day on their way to and from Mass. Like the cloistered sisters themselves, the figure is almost never brought out into public spaces. When I went to the view the sculpture, instead of being admitted to the portion of the monastery where the *Athlone Madonna* is generally kept, the figure was carried out to the room where the sisters sometimes receive visitors and was sat on a chair next to the sisters themselves, behind the grille, as if she was one of them too.

---

504 Concannon, 444.

505 Ibid., 445.

506 Interview with the author, April 2010.
Every Christmas and Easter week a little light is burned before the Madonna. In 2009, the Franciscans celebrated the 800th anniversary of their order, and as the Poor Clares are a Franciscan order of nuns, the figure of Our Lady of Bethlehem was incorporated into the celebration. The Franciscan monks processed from their friary in a different part of Galway city to the Poor Clares’ convent on Nun’s Island, ending in their chapel, where the Our Lady of Bethlehem had been brought. The Seven Joys of Our Lady were then recited in front of her.

**Dating and Comparisons**

The Athlone Madonna is not likely to predate the 1241 founding of the Franciscan monastery at Athlone, where the figure is thought to have originated. Although a hieratic depiction of a Madonna and Child in the Romanesque mode, certain details of this sculpture indicate a date a few decades after the founding of the monastery, perhaps in the mid to late thirteenth century. The Athlone Madonna maintains a strict rigidity in the upper portion of the body, similar to that found in both the Kilcorban and Holy Ghost Madonnas, but the cascading folds of her skirts become much more decorative and dynamic (Fig. 76 - Fig. 77). This is especially evident in the play of the fluttering, ribbon-like folds of the Madonna’s lower draperies. A similar kind of playfulness in the lower drapery folds can be seen on two early fourteenth century incised grave-slab figures, one from Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 78) and the other from St. Canice’s Cathedral, in Kilkenny City (Fig. 79). Even more expressive is a small, mid-thirteenth century French ivory depicting the Madonna and Child (Fig. 80), now in the
Louvre. One can easily imagine that many ivories and alabasters from England as well as the continent would have been imported to Ireland507 and may well have had an impact on Irish fashion and artistic design.

**Restorations**

Restorations appear to have been conducted on the *Athlone Madonna* in the time since it was first documented by MacLeod, but no records of any restorations exist. The faces of both the Madonna and Child have been obviously repainted when compared with the photographs that MacLeod initially published. The wood also has the slightly waxy appearance of reconstituted wood. Some photographs in the MacLeod papers, now held by the National Museum of Ireland, show the *Athlone Madonna* post-restoration, leading one to conclude that MacLeod may well have been the instigator of such work.


---

507 *Our Lady of Youghal*, in Co. Cork (discussed on page 185, of the Catalogue Introduction) is one of the few extant examples of imported ivory work in Ireland.
JCA-L-004: St. Molaise (Fig. 81 - Fig. 85)

1. **Location**: National Museum of Ireland –Decorative Arts and History, Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (NMI: DF L1528)

2. **Date**: Late 13\textsuperscript{th} / early 14\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. **Technical details**:

(a) dimensions: H: 160 cm, W: 36 cm

(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Two, the neck and head are carved from a separate block than the rest of the body. It appears that the neck and head are fitted into the collar of the amice.

(d) dowel holes: None visible.

(e) evidence of polychrome: There are traces of a white paint, gesso or emulsion over the entire figure, but no other indications of polychrome remain.

(f) general condition: Much of the carving of the head is a modern reconstruction. Virtually the whole face and much of the hair is the work of a twentieth century sculptor. Plaster repairs have been made to the body as well. Both arms of the figure are broken just above below the elbows. There were many cracks in the wood, which have been filled in during modern restoration work. There are also several worm holes. The dalmatic is broken off at the bottom.
4. Description:

(a) head: The head is largely a modern creation. The hair of the long, narrow head is comprised of a cap of long fluted curls emerging from a centre point. The figure has a long forehead, the brow is not carved. The eyes bulge out from their sockets, giving the appearance that they would have been large and archaic when painted, like those of St. Molua in Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 113) and the Kilcorban Madonna in Co. Galway (Fig. 48). St. Molaise’s round cheek bones are very prominent. The nose is long and thin, and there is a deeply incised philtrum. The mouth is small, thin and straight; it neither smiles nor frowns. Along the strong jaw-line is an odd-looking beard carved in a series of deeply incised lines approximately 3.5 cm long. There is no moustache. The ears are rendered in great detail and seem to be part of the original carving rather than the modern restoration. The neck is very long and only slightly thinner than the head. The neck sits into the collar of the amice.

(a) body: The collar of the amice is very wide and high, especially behind the neck. The figure’s shoulders are narrow and sloping. The chasuble falls flat against the figure’s torso until the level where the arms emerge from the chasuble. Both arms are broken off below the elbows at this point. The figure’s right hand looks as if it could have been raised in blessing, and perhaps the other hand held some sort of attribute, since this arm seems as if it may have been held straight out. Below the arms, the chasuble falls in long V-shaped folds. The end of the chasuble is pointed.
The figure wears a dalmatic and tunicle underneath the chasuble. Both are carved in long, undulated vertical folds. The dalmatic is approximately 12-15 cm shorter than the tunicle. The bottom of the tunicle seems to have been broken at the bottom. Below this is a strange mushroom-stalk like base. The figure has a very shallow profile.

5. Identification of the subject: There is very little iconographical evidence for the identification of this saint. He wears the robes of an ecclesiastic and is tonsured in the Irish style. However the tradition is very firm that this is a carving of St. Molaise (although the figure does not wear an abbot’s mitre). St Molaise is also known as Laisren mac Delain. He was the founder and abbot of the Innismurray monastery in the sixth century. He is the man who imposed, as penance, the banishment of St. Columcille, which began the latter’s sixth-century missionary work in northern Scotland.\footnote{John O’Hanlon, \textit{Lives of the Irish Saints with Special Festivals, and the Commemorations of Holy Persons, Compiled from Calendars, Martyrologies, and Various Sources, Relating to the Ancient Church History of Ireland} IV (Dublin: James Duffy and Sons, c. 1900), 203-229.}

6. Comments:

   \textbf{History}

Nothing of this figure’s past is known prior to the nineteenth century. According to a local tradition documented by Wakeman in the nineteenth century,\footnote{W.F. Wakeman, “Inis Muireadaich, now Inismurray, and Its Antiquities”, in \textit{JRSAI}, 17 (1885-86), 174-332.} people from Inismurray believed that the figure of \textit{St. Molaise} was carved by the famous sixth century artificer, \textit{Goban Saor}, to whom the construction of many churches in Ireland have been attributed. Another local tradition documented by Wakeman,
asserted that the carving was actually a figurehead from one of the ships of the Spanish Armada, which came to the western coast of Ireland in the late sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{510} Wakeman also relates that the figure was stolen from its church, Teach Molaise, and carried out to sea by boat. It was then thrown overboard and used as a target for rifle and pistol practice and left out at sea. Miraculously the next morning it was found in its accustomed place in the church.\textsuperscript{511} In 1834, the \textit{Protestant Penny Magazine} recounts a legend that a Captain Morgan landed on the island and slashed the figure’s face with a sword, necessitating the plaster and putty repairs seen in MacLeod’s photographs.\textsuperscript{512}

In 1838, the figure was given a cursory mention by O’Donovan in his description of a figure of \textit{St. Brendan} on Innisglora. He states, “The resemblance which it (\textit{St. Brendan}) bears to Father Molaise on Inish Murray [sic.] is striking, but the latter is better preserved as being placed in a roofed chapel.”\textsuperscript{513} Unfortunately the figure of \textit{St. Brendan} is no longer extant; it has not been seen

\textsuperscript{510}Wakeman, 223.

\textsuperscript{511}Ibid

\textsuperscript{512}Anonymous, “A Visit to Inismurray,” \textit{Protestant Penny Magazine} I, No. V, (Saturday, October 25, 1834), 65-69. The vitriol expressed by the author of this account against devotional images after the emancipation of the Catholic Church is shocking to the modern reader and indicative of the strong feelings inspired by these images on both sides of the aisles, “This disgusting idol stands upright before the degraded worshippers, in the full gaze of the priests of that church, which modern liberalism, in the exercise of a spurious charity, scruples to denominate idolatrous… The old woman in Inismurray, expecting sympathy and relief from the object of her worship, in a calamity in which disregard of the law, and love of whiskey had involved her, was as truly a pagan, as if the image before which she prostrated herself were denominated Mars or Bacchus.” Ibid., 67, 69.

\textsuperscript{513}John O’Donovan, \textit{Ordinance Survey Letters: Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Mayo Collected during the progress of the Ordinance Survey in 1838} I (Bray, 1927) 105.
since the early twentieth century. From a sketch by Caesar Otway (Fig. 86) and a photograph by Dunraven (Fig. 87), it can be told that the two had similarly shaped heads, wore a high collared amice, and both appear to have been carved in the same head-on-a-pike manner as the Kilconnell Head\textsuperscript{514} and the figure of St. Molua.\textsuperscript{515}

From the time of Wakeman’s description in 1886 to the time of MacLeod’s writing in 1946, the figure was kept at Teach Molaise surmounting a tomb-like projection in one corner of the building, called St. Molaise’s bed (Fig. 88). It remained there until 1948, when the last of the islanders departed Inismurray, at which point the figure was acquired by the National Museum.\textsuperscript{516} MacLeod theorizes that both this figure and the figure of St. Brendan were brought to their respective island homes in small early Christian stone churches from larger establishments on the mainland at some point during the suppression of the monastic houses.\textsuperscript{517} It seems to me that the figures could have been carved for the churches in which they were found on Inismurray and Innisglora several centuries after the foundation dates of those churches and did not necessarily need to have been imported from other mainland churches. However, MacLeod’s

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{514} See Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, “Kilconnell Female Head,” p.286.
  \item \textsuperscript{515} See Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, “St. Molua,” p.255.
  \item \textsuperscript{517} Catriona MacLeod, “Some Medieval Wooden Figure Sculptures in Ireland: Statues of Irish Saints,” Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 106 (1946), 160-161.
\end{itemize}
argument that the island churches had close connections with mainland monastic institutions as well as the large scale of the figures is somewhat persuasive.

**Dating and Comparisons**

MacLeod dates both the figure of *St. Molaise* and the no longer extant *St. Brendan* to the late thirteenth century or early fourteenth century.\(^{518}\) This dating seems most in keeping with the style of the carving. The type of V-shaped folds which fall down along the front of the figures garment first enter art in approximately the mid-thirteenth century and can be seen on several examples of extant French stone sculpture, such as a figure possibly of St. Dionysius from Rheims Cathedral (Fig. 89). Close parallels can also be seen on two figures of bishops seen on the middle tier of the west front of Wells Cathedral (Fig. 90).\(^{519}\) The manners in which the two sides of the V-shaped folds do not quite meet are very reminiscent of a wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire (Fig. 91 - Fig. 93). As MacLeod points out, even the hair styles of the two figures are similar.\(^{520}\) Parallels can also be seen in contemporary Irish stone carving such as on an effigy of a bishop from Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 94). All are dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and therefore this is a likely dating for the figure of *St. Molaise* as well.

\(^{518}\) Ibid., 159.


\(^{520}\) MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints,” 159.
Both Wakeman and Hourihane concur on a fifteenth century date for the figure. Wakeman gives no supporting evidence for this date, but Hourihane states that the treatment of the draperies is reminiscent of stone sculpture of the mid-fifteenth century, and that the narrowness of the figures resembles the wooden figure of St. Gobnait, dated to the early fourteenth century. If the figure of St. Molaise is indeed dated to the fifteenth century as Wakeman contends, then it is wholly unlike the other wooden figures in this study group from that time. The drapery folds on both the Holy Ghost Risen Christ and on the Askeaton Madonna are much more deeply undercut and free flowing than St. Molaise’s shallowly cut stiff folds. The pose of the Askeaton Madonna is much more natural than St. Molaise’s strict frontality (the Risen Christ’s pose has been too affected by his replaced limbs to make a good comparison in this) and both are carved much more ‘in the round’ than St. Molaise. Additionally the hachured style of St. Molaise’s draperies is not seen in any of these later carvings. The similarity that Hourihane finds to the narrowness of the early fourteenth century figure of St. Gobnait also surely would argue for an earlier date as well.

521 Wakeman, 223.
522 Hourihane, 977.
This same narrowness is can be seen in the fourteenth century figures of the *St. Molua*\(^{526}\) and the *Clonfert Madonna*.\(^{527}\)

O’Farrell’s dating of the figure to “no later than the twelfth century”\(^{528}\) seem implausible. The types of drapery folds that are seen on the front of the carving do not become common until the mid-thirteenth century. Many of O’Farrell’s assessments do not seem fully accurate. He states,

The change from the old Celtic monasticism to the pan-European monastic orders introduced in the mid-twelfth century… likewise brought a change in devotional practices, so that from that period onwards non-Irish saints predominate in Irish sculpture. If the Inismurray statue really represents St. Molaise, and tradition is firm on this, it would seem rather unlikely that it dates from a time much subsequent to the twelfth century.\(^{529}\)

But as has been seen in the course of this study of medieval Irish wooden figures, several sculptures dated much later than the twelfth century represent Irish saints. O’Farrell also states that,

The drying and shrinkage of the figure has resulted in the present attenuated appearance of the figure which when carved would have been appreciably wider. The head has become detached but the grain and cracks on the neck match perfectly with the socket in the body into which the head fits, leaving no doubt that the figure was originally carved, head and body, from the one piece of timber.\(^{530}\)

---


\(^{528}\) O’Farrell, 208.

\(^{529}\) Ibid.

\(^{530}\) Ibid.
However, for the figure to have survived so long and for it to have come down to us in such a relatively well-preserved state, it would have had to have been carved from well-seasoned wood. This would greatly reduce any subsequent drying and shrinkage of the figure. Also it is a wonder that if the present attenuation occurred as a result of drying and shrinking, that the same has not occurred to other the other medieval Irish wooden figure sculptures, none of which show this same effect. The grain of the wood in the back of the figure was not able to be studied during the course of this research, and the junction of the pike-neck with the torso of the figure has only been able to be examined from photographs. However the neck of the Kilconnell Female Head is made in a similar manner and the bottom of the long pike-like neck is definitely carved into a wedge shape, not broken. Also, it seems strange that the figure of St. Molaise should have cracked in the manner that O’Farrell suggests, at a junction where the wood would have been strongest – in the centre of the shoulders. Finally, if it did in fact crack here, that it should crack in a circular manner in order to cut a long neck out of the figure, rather than straight through the wood, with the grain. That the junction of the pike-neck with the torso of the carving is so perfect is perhaps a testament to the skill of the carver.

Two extant wooden Irish statues display similar modes of construction to the figure of St. Molaise. These are the Kilconnell Head and the figure of St. Molua. Both are constructed on a head-on-a-pike design, where the head is carved on a long pike-like neck that was then set into the collar of the torso of the figure. This style is only seen in these two extant figures, and from the drawings and
photograph of the no longer extant *St. Brendan*. I have also observed a similar manner of carving in a figure believed to represent *St. Procopius* (Fig. 95 - Fig. 96) currently on display at the St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague (now in the possession of the National Gallery of the Czech Republic). This figure, dated to the late fourteenth century, consists of a headless man wearing monastic garb. The head is no longer extant, but the inside of the amice’s collar is hollowed out as if to accommodate a pike-like neck, in a similar manner as is seen the Irish examples.

**Restorations**

After the National Museum acquired the wooden sculpture of *St. Molaise* in 1949, the figure was reconstructed by sculptor Gabriel Hayes. The face of the figure is largely a modern creation. From both a description contained in the National Museum’s loan register and from the photographs taken by MacLeod in the 1940’s, pre-restoration, the nose of the figure was completely missing and possibly the mouth as well, with a large section of plaster covering over it in the photograph (Fig. 58). The register describes the front part of the head, chin and nose as having been hacked off and covered over with plaster.\(^{531}\) Although conservation of the wood was probably much needed at the time that the Museum acquired the piece, it is regrettable that reconstruction was undertaken without any comprehensive record of the original appearance of the figure.

---


JCA-L-005: Clonfert Madonna and Child (Fig. 97 - Fig. 99)

1. Location: Clonfert Catholic Church, Clonfert, Co. Galway

2. Date: Early 14th century.

3. Technical Details:

   (a) dimensions: H. 122 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: One

   (d) dowel holes: None apparent

   (e) evidence of polychrome: Much of what appears to be the original polychrome remains on the figure. The Madonna’s veil is painted white and the flesh of both figures is painted with a cream-colored polychrome. The cheeks of both are blushed with a pale carnation, and their lips are painted with carmine. Much gold leaf remains on the Madonna’s crown. Both the Madonna and Child have dark brown hair. What seems to be a white gesso
base with red-lead priming can be discerned over the wood of the entire carving. The sclerae of both figures are painted white with the irises and pupils painted black with small white dots intended to depict reflected light. The painted pupil and iris of the left eye of the Madonna has a marked outward diversion. The polychrome of the Madonna’s gown is a greyish-blue and her cloak is the same carmine-colour as her lips and cheeks. The Christ Child’s robe is painted the same cream coloured polychrome as his skin tone. His shoes appear to have once been also painted cream, although the degree of decay displayed here makes it difficult to tell with certainty. The carving is almost entirely covered with polychrome. The majority of the paint is well attached to the figure, although it has worn off and flaking in places. The polychrome is missing from approximately the bottom 25 cm of the Madonna’s skirts as well as from the Child’s feet—with the exception of only one or two small flakes. The polychrome of the Madonna’s neck is cracking.

(g) general condition: The Madonna’s left arm is missing from just before the elbow. The Christ-Child’s left arm is also missing from just before the elbow. Both appear to have been hacked off and there is a dent in the wood of the Madonna’s torso just below the left breast in line with the break in the arm. Presumably this is where the blade that cut the arm made contact with the body of the figure. There is a chip of wood missing from the right side of the Madonna’s crown. Christ’s feet are much decayed, as is the entire bottom portion of the Madonna’s draperies. There is also
some evidence of decay on the stub of Mary’s broken arm, although none on the stub of the broken arm of Christ. This may be because the stub of the Christ-Child’s arm is covered with the same cream-colored polychrome as his robe and skin (indicating that this portion of the polychrome is not original), whereas the break in the Madonna’s arm has been left bare.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna wears a fillet-style crown that sits high on her head. The crown comes to three rounded points in the centre. Below the crown is a long straight veil which falls onto the figure’s shoulders. This veil has a short pleated fringe that emerges from underneath the crown in front. Beneath this fringe the Madonna’s curly hair can be seen above her forehead. Her hair falls along the sides of her face and neck and covers her ears. It falls in front of her shoulders in two locks. The lock on the left side falls to just past her collar. The lock on the right is much longer and is grasped by the extant left hand of the Christ Child.

The Madonna’s face is long and ovular. The jaw-line is very soft and the cheeks are slightly rounded. The painted black crescents of her eyebrows follow the carved line of the brow. The eyes protrude-out slightly from the sockets. They are double-lidded, and shallowly carved. The eyes themselves are elliptical, but when the lids are taken into account, the bulges of the carving within the sockets are round. The sclerae of the deeply-set eyes are painted slightly whiter than the cream
coloured skin-tone. The nose is long and triangular; it has a high profile and the small nostrils are deeply carved. Below this is a shallowly carved philtrum. The unsmiling lips are thin and straight. The top lip comes to a slight rise in the centre with only a small indication of a cupid’s bow. The chin is very long and broad, and the jaw does not project out very far from the neck. The neck also is very long and broad.

(b) body: This carving has a shallow profile, except where the Child is held on the left side. The back is flat, and, according to MacLeod, deeply hollowed. The Madonna’s rounded shoulders are narrow and sloped. The ends of the figure’s veil fall onto her shoulders. The scoop-necked collar of the Madonna’s gown falls to just below where her collar bones would be, were they carved. The bodice of the gown is tight to the torso and no drapery folds are carved on it. There is a slight rise indicating her left breast. The other breast is not carved because this area of the Madonna’s chest is covered by the outstretched extant arm of the Christ Child. There is no gap between the arm of the Christ Child and the Madonna’s chest; they are carved from the same block of wood. The sleeve of the Madonna’s gown is carved tight to the break in her right arm. In exact line with the break, on the Madonna’s torso and underneath her left breast, is a long, thin, horizontal indent in the wood. It appears that this is where the blade which cut the Madonna’s arm made contact with the wood of the torso. The indent does not break the polychrome – perhaps

532 I did not have the opportunity to view this figure outside of its case and therefore was unable to see the back. MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West,” 180.
indicating that the polychrome is more recent than the indentation. The other arm is completely covered by her red cloak leaving only the hand exposed, which emerges to support the Christ-Child. This hand is quite large and the carving is very flat. There are definite separations between the fingers, especially between the middle and index fingers. The cloak is draped diagonally across the figure’s body from the right shoulder, behind the Christ Child’s body, and around her waist on the figure’s left side. The folds of the Madonna’s cloak fall vertically from underneath the Child’s body, forming a ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern at the bottom. The remainder of the cloak’s drapery folds – mostly on the right side of the figure – fall downwards diagonally from right to left in same direction as the draping of the cloak around the Madonna’s body. Viewed from the front, it appears that these diagonal folds become fluted on the right side. In profile, these flutes are actually series of six loopy folds which fall nearly to the bottom of the cloak. The cloth of the gown, which can be seen below the bottom hem of the cloak, falls in long, undulating, vertical folds. This portion of the sculpture is very decayed and most of the polychrome is missing from approximately the bottom 25 cm of the figure. The Madonna’s feet are not carved. No movement can be seen underneath the clothing of the figure. The figure stands very straight and rigid.

(b) Christ Child: The Child is seated in the Madonna’s extant right hand. He is carved from the same block of wood as his mother. The Child sits in a very erect position and reaches with his extant left arm to grasp a lock of
the Madonna’s hair. There is no separation between the Christ Child’s arm and hand and the Madonna’s body. Most of the paint on the upper portion of this arm is missing and what appears to be the red-lead priming of the wood can be seen.

The Child’s face is round and in profile, rather flat. The Child’s thick, dark brown hair is carved in deeply-incised erratic curls over his entire head; the hair completely covers the ears. The Child’s forehead is high and round. The eyebrows are neither painted nor carved. The eyes are wide and glance upwards towards his mother. Both the upper and lower lids are shallowly carved. The nose is short and round; its profile hardly rises from the face at all. Most of the paint on the nose has been worn away, and what appears to be the red-lead priming of the wood shows through. The philtrum is clearly carved above a distinct cupid’s bow painted in bright carmine. The mouth is tiny – barely wider than the nose – and the chin is long. The Child’s head sits on a thick, pillar-like neck.

The Christ Child wears a long, plain tunic with a high, notched collar. Shallow undulating vertical folds are carved on the Child’s garment. His legs are disproportionately long in comparison to his torso. The small feet, which stick out from beneath his robe, are much decayed. Very little evidence of polychrome on the feet survive, but traces of a white or cream-colored paint on the feet indict that they may have been covered with the same polychrome as the flesh and robe, or perhaps these flakes are what remain of a gesso base.
The right arm of this little figure has been mutilated in much the same way as the Madonna’s arm. It appears to have been hacked off just before the elbow. The stub of the broken arm of the Christ-Child, unlike that of his mother, has been painted over with the same polychrome as his robe and flesh.

5. Identification of the subject: This standing Madonna is shown holding the Christ Child in her right arm. He turns towards her, smiling, and grasps a lock of her hair. The Madonna is carved in a stiff and formal way, although unlike earlier figures, she has left her throne and stands simply in front of the viewer. The Child in her arms seems to act even more naturally, turning away from the viewer and towards his mother. The Child is seen grasping a lock of the Madonna’s hair, which may be a symbol of the Madonna’s purity and chastity. Virgin saints were often portrayed with their hair loose and flowing, in contrast to the courtesan or personifications of profane love, who were usually shown with braided hair. Although the Madonna is typically portrayed with loose hair, the particular attention called to it in this figure would seem to indicate a specific iconographic meaning was being insisted upon in this instance.\(^{533}\) The more naturalistic manner in which the Child is portrayed is first illustrated in French sculpture, as can be seen in the figure of the Virgin and Child from Saint-Corneille in Compiegne, dated to c. 1270 (Fig. 100).\(^{534}\)


6. Comments:

**Dating and Comparisons**

The *Clonfert Madonna* has left her throne and stands stiffly before the viewer. The Child looks up at his mother and grasps a lock of her hair lovingly. He sits rigidly, and his hair style, cut high across his forehead and low over his ears, is of an early type. As MacLeod points out, there is a certain similarity between the *Clonfert Madonna* and the *Athlone Madonna*;\(^{535}\) they share the same ovular face-shape and long thick neck. The *Clonfert Madonna* also shares several similarities with the *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, particularly in the treatment of the Christ-Child in both figures. Both Christ figures have similar ovular faces, chin-length wavy hair worn in similar styles, and nearly identical long robes. Both are supported in one of their mother’s arms, off to the side of the larger figure. In both cases, the Madonnas’ hands, which support their children under their bottoms, are proportionately very large and quite flat. The Christ figures both gesture towards their mothers with affection, the *Waterford Nursing Madonna* grasps his mother’s breast, whereas the Clonfert Child gingerly holds a lock of his mother’s hair. Despite the Child’s engagement with his mother in both cases, the Madonna’s engagement remains wholly with the viewer, at whom she gazes with a benevolent expression. Both Madonnas are proportionately long and narrow as seems to be typical of other fourteenth century figures surviving in Ireland. They reflect the slender, willowy forms of the international Gothic style, particularly

\(^{535}\) MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West”, 181.
that of the portal figures on French Cathedrals that were, without doubt, frequently viewed by those on pilgrimage.

History

Little is known about the history of the Clonfert Madonna. No accounts of it exist prior to MacLeod’s article of 1945. At that time it was at Eyrecourt Chapel, Eyrecourt, Co. Galway, although locals assert that it must have only been very briefly there, and that it has always otherwise been in Clonfert. Local tradition asserts that the figure came from the Cathedral at Clonfert.\footnote{This establishment is very well published, including: Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Hadcock, \textit{Medieval Religious Houses Ireland} (London: Longman Group Limited, 1970), 64; Françoise Henry, \textit{Irish Art in the Romanesque Period, 1020-1170}, (London: Methuen, 1970), 159-62; and Tadhg O’Keefe, “The Romanesque Portal at Clonfert and its Iconography,” in Cormac Bourke (ed.), \textit{From the Isles of the North: Early Medieval Art in Ireland and Britain, Papers representing the Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Insular Art held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, 7-11 April 1994}, (Belfast: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1995), 261-70.} The Cathedral of Clonfert is dedicated to St. Brendan and is a very ancient establishment. The first church at that site is believed to have been founded in the late sixth century, and the much of the current structure is tenth century. Clonfert Cathedral was also a major medieval pilgrimage site in western Ireland and attained cathedral status when it became the seat of a diocese in 1111. Its Romanesque portal dates to about that time. Clonfert Cathedral is unusual in Ireland in that it has remained in nearly continuous use and is currently a Church of Ireland church. Tradition also holds that the Clonfert Madonna was partly mutilated during Cromwell’s campaign when his soldiers pillaged the
The missing arms of both the Madonna and the Child seem to bear witness to intentional damage, whether specifically by Cromwell’s soldiers or others. The arms have been cut off with a blade; this is evidenced by the cleanliness of the break on both. In the case of the Child’s arm, it seems particularly deliberate, because at the point at which it was cut the underside of the arm was still joined to the torso. This necessitated two separate cuts with the blade, one horizontal and one vertical. The Madonna’s arm seems to have been removed with one heavy horizontal swing of the blade, as evidenced by the mark of its contact with the torso. There is still a long thin dent in the wood just below the Madonna’s breast and in line with the cut of the arm.

Restorations

Restoration of this figure has been carried out since the publishing of MacLeod’s article. Hourihane states that the faces of both figures are largely reconstructions, but the evidence for this is not apparent. Judging from the photographs published by MacLeod in her article, several layers of paint have been removed and repaints done perhaps to some of the details of the face of the Madonna. But as in the case of so many of the restorations done to the medieval Irish wooden figures, no records were kept, and so exactly what work was done to the figure cannot be wholly ascertained.


---

537 MacLeod, “Medieval Madonnas in the West”, 181.
1. **Location:** Rectory of the parish church, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork

2. **Date:** 14th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: about 76 cm

   (b) type of wood: Bog oak.

   (c) number of blocks: One block.

   (d) dowel holes: None.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: Although the figure has been largely denuded of its polychrome, remnants of several different colours can be seen on the carving including traces of cream, beige and red. Beige paint can be seen on the figure’s neck and extant portions of the much-decayed face, suggesting a very old flesh-tone. Remnants of cream can be seen on the veil. The saint’s tunic was painted red over a gesso base and the remains of a light brown polychrome remains on the belt. Her cloak appears to have once been blue.

   (f) general condition: The very dense and heavy bog-oak that this figure is carved from appears to be in relatively good condition throughout most of the sculpture, however some areas of active dry-rot can be seen in the bottom of the figure as well as in the face. A few wood-worm holes are
evident in these areas as well. Some areas of mould towards the bottom of the figure can also be seen. The carving is for the most part intact with the unfortunate exception of the figure’s face and the very bottom portion of the statue. Not enough of the figure’s facial features remain in order to discuss them adequately.

4. Description:

(a) head: The figure’s head and face are long and ovular, but the facial features have been completely lost to rot and decay. MacLeod discuss “one large and archaic eye”\textsuperscript{538} in her visual description of the figure of \textit{St. Gobnait}, which may refer to the smooth, raised lump on the left side of the figure’s face. Although in the vicinity of where one would expect an eye to be placed, no clear carving on that portion of the sculpture was evident to this viewer. This may be because of additional deterioration and rubbing by the faithful in the nearly seventy years since the publication of MacLeod’s article.

The figure has a long columnar neck which broadens in a flange-like manner towards its base. She appears to wear a veil and wimple. The veil falls behind her neck and shoulders and a wimple appears to be indicated by an incised line which bisects the figure’s neck. The head bends slightly forward, as if it were meant to be placed on a wall at a height, glancing down at the viewer.

\textsuperscript{538} MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints,” 166.
(b) body: The carving of the body is very compact and evidently “in the block”.

Her shoulders are very narrow and slightly sloped. Her scoop-necked collar is lower than one would expect to see. This perhaps gives further evidence that a wimple was meant to be indicated. The carving of the figure’s tunic is flat on the upper portion of her chest and the breasts are not indicated. Over the figure’s lower torso and stomach, deeply carved vertical folds can be seen. Here the material of her dress flounces out slightly over the figure’s wide, flat belt. Below her belt, St. Gobnait’s skirts fall in long, deeply undulating vertical folds which continue to the bottom of the carving.

The figure wears a cloak over her left shoulder. It falls over her upper arm and along the contour of the outer edge of her body. This cloak continues to the bottom of the statue. On the right side of the sculpture, the cloak falls behind the figure’s arm and she grasps its hem in her right hand, pulling it slightly forward towards the bottom of the carving. St. Gobnait’s right arm is extended along the side of her body and the elbow is bent slightly to allow her to grasp the cloak at her side. There are no gaps between the figure’s arm and her body. The figure’s sleeves are tight to her wrists. Her left arm is bent at the elbow and she places her hand, turned to the side, on her breast. The carving of this arm is very flat, and

539 According to MacLeod, “Parted fingers seem to enclose a fold of the dress, or perhaps once held cloak strings applied with raised gesso, now worn away… On the West front of Wells Cathedral some of the nobles, abbesses and queens wear tunics similarly pleated and belted and cloaks to the shoulders whose fastening cords are also held by the hand turned on the breast. In the church of St. James in Bristol the thirteenth century effigy of a noble offers another parallel in dress and pose. Outside the Butler church
appears more relief-like than sculptural. Both of the figure’s hands are large in comparison to her body (although small when compared to the figure’s head). They are flatly carved and the fingers are long with undifferentiated joints. The bottom of the figure deteriorates into rot. It does not appear that a base was ever intended to be carved, although this area of the sculpture is so damaged by decay that it is difficult to tell with certainty.

(c) back: The sculpture is flattened and deeply hollowed from the back, making it appear trough-like. The hollowing of the wood begins shallowly, near where the base of the skull would be, and deepens to the base of the sculpture. This extreme hollowing of the wood is seen in most other examples of fourteenth century carving in Ireland.

5. Identification of the subject: St. Gobnait lived in the sixth century and is perhaps one of the most famous female Irish saints, particularly in the southern part of the island. She is known by many names and spellings, including Gobnat, Gobnait, Gobeneta, Abigail (an anglicised version of the Irish name), Abina, Abby and Deborah. She is believed to have lived her entire life in what is now Ballyvourney, Co. Cork. St. Gobnait became abbess of a convent there, the ruins of which are believed to still exist near to her pattern site. Many miraculous

at Gowran, Kilkenny, the effigy of a cloaked, wimpled lady under an “early English” niche presents similar features. MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints,” 166.

540 John O’Hanlon, Lives of the Irish Saints, with special festivals and the commemorations of holy persons, compiled from calendars, martyrologies, and various sources, relating to the ancient history of Ireland, Vol. II (Dublin: John Duffy and Sons, date unknown – likely c. 1900), 462-63.

541 Eilís Uí Dháiligh, Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney (locally published pamphlet, no publisher given), 2.
events are attributed to Gobnait during her lifetime. In one instance a
neighbouring chieftain attacked Ballyvourney in order to steal cattle. In the face
of this, Gobnait took a beehive and prayed over it. The bees flew out, and drove
off the attacker.\textsuperscript{542} In another famous instance, a plague threatened Ballyvourney
from the east. Gobnait went out to a field east of town and blessed it, consecrating
the ground. The plague did not pass the field into the town and Gobnait was
credited with saving the town from the plague.\textsuperscript{543}

This sculpture has been identified as St. Gobnait based on local tradition,
where the little wooden figure is treated as if it were a relic of the saint. The figure
does not hold any identifying objects and its identification as anything other than
an unidentified female saint is reliant on tradition and context.

6. Comments:

\textbf{Dating and Comparisons}

This old figure of \textit{St. Gobnait} is greatly venerated in her home parish
in Ballyvourney, Co. Cork. The traditional assertion that the figure is more than a
thousand years old seems suspect stylistically. Into this assertion we should
perhaps read the intended meaning that the figure of \textit{St. Gobnait} is very old and
revered. Both Harris\textsuperscript{544} and MacLeod\textsuperscript{545} date this figure to the thirteenth century,
however Du Noyer\textsuperscript{546} and Hourihane\textsuperscript{547} provide a fourteenth century date. I am more inclined to agree with a date in the fourteenth century. The narrowness of the figure is similar to other wooden devotional sculptures in Ireland dating to that time, including the \textit{Clonfert Madonna}, the \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna} and St. Molaise. Additionally, as Hourihane points out the wimple, veil and general outline of the figure are also indicative of a date in the early fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{548} 

The saint’s left hand is placed on her breast. A similar gesture can be seen on many tomb sculptures in Ireland, most dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. More than a dozen effigies of this type have been found in Ireland, both of men and women, and all lay-people. In some instances, this gesture is used to grasp the figure’s collar, while in others the hand is merely placed on the breast. Three female effigies from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Fig. 105 - Fig. 107) bear an especial resemblance not only in gesture, but also in dress, to the Ballyvourney St. Gobnait. All of these figures wear long, vertically pleated tunics, belted low on the waist, and capes. In the case of the effigies, the capes appear to be held in place with what may be a circular broach, whereas Gobnait appears to wear her cloak unfastened, slung over her shoulders. It is very interesting to note that no effigies of ecclesiastics seem to hold their hand in this particular way.

\textsuperscript{546} G.V. Du Noyer, “Note on St. Gobnat’s Effigy, Ballyvourney,” within “Proceedings at the Meetings of the Archaeological Institute, December 1, 1854,” in \textit{The Archaeological Journal} (London: Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1855), 85-86.

\textsuperscript{547} Hourihane, 972.

\textsuperscript{548} Ibid.
The sculpture is also locally said to be a replica of an original figure made entirely of gold.\textsuperscript{549} Perhaps this story is indicative a vague memory of the sculpture, or a predecessor, at one time having been entirely covered with repousee or gold-leaf. There does not appear any evidence of leafing on the figure currently, however several figures in Ireland are known to have had significant amounts of gold-leaf, including the \textit{Museum Standing Madonna},\textsuperscript{550} the \textit{Kilcorban Madonna},\textsuperscript{551} and the \textit{Unidentified Glendalough Saint},\textsuperscript{552} which is covered entirely in gold.

\textbf{History and Current Traditions}

Records of the Ballyvourney \textit{St. Gobnait} only go back as far as the seventeenth century. In 1601, Pope Clement VIII granted a special dispensation to those who prayed in her church on the saint’s feast day (although no mention is made specifically of the figure). The Calendar of the Carew manuscripts reads,

\begin{quote}
An indulgence granted by pope Clement VIII: To all the faithful in Christ of both sexes, who, having truly repented and confessed and partaken of the Holy Communion, shall devoutly resort to the parish church of St. Gobeneta, at Ballyvourney (in Muscrye), in the diocese of Cloyne, on that saint’s day [11\textsuperscript{th} February] from sunrise to sunset, and there offer pious prayers to God for the concord of Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of holy mother Church, we remit, in the usual
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{549} Fr. D.P. O’Briain in discussion with author, May 2010. The same legend is recounted by MacLeod, with a bit more detail, “Today local tradition claims that another statue, a golden image of the saint, lies buried in \textit{Claise na h-Iomhaighe}, beside the old church.” MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 166.


formulary of the Church, ten years and as many fortes of the penances imposed on or in any other way whatsoever incurred by them. These presents to be in force for ten years only. But if besides we have granted to the faithful in Christ resorting to the said church any other indulgence in perpetuity or for a fixed time not yet expired, these presents are to be void. Given at Rome, at St. Mark’s, under the seal of the Fisherman, 12 July, 1601, in the 10th year of our pontificate. 553

In 1717, Richardson gives one of the earliest documented accounts of the figure and its religious pattern. 554 The text of Richardson’s account as well as a detailed explanation of the pattern surrounding the figure of St. Gobnait are given in Chapter 3, p. 129.

It is especially important and remarkable that the traditional prayers and patterns surrounding this little wooden figure of St. Gobnait survive, where so many others in Ireland have been lost. The patterns and traditions surrounding many of the extant figures and holy places were systematically eradicated, first by Protestant authorities during the suppression and later by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland, in an attempt to bring the Catholic Church in Ireland into greater conformity with the Roman Catholic Church. In regards to the devotions shown to the Ballyvourney St. Gobnait, Smith, writing in the nineteenth century shortly before the emancipation of the Catholic Church in Ireland, states,


I have been informed, that the devotion used to this image, has been, of late, prohibited by the titular bishop of the diocese; but so strong are the ignorant Irish prejudiced in its favour, that they still persevere in their superstition, which is not a little kept up by the gain it brings to the proprietor of this image, who, as I hear, farms it at a considerable rent to the person who exposes it to view.\textsuperscript{555}

\textbf{Restorations}

Despite all that the figure and the traditions surrounding it have been subject to, both continue to thrive into the twenty-first century. However, to ensure that the figure continues to survive without further damage, the wood ought to be treated by a professional. There is some indication of active rot, in the already deteriorated areas of the face and base. Additionally a professional ought to be consulted on proper storage of the figure when it is not on public display.

7. \textbf{Bibliography:} Cochran (2004), 74, 87-88; Hourihane (1984), 971-972; MacLeod (1968), 318-319; Duignan and Killanin (1967), 367; MacLeod (1946), 164-167; Harris (1932), 272-277; Cox (1902), 175; Kelly (1897), 101-105; Du Noyer (1855), 85-86; Windele (4 Sept. 1853), 12 I no. 10, 289-294; Smith (1815), 185; Richardson (1717), 70-71.

\textsuperscript{555} Charles Smith, \textit{The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork} (Cork: John Connor, 1815) 185.
1. **Location:** Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (in the Kilmanagh-Ballycallan Parish)

2. **Date:** 14th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: approximately 152 cm high

   (b) type of wood: unknown, possibly oak.

   (c) number of blocks: Currently two. The body of the figure appears to be constructed out of a single piece of timber that has been deeply hollowed in the back. The head and long, pike-like neck are carved from separate piece of wood, which sits into the collar of the figure’s amice. The arms are now missing, and it is not possible to determine if they were carved from separate pieces of wood.

   (d) dowel holes: There is only one possible dowel hole visible, on the right side of the figure, below the shoulder. This rather large hole could either have been placed there as a means of joining the now missing arm to the figure, or perhaps is a natural knot in the wood.

---

556 Because this figure was hung high above a doorway in the Killaloe church, I was unable to physically measure it. The height of the figure is therefore approximate, based upon my observation of it. MacLeod states that the height of this figure is “5 foot”, MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 162.
(e) evidence of polychrome: Very old, thinly applied polychrome is evident over the entire figure, and may be original to the sculpture. A darkened and worn beige flesh-tone thinly covers the wood on the face and neck of the figure. The hair and beard are painted with a dark brown, or possibly black, paint and the eyebrows and eyes are outlined in the same colour. The irises and pupils of the figure are not differentiated and are all filled in with the same dark brown paint colour. The lips are thinly painted and sharply outlined in burgundy and the cheeks are faintly blushed with this same shade. The figure’s amice, chasuble and alb are all thinly painted chocolate brown, this paint colour is only distinguishable from the natural wood colour at the base of the figure, where the bottom of the sculpture has been sawn off.

(f) general condition: This figure is in very poor condition. The arms are both missing; the right arm is missing from before the shoulder and the left arm is missing from a midpoint between the shoulder and elbow. The left arm appears to have been missing from rot, whereas the right arm is missing in a clean cut – this is the same side of the body as the dowel hole and the cleanness of the cut combined with the dowel hole may be evidence of an old repair attempt. Much of the outer-most edge of the sculpture is irregular and shows evidence of active dry rot. A wide radial crack can be seen on the right side of St. Molua’s collar which extends to the bottom of the third loopy fabric fold on his chest. The bottom of the figure looks as if it has been sawn off and there is rot in this portion of the wood as well.
The wood of the entire figure appears to be very dry and in need of reconstitution. Many woodworm holes can be seen throughout the entire figure.

4. Description:

(a) head: St. Molua has a small head set on a long, pike-like neck and the face is nearly flat in profile. The head and neck are carved fully in the round, even though the body is drastically hollowed at the back. The saint has a short, broad forehead below his dark hair. The hair is carved in shallow, vertical lines around his head. It gives the impression of a tonsured haircut, but due to the height at which the figure is displayed, it is not possible to tell this with certainty. St. Molua has lightly carved brows under the thin, high crescent lines of paint which delineate them. The areas where the saint’s eyes are painted bulge out slightly from the sockets, but there are no clearly carved lines which indicate the upper and lower lids. Below the eyes, is a gentle rise indicating cheek bones, which help to give St. Molua’s face an ascetic quality. His nose is small and triangular and does not protrude very far from the plane of the figure’s face. Both thin nostrils are clearly incised. He wears a full beard and moustache. The moustache rises in a high arch above the figure’s mouth, meeting the underside of his nose and leaving his wide philtrum exposed. The moustache is lop-sided, rising higher on the left side of the figure’s nose than on the right side, giving the whole face an impression of asymmetry. Below the philtrum, the corners of the saint’s lips pull down in a sombre
expression. The lips are thin and sharply painted. The upper lip is broader than the lower lip and has a deep depression in the vermilion border, below the philtrum. Below St. Molua’s mouth and along his jawline is painted a dark beard. The beard and moustache appear to be carved. The beard extends to the underside of the saint’s jaw and back to the earlobes. The ears are carved without interior detail. A clear expanse of neck can be seen between the back of the saint’s ears and his hairline. His long, columnar neck has no anatomical detail.

(c) body: The figure’s body is very flat and plank-like and is separately carved from the head and neck. The pike-like neck sits into the statue’s collar, which is carved fully in the round. Below the collar and shoulders, the St. Molua’s body is deeply hollowed and has a very narrow profile, almost like a relief sculpture. This is reminiscent of several other standing figures in Ireland, including the Clonfert Madonna,557 St. Molaise558 and the Fethard John the Baptist.559 The figure’s amice has a very high collar which is also very practical, as it is used to stabilize and hold in place the head and neck. Only the left, thin and sloping shoulder survives in its entirety, however this arm is missing from a midpoint between the shoulder and elbow. The right arm and shoulder are both missing in a clean, deliberate looking cut. This cut might have been made as part of a repair attempt, as there does not seem to be other evidence of deliberate

mutilation. The cut makes the figure appear to lean more towards its right side. *St. Molua’s* chasuble is carved with many long, loopy folds which fall from his shoulders down the saint’s torso. These are clearly incised and linear. The folds extend from the saint’s upper chest to about mid-thigh level. The saint’s chasuble ends in a long point over his alb at about mid shin level. The alb is carved in softly undulating folds, which are especially evident on the sides of the sculpture. Below the alb, the very bottom skirts of *St. Molua’s* under-tunic can be seen, carved in similar soft, undulating folds. The statue is cut off at the bottom, across the skirts of this under-tunic. It has neither base nor feet. The wood at the bottom of the figure is much thicker than throughout most of the rest of the body.

(d) back: Because the figure of *St. Molua* was displayed at a height significantly above the viewer’s head and mounted on a wall, it was not possible to observe the back of the sculpture in detail. However, it appears to be deeply hollowed below the shoulder becoming thinker towards the bottom of the sculpture. One presumes that an iron ring or other such device is used to affix the sculpture to the wall.

5. **Identification of the subject:** St. Lua, alternately known as Molua (an affectionate name meaning “my Lua”), Dalua (“our Lua”), Lugid, Lugith, Lugaidh, Luan, and Lugidus, was a sixth century Irish ascetic who founded a monastery near present
One story recounted regarding the saint’s name is rather humorous. According to O’Hanlon,

> When Comgall of Bangor, with his family, was wending his way, it came to pass, that they heard somewhat like the cries of a babe in a bank of rushes, while they saw a service of angels over it a little distance from the road. Then St. Comgall said to a monk of his order: ‘See thou what is there in that bank of rushes.’ The man went and giving a kick into the brake of rushes, he beheld a child in the midst, and he took it into his arm-pit. St. Comgall asked what he had found and what he had done. The monk replied, that he had found a babe, and that he had given it a kick. ‘Where is it?’ then enquired Comgall. The brother answered, that it was in his arm-pit. ‘This shall be its name,’ said Comgall, ‘My-lua (kick) son of ocha (arm-pit).’

Other versions of the saint’s early life describe his having been raised by his parents rather than monks and recount many miracles which Molua was said to have performed as a child. Despite these different accounts of his early life, the sources seem to agree that the saint eventually became an apostle of St. Comgall of Bangor and that he performed many miracles while studying under the older saint. After Molua came to maturity and, with Comgall’s blessing, struck out on his own and founded many monasteries. According to St. Bernard, these monasteries numbered in the hundreds. The identification of this wooden figure as Molua is due local tradition and attribution. The sculpture has no identifying

---


561 Ibid., 43.

562 Ibid., 46.

attributes which would otherwise identify it, other than its monastic habit and tonsure

6. Comments:

Dating and Comparisons

Like the figure of *St. Molaise*, already discussed\(^{564}\) and the no-longer extant *St. Brendan*, the body of the statue of *St. Molua* is thin and plank-like, and has a head-on-a-pike construction. All three figures have high collared amices and dalmatics. Molaise and Molua both have an ascetic quality to their faces with prominent cheek-bones over hollowed-cheeks and bulging eyes. They display a tonsured haircut in the Irish style, and wear beards. A series of V-shaped folds cascade in decorative manner down the front of their chasubles. They are similar in style and proportion and all three figures depict sixth-century Irish monastic saints. They are likely to date to roughly the same time period, perhaps in the fourteenth century, although it is impossible to establish a firm date for these figures with any kind of certainty without scientific dating analysis.\(^{565}\)

History

Nothing is currently known about the pre-Suppression origins of this figure. The chapel in Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny where the figure is kept is near the former site of a monastery founded by St. Molua, which he used to visit on his


\(^{565}\) For a more thorough discussion of the contentious nature of the dating of the related figure of *St. Molaise*, please see the entry on *St. Molaise*, p. 226.
way to and from Limerick. A holy well nearby, *Thubbermolooa*, was also associated with the saint. O’Holahan, writing in 1875, states,

A statue of St. Molua, a piece of carved wood, of the thirteenth century, was found in a well near the chapel, about eighty years ago. It has been since kept in the possession of the Butler family. The timber is still sound, and said to be indestructible by fire. Since it came into the possession of the Butlers, they say it fell into a fire, in which it lay three days, and was taken out uninjured! It is now considered to be a protection against that destroying element. 566

The small parish of Killaloe is named for the saint, its name in Irish being Cill-da-lua, meaning Church of (saint)Lua. During the Suppression the sculpture may have been in the keeping of the Hayden family and was brought to the holy well as part of a traditional pattern once a year on the saint’s feast day, where it was viewed by pilgrims. This is a tradition recorded by MacLeod in the 1940s, which is confirmed by Eugene O’Curry’s account, written during the Ordnance Survey in 1839. The current present parish priest at Killaloe, Fr. Richard Felan, did not recount such a tradition to me during my May 2010 interview with him. A similar tradition surrounding St. Molua is recounted in Emlygrenan, Co. Limerick, where, in 1947, the saint’s pattern was held on and around the 3rd of August. According to D.J. Ryan,

'Rounds’ are made there on that date; also on the preceding Sunday and the two Sundays after. A pilgrim has the choice of completing the whole ritual on the one day or dividing it over the three days mentioned. When rounds are completed at the well the pilgrim proceeds to the churchyard a few hundred yards away, and

---

does three rounds of it, beginning and ending at an ancient stone about 5 feet high. After the last round here the pilgrim makes the Sign of the Cross on the stone with a large pebble. As a consequence, deeply inscribed crossed are on it...St. Molua’s Well has a widespread repute for cures. Pilgrims come from a radius of twenty miles to pray there and make “rounds.” Formerly moss from the well side used to be sent to relatives in America afflicted with eye trouble.\footnote{D.J. Ryan, “Miscellanea: Mediaeval Wooden Figure Sculptures” in \textit{JRSAI}, Vol. 187 (1947), 159-160; MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 162; John O’Donovan (containing O’Curry’s letter), \textit{Ordnance Survey Letters Kilkenny: letters containing information relative to the antiquities of the County of Kilkenny collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1839}, ed. Michael Herity (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 108-109.}

The well was destroyed during road repairs in 1760 and the religious pattern involving the figure of Molua and the now-destroyed well soon dissipated. Eventually the figure of \textit{St. Molua} was given to the Butler family, whose residence was near the location of the Killaloe church. Carrigan states that the tradition at the time of his writing was that the figure was found in \textit{Thubbermolooa}, Molua’s well or pool, before the pool was destroyed around 1760 for the making of the road from Killaloe to Kilmanagh.\footnote{William Carrigan, \textit{The Histories and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory} III (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1905), 440-441.} The Butler family kept the figure for more than a hundred years, and in MacLeod’s time, people still alleged that the statue was kept by the Butlers under the floor of their cottage in order to preserve it.\footnote{MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 162.}

According to the Ordnance Survey Letters on the parish of Killaloe, written September 15, 1839,

\begin{quote}
There is a patron [pattern] held here still on the 4\textsuperscript{th} day of August which is Saint Molua’s festival. \{The patron is held
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{D.J. Ryan, “Miscellanea: Mediaeval Wooden Figure Sculptures” in \textit{JRSAI}, Vol. 187 (1947), 159-160; MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 162; John O’Donovan (containing O’Curry’s letter), \textit{Ordnance Survey Letters Kilkenny: letters containing information relative to the antiquities of the County of Kilkenny collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1839}, ed. Michael Herity (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 108-109.}
\item \footnote{William Carrigan, \textit{The Histories and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory} III (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walker, 1905), 440-441.}
\item \footnote{MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints”, 162.}
\end{itemize}
on the Sunday after the 4\textsuperscript{th}. E.C.} There is a wooden figure of St. Molua preserved by a farmer named Michael Butler, in the immediate vicinity of Killaloo. It is four feet nine inches high at present, of which the stumps of the legs make two inches. It is fourteen inches across the chest, and but 2 inches in thickness, having no arms or back. It is dressed in a folding Cassock with a stand-up collar, open in front at the neck. The head and the nose are mutilated; the rest of the features are distinct enough. It is formed out of a piece of oak, which, tradition says, was dug up at the well, probably the \textit{Bile tobair} or Ancient Well Tree. The figure formerly stood at the well and was taken care of by a family of the name of Hayden, who, it would appear, were the Herenachs [sic.] of the place. This family derived a handsome revenue from the guardianship of Ould Molua \{as he was called\}, but when the well was destroyed their calling fell away, and so they made a present of Molua to the grandmother of the present owner, about 60 years ago, and it has remained in the family ever since, and tho they feel no religious or superstitious veneration whatsoever for it the refuse to sell or bestow it.\textsuperscript{570}

I was able to observe and photograph this figure in May of 2010. According to the current priest of the Killmanagh-Ballycallan-Killaloe parish, Fr. Richard Felan, the figure was believed to have been found in “an old farm house” where it “had been put to various uses.”\textsuperscript{571} One wonders if this old farm house was that of the Butler family, of which MacLeod wrote. Fr. Felan had no knowledge of any stories associating this figure with a now-extinct pattern or holy well.


\textsuperscript{571} Fr. Richard Felan, in discussion with author, May 2010.
A final note: although I mentioned the figure of St. Molua in passing in my master’s thesis, I erroneously stated that it had once been in the collection of St. Kieran’s College in Kilkenny. I believe that I was mistaken in that regard and that the figure has not left Killaloe parish since before MacLeod’s time. In order to be clear, the Killaloe to which this entry refers to is the very small parish in Co. Kilkenny, not the larger and more famous town of Killaloe in Co. Clare, which, as the Irish name Cill-da-lua indicates, is also associated with St. Molua.


JCA-L-008: Waterford Nursing Madonna

1. Location: Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City, Co. Waterford.

2. Date: 14th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: 78 cm, W: 18 cm

   (b) type of wood: It appears to be bog oak. The wood is dark, glossy and very heavy. It may also have been treated, perhaps when the layers of emulsion were removed.

   (c) number of blocks: One.

572 This figure has also been sometimes known as the Kilmeaden Madonna.
(d) dowel holes: Four total, although two seem to perhaps be from knots in the wood rather than dowel holes. These two are found on the top of the Madonna’s left wrist and on the front of the base. There are also two holes in the back of the sculpture, one in the back of the figure’s head and one in the middle of her back, which likely were for attaching her to a wall. The figure was previously hung on a wall in a pub in Kilmeaden, Co. Waterford.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Remnants of the off-white emulsion which formerly covered the entire figure can still be seen in many of the crevices and on the left side of the crown. There are also remnants of a modern chocolate brown paint in many places on the figure. Deep within the folds of the skirts, underneath the buttons of the bodice and near the Madonna’s right hand is an old carmine-red polychrome. On the left side of the figure, within the folds of the cloak old blue polychrome, aged dark, can be seen. The entire figure used to be covered in a thick white emulsion (Fig. 121), and later chocolate brown paint, which was only removed in the 1990s. One wonders if layers of the medieval polychrome were accidentally removed at this time as well.

(f) general condition: There are many small radial cracks, but no large fissures in the wood. A large chunk of wood is missing from the right side of the figure’s base. The bottom of the figure’s face looks as if it had split and was repaired with some kind of resin or amber-coloured glue. Both the left
and right sides of the crown are damaged and portions of it are still covered with emulsion and brown paint. No woodworm holes can be seen.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a long, ovular face with a high, rounded forehead. Her brow is clearly carved in high crescents above her eyes. The Madonna’s almond-shaped eyes protrude from their sockets and come to sharp points at both their inside and outside corners. Both upper and lower lids are carved. The upper eyelid is strongly defined by incised crescents above the eyes. The high bridge of the Madonna’s nose emerges in a continuous line from the brows and ends in a round tip, which seems to be worn down somewhat. Both nostrils are carved, but somewhat unevenly; the right nostril is larger than the left. The figure has a softly defined philtrum above her smiling lips. Deep dimples punctuate the outer corners of her mouth and her overall expression is kind. The Madonna has a long, rounded chin, soft jawline and a long neck which widens at its base where it meets the figure’s collar.

A thin, wavy line of hair can be seen which falls across the very top of the sculpture’s forehead, becoming thick waves of hair that emerge from underneath the Madonna’s crown, fall on either side of her face, obscuring her ears and falling behind the figure’s back. The hair is deeply inscribed with wavy lines, indicating the hair’s texture.

The Madonna wears a high crown. The band is carved in waves, the crests of which would have been surmounted by trefoil designs in
relief. Two of these trefoils survive, one in the centre of the crown and the other just to the right of centre. It appears that the whole crown would have been carved in similar trefoils, but the rest of the crown is too damaged or obscured by old emulsion to be able to make them out currently. At the very top of the Madonna’s crown and head is a flat plane, on which the cross section of the log that the statue was carved from can be clearly seen. From this lack of carving, it seems evident that the top of the figure’s head was not intended to be seen and so likely was placed at a slight height above the viewer’s head.

(b) body: The Madonna has a very narrow body and shoulders. She is very much ‘in the block’ and the shape and width of the log of wood from which the sculpture was carved is evident. The Madonna’s dress has a scoop-neck collar which buttons down the centre of her bodice. This button detail is very unusual amongst the surviving figures in Ireland. The buttons are undone and lie on the right side of her chest. On the left side of the Madonna’s bodice is a small scallop detail which is likely meant to indicate button-loops. Through her opened bodice, the Madonna pulls out a single, oblong breast with which to feed the Child. She holds the breast with her right hand and the Child in her left arm. This breast is unnaturally positioned in the centre of the figure’s chest and a second breast is not indicated. The Madonna wears a cloak over both of her shoulders. The cloak falls over her arms leaving only the tight wrists of the Madonna’s dress exposed. On her right wrist, an additional row of buttons can be
seen. The left arm and hand are not rendered in full detail. They are mostly positioned behind the Christ Child’s body and were not apparently intended to be seen. The cloak is drawn across the Madonna’s body from her left side to her right, underneath the Christ Child and below her breast. The cloak falls in deep, V-shaped folds down her left side below the Child’s feet and in long ribbon folds below this and along the outer hem on the right side. On the front of the figure, the bottom of her cloak ends well above where her knees might be. The Madonna’s skirts fall in long, deep, undulating vertical folds which fall to the base of the figure and rest in accordion-like folds on the base and across her feet. Only the pointed toes of the Madonna’s shoes can be seen on the base emerging from beneath her skirts.

(c) base: The figure’s base is very plain and thicker on the right side of the sculpture than the left. There is damage from rot on the right side and a large dowel hole, or knot, on the left side. The base is carved from the same bock of wood as the rest of the sculpture and appears to be roughly still in the shape of the log of wood from which this figure was hewn. When the base is viewed from the bottom, this is especially evident.

(d) back: the back of the figure is flattened and uncarved, but surprisingly not hollowed out. In most figures of similar age, one would expect the back to have been hollowed.

(e) Christ Child: The Child sits in the crook of his mother’s left arm and is
supported under his bottom by her large left hand. The Child sits in profile to the viewer, and reaches with both his hands to grasp his mother’s breast. He wears a long robe with bell sleeves and a skirt that covers half of his feet. The Child’s feet are very broad and rudimentarily carved. The sole of his right foot, excepting the heel, is exposed as are the toes of left, forward-most foot. The Child’s face is depicted with full cheeks and softly carved features, none of the clearly incised lines that can be seen on the Madonna’s face are evident here. What can be seen are his short, rounded forehead, shallow brow and slightly protruding eye region – although neither his upper nor lower eyelids are indicated. His nose is small and rounded, and both nostrils are carved. His tiny mouth smiles and dimples at the corners. His chin is small and rounded and his jawline is soft. The Child’s neck is short and mostly hidden by his shoulders when the statue is viewed from the front. The neck widens at the base where it meets the scoop-necked collar of his tunic. The Child’s hair is long and wavy, though not incised like his mother’s, and covers over his ears. It meets his collar in the back.

5. Identification of the subject: Images of the Madonna suckling the Christ Child are among the most ancient images of the Virgin and have their roots in rigid, hieratic Egyptian images which depicted the goddess Isis nursing her son, Horus. In Christian art, depictions of the nursing Madonna became especially popular in the fourteenth century, when many relics of the Virgin’s milk appeared, across Italy
especially. The Cistercian Order also helped to popularize this type of Marian depiction in their art, frequently depicting St. Bernard of Clairvaux kneeling in front of the Virgin, who presses her breast, spurting milk into Bernard’s mouth, while the Child sits on her knee. An example of this type of image is the *Nursing Madonna and Child between St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Benedict* (Fig. 122) currently on display at the Prado in Madrid. Frequently, depictions such as this are inscribed with the motto, “Monstra te esse matrem”, or “Show thyself to be a mother”. Clearly, the emphasis in images of the nursing Madonna is on the humanity and motherhood of the Virgin Mary and, according to Hall, “The medieval concept of the Virgin as the mother not only of Christ but of all of mankind was closely linked with that of her benevolence and mercy, and therefore her role as intercessor before God.”

6. Comments:

 **History**

 *The Waterford Nursing Madonna* was donated to the Waterford Museum of Treasures in 2008 by the Doyle family of St. John’s Park, Co. Waterford. According to Eamonn McEneaney, director of the Waterford Museum of Treasures, he was told by the Doyle family that their father, James Doyle, was known to have a special devotion to Our Lady and somehow came across this old figure in a shed belonging to the Dunhill church. After doing some work for the parish priest, James Doyle was given the figure as payment. The carving was

---

573 Hall, 328-29.

574 Ibid., 46.
donated to Waterford Museum of Treasures in 2008 by James Doyle’s children in memory of their father and mother.\textsuperscript{575}

The current church in Dunhill was built in the late nineteenth century and was the third church building erected on that site. These three churches were built in quick succession beginning at time of the agreement by both the Irish and British parliaments to repeal the Test Act, which effectively ended institutionalized discrimination against Roman Catholics. The first church was built on this site in 1798 and the second in 1820. The present building was erected in 1884. The fund for the current church and its furnishings were drawn from the local population, and according to local historian, Frank Power, “many items were donated, including seats, stations of the cross, windows, altars, and statues.”\textsuperscript{576}

It is possible that the \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna} was donated to the Dunhill church at this time, although there are no records or local traditions which support this theory. What is known is that there was a mass rock in Ballyleen (approximately three kilometers from Dunhill), believed to have been used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and an old building in nearby Shanaclone (approximately one kilometer from Dunhill), where mass was celebrated during the eighteenth century. These sites illustrate a continuous, living Catholic tradition in the area of Dunhill throughout the Suppression.

It is very possible that the \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna} may have been associated with the Anglo-Norman Le Poer, or Power, family. The Power family

\textsuperscript{575} Eamonn McEneany in conversation with author, October 2010.

\textsuperscript{576} Frank Power, \textit{Historic Dunhill Landmarks}, (locally produced booklet, 1988).
was one of the most influential families in southeast Ireland in the middle ages and one branch of this family made Dunhill their *caput*. At various points in time, the Powers held territory in all areas of the lordship, excepting Ulster and Kerry, but by far their largest holdings were in the vicinity of Waterford and the southeast.\(^577\) In Ireland, the Power family was descended from three sons of a Somerset landowner who all were granted their Irish land independently.\(^578\) One of these brothers, Robert le Poer (d. 1178), made his seat in Dunhill (alternately spelled Donoil, Donoyle, Donhill and DonIsle amongst others, in the literature) and his descendants drew the name of their baronage from this place, becoming the Barons of Donoil.\(^579\)

Gabriel Redmond suggests that the castle of Dunhill may have been built by either Robert, the first baron of Donoil or by his son, John who succeeded him.\(^580\) Unfortunately, very little information about the medieval Barons of Donoil survives to the present day, aside from a few parliamentary summons and reconstructed succession lists. The barony ended in the seventeenth century when Cromwell and his forces attacked and destroyed both the castle at Kilmeaden, 

---


\(^{578}\) Ibid., 94.

\(^{579}\) Ibid., 95.

which the baron himself defended, and the castle and church at Dunhill, which was defended by the baroness.\textsuperscript{581}

Ryland identifies this not as the wife of the defender of Kilmeaden, but rather as another Poer relative. The story of the demise of Dunhill castle and the adjacent medieval church is preserved in several sources,

The Castle of Dunhill, situated on the sea-coast beyond Tramore, was bravely defended by a lady. It was built on a rock almost inaccessible, and judging by the ruins still remaining, it must have been a place of prodigious strength. For a long time it resisted the attack, though artillery was used to make a breach in its outworks. At length it yielded. The countess was the life and soul of the defenders. Day and night she was on the ramparts, animating by her presence and energy the spirits of the garrison. She had, it seems, a skilful engineer, who defeated all the plans of the besiegers. One day she retired to rest, but she neglected to provide for the wants of her weary soldiers. Her engineer sent to demand refreshment for himself and his comrades; he received in return the unwarlike mead of a drink of buttermilk. Irritated at the insult, he made signals to the foe, who actually had raised the siege, and were in marching off, and surrendered to them the Castle. It was forthwith blown up with gun-powder. The Countess perished among the ruins.\textsuperscript{582}

After the restoration of the monarchy in England, John Power (likely the son of the baron who defended Kilmeaden against Cromwell) was named in the

\textit{Act of Settlement and Explanation} as one of Charles II’s nominees to have his

\textsuperscript{581} R.H. Ryland, \textit{The History, Topography and Antiquities of the County and City of Waterford} (London: John Murray, 1824), 76-79.

\textsuperscript{582} Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall, \textit{Ireland: Its Scenery, Character &c I}, (London: How and Parsons, 1841), 302.
lands in Dunhill restored. Apparently, this was never carried out, however, as according to Redmond, Dunhill remained in the hands of the Cole family, to whom it was awarded by Cromwell, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, although they were never in residence there and both the church and castle remained in ruins.\footnote{Redmond, 14-15; \textit{A collection of all the statutes now in use in the kingdom of Ireland, with notes in the margin [1310-1666]: and a continuation of the statutes made in the reign of the late King Charles the First of ever blessed memory; and likewise the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, with the rest of the acts made in the reign of His Majestie that now is, Charles the Second by the grace of God of England, Scotland, France and Ireland king, to the dissolution of the Parliament, the seventh of August, 1666 ; as also a necessary table or kalendar to the whole work, expressing in titles the principal matter therein contained, for the ease and advantage of the reader} (Dublin: Benjamin Tooke, 1672) 100-101.}

That the medieval Dunhill church was also destroyed during Cromwell’s siege is commented on by several sources. In the Ordnance Survey Letters, it states of the Dunhill church that, “large masses of its walls are scattered about as if it had been demolished by cannon.”\footnote{Michael O’Flanagan, \textit{Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Waterford Collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey} ref: 43-45 (Hand typed transcription of the Letters in the National Library of Ireland Collection, 1928), 23-24 \textit{Ibid.}, 24.} And Ryland says, “There are indubitable proofs of his [Cromwell’s] remorseless hand in the ruins of the castle and the adjoining church, one-half of which has been carried away by the explosion of gunpowder.”\footnote{Ryland,80.} Nothing is said about a figure of the Madonna, however, on the 9\textsuperscript{th} of June 1841 the Ordnance Survey Letters record,

In the townland of Killone in this parish [Dunhill] is shown the site of an old church which was dedicated to St. John, from which the townland derived its name. In the townland of Castlecraddock there is a holy well dedicated to St. Martin at which patterns were formerly held. There is nothing else of antiquarian interest in this
parish, though the names of some townlands would indicate that there were several old churches.\textsuperscript{586}

Unfortunately very little about the foundation of this now ruined church is currently known, including its dedication. One could suppose that, due to its proximity, it was built around the same time as the castle of Dunhill, in the late twelfth century. Local historian, Frank Power, dates the ruin to the fourteenth century,\textsuperscript{587} which is corroborated by the earliest reference to the church yet found, in the British Government’s Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland, reports the taxes paid by the Dunhill church for the years 1302 to 1307,\textsuperscript{588} inferring that the foundation of the church was at the latest in the late thirteenth century, and may have been earlier.

There are a few other medieval churches in the vicinity of Dunhill from which the \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna} may originate. The ruins of a church at nearby Reisk may also be dated to the thirteenth century. Records from the Calendar of Documents record that 10s was paid in taxes by that church on 1302,\textsuperscript{589} again suggesting that the church was built in the late thirteenth century, at the latest. Interestingly, the Ordnance Survey Letters record a religious pattern dedicated to the Virgin Mary that were still being held near the Reisk church when he was writing in the mid-nineteenth century, stating that, “There is a large

\textsuperscript{586} O’Flanagan, \textit{Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Waterford Collected during the progress of the Ordnance Survey} ref: 43-45, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{587} Power, unpublished local booklet.


\textsuperscript{589} Ibid., 304.
and much frequented graveyard attached to this church, and patterns are held at it on the second festival of the B.V.M. occurring in Autumn.” 590 In many instances where statues survive in situ in Ireland, these figures are also incorporated into local patterns that are dedicated to the same saint which the sculpture is said to depict. This may indicate that a figure of the Madonna was formerly part of this pattern, although without documentation, this is again conjecture.

The remains of what may have been a monastery survive in the townland of Loughdeheen, approximately four and a half kilometers from Dunhill. There has been some debate over whether this structure was originally built to be a castle or a monastery, however in a dissolution-era survey entitled “Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions,” this structure is designated as confiscated monastic land and is leased to William Wyse of Waterford. Several sources have speculated that this structure may have once belonged to the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, to which many members of the Power family belonged, including: Sir Maurice de Poer, 1449; Sir Edmond de Poer, Commander of Castlemore, 1449; Sir Michael de Poer, 1476; Sir William Power, 1514, 1533; and Sir Richard Power, 1515.591 The Hospitallers had St. John the Baptist for their patron,592 but this would not preclude their having a figure of the Madonna in their possession,

590 O'Flanagan, ref. 40, 21.
591 Redmond, 19.
or even an individual establishment of the order from being dedicated to the Virgin.

**Dating and Comparisons**

Eamonn McEneaney dates the figure to the fourteenth century, and I believe that date is correct. Standing Madonnas, which hold a partially or fully clothed Child on their hip or side, were common in continental artwork in the fourteenth century. Many examples can be found of this motif, including a large alabaster figure from Catalonia dated to the latter half of the fourteenth century, now in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (Fig. 123) and a Madonna from Ruskinovce, Spiš county, in East Slovakia (Fig. 124) currently on display at the Slovak National Gallery. Both of these Madonna’s exhibit similar modes of dress, pose and hairstyle as the *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, although the Irish figure does not exhibit the “Gothic sway” evident in the continental examples.

The *Waterford Nursing Madonna* also shows several similarities to another *Madonna Lactans*, also in Barcelona, at the Museu Frederic Marès (Fig. 125). Both figures have the odd attribute of a single breast emerging from the middle of the Madonna’s chest. Also, in both examples the Madonna offers the Child her breast but maintains her engagement with the viewer rather than the suckling baby. Additionally, emphasis is placed in the costume of both figures on buttons.

---

The motif of the *Madonna Lactans* was not entirely uncommon in Ireland, including a figure on the fourteenth century *Domhnach Airgid* shrine (photo unavailable) in the National Museum of Ireland and one dated to 1566 found in a marginal drawing in the *Great Parchment Book of Waterford* (Fig. 126), currently on display in the Waterford Museum of Treasures. Speculations have also been made as to whether the Madonna and Child image from folio 7v in the Book of Kells was meant to infer a type of *Madonna Lactans* reading, due to the position of the Child and unusual emphasis placed on the Madonna’s breasts in the illumination.⁵⁹⁴

Perhaps the most directly comparable figure of a *Madonna Lactans* in Ireland is the *Askeaton Madonna* (Fig. 145), which likely originated at the Franciscan Friary in Askeaton, Co. Limerick.⁵⁹⁵ The *Askeaton Madonna*’s later date is evidenced by the increased naturalness in her anatomy, pose and interaction with the Child, as well as the later style of her clothing. Yet, it is remarkable that given the great losses that Ireland suffered to her material heritage from the lordship period that the *Askeaton Madonna* and the *Waterford Nursing Madonna* would both survive.

The *Clonfert Madonna* (Fig. 97) also shares several similarities with the *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, particularly in the treatment of the Christ-Child in both figures. Both children have similar oval faces, chin-length wavy hair worn

---


in similar styles, and nearly identical long robes. Both children are supported in one of their mother’s arms, off to the side of the larger figure. In both cases, the Madonnas’ hands, which support their children under their bottoms, are proportionately very large and quite flat. The Children both gesture towards their mothers with affection, the Waterford Nursing Madonna grasps his mother’s breast, whereas the Clonfert Child gingerly holds a lock of his mother’s hair. Despite the Child’s engagement with his mother in both cases, the Madonna’s engagement remains wholly with the viewer, at whom she gazes with a benevolent expression. Both Madonnas are proportionately long and narrow as seems to be typical of other fourteenth century figures surviving in Ireland, although unlike most, the Waterford Nursing Madonna’s back is not hollowed.

**Restorations**

One final note on the recent history of this sculpture, according to museum file notes at the Waterford Museum of Treasures as well as a photograph contained in those files (Fig. 83), it seems that while still in the possession of the Doyle family a thick layer of white emulsion was removed from the Waterford Nursing Madonna in the late 1990s. It is not currently known what method was used to remove the emulsion, and thankfully some of the medieval polychrome still survives in the folds and crevices of the carving. One wonder whether if modern museum-quality methods had been used, even more of the original polychrome might have survived.

7. **Bibliography**: McEneaney (2008), 144.
JCA-L-009: Holy Ghost Angel (Fig. 127 - Fig. 130)

1. **Location:** Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City, Co. Waterford (WMT 1994.008).

2. **Date:** Latter half of the 14th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. 105 cm. W. 21 cm. (at the base)

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: One block is extant. Presumably, the arms and the wings were separate blocks. These are no longer extant.

   (d) dowel holes: In the figure’s left shoulder there are two empty dowel holes and three with broken dowels still in them. Presumably these are evidence of attempts to reattach the no-longer-extant arm.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The sculpture is painted all over in a thick putty-coloured paint, overlying a layer of dark brown polychrome. No trace of the original polychrome is visible.

   (f) general condition: The sculpture is extremely damaged from rot and decayed. There are several radial cracks in the folds of the over-the-shoulder garment, and one in the right side of the face that runs the length of the head. The top of the head is missing. The torso is worm eaten and there

---

596 MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” 91.
are several areas with evidence of past wood rot. The right arm, which might have held an identifying symbol, is missing. Dowel holes in the shoulder of this arm indicate that there were several attempts to repair it. The left arm is under the over-the-shoulder garment but large chunks of wood have rotted away. The bottom of the figure is much decayed, the feet are so badly damaged that their details can no longer be discerned.

4. **Description:**

   (a) **head:** The top of the figure’s head, and the hair on the left side of the face are missing from decay. The hair on the right side shows it to have been carved in short curls that cover the ears, cut in small, incised swirls that frame the face. The face is softly moulded and the entire face is delicately carved. The brow is faintly suggested. The eyes are large, open, and double-lidded. The nose is small and although it is much decayed, it seems to have been made up of softly rounded shapes. The nostrils seem to have been deeply carved. The philtrum is clearly rendered over the lips, which are gently smiling and deeply bevelled, especially at the corners. The chin is small and round; the cheeks are full. The neck is long and slender, ending in the notched collar of the angel’s undergarment. A wide, deep crack runs along the left side of the face. The facial features are obscured by thick layers of paint.

   (b) **body:** The figure is carved in the round and solid. The back is much more decayed than the front. The figure’s chest is very flat with a lot of evidence of rot. The undergarment is tight with a notched collar. The
thick, toga-like cloak sweeps across the figure from its left shoulder and loops up, under where the no-longer-extant right arm used to be. The garment appears to have had a border. The cloth falls from the left arm, which it covers, and a ‘rippling-ribbon’ style fold can be seen towards the bottom of this section of the cloth. In the front of the figure on the right, the cloth is fluted, becoming V-shaped folds as it wraps around the profile. There is a small bit of fluting on the left side. The feet peak out from underneath the bottom draperies but are decayed, nearly beyond recognition.

The right arm is completely missing from the shoulder and there are several dowel holes in the break. The other arm, and possibly the hand, is covered by the angel’s cloak. If the hand was meant to be covered by the cloak, than it looks as if it used to hold an object here that is no longer extant. If the hand was meant to be exposed, than it is possible that this is where the hand was, but now is broken off. There is so much decay on this section that it is impossible to clearly determine.

5. Identification of the subject: This figure has been identified variously as both an unidentified female saint, or as MacLeod theorizes, possibly an angel. MacLeod states,

This statue…recalls some of the sculpture inspired by the great Nino Pisano’s work in the second quarter of the North Italian Trecento. It is especially reminiscent of the angel
sculpture popularized by his famous Annunciation groups of the Virgin and the angel Gabriel.\textsuperscript{597}

However, the extent of damage wrought by time on this piece makes this identification difficult to determine. Although carved in the round, the extent of the decay on the back of the piece has erased any evidence that it might have had wings. Even its more general identification as an unidentified female saint is up for debate. Although the face is quite effeminate, its short hair style and lack of breasts make even assigning a gender to the figure problematic.


MacLeod’s note of the similarity of this piece to the work of Nino Pisano seems plausible to me. Both in terms of facial features and drapery, the Holy Ghost Angel bears a striking resemblance to that artist’s work, as can be seen in his figure of the Madonna and Child from Santa Maria Novella in Florence (Fig. 131) and in his Annunciation group in Santa Caterina in Pisa (Fig. 132). It is also interesting to note that wings were not carved on Pisano’s marble angel. The marble Annunciation figures that Pisano sculpted in Pisa greatly influenced woodcarvings of the same subject in and around that area for a long time afterwards,\textsuperscript{598} and Pisano’s workshop carved many copies of the figures in wood.\textsuperscript{599}

\textsuperscript{597} MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” 92.

One very interesting example of a wooden Angel Gabriel that might have been carved in Pisano’s workshop can be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London (Fig. 133 - Fig. 134). Like the Holy Ghost figure, this sculpture has no wings, similar facial features and an elegant, elongated body. The deeply carved drapery, gathered up under the London sculpture’s hands, help us to imagine what the pose of the Waterford figure may once have been. Unfortunately, the London sculpture has lost its original polychrome, although a note in the museum file record records that during restoration work in 1959, traces of patterned polychrome were found on the garments, similar to Luccan silks, and gilding on the hair.600

The sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum was purchased from a dealer in Florence by Sir John Charles Robinson, the first superintendent of the South Kensington Museum (which was later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum).601 Robinson reported that he was told by the dealer that the figure came from an annunciation pair that had once been in Pisa cathedral, where it had been displayed on a highly placed sconce. When the sculptures were taken down, they were sold to a country parish priest who had the bottoms of the figures sawn


off to fit them into a niche in his church. Later, the priest sold the angel to the
dealer. The sculpture was acquired by the museum in 1860.602

According to the Victoria and Albert Museum, their wooden angel has
evidence of dowel holes on the back of the figure for the insertion of wings,
whereas there is no extant evidence that the Waterford figure ever had wings.
Nevertheless, similarities between these two figures, as well as with other Pisano-
inspired wooden annunciations, suggest MacLeod’s attribution of the figure as an
angel is not wholly unfounded. This figure seems to be the work of an Italian
carver working in the latter half of the fourteenth century.

Killanin (1967), 456; MacLeod (1946), 91-92; Smith (1746), 183.

JCA-L-010: Kilconnell Female Head (Fig. 135 - Fig. 137)

1. Location: Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon

2. Date: Late 14th century (?).

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H. 56 cm. W. 13cm.

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: One extant.

602 Victoria and Albert Museum, “Angel of the Annunciation”, Internet museum file record,
Museum number: 7719:1-1861, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O127337/statue-angel-of-the-
(d) dowel holes: None apparent.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Aside from a few spots of white paint or gesso on the long shaft, none of the polychrome is intact.

(f) general condition: Only the head and long neck/shaft remain of this figure, and these are very decayed. There are many worm holes in the extant portion of this carving, which gradually increase towards the top of the head. The top of the head is the area most damaged by decay. The end of the nose is missing from rot, and most of the rest of the features are difficult to discern because of the extent of the damage to the piece.

4. Description: The face of the figure is a long and narrow oval. The back of the head is flat. It is difficult to determine if the figure was meant to be wearing a veil or if this is what is left of the figure’s hair. The eyes of the figure were open, almond-shaped and double lidded. Most of the figure’s nose is worn away by decay, and the end of the nose is completely missing. The lips smile, the line between them is very deeply incised, and the lower lip is very full. The corners of the mouth are indented. The chin is slightly tapered.

The neck / shaft is very long, and it tapers to a wedge at the bottom. There are some spots of white paint or gesso on the shaft. This shaft was probably meant to sit into the collar of the rest of the figure, in the same manner of construction as the figure of St. Molaise603 or St. Molua,604 now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland.

5. **Identification of the subject**: This is most likely the head of a Madonna or female saint. Although much deteriorated, the features seem feminine. The general likeness that it bears to the *Holy Ghost Madonna*\(^{605}\) and the proliferation of images in wood of the Madonna suggest that this could be the head of a Madonna.

6. **Comments**:

**History**

The monastery at Kilconnell was established in the late fourteenth century,\(^{606}\) suggesting that the *Kilconnell Head* likely dates to no earlier than that time. It is possible that the Franciscans brought the figure with them from elsewhere, or that it came from a neighbouring church and was brought at some point to the Kilconnell monastery. Not enough of the figure survives in order to make a thorough stylistic comparison.

---


\(^{606}\) Several manuscript sources refer to the founding of the monastery of Kilconnell, the earliest date for which is given in the Annal of the Four Masters, as 1363 and the latest is 1400, given in Mervyn Archdall, *Monasticum Hibernicum: or, A history of the abbeys, priories and other religious houses in Ireland; interspersed with memoirs of their several founders and benefactors, and ... superiors ...; likewise an account of the manner in which the possessions belonging to those foundations were disposed of, and the present state of their ruins; collected from historians, records, and manuscripts*, (London: G.G.J and J. Robinson, 1786.). Roger Stalley states that the foundation date was 1414, but this appears to be an error, as he cites Francis Bigger for that date and Bigger does not seem to say anywhere that the monastery was founded in that year. Bigger quotes an entry dated to 1414 in the *Ex Waddingo Annal Minor* Vol. IX on page 367 regarding the founding of Kilconnell monastery, but does not state that the monastery was founded in that same year. The entry is confusing on other grounds as well, as the entry is dated 1414 but refers to events in 1420. Francis Bigger, “The Franciscan Friary of Killconnell, in the County of Galway, its history and its ruins,” in *The Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* I, No. iii (1900-01), 145-167; II, No. i (1902), 3-20, and III, No. i (1903-4), 11-15.
Although English troops were quartered at Kilconnell friary for nine months in the late sixteenth century,\(^{607}\) the buildings of the abbey were allowed to survive and remained inhabited by the Franciscans long after the general suppression of the monasteries,\(^{608}\) a fact which probably contributed to the survival of the Kilconnell Head. A mention was made in the table of contents of the Red Council Book stating that it contained a note of concordat for the “not suppressing” of Kilconnell in the Diocese of Clonfert.\(^{609}\) Mooney writes that “almost all of the nobles of the country have erected burial places for themselves in the church,”\(^{610}\) and so perhaps it was upon their appeal that the monastery was not suppressed. Mooney goes on to say that even at the time of his writing, circa 1616, the monastery was still inhabited. He attributes this to the Protestant soldiers’ fear of retribution from God if they harmed the friars or the Kilconnell Friary. Mooney relates the story, which said occurred about the year 1596,

A certain knight, named John Kynk, came on one occasion to the Convent while the garrison was there. He had with him a horse, which he highly prized, and nothing would do him but to stall the animal in front of the altar of St. Francis… This desecration did


\(^{608}\) Donough Mooney, a Franciscan friar writing in the early seventeenth century, states, ‘the convent and church to this day remain complete in all their parts, the glass in the windows unbroken, the ceiling uninjured, and the paintings in good condition.’ “Tractatus de provincia Hiberniae,” ed. B. Jennings, Analecta Hibernica, 6 (1934) , 56-8. An English translation of the text is given in a series of articles published in the Franciscan Tertiary, IV- VIII (1893-8).

\(^{609}\) The Red Council Book, the book of the Privy Council in Ireland and dated to 1541-3, has long been considered lost, although a copy of its table of contents was preserved in the papers of Sir William Ussher, and published in the Historic Manuscripts Commission, 15th Report, appendix, III. 274 under the date of 1541. 2. Jan. 6. Sir William Ussher, “A Table to the Red Council Book,” Historic Manuscripts Commission, 15th Report, appendix, III. 274.

\(^{610}\) Donough Mooney, Franciscan Tertiary, V (Feb. 1895) 289.
not escape the vengeance of God. The horse, so valued by its owner, which in the evening was in sound health, lay dead when they entered the church in the morning. All were struck with astonishment, and acknowledged that it was an act of the Divine Power. About the same time some of the soldiers were ransacking the graves of the dead, in expectation of finding some hidden treasure or other spoil, when a monument fell, in a wonderful way, and crushed the thigh bone of one of the plunderers. The others were so terrified by the accident that they never dared again to rifle the tombs. Captain Stryck [captain of the garrison of soldiers]… influenced as well by fear as by other motives, he promised the friars, giving them his word of honour, that he would not allow them to be injured. He told them to remain in the monastery, and gave strict orders that no one should molest them. He also ordered the soldiers, and took care that his orders were enforced, to do no damage to the building, and on no account to burn the wood or roof of the church or cloister. He moreover set aside for their exclusive accommodations some cells in the dormitory and the sacristy, where he permitted them to say Mass in private. Thus during the nine months he remained there in garrison, the friars lived in the convent, and succeeded, with the help of God, in preserving their old home from destruction. All of the trees of the orchard and garden were, however, cut down and burned by the soldiers. When these were consumed they had to seek their supply of firewood in the neighbouring forests, from which they seldom returned without a skirmish with the enemy, and the loss of some of their men. However, they were more afraid of injuring the wood-work of the church and convent than of meeting their foe in battle.\textsuperscript{611}

It is perhaps this reluctance to harm any of the wood work of Kilconnell Friary which permitted the \textit{Kilconnell Head} to survive. It was not until around the time of the Battle of Aughrim in 1691 that most of the monks were forced to abandon

\textsuperscript{611} Ibid., 9.
the monastery, and went to live in a neighbouring bog, although it appears that at least some remained until the early nineteenth century.\footnote{Bigger, Vol. II, 16.}

Nothing about the specific history of the \textit{Kilconnell Head} is known prior to the twentieth century, when it was acquired by a school-teacher named Martin J. Joyce who lived from the years 1909-1991. According to the museum label at the Aughrim Interpretive Centre where the \textit{Kilconnell Head} is now kept, Joyce, “began collecting items of historical interest with artefacts from the fourteenth century Franciscan Abbey near his birthplace in Kilconnell… With them, he established a museum in this school (St. Catherine’s National School, Ballinsloe)…” In 1991 shortly after Joyce’s death, the Aughrim Interpretive Centre was opened and acquired the collection of this small museum. It is unknown in what manner Joyce acquired the \textit{Kilconnell Female Head}.

There is an intriguing reference made to a Kilconnell Madonna in a 1979 thesis by Peter O’Dwyer. He states, “Two statues of Mary, venerated in Franciscan monasteries are mentioned in the 15\textsuperscript{th} century – one in Tralee and the other in Kilconnell abbey, Co. Galway.”\footnote{Peter O’Dwyer, \textit{Towards a History of Devotion to Mary in Ireland 1100-1600}, for the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy (Dublin: Carmelite Publications, 1979) 77.} The reference which O’Dwyer provides for this is the series of articles by Francis Bigger. However upon close examination of those articles, no mention is ever made of a Kilconnell Madonna. It seems that O’Dwyer did not think that the Kilconnell Madonna was still extant, and so probably did not know of the existence of the wooden head then in the
possession of Martin Joyce. A reference to a no-longer extant wooden figure of St. Francis, then in the keeping of a man named Joe Page, is mentioned in O’Donovan’s *Ordnance Survey Letters, County Galway*. By the time that Bigger was writing sixty years later, he was unable to find any trace of the figure of St. Francis. It would be interesting to find out where O’Dwyer got the notion then of a Kilconnell Madonna. Research has thus far proved inconclusive.

**Dating and Comparisons**

One of the only stylistic clues by which to date the *Kilconnell Head* is its ‘head-on-a-pike’ construction. The figure’s neck becomes a long shaft which tapers to a wedge at the bottom. This shaft was probably meant to sit down into the collar of the figure’s garment, the torso being carved from a separate block of wood. This same method of construction is shown in the figure of *St. Molaise* from Innismurray (now in the National Museum), the figure of *St. Molua* from Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny and in photographs and drawings of the no longer extant figure of *St. Brendan* from Innisglora. Although MacLeod suggested a

---


thirteenth century date for all three of these figures, various other authors have suggested dates as early as the twelfth century and as late as the fifteenth century. The establishment of the Kilconnell monastery in the late fourteenth century would seem to indicate a date for the figure of likely no earlier than that time. Without scientific dating of the wood, a firm date for these figures as well as the *Kilconnell Head* is not likely to be established.


---

**JCA-L-011: Fethard St. John the Baptist (Fig. 138 - Fig. 140)**

1. **Location:** National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin - on loan (NMI: L1506B).

2. **Date:** Early 15th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: 164 cm, W: 46 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: It seems as if this figure was originally carved from three or four blocks. Both the main part of the figure and the lamb were carved from a single block of wood. It appears that the block was not quite wide

---


620 MacLeod, “Statues of Irish Saints,” 155-70.
enough to accommodate the figure’s shoulders, so an extra piece of wood was added on either side in order to broaden this area of the carving. The extension to the left shoulder is no longer extant. The bottom of the right shoulder-extension is broken towards the bottom. Additionally, only two small pieces of the original base are intact, below the feet. This original base was carved from the same piece of wood as the rest of the main body of the figure; the current base consists of a thin bevelled board attached to a second trapezoidal board that is nailed to the front of the figure’s feet.

(d) dowel holes: There are two visible. On the back of the right shoulder there is a hole with a dowel in it where the shoulder is attached. There is also an empty dowel hole in the other side where the no longer extant shoulder would have been attached. The conservation report mentions three dowel holes at the missing right arm, but only two were visible when I observed the figure.

(g) evidence of polychrome: The polychrome consists of ground pigments suspended in an oil base. It has a pink undercoat of lead white mixed with vermillion pigments, excepting the figure’s hair, beard and lamb. According to pigment analysis, the figure has been varnished and repainted at least six times. The hair and beard are painted with brown and black polychrome. There are also some traces of gold leaf showing through the paint on the hair. The pigment analysis states that underneath

---


622 Ibid.
the more recent polychrome on the hair, there are two layers of gold leaf over red and white lead priming. The eyebrows are painted as black, single-line crescents, as are the upper lashes of each of the eyes. The sclerae are painted white. The irises are dark blue, and the pupils are not indicated. The warm flesh-tone painted on the face, neck, and upper chest is enhanced by blushing on the figure’s cheeks and lips. The original flesh tone consisted of vermillion and lead white over gesso. The low-collared undergarment is painted with a pale yellow-ochre polychrome and has a single black line painted approximately one centimetre below where the collar meets the chest. The yellow-ochre color is comprised of orpiment yellow layed over top of vermillion. There are some other additional traces of black polychrome on this portion of the figure. The outside of the cloak is bright red with underlying traces of black paint, and the lining of the cloak is blue. The original red of the sleeve was made of copper glazing with lead tin yellow. The lamb is painted with a white lead polychrome that has been overpainted with varnish. The bare legs and extant portions of the feet are also painted with the same warm flesh-tone as the figure’s face and neck. Traces of the white gesso underneath the polychrome can be seen over the entire figure.

623 Ibid.
624 Ibid.
625 Ibid.
626 Ibid.
(h) general condition: The right arm is missing, as are the ends of both feet and most of the original base. The bottom of the attached right shoulder has broken off from dry-rot and the extension of the left shoulder is completely missing. There are several small cracks throughout the entire figure and some small areas in which evidence of wood-worm can be seen. The back of the head seems to have been damaged and is repaired with plaster. The lamb’s features have all been rubbed smooth.

4. Description:

(a) head: The head is very long and ovular. The hair, which is parted in the middle of the forehead, consists of thick and wavy interlocking strands that are tucked behind the figure’s ears and fall to the front of his shoulders. The forehead is high and the temples are bare, the hairline does not begin until behind the ears. One wonders if the similarity that this bears to the traditional Irish tonsure is deliberate or merely coincidental. The insides of the ears are roughly carved. The face is very long with high cheek bones. The high brow is carved in shallow relief and enhanced by two black painted crescent-shaped eyebrows which follow the line of the carved brow. The almond-shaped eyes bulge out slightly, and both upper and lower lids are indicated. The eyes glance upwards. The long, thin nose has a triangular underside and the nostrils are carved. The nose is a replacement.\textsuperscript{627} The entire space between the nose and the mouth is taken up by a long drooping moustache. The top lip is not carved and the bottom

\textsuperscript{627} Ibid.
lip juts out below the deeply bevelled line of the mouth. There are about
two centimetres of bare skin between the bottom lip and the beginning of
the beard. The beard does not meet the hairline but rather is like a long,
wide goatee. The ends of the moustache meet the beard. The beard and
moustache, like the hair, consists of long, wavy, interlocking strands. The
long beard hangs straight down from the face; it does not touch the neck or
the chest although it covers both. The neck is very long.

(b) body: The neck of the figure joins with the bare chest, the collar bones are not
carved and no distinction is made between where the neck ends and the
chest begins. The chest and upper torso of the figure are quite flat. The
scoop-necked collar of the undergarment is very low. No folds are carved
on this undergarment. The figure wears a cloak that is swept from his right
side to the left. The extant left hand is covered by cloth from the cloak, is
carved close to the body and holds the ‘Agnus Dei’. The non-extant right
hand may have pointed towards the ‘Agnus Dei’. The cloth from the
extant hand falls in long vertical folds, forming a decorative rippling-
ribbon pattern towards the bottom of the drapery, revealing the blue
polychrome of the lining of the cloak. All of the folds are carved in high
relief. The cloak falls to the knees of the figure.

The legs and feet of the figure are carved completely in the round,
whereas the rest of the back of the figure is flat, from the back of the head
to the bottom of the cloak. According to the conservation report, the back
is shiny from former treatment of wood consolidation and deeply
hollowed with visible cut marks from hand-tools are in the hollow, although owing to the delicate state of the carving, I was not able to personally observe the back. The conservation report also records that the wood is degraded and spongy and that a wooden block has been attached to the interior of the hollow as a repair to a damaged or burnt surface. The legs and feet are bare, and the fronts of both of the feet are missing. According to the conservation report, the figure’s feet were frequently touched when the sculpture was on display in the church. Only a small amount of the original base of the figure, attached to the soles of the feet, is extant. It seems to have been carved from the same block of wood as the feet. On the outsides of the feet, this small piece of the base has been painted with the flesh-tone polychrome, making the soles of the feet appear thicker than they were intended to be. The current base consists of a thin bevelled board attached to a second trapezoidal board that is nailed to the front of the figure’s feet. The whole figure leans significantly backwards and would not stand unless placed against a wall.

(h) lamb: A small lamb is held in the figure’s left hand. It is painted white, and there are also some faint traces of black polychrome, particularly in the nose area. The carving of the small sheep appears to have been rubbed smooth. The carving of the tail and back legs remains the clearest, while

---

628 Ibid.
629 The conservation report mentions that the figure has previously been documented as having been previously damaged in a fire, but I have found no record of that event. Ibid.
630 Ibid.
the detail of the head, back and front legs seems to have been erased, as if from rubbing.

5. Identification of the subject: The saint is depicted bare legged, holding a lamb and wearing a rough-looking tunic underneath his cloak. John the Baptist is frequently depicted with bare legs and wearing clothing made of animal skins, which the roughness of the tunic may indicate. Another standard symbol associated with images of John the Baptist is the lamb of God, or *Agnus Dei*. The figure has the cloth of his cloak draped over his hand, underneath the lamb that he holds, symbolizing its sacredness. The symbol had its origins in a gospel passage (John 1:36) that states, “and as he (John the Baptist) watched Jesus walk by, he said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God.’” 631

6. Comments:

**History**

MacLeod states that the three figures from Fethard, Co. Tipperary were purported to have come from the Church of the Holy Trinity.632 The Visitation Record of Archbishop James Butler records that the *Fethard Trinity*, was known to be in the possession of the parish priest in 1759.633 The first published account mentioning the *Fethard St. John the Baptist* figure appears in 1874. In it, Cantwell

---

631 Hall, 172.


633 Visitation Record of Archbishop James Butler, 1759, MSS. in St. Patrick’s College, Thurles.
states that there were “three very ancient and well-carved figures” in the church and goes on to describe the figure of *St. John the Baptist* as a representation of the Good Shepherd.\(^{634}\) The church in which the figures were located at the time of Cantwell’s writing was built c. 1822. When they were still kept in the former church, the carvings were exhibited to the public on Trinity Sunday every year as part of a local pattern. The pattern was discontinued around the same time as the building of the new church. According to Cantwell, it was locally believed that at the time of the Dissolution, the three figures were buried in order to hide them.\(^{635}\)

There is nothing to either substantiate or disprove this story. If the sculptures were buried, they could not have been buried long. The damage to the *Fethard St. John the Baptist* is not as extensive as one would expect in a piece of wood long interred. The most compelling evidence against the burial of the three figures is simply their size. All three Fethard figures are roughly life size. This would have necessitated the digging of either three very large holes – comparable in size to three graves – or one giant hole in which to bury them. It is possible that they could have been buried in the cemetery, but no tradition substantiating this exists.

In a series of letters between L.S. Gogan, Deputy Keeper of the Art Division of the National Museum, and Rev. Timothy O’Dwyer, a parish priest from Fethard, Co. Tipperary, it is learned that all three Fethard figures were first


\(^{635}\) Ibid.
brought to the National Museum in 1932 for an exhibition of ecclesiastical objects put together for the Eucharistic Congress which was to take place in Dublin.\textsuperscript{636} Subsequent to this exhibition, it was requested that the carvings remain at the National Museum on ‘perpetual loan’, however the request was denied. Restoration work to the figures was discussed and approved by the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Harily, in 1932.\textsuperscript{637} It is not known if the figures were ever returned to Fethard or if they remained in the custody of the museum from the time that the restoration work was approved until 1948 when the loan of the figures was finally agreed to by Rev. Canon J.J. Ryan, parish priest of Fethard.\textsuperscript{638}

**Restorations**

In 2009, this figure was conserved following a system failure within its case, resulting in a dramatic temperature shift and relative humidity change. This caused a contraction of the wood and subsequent flaking of the polychrome, especially on the figure’s face, legs and areas of red polychrome. Several infills with a wood composite on the figure’s face and torso were also lifting. At that

\textsuperscript{636} L.S. Gogan to Rev. J. O’Dwyer, 10 June 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; Rev. J. O’Dwyer to L.S. Gogan, 13 June 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; L.S. Gogan to Rev. J. O’Dwyer, 15 June 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; Rev. J. O’Dwyer to L.S. Gogan, 16 June 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

\textsuperscript{637} Rev. J. O’Dwyer to L.S. Gogan, 9 Nov 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; L.S. Gogan to Rev. J. O’Dwyer, 10 Nov 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; Rev. J. O’Dwyer to L.S. Gogan, 13 Nov 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

\textsuperscript{638} I could not find a copy of this letter in the National Museum’s files; however it was referenced in two letters, from 1948 and 1980. Unknown to Rev. Canon J.J. Ryan, 12 Mar 1948, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin; F.X. Martin to Catriona MacLeod, 2 Sep 1980, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
time, the figure was consolidated using Russian Isinglass (sturgeon glue in water at 5 and 10 % solutions). Some areas of the statue were infilled using glass fume silica micro-ballons. After consolidation, the statue was cleaned and the base was stabilized by infilling parts of it with various materials. The *Fethard St. John the Baptist* had been previously conserved in the 1990s when it received surface cleaning with saliva, and was consolidated with rabbit skin and gelatin adhesives. The figure at that time was also chemically treated for pest activity. In 1997, a student was permitted to conduct a technical analysis of this figure’s pigments which wholly concur with the 2009 findings.\(^639\)

Much earlier conservation work has been carried out on this statue since its loan to the National Museum in 1948, however the unavailability of restoration records for many of the Irish wooden figure sculptures has been a great hindrance to their study. In the case of the *Fethard John the Baptist* some clues exist to what work might have been carried out prior to its conservation in the 1990s, both in photographic evidence (Fig. 141) and in letters between various personnel of the Museum and the Canons of the Church at Fethard from 1932-1980. In in a letter from November of 1932 it was initially suggested that the more modern coats of polychrome be removed from the figure.\(^640\) A letter from Breandon O’Riordain, Director of the National Museum, to F.X. Martin of the Augustinian House of Studies in Ballyboden, Co. Dublin and Professor of Medieval History at

---

\(^639\) AI/97/073, Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

\(^640\) L.S. Gogan to Rev. J. O’Dwyer, 10 Nov 1932, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
University College, Dublin, dated 18th June, 1980, states that when the figure was received by the Museum it was “in very bad condition with dry rot and furniture beetle,” and that the wood was subsequently treated and strengthened. An earlier letter from an unknown person associated with the National Museum, dated 12th March, 1948 and addressed to Canon Ryan, specifies that the wood was treated with Biotex and that the wood was “strengthened from behind.” Some of the details, especially of the face are repaints were probably carried out at this time. This figure of St. John the Baptist is now on display in the National Museum as part of its Medieval Ireland exhibition.

**Dating and Comparisons**

Both MacLeod and Hourihane assign this figure a date in the late fifteenth century. A fifteenth century oak chest from France on display at the National Museum of Ireland, has a carving of St. John the Baptist very similar in style to the Fethard carving (Fig. 142). The figure’s pose, the musculature of the legs, and the way that the lamb is held are all similar. However, the drapery folds on the Fethard St. John the Baptist seem carved in an earlier style. The way in which the cloth of the figure’s cloak is draped up over the arm, is a convention which entered French Gothic sculpture in the thirteenth century. A good example of this, dated to 1225-30, can be seen at Amiens Cathedral in the left jamb of the left doorway in the west portal (Fig. 143). Here, the figure of Honoratus drapes his

---

641 Breandon O’Riordain to F.X. Martin, 18 Jun 1980, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

642 I have yet to find an explanation of this product (Biotex), but assume it to be some type of wood consolidation agent. Unknown to Rev. Canon J.J. Ryan, 12 Mar 1948, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
cloak over his arm in a very similar manner to the *Fethard John the Baptist*. The drapery folds, both undulating vertical folds and rippling-ribbon style folds are also very similar to the Fethard figure. In Irish stone carving this same convention can be seen in an incised slab of an ecclesiastic (Fig. 144), dated to the fourteenth century, from St. Canice’s in Kilkenny city. Here again, the drapery is brought up over the figure’s arm and is carved in both undulating vertical and rippling-ribbon style folds. The *Fethard John the Baptist* also seems to have more in common with the *Clonfert Madonna* (Fig. 97), dated to the fourteenth century, than to any of the others in the study group. They share the same sort of elongated ovular head, and pillar-like neck which goes straight into the chest. Additionally the drapery folds of the *Fethard St. John the Baptist* have more in common with those of the *Clonfert Madonna* than with figures such as the *Askeaton Madonna* (Fig. 146) and the *Holy Ghost Risen Christ* (Fig. 172), both of which appear to belong to the late fifteenth century. The folds carved in the draperies of both the *Fethard John the Baptist* and the *Clonfert Madonna* are carved rather shallowly in comparison to the late fifteenth century examples. They share the same sort of ‘rippling-ribbon’ style of drapery fold. In these two early figures the fold begins as a series of long, undulating vertical folds which suddenly begin to loop over themselves, forming a more drastic sort of rippling-ribbon effect – the folds twist over themselves to such an extent so as to completely close off the individual sections of the fold – all the while remaining, on the rippling-ribbon section especially, rather shallowly carved. The drapery folds of both the *Askeaton Madonna* and the *Risen Christ* are much more deeply undercut. This would seem
to indicate a date in the early fifteenth century for the *Fethard St. John the Baptist*.


---

**JCA-L-012: Askeaton Nursing Madonna** (Fig. 145 - Fig. 147)

1. **Location**: National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin (NMI: L1556).

2. **Date**: Mid to late 15ᵗʰ century.

3. **Technical details**:

   (a) dimensions: H. 94 cm. W. 42 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: Single block

   (d) dowel holes: Two very shallow dowel holes can be seen, one at the break in the Madonna’s arm and the other at the break in the Christ Child’s arm.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: Remnants of both an aged cream-colored polychrome, and a brown ochre paint can be seen over the entire figure.

   (f) general condition: This sculpture is very damaged. The top of the Madonna’s head is missing and her left shoulder has almost completely deteriorated from rot and decay. The Madonna’s left arm has been broken about half

---

way down the forearm and the Christ-Child’s left arm is broken just before the elbow. In both cases there is evidence of an attempted repair; a shallow dowel hole is located on both breaks just to the left of centre. There is much evidence of dry-rot and a proliferation of worm-holes throughout the entire sculpture. This is especially evident on the Madonna’s lap and skirts, becoming increasingly worse towards the base of the figure.

4. Description:

(f) head: The top of the Madonna’s head is missing from the crest of the forehead up. There is significant evidence of rot on this portion of the carving, however it is possible that the head may have been flat originally and carved to accommodate a separate metal crown, as is the case with Our Lady of Dublin (Fig. 190) and possibly also the Killoran Madonna (Fig. 203).\(^{644}\) The Askeaton Madonna’s hair falls behind her shoulders; it appears to have been parted in the middle. The tresses are deeply carved at the figure’s temples and become increasingly shallow as the hair falls. The ears are completely covered. The Madonna has an ovular face with high rounded cheek bones, a long chin and softly modelled jaw-line. Her almond-shaped eyes are double-lidded and deeply incised underneath a naturalistically carved brow. Her nose is short with a round tip. The space between her nose and lips is rather long. The philtrum is lightly incised, and the thin lips smile gently. The top lip is fuller than the lower lip.

---

\(^{644}\) See Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, “Our Lady of Dublin”, p. 447 and Catalogue, Figures from the Lordship Period, “Killoran Madonna”, p. 378. However, the Killoran Madonna also has suffered significant damage making it difficult to determine fully what it may have looked like in its original state.
(g) body: The figure’s rounded shoulders are very narrow. The left shoulder is almost completely eaten away by decay. The neckline of the tight bodice is lightly incised and falls below the Madonna’s exposed right breast. Close attention has been paid to the figure’s anatomy; her collar bone, nipple and aureole are all clearly carved. The Child’s hand rests on the Madonna’s exposed breast just to the right of the nipple.

The bodice remains tight to below the Madonna’s waist. The figure wears a cape over her shoulders, out of which her broken right arm emerges. The cape is drawn from left to right under the right arm, across her lap and underneath the seated Child. The cape falls from her left arm on the side of the sculpture in a stylized ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern. There is no distinction made in the carving between the cape and the skirt. From the waist down, the cape and skirts are very full and fall in deeply carved drapes and folds. There is a singular, deeply-undercut, V-shaped fold that hangs between the Madonna’s parted knees. Two undulating vertical folds fall from her left knee, and one long, triangular fold hangs from the Madonna’s right knee. Three loopy folds fall from the Madonna’s right thigh. The material of her skirt is draped across the seemingly narrow board on which she sits. In the left profile, the cloth from the sleeve covers that of the dress. It cascades down to the base of the carving in one long vertical fold overlapped by a ‘rippling-ribbon’ fold. On this side, the material of the Madonna’s skirt is not draped across the seat-board.
The base of the figure is very decayed and worm eaten. It is roughly round in shape, although this could be a result of the extent of deterioration. Two deteriorated upraised bumps, which were once the Madonna’s feet, emerge from underneath the skirt and rest upon the base; however none of the details of this area of the carving have survived.

(h) Child: The Child is seated on the Madonna’s left knee while she clasps him around his waist with her left hand. The Child’s proportions are more those of a small adult than of a child. His hair is arranged in a series of small curls around his face and at the base of his neck. The back of the Child’s head is very flat; it clearly was not intended to be seen. He looks out straight towards the viewer. The Christ Child’s facial features are very similar to those of the Madonna, although unlike the Madonna, he does not smile. His brows are only faintly indicated but his eyes and eyelids are deeply incised. The eyes are almond-shaped and doubled-lidded. His nose is short and round; the nostrils are not carved. His philtrum is faintly incised and his lips are thin. The chin is small and round, set into the chubby face and flaccid jaw-line. The Child’s neck is quite short.

The Child sits up stiffly in his mother’s embrace. His left arm is broken off just before the elbow and his right hand reached up to touch the Madonna’s exposed breast. The Child wears a long tunic with no carved lines to indicate the collar or cuffs of the sleeves. Drapery folds are only very faintly indicated on the Christ Child’s torso. His right foot is propped up on the Madonna’s right thigh, causing his knee to be slightly upraised.
The drapery of the Child’s tunic falls in a ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern from his left/forward knee and covers where the left foot would be, were it carved. Two curved diagonal folds emerging from underneath this fold and swoop back towards the Child’s bottom.

5. Identification of the subject: For a general explanation of the *Madonna Lactans* as a motif, see: *Catalogue*, “Waterford Nursing Madonna,” section 5, p. 305. Although the Child is not actually shown nursing in the Askeaton carving, the Madonna’s bared breast and the Child’s gesture to it make the meaning of the figure apparent.

6. Comments:

**History**

This carving of a nursing Madonna has been associated with the Franciscan Friary at Askeaton, however nothing is now known of the specific history of this statue prior to the nineteenth century. At that time, it was in the possession of the Combha family at Tubrid, about one mile away from the friary. It has since become associated with that Franciscan house. In 1890, Michael Sommers – the owner of the land on which the Combha house stood – got custody of the statue, and around 1940 it passed into the care of Sommers’ nephew, Patrick Casey.

The Franciscan Friary at Askeaton, from which this sculpture is believed to have come, was founded in either 1389, by Gerald, the fourth Earl of

645 MacLeod, “A Carved Oak Nursing Madonna from Askeaton, Co. Limerick,” 256.

646 Ibid.

309
Desmond or in 1420 by James, the seventh earl. This was a substantial foundation according to a record documenting the possessions of the friary following its dissolution, and significant ruins dating mostly to the fifteenth century survive to this day.

Interestingly, the friary remained occupied and undissolved for many years following Henry VIII’s 1536 and 1539 Acts of Suppression. According to Westropp, the Earls of Desmond were “all powerful in their domain,” allowing the monastery to survive for some time. A Franciscan chapter meeting was even held at Askeaton in 1564, thirty years after the beginning of the Suppression and Dissolution of the Irish monasteries.

It was the end of the Desmond hegemony which rang the death knell of the Askeaton friary. Gerald, the fourteenth Earl of Desmond, had run afoul of the Crown several times during his tenure. According to Brady,

---


649 Christopher Peyton and Other Commissioners, “Survey of Escheted Estates in County Limerick,” 1586, Record Office, Dublin, 198, 262 and 263, as quoted by Westropp, “Notes on Askeaton, I”, 33-34. This document was destroyed in the Public Records Office fire in 1921.

650 Unfortunately very few records survive of this century when the Askeaton friary flourished.

651 Westropp has a very detailed account about how a printing error in Louis Auguste Allemand’s *L’histoire Monastique d’Irlande* (1690) confused later writers, including Archdall, leading them to believe that the monastery was ruined in 1481. He states that the actual date of the ruination of the friary was 1581. Westropp, “Notes on Askeaton, I”, 33-35.
Most of his contemporaries were agreed that Desmond was mad. To Perrot he was ‘the crack-brained earl… more fit to keep bedlam than to rule in Ireland. To Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, he was ‘the brain-sick earl’, the ‘weak-brained’, ‘the faint-brained earl’. Even Desmond’s sympathizers were forced to concede that he was mercurial, dim-witted and, worst of all, an easy prey to external influence.\(^652\)

In 1560, the Earl of Desmond was reprimanded by the government for violent behavior, and again in 1562. He had on-going rivalries with both the Butler and Ormond families, who held nearly equally powerful Munster baronies. These conflicts caused Desmond to be summoned to court yet again in 1565 and finally, in 1567, caused Queen Elizabeth to order the Earl arrested and transported to England, where he was held prisoner for seven years.\(^653\)

The Earl’s long absence proved exceedingly detrimental to his territories. His people revolted against the English of Munster under the guidance of their new leader, James Fitzmaurice (Desmond’s cousin, to whom he had delegated responsibility in his absence), resulting in an incredibly bloody, five-year, guerrilla-style war, the short-term result of which ended up largely in Desmond’s favor: Fitzmaurice would only end his tenure (and therefore his rebellion) when Desmond returned to power, effectively forcing England’s hand into turning the Earl’s territories back over to him. The long-term results, however, were not entirely in Desmond’s interests, the most important of which for our current study

-----


\(^653\) Ibid., 390-91.
was that the Fitzmaurice rebellion had largely been predicated on popular adherence to the Roman church in the face of English Protestantism.  

When Desmond was returned to Dublin in 1573 for examination and possible reinstatement he escaped back to his former territories, effectively jumping his bail, and declared himself in opposition to the authority of the Dublin administration, but not to the crown. Elizabeth ultimately decided in his favor, largely in order to reinstate him to his lands and end the Fitzmaurice rebellion. Desmond was now considered loyal to the crown, but the disenfranchisement of Fitzmaurice and his allies, in conjunction with Desmond’s open opposition to the Dublin administration, left him effectively without allies in Ireland.

These problems came to a head in 1579. Fitzmaurice returned, bent on waging a religious war against the English Protestants. Desmond attempted to put Fitzmaurice’s invaders down, but since Desmond’s allies had defected to Fitzmaurice, he was left without the power to do so. According to Brady, Desmond could only muster sixty men, all of whom belonged to his own household. Around the same time, the Earl’s cousin, Sir John of Desmond, murdered an English envoy. This act put Sir John firmly in Fitzmaurice’s camp, and deepened the Earl’s problems with the crown.

In the face of the Earl’s impotency, Sir Nicholas Malby, Lord President of Munster, invaded the Desmond territories without warning in order to squelch the Fitzmaurice rebellion. According to Brady, Malby, “…cessed and billeted his

---

654 Brady, 306.
655 Ibid., 310.
troops upon Desmond’s tenants, commandeered Desmond’s castles and even
raided Desmond’s chief residence at Askeaton.”656 This proved intolerable to the
Earl and led him also to defect to Fitzmaurice’s side before the end of the year.

It was during Malby’s attack on Askeaton that the friary was destroyed.

According to Westropp, the army,

‘defaced and burned the Abbey;’ they entered the deserted
church, desecrated it, and smashed the tomb of Earl James
[the father of Gerald, the fourteenth and current Earl]. The
monks had fled, save brother John Cornelius (or Conolly);
him they ‘cruelly slew’; they also hanged an Irish soldier of
the Earl… and hanged with his own cord another monk,
William Tenal.

On the 7 October, 1579, the Earl of Desmond wrote,

Sir Nicholas Malbay camped within the Abbey of
Askeaton, and there most maliciously defaced the ould
monuments of my ancestors, fired the Abbey, the whole
town and the corn thereabouts, and ceased not to shoot at
my men within Askeaton Castle.

Subsequent campaigns brought the English back to Askeaton over the next
several years, and troops continued to be occasionally quartered in the old
monastery. The Carew manuscripts document that some of the friars fled to Spain
soon after the destruction of their abbey,657 but nothing else is currently known
about the friars for the next forty-seven years. Even Donagh Mooney, who was
able to document and preserve so much of the Franciscan heritage in Ireland, was

656 Ibid., 311.
657 Brewer and Bullen, 203, 308.
unable to collect much information about Askeaton Franciscans when he was writing in 1617. However in 1627, the friars returned to live among the ruins of their old monastery, they were finally able to fully re-establish themselves in 1642, with the temporary triumph of the Catholic Confederates in retaking the castle at Askeaton.

The friars were able to maintain the monastery at Askeaton, and practice openly, relatively unmolested for the next few years, but at the invasion of Cromwell the history of the old monastery, apart from a list of successive guardians, falls silent again. The last guardian believed to be in residence at Askeaton friary was nominated in 1714. It is unknown at what point the Askeaton Madonna passed into the possession of the Combha family, however one might reasonably surmise that it remained in the friars’ possession until the eighteenth century. Likely, the preservation of Askeaton friary through the initial onsloughts of Dissolution and Suppression aided the Madonna’s survival.

**Dating and Comparisons**

A story is related by MacLeod that the Combha family, if questioned about the Madonna, would say that it was “carved with a spoon by a retarded man.”

---


659 For a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the Catholic Confederacy and the complicated relationship between religion and government in Ireland during the seventeenth century see Conor Ryan, “Religion and State in Seventeenth Century Ireland,” in *Archiviwm Hibernicum* 33 (1975), 122-132.

boy.\textsuperscript{661} Clearly the Combhas were not very good liars, given the
preposterousness of the story when confronted with such a masterful work of art.
The deeply undercut, regularly spaced folds somewhat resemble those of the
figure of the \textit{Risen Christ} at Waterford (Fig. 172), and the broad face and long
neck recall other, earlier, Irish Madonnas. The bodice of the dress is similar to one
painted by French artist, Jean Fouquet c. 1450 in his work, \textit{Virgin and Child of
Melun} (Fig. 148), although in this figure the collar of the dress simply falls below
the bared breast, where as in the Fouquet painting the Madonna has undone the
lacing on the front of the gown.

As previously mentioned, the motif of the \textit{Madonna Lactans} was not
entirely uncommon in Ireland, and perhaps the most directly comparable figure in
Ireland is the newly discovered \textit{Waterford Nursing Madonna},\textsuperscript{662} which may have
originated in Dunhill, Co. Waterford. The \textit{Askeaton Madonna}’s later date is
evidenced by the increased naturalness in her anatomy, pose and interaction with
the Child, as well as the later style of her clothing.

When viewed in the context of its history, the \textit{Askeaton Nursing Madonna}
is remarkably well preserved. The style of the carving seems to indicate a date for
the figure in the mid-to-late fifteenth century. This also seems quite plausible
when the popularity of the \textit{Madonna Lactans} theme and the style of clothing in
the firmly dated \textit{Virgin and Child of Melun} are compared. Finally, this date also

\textsuperscript{661} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{662} For a more complete discussion of this motif in Ireland please see Catalogue, \textit{Figures from the
coincides with the heyday of the Askeaton monastery and the period to which
most of the construction is believed to have taken place.

(1987), 266-267.

JCA-L-013: Museum Standing Madonna (Fig. 149 - Fig. 152)

1. Location: National Museum of Ireland, Reserve Collections – Art and Industry
   Division, Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (NMI DF 1948.120).

2. Date: Late 15th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H. 52 cm, W. 18.5 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: The carving is comprised of one block with a modern base
       attached.

   (d) dowel holes: There are two very small dowel holes visible. One can be seen
       on the top of the orb in the Christ Child’s hand, presumably for a cross to
       be inserted. The other is in the Madonna’s closed fist, as if she once held
       some object, possibly a flowering rod or a sceptre.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: This figure is entirely covered with polychrome and

gold-leaf. The Madonna’s hair retains traces of black polychrome and gold leaf. Remnants of gold-leaf also remain on the hair of the Christ-Child, on the orb that he holds, as well as on the border of his skirt. Evidence of leafing also can be seen on the Madonna’s belt, and on the borders of her skirt and the sleeves of her gown. Traces of gold and red polychrome remain on the fillet-style crown. The gowns of both the Madonna and Child are painted a bright carmine colour. The Madonna’s cloak is blue, aged so dark that it is almost black. In places the red-lead priming of the wood and gesso base coat shows through the polychrome. Both figures have the same pale flesh-tone. Their cheeks and lips are blushed with the same carmine. The sclerae of both figures are only distinguished from the rest of the face by a thin black outline, they are not painted white and the drawing is uneven. The eyebrows of both figures are also thinly outlined with black polychrome. Their irises are brown and outlined in black with black pupils. There is a blackish shading on the outside corners of the noses of both figures, as well as on the inside corners of their eyes. The nostrils are painted black. There is a splattering of a different, brighter flesh-colour over the entire carving.

(f) general condition: The figure is very dirty and the polychrome is beginning to flake. With the exception of having both black polychrome and gold leaf on the hair of the Madonna, it would seem that all of the polychrome is original to the figure; there is no evidence of over-paints. A few of the crown’s crenulations have been broken off. The cross from Christ’s orb is
missing, as well as the object which would have been held in the
Madonna’s closed fist. There is a horizontal crack in the figure in the
vicinity of the Madonna’s right knee, over the fluted drapes. Below this
there are some other smaller horizontal cracks which appear to be very
shallow, perhaps only in the paint. At the back of the figure,
approximately 4 cm above the bottom of the skirt, is another horizontal
crack. A large chunk of wood, about 2.5 cm high and 5 cm wide is missing
from the back of the figure. This area has been painted black, and there is
some active rot towards the top of this chip. There does not appear to be
any other decay in the figure, and no evidence of wood worm is present.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna’s fillet sits high upon her forehead. The bottom of it is
triple banded, with two thin, upraised bands sandwiching a wider,
depressed band with carved upraised round studs. Some of the
crenulations from the crown are missing and the ones which are extant are
worn. It appears that originally they were either trefoil or flower-shaped.
Over the top of the head, there is a portion of the crown that looks as if it
was meant to depict cloth; this has traces of a carmine red polychrome and
reaches a low peak in the centre. This polychrome is the same shade as
that found on the gowns of both the Madonna and Child.

The Madonna’s hair is very long; it falls to about 6 cm from the
bottom of the figure. It remains very close to the sides of her head and
completely covers her ears. The hair becomes fuller as it falls behind the
figure’s shoulders and reaches its fullest point just past the back of her shoulders then tapers towards the bottom. It is carved with many finely incised wavy lines.

The carving of the Madonna’s eyes and brow is very shallow. The painted lines follow the carving of the left eye very closely, but the bottom painted line of the right eye falls below the carved line. The long, hooked nose has a high profile. The nostrils are carved and painted. The space between the nose and mouth is quite large and the philtrum is shallowly carved. The Madonna has a clearly painted cupid’s bow. The lips do not smile. The carving of the bottom lip is much fuller than the painted area. The figure’s chin is small and pointed. Her long neck broadens towards its base.

(b) body: This figure is carved fully in the round. The Madonna’s rounded collar is rendered well-below the base of her neck. Her gown is belted at the waist and the sleeves are tight to her wrists. The figure’s arms are disproportionately large. Only a few very shallow drapery folds are carved on the bodice of the figure’s dress. There is no indication of breasts.

The Madonna’s long cloak falls to the bottom of the figure in the back. Her right arm, bent at the elbow, emerges from under the thickly carved cloak; she holds her fist to her chest. There is a dowel hole in this fist for the insertion of some no-longer extant object, possibly a flowering rod or a sceptre. The arm is long and the hand is very large, and if straightened, the figure’s arm would fall to below her knee. The Madonna
supports the Christ-Child in her left arm. Most of this arm is hidden behind the body of the Child and is not visible when the statue is viewed from the front.

The figure’s legs are short in proportion to the torso. The Madonna stands in a *contrapposto* position with her right knee bent. Her skirt seems to be gathered underneath the Child’s body; drapery folds cascade from under the Child’s bottom and fall in fluted vertical folds which form a ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern for approximately 6 cm and then fall in a vertical fold to the bottom of the figure. Where the skirt is lifted, an underskirt is revealed, painted the same carmine-red as the Madonna’s gown. More diagonal folds emerge from underneath the fluted vertical drapes and fall towards the knee and shin of the Madonna’s forward right leg. A single looped fold emerges from underneath the Madonna’s closed fist and falls over her pelvis. The bottom of the skirt falls in undulating vertical folds. The feet are not carved.

The upper portion of the Madonna’s cloak is form-fitting. It follows the shape of the arms, even on the undersides. Below this indentation, the cloak becomes fuller, at the bottom of the figure it is approximately 2-3 centimetres wider on either side than the skirt. The back of the cloak, where it can be seen at the bottom of the figure’s hair, is carved in a series of shallow vertical undulating folds. On the Madonna’s left side is a long horizontal crack beginning at the edge of her skirt, running through the cloak and extending back towards the end of her hair.
A large chunk of wood, about 2.5 cm high and 5 cm wide is missing from
the back of the figure. This area has been painted black, and there is some
active rot towards the top of this chip.

(g) Child: Both the Madonna and Child are carved from the same block of wood.
The Christ-Child is quite small. He sits in the crook of the Madonna’s left
arm and she supports him underneath his bottom with her hand. The
Child’s hair falls over his ears and has short bangs cut high across his
forehead. It is incised with fine lines. Traces of gilding remain the on the
Child’s hair, and there is a large green splotch of polychrome, which
appears accidental, towards the back of his head. The Child’s eyebrows
are painted in thin black lines which do not entirely follow the carved line
of the brow; the painted eyebrows lift up towards the centre more than the
carved line does. His eyes are elliptical in shape, outlined in thin black
lines. He gazes straight out at the viewer.

The Child’s nose is short with a bulbous tip. The nostrils are
carved and the philtrum is lightly incised. Like the Madonna, the space
between the Child’s nose and mouth is quite long. His unsmiling lips have
a distinct cupid’s-bow. His chin is small and pointed. The tunic’s collar
nearly meets his chin. The Child’s upper body is quite long in proportion
to his short legs. His tunic is unbelted and the skirt falls in deep,
undulating vertical folds. No attempt has been made to portray feet.

The Christ-Child raises his right arm and holds up his first two
fingers and thumb in a gesture of blessing in a gesture of blessing. The
The carving of this arm is very flat. His left arm is bent at the elbow and rests in his lap holding a large gilded ball. It was likely surmounted by a small cross that is no longer extant.

5. **Identification of subject:** This representation of the Madonna and Child shows the Madonna standing and holding the Infant Christ. He holds a globe that would have been surmounted by a small cross, and raises his other hand in a gesture of blessing. This was a typical mode of presenting Christ as ‘Salvator Mundi’, or saviour of the world. This same globe-with-a-cross symbol was also one of the insignia used by English kings. In the Madonna’s now empty left hand, she may have held a lily, symbol of her purity, or a flowering rod of Jesse, symbolizing the genealogy of Christ, or perhaps a sceptre.

6. **Comments:** Nothing is known about the history of this small Madonna prior to its acquisition by the National Museum in 1948. Several items were not recorded in the acquisitions register for 1948, and this was one. Therefore the National Museum has no record of the origins of this small carving. When the piece was acquired it was covered entirely with black paint. Several coats of paint were removed from the figure to reveal the medieval polychrome underneath. The

---

664 Hall, 324.

665 E-mail from Jennifer Goff, Curator of Furniture, Music, Science & the Eileen Gray collection, National Museum of Ireland, 28 Dec. 2011. According to Ms. Goff, “The print out which you have is from Adlib our registration department’s database which says that the statue’s registration number taken from the old registers DF:1948.120. However as you can see from the enclosed photograph of the registers for the furniture and wood collections from 1948 which I have here in the office that there were only three objects registered in 1948 for the furniture and wooden items collections. From the number on the statue – evidently there were another 197 objects which were not registered by our previous curators.”
original paint is very well preserved, however the figure is in need of some conservation to prevent the polychrome from flaking. It shows a generous use of gold leaf on the hair, crown, belt and on other small details and bright carmine coloured polychrome on the Madonna’s dress. Other extant figures in Ireland which are covered over in thick layers of modern paint, particularly those in the collection of the Waterford Museum of Treasures, would likely benefit from having the modern layers removed. Underneath, they may also reveal substantial amounts of their original polychrome.

Hourihane points out that the figure of the Christ-Child is similar in pose and dress to a stone carving at Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 153) and therefore dates the figure to the mid-to-late fifteenth century. Supporting evidence for this date can be found in the fluted, falling, rippling-ribbon type of drapery folds which expose the underskirt seen towards the bottom-right of the Museum Standing Madonna. A similar drapery style can be seen on an unknown female saint, possibly St. Catherine, depicted on a tomb-chest in the sexton’s house of St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny city (Fig. 154). Hunt dates this stone carving to the sixteenth century. However the similarity of the Child’s pose and dress to the Jerpoint figure, as well as the Madonna’s very long hair point to a date perhaps in the late fifteenth century.


---

667 Hourihane, 990.
668 John Hunt, Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture: 1200-1600, A study of Irish tombs with notes on costume and armour II, (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1974) Cat. No.154.
1. **Location**: Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. **Date**: Late 15th century.

3. **Technical details**:

   (a) dimensions: H. 76 cm (approximately).

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: Single block

   (d) dowel holes: There are two large dowels holes. One at the mid-point between the figure’s shoulder and elbow on the back of each arm. These appear to have been used to affix the sculpture to a wall.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The circlet crown over the figure’s Cream painted veil has traces of gold leaf. The veil has areas of painted shading in a brown colour that looks as if it was applied to the white polychrome when both paints were still wet. This painted shading accentuates the carving, especially on the fringe of the veil. There are also some artificial areas of shading painted on the veil where the carving is flat and smooth, this is especially evident on the right side. The figure’s hair is painted brown. The flesh-tone of the face is yellowish and the cheeks are flushed. The paint on the figure’s face and neck is chipping badly, especially on the left

---

669 MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” 196.
side as well as on the underside of the chin. The eyes are smudged, like those of the Christ-Child on the *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*. The crescent-shaped single line eyebrows are black, and nearly identical to those of the *Kilcorban Madonna*. These two figures, which are displayed together, appear to have had their polychrome retouched at the same time. The lips are just barely blushed with carmine. The robe is painted a dark blue-green. The outside of the cloak is maroon and bright carmine on the inside of the folds. There are traces of white paint on top of the maroon of the cloak; this white is possibly a more modern coat of paint that was removed during the restoration of the figure. Likewise, there are traces of black polychrome on top of the blue-green of the gown. St. Catherine’s belt is painted black over a layer of burnt sienna. The ring-and-pin brooch which fastens the figure’s cloak was leafed with gold, as was the hilt and cross bar of her sword. The blade of the sword is dark grey in the section just below the hilt, and gradually becomes brown towards the tip of the blade.

(h) general condition: The top of the head above the circlet crown has separated from the rest of the carving and it seems to no longer be attached. On the right side of the veil a piece of the wood is missing about 3 cm long, 2.5 cm wide and 1 cm deep and there is active rot in this area. The paint is flaking off of the figure’s chin. The left arm is missing at the juncture from where it once emerged from the cloak. The bottom of the statue is quite decayed and worm-eaten, and there are a few hair-line cracks. There
is also much evidence of decay on the flat portions of the back of the piece, although almost none in the hollow.

4. Description:

(a) head: The figure wears a circlet crown about 1 centimetre wide over a cream-coloured veil, which falls the entire length of the hair. The hair emerges from beneath the fringe of the veil at the sides of the statue’s face and falls along the sides of her face, neck and shoulders. The hair appears to be very straight and is not incised. The fringe of the veil is carved in an ‘accordion-style’ underneath the circlet crown and the indentations in the carving are enhanced by painted shadows. The crown and veil are damaged on the left side, as described above.

    The figure has a short forehead beneath the fringe of her veil. The face is long and ovular, cheek bones are not carved. The brow-ridge is delicately rendered. There are no clearly incised lines which define the large eyes. Instead, almond-shaped bulges emerge gradually from the eye sockets. The nose is long, straight, and triangular. The nostrils are not carved, nor have they been painted. The philtrum is shallowly carved and the mouth is very small, smaller even than the width of the nose. The lips are thin, and the upper lip reaches a single point in the middle rather than a cupid’s bow. The figure’s chin is proportionately quite large. The neck is long and wide.
(b) body: The neck widens towards its base. The shoulders are sloped and narrow in proportion to the head but in keeping with the scale of the rest of the body. The shoulders are covered by a maroon coloured cloak that is fastened in the middle by ring-and-pin style brooch. The brooch has a flat front face and is undecorated. The pin passes through two loops of the cloak’s fabric. The cloak falls in two convex curves from the shoulders to meet the pin. Below the pin, the cloak falls in two concave curves, allowing the arms to emerge from underneath. The cloak is gathered on either side of the figure: under her extant right hand and in the area where the now missing left hand would have been.

The figure’s gown is belted across her waist. Very few drapery folds have been carved, aside from a few vertical folds on the cloak. At the inside edges on both sides of the cloak, the cloth is carved in a swooping C-shape to reveal the carmine coloured lining underneath.

The figure’s right arm emerges from the cloak and is visible from a point just below the elbow. She holds a downward pointing sword in her left hand. The sleeves are carved tightly to the wrist and the arm and hand are flat against the body. The carving of the hand is very shallow. The thumb is not rendered, presumably it is meant to be hidden behind the hilt of the sword. The sword’s hilt has a handle with a rounded end, straight cross-guard, and a pointed tongue that extends over part of the blade. Traces of gold-leaf can be seen on the hilt. The colour of the double-edged blade is difficult to discern. It appears that the lowest layer of visible paint
is the same burnt sienna as was seen on the belt, this layer is most visible closest to the hilt. Over this, chips of black paint cling. The bottom six centimetres or so of the blade seem to be a repair, possibly of plaster. This section is separated from the rest of the blade by a small crack. It is much smoother than the rest and is painted in a solid, gunmetal-grey, which surprisingly blends with the rest of the polychrome until closely examined.

The entire bottom portion of the carving below the cloak is much damaged. There are a few small cracks especially in the area around the sword. Large chunks of the wood are missing as a result of decay; this is most prevalent towards the back of the figure on both sides.

5. Identification of the subject: This female figure wears a circlet crown and holds a sword in her right hand, her other arm is missing. This is most likely a figure of St. Catherine of Alexandria, a fourth century martyr and a very popular saint in the Middle Ages. St. Catherine was of royal birth, symbolized here by her circlet crown and gilded brooch – the gilding on the brooch indicated the wearer’s high social status, as detailed by Deevy.  

The Roman emperor Maxentius desired her and when she would not consent, devised a wheel studded with iron spikes with which to torture her, but it was destroyed by a lightning bolt sent by God before it could harm her. After that, Maxentius had St. Catherine beheaded. This figure holds her sword of martyrdom in her extant hand. In her other hand she most


671 Hall, 58.
likely held either a small spiked wheel, or perhaps a book, as St. Catherine was a patron of education and learning.

6. Comments: For a complete discussion of the circumstances and stories surrounding the discovery of this figure, please see Catalogue, *Figures from the Lordship Period*, “Kilcorban Madonna and Child,” section 6, p. 196.

**Comparisons and Dating**

There are several extant examples of St. Catherine in Irish stone carving. Many of these, including examples from Howth, Co. Dublin (Fig. 158), Duleek, Co. Meath (Fig. 159), Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Fig. 160), and Lismore, Co. Waterford (Fig. 161) show St. Catherine holding the down-turned sword in her right hand in front of her body and the wheel in her left hand. The pose of the Howth figure seems to bear the most resemblance to that of the Kilcorban St. Catherine. The swords that both carvings hold are of similar types, and held in the same position in the centre of the body, pointing downwards. Hunt dates the Howth carving to c. 1462; this may indicate that the Kilcorban St. Catherine also dates to the late fifteenth century. Further evidence for a late fifteenth century date for this figure is provided by Hourihane, who points out that the sword that the Kilcorban St. Catherine carries is particularly similar to a one found on a late fifteenth century stone carving of that same saint from the Priory of St. Mary, Clontuskert, Co. Galway (Fig. 162). He states that both have the same “broad

---

672 Hunt, *Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture* 1, 144-5.

329
double-edged blade, stop ridge, straight quillons and short grip.” Additionally, the cloak and brooch are similar in both figures.

The manner in which the cloak is worn across the upper body and fastened at the centre of the chest by a ring-and-pin style brooch is very reminiscent of two figures of Christ showing the wounds from the sixteenth century, one from Gowran, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 163) and the other from St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny (Fig. 164). The brooch, which has a plain, undecorated front, is described by Deevy as a type worn throughout western and northern Europe. She notes that although in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ring-and-pin style brooches were used to fasten garments at the slit in the neck, by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, brooches are used primarily as cloak fastenings, as seen here. The evidence of the manner in which the brooch is worn, combined with the type of sword held by the figure serve to date the sculpture to the late fifteenth century.

Of the extant Irish wooden figures, the Kilcorban St. Catherine bears the most resemblance to the Museum Pietà (Fig. 178). They are both carved in a provincial style, have elliptical eyes, straight triangular noses and proportionately tiny mouths. Although the figure of the Madonna is more heavy-set then the St. Catherine, they both have ovular faces lacking any indication of cheek bones. The

---

673 Hourihane, 970.
674 Deevy, 8-10.
675 Deevy, 60.
vertical folds in both figures are carved in gradual undulations, and there is a relative lack of modelling of the drapery on the upper portion of the cloaks.

Restorations

Like the Kilcorban Madonna, with which the sculpture has long been associated, St. Catherine was restored by MacLeod in the 1940’s or 1950’s, but no records were kept of the restoration. Photographs taken before and during the restoration (Fig. 165 -Fig. 166) indicate that layers of paint were removed, and that the figure’s face was repainted. The restoration work seems to be sympathetic to the carving, lacking the elaborate reconstructions that have marred a few of the extant sculptures. Since the restoration, the polychrome on the figure’s eyes has become quite smudged. It is not known at what point or under what circumstances in the last sixty years that this occurred.

Although restoration work was carried out on this figure more than half a century ago, it is badly needed again. Since MacLeod’s restorations were undertaken, a large chunk of the wood from the side of the veil has gone missing and this area has active rot. The top of the figure’s head also appears to be lifting and separating from the rest of the carving, likely from rot found underneath the surface of the polychrome. The wood, especially of the figure’s head, ought to be retreated so as to prevent further decay.

JCA-L-015: Holy Ghost St. Stephen (Fig. 167 -Fig. 168)

1. **Location**: Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City, Co. Waterford

   (WMT 1994.003).

2. **Date**: Late 15\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. **Technical details**:

   (a) **dimensions**: H. 55.7cm, W. 19 cm

   (b) **type of wood**: Oak\textsuperscript{676}

   (c) **number of blocks**: One.

   (d) **dowel holes**: None visible, The figure has a similar metal loop emerging from its back as seen in the other Holy Ghost figures.

   (i) **evidence of polychrome**: This figure is entirely covered in a putty-coloured polychrome, a layer of dark brown polychrome shows through in places.

   (j) **general condition**: This is a small, but well-proportioned standing figure with a flat back. Its back has not been hollowed and the statue is quite heavy. The majority of this figure is well preserved although the shallowly carved facial features are obscured by several layers of thick paint. The bottom of the figure shows some evidence of decay and the feet are no longer extant.

\textsuperscript{676} MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford”, 97.
4. Description:

(a) head: The head is broader across the front than in profile. The face is round and fleshy. The hair is parted in the middle; it is incised with regular wavy lines and curls under where it touches the collar. In the front, the hair emerges from the figure’s temples and completely covers his ears. The eyes and brow are barely carved, and obscured by thick paint. Little can be told of their shape. There is a large dent or chip over the left eye, and a smaller one on the right cheek. The cheeks are quite full. The nose is short and round. The distance between the nose and the lips is short, there is no philtrum, and nostrils are only hinted at. The upper lip has not been carved. The mouth consists of a bevelled line, with a very full lower lip and it does not smile. The long, broad chin slopes down into the neck. The neck is long and wide, it is partially covered by the upstanding collar.

(b) body: The figure stands very straight and rigid; no movement can be seen beneath the garment and there is no indication of underlying anatomy. The saint wears a long tunic with dalmatic worn over it, with a high, wide collar. The dalmatic is open on the sides, until just above the bottom where the front and back are connected by a wide, horizontal band. It has a carved fringe at the bottom edge. There are long, vertical undulating folds in the entire costume. A long, narrow maniple is draped over the figure’s left wrist. Both arms are bent at the elbow and held close to the figure’s body. In his right hand, held against his chest, St. Stephen holds a pile of rocks. In his other hand, he holds a book to his chest. The book is carved
in detail, and held together by a clasp. The bottoms of his draperies seem
to bunch and part for his no-longer-extant feet.

5. Identification of the subject: This figure is shown wearing a deacon’s dalmatic with a
narrow, early-type of maniple draped over one wrist. He holds a pile of rocks in
one hand and a book in the other. St. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, who
was stoned after offending the Jewish Sanhedrin, an account of which is given in
Acts 7:2-60. St. Stephen was also one of the first deacons appointed by the
apostles. He is thus shown he wearing the garb of a deacon and holding the
rocks of his martyrdom. The book in his other had may symbolize his wisdom and
learning, or the Word of God that he died for.

6. Comments: For the history of the Holy Ghost figures, see Catalogue, “Holy Ghost
Madonna and Child”, section 6, p. 209.

---

677 Hall, 290.
Dating and Comparison

This figure can be dated based upon the deacon’s dalmatic and narrow maniple draped over his wrist. According to MacLeod, the dalmatic, open on the sides, is shown on English alabasters and French ivories of the fifteenth century. The maniple that figure wears is of a type in use until the sixteenth century. Both she and Hourihane date the figure to the late fifteenth century, with Hourihane specifying a date between 1460 and 1480. There are no known extant stone examples of St. Stephen in Ireland; however a figure of St. James Major from Kilconnell, Co. Galway (Fig. 169) dated to the late fifteenth century is similar in style to the Holy Ghost St. Stephen. The garments of both are carved in similar long, straight rippling ridges. The Holy Ghost St. Stephen is also very similar to two English alabaster figures of St. Stephen in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Fig. 170 - Fig. 171), both dated to the fifteenth century.\(^{678}\) Both of these figures hold a book in one hand and a pile of rocks in the other, as does the Holy Ghost St. Stephen. The garments of the alabaster panel figure are especially similar to those of the Holy Ghost St. Stephen. The similarities between the Holy Ghost Stephen and the alabasters as well as to the Irish stone carving of St. James Major evidence a date in the mid-to-late fifteenth century for the Holy Ghost St. Stephen.

Restorations

This small figure is the one of the best preserved carvings from the Holy Ghost Hospital. The only damage to the figure is found at its very bottom, where there is some evidence of decay and the feet are now missing. Perhaps, like the figure of the Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist, it was left with this portion of the sculpture on a damp floor for a long period of time. As in the case of the other Waterford figures, the many thick modern layers of paint should be removed in order to reveal the medieval polychrome underneath. MacLeod refers to several layers of polychrome that could be seen at the time of her writing, which are no longer visible. In addition the current polychrome on this and the other Waterford figures seems to be much darker than the cream-colour that she describes, perhaps giving evidence that they have been repainted since the time of her writing.

7. Bibliography: Cochran (2004), 140-144; Hourihane (1984), 975-976; Duignan and Killanin (1967), 456; Mooney(1956), 131; MacLeod (1946), 97-98; Smith (1746), 183.
1. **Location:** Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City, Co.Waterford.

2. **Date:** Late 15\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. **Technical details:**
   
   (a) dimensions: H. 162 cm (approximately)

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: The figure is currently made up of four or five separate pieces. Both arms are replacements that have been inserted into large plaster sections. The hand of the upraised arm is separate. The feet and base, which are one piece, are attached to the broken stumps of the legs of the original sculpture. There is a gap between the replacement feet and the break in the original sculpture.

   (d) dowel holes: None visible.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: Thick putty-coloured paint overlays several other layers of polychrome. A layer of dark brown paint can be seen immediately beneath the current top-coat in several places, particularly on the underside of the cloak. Layers of white and red polychrome are also

---

679 Because of the size of the figure and the height at which it is displayed, it was not possible to get an exact measurement. MacLeod records its height as “over life-size” and Hourihane lists its height as “unknown”. MacLeod, “Medieval Figure Sculpture in Ireland, the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford” \textit{J.R.S.A.I.} 76. no. 2 (July 1946), 94; Hourihane, 998.

680 MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford”, 94; and Hourihane, 998.
visible, as are indications of red-lead priming on the wood. Large pieces of paint are flaking off and lay in the bottom of the case.

(g) general condition: This figure is very damaged and portions of the sculpture are replacements or plaster repairs. Both arms have been replaced and are not in their original positions, as is evidenced by the carved musculature of the chest and the large plaster sections into which they are inserted. Active rot in the wood is apparent at the juncture of the wooden upraised arm and the plaster repair. The legs have been broken just above the ankles and a pair of replacement feet have been joined to a board-like base. There are large radial cracks in the torso, and smaller cracks that follow the fold of the garment, although these smaller cracks are possibly only in the paint. The paint is flaking off of the wood in large sections and lies in the bottom of the case.

4. Description:

(a) head: The head is very long and ovular and sits atop a thick, wide neck. A crown of thorns has been carved around the top of Christ’s forehead. His hair falls in waves behind his neck and shoulders, with separate tresses only slightly indicated. His eyes are double lidded and his brow is shallowly carved. Christ’s face is rather flat in profile. The nose has a low profile; it is straight and triangular and the nostrils have been clearly carved. The space between his nose and mouth is not very long and is taken up by his moustache. Both of Christ’s lips can be seen below this moustache and the mouth turns down at the edges. The moustache extends
down quite far to join with the beard. This accentuates the down-turned expression of the mouth. There is a gap about 2.5 cm long between the bottom lip and the beginning of the beard. The beard follows the jaw-line, and while it covers the underside of the jaw, it does not extend onto the neck. The beard and the moustache are comprised of many small incised lines. The chin is long and the facial features are obscured by many layers of paint.

(c) body: The long neck joins to the bare torso at the collar bone. The collar bone is shalllowly carved; however, the pectoral muscles and ridges of the breastbone are rendered in high relief. The nipples are not indicated. The ribs are carved in depth equal to that of the breastbone. On the exposed left side of the chest, the ribs are nearly straight, horizontal lines that then rise at an angle underneath the pectoral muscles to form the hollow of the stomach. The figure’s left shoulder is covered by tightly-pulled drapery. Just after the concave of the stomach begins, the cloth is wrapped more loosely around the figure at a diagonal. The folds hang straight from where the left arm used to be, and then fall diagonally towards the left, and become fluted at the side. On the side of the figure, these flutes become very deeply cut V-shaped folds. The drapery then sweeps up and behind Christ’s upraised arm. The end of the drapery, halfway down the calf, flies backwards drastically as if blown by a great gust of wind. An attempt is made to show the right knee bent forward beneath the drapery. The cloak is higher on the right side of the figure and falls diagonally towards the left
side. The bottom of the left knee is exposed. The drapery descends in an almost ribbon-like fashion. The back of the drapery is much lower than the front.

There are two major cracks in the torso; the first extends from the corner of the collarbone on the left side, through the pectoral muscle just to the right-of-centre, narrowing to its end, halfway down the ribcage. The second crack in the torso begins in the bottom corner of this same pectoral muscle and extends down the torso and ends around the junction of the legs. This is the wider of the two major cracks.

The figure is carved almost fully in the round; only at the last possible moment does the back of the figure become flat. The flattening begins at about shoulder-blade level, and extends down the length of the drapery. Not enough of the back is visible to discern if the back is hollow, however from the amount of radial cracks in the front of the sculpture, it would seem not to be. The legs are carved fully in the round. They are very cylindrical and missing from just below the ankle. A pair of rather flatly carved feet and a small board-like base, carved from a single block of wood, has been attached to the stumps of the legs. There is a gap between the feet and the ends of the legs. The arms also are replacements, inserted into large plaster sections. The right arm is upraised in a gesture of blessing, it has no elbow, but rather the arm curves gradually in a hose-like fashion. Although Christ’s chest is bare, he is given cuffs which don’t appear to have been carved from the wood, they are, perhaps rolls of
plaster. The hand raised in blessing is carved from as separate piece of wood from the rest of the arm. The attaching of the arm to the figure is odd. Much plaster has been built up on the side of the figure into which the arm was inserted. This was necessary because the arm is found in a different position than it would have been in the original would not have been upraised in the original – this can be told from the musculature of the chest. There is a large crack in the plaster where the wood of the arm meets the plaster. There appears to be active rot in the wood of the arm near this crack. The other arm is also inserted into a large plaster section, but here the plaster is sculpted into drapery folds incongruous with the wooden folds.

5. **Identification of the subject:** Christ is depicted here with a nude torso and legs wearing a cloak that is tightly wrapped at the shoulder and becomes looser as it falls around his body. His arms are not shown in their original positions and he perhaps either held the banner of the Resurrection with its red, or held his arms in a palms-out gesture to show the stigmata, as can be seen on a few examples of Irish tomb sculpture (Fig. 176 - Fig. 177).

6. **Comments:** For the history of the Holy Ghost figures, see *Catalogue*, “Holy Ghost Madonna and Child”, section 6, p. 209.

---

Dating and Comparisons

Devotional images of the Risen Christ first became popular in Italy in the late fourteenth century. The earliest extant images of the risen Christ in Ireland appear on funerary monuments towards the end of the fifteenth century. This is the only surviving wooden figure of a risen Christ yet discovered in Ireland. The long ovular head and cylindrical neck bears some resemblance to the figure of St. John the Baptist from Fethard (Fig. 138). The deeply cut V-shaped folds of the garment are somewhat similar to those found on the Askeaton Madonna (Fig. 147).

There are, however, a few examples of the Risen Christ in Irish stone sculpture with which the Holy Ghost Figure could be compared. Two carvings, one from Athboy, Co. Meath (Fig. 176) and the other from Ennis, Co. Clare (Fig. 177) both show the Risen Christ just having emerged from the tomb, holding a cross staff in his left hand with the right hand raised in blessing. Both figures are bare-chested and wear the crown of thorns. In the stone carvings, however, Christ wears the perizonium and not the cloak that the Holy Ghost Risen Christ is depicted in. Figures of Christ showing the wounds, such as one from Gowran, Co. Kilkenny (Fig. 163) and one from St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny city (Fig. 164) depict him wearing a cloak, although in these the cloak is fastened on the front of Christ’s body – rather than draped across one shoulder as in the Holy Ghost figure – and in the case of Gowran, show him wearing a kingly crown, rather than the crown of thorns. Since the Holy Ghost Risen Christ’s original arms are missing

---

682 Hall, 263.
from the shoulder, it is now impossible to determine whether the figure was a 
Christ showing the stigmata, or held a cross staff and raised his right hand in 
blessing. In feeling, however the Holy Ghost figure seems the closest to the *Risen 
Christ* from Ennis. All of the stone figures, except for the Athboy carving (which 
is dated to the early sixteenth century) are dated to the late fifteenth century. This 
evidence, as well as the similarities between the *Holy Ghost Risen Christ* and the 
deeply cut draperies of the *Askeaton Madonna* discussed above, indicate a date in 
the late fifteenth century for the Holy Ghost figure.

**Restorations**

Of all the figures from the Holy Ghost Hospital, this is the one most in 
need of conservation work. It is literally crumbling within its case, with large 
sections of the polychrome falling off from both the wood and the plaster. There 
is evidence of active rot in the figure – although this seems to be confined to one 
of the replaced arms. The restorations made to the sculpture in the past are 
unsympathetic to the original carving. The hose-like arms are found in a different 
position than the arms of the original figure, and in order to accommodate their 
new positions large sections of plaster had to be built up on the sides of the figure. 
The feet and base are poorly crude replacements attached to the break in the 
figure’s legs. It is unknown when these repairs were made to the figure, and they 
have at least been there since the time of MacLeod’s writing, long before the 
Waterford Museum of Treasures acquired the piece. If it is possible to remove 
these restorations without doing further damage to the original carving, it should
be done. Also, the many thick layers of paint that cover over its medieval polychrome ought to be removed and conservation of the wood undertaken.


---

JCA-L-017: Museum Pietà (Fig. 178 -Fig. 181)


2. Date: 15\textsuperscript{th} century (?).

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H. 72 cm W. 33 cm

   (b) type of wood: Sycamore\footnote{According to MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 61-62.}

   (c) number of blocks: The sculpture appears to have been comprised of six separate blocks originally, four of which are currently extant. Both the Madonna and the Christ figures are carved from separate blocks, and the arms of each were also carved separately and attached with dowels. Christ’s arms are now missing. There is one additional, more modern,\footnote{There is some ambiguity as to what the museum number for this figure might be. In the acquisitions registers this number corresponds to a Burmese panel carving rather than to the pieta.}
piece of wood that has been used to repair a large fissure in the Madonna’s skirt.

(d) dowel holes: There are several dowel holes in this figure. The Madonna is connected to the figure of the dead Christ by two dowels, which are visible in the gap between the figures’ bodies. These dowels are fitted into holes in each of the Madonna’s knees and in Christ’s lower back and upper thigh. The dowel on the left side of the figure tapers in order to fit into the smaller hole in Christ’s thigh. Additionally, large dowel holes can be seen in the flat cuts through Christ’s shoulders. A broken dowel can be seen in the hole of the figure’s right shoulder. Presumably the Madonna’s arms are also attached with dowels, although this is not immediately observable.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The outside of the Madonna’s veil/cloak is painted with a blue-grey polychrome and edged with gold-leaf. A lighter blue polychrome is used where the underside of the figure’s cloak is exposed. This same pale blue also covers the swag of cloth around the collar of the Madonna’s dress. The dress is painted a carmine colour and she wears a gilded belt. The Madonna’s skin is painted with a very pale flesh-tone, but the cheeks are brightly flushed and the lips are painted with the same carmine polychrome as her gown. The Madonna’s eyebrows are lightly rendered with a faint black polychrome and her upper eyelids are also thinly edged in black. Her sclerae are white and the irises and pupils are painted black with a white spot of polychrome to indicate reflected light. Although much of the Madonna’s polychrome is intact, that of the Christ
The polychrome on Christ’s head is mostly intact, but large chips of paint are missing from Christ’s torso, and the polychrome is almost entirely absent from the top of his perizonium and from his feet. The cream-coloured polychrome used for the flesh-tint of the mostly nude Christ is paler than that of the Madonna. There are faint traces of what was once a bright red polychrome -- representing blood -- on Christ’s forehead, dripping from the wound in his side and running down the flank of his exposed leg. Remnants of this same red colour can be seen in some of the paint chips remaining on the tops of the figure’s feet. The perizonium was painted white. Christ’s hair and beard are painted with a medium brown polychrome. A gesso base-coat can be seen on both figures where the paint is chipped.

(f) general condition: The heads of both figures are in excellent condition. The Christ-figure’s arms are missing from just before the shoulders. The tips of the fingers of the Madonna’s right hand are missing, as is the end of the thumb on her left hand. The two figures have been poorly fitted together; the dowels are exposed and there is a significant gap between the two bodies. A large radial crack in the Madonna’s skirt has been repaired with a more modern section of carved wood, but the repair is nearly seamless. There is some evidence of wood worm at the bottom of the Madonna’s skirts.

4. Description:

(a) head of the Madonna: The Madonna wears a long, voluminous veil which
becomes a cloak as it drapes around her body. It has a carved, hem-like border, which has been coated with gold-leaf. The veil falls high across the Madonna’s forehead, concealing her hairline. Much of the pale blue lining of the veil is visible around the Madonna’s face, but her hair is not revealed. The Madonna’s face is round and heavy-set. Her forehead is also round and high, with crescent brows over almond-shaped, double-lidded eyes. The eyes glance upwards. The painted eyebrows follow the carved line of the brow, and lift up over the bridge of the long, triangular nose. The nostrils are shallowly carved, and a philtrum is not indicated. The Madonna’s diminutive mouth has a very full upper lip over a deeply incised narrow lower lip. The Madonna’s mouth is slightly open. The soft jaw-line tapers into a short, wide neck. The Madonna’s heavy-set figure and concealed hair make her appear older than most Marian depictions and the expression that the Madonna’s parted lips and upraised eyes impart to the sculpture is one of quiet despair.

(b) body of the Madonna: I was not permitted to remove the figure from its case; however, it appears to have a flat back that has not been hollowed out. The Madonna is seated in a chair whose back rises to about the level of her elbows. She uses her right arm to support her dead son’s shoulders. The tips of the fingers from the Madonna’s right hand are missing and appear to have been cut. The left arm is bent at the elbow and held palm-up above Christ’s body, in a beseeching gesture. The last joint of the left thumb is missing. Neither hand makes contact with Christ’s body.
The Madonna’s veil falls to become a cloak over her shoulders. On the tops of her arms there are softly raised diagonal folds carved on the cloak. The fabric of the cloak appears to wrap completely around the figure’s arms, flaring to reveal the pale blue lining at the point where the arms emerge. The material on the sleeves of the Madonna’s dress appears to twist around her arms and ends in thick, gilded cuffs of fabric carved tight to the Madonna’s wrists. The fabric of these cuffs is also carved in a similar twisted style, as is the gilded belt which she wears around her waist. The cloak falls to the side and back of the figure below the Madonna’s left arm. Below her right arm, the cloak is drawn across her lap, underneath Christ’s body. From the Madonna’s knees, her cloak falls in a two convex curves the higher and smaller of which falls scallop-like over her left knee, towards the back of the figure. The second, longer concave curve falls over the figure’s right shin, and ends at the bottom, right-side of the figure. Two, deeply-cut, curved-diagonal folds follow the line of the bottom curve of the falling cloth. The uppermost, scallop-like curve may be the product of a later repair, as it appears to be over a more modern piece of wood fitted into fissure in the sculpture. The top most portion of this curve appears to be sloppily rendered and may even be a plaster repair.

The collar of the Madonna’s long gown is a swagged cloth which falls over her collar bones and is painted with the same pale blue polychrome as the lining of her cloak. This semi-circular swag is made of
small, deeply cut, curved overlapping folds. From below the collar, the Madonna’s dress emerges in shallower vertical folds which dissipate with the rise of her rather ample breasts. Below the Madonna’s breasts, the vertical folds re-emerge and become more deeply-cut as they gather at the top of the belt.

The Madonna’s skirt falls in deeply undulating vertical folds from her knees to the bottom of the statue. Just to the left of the centre of the sculpture, a large radial crack in the figure has been repaired with a fitted piece of wood that has been carved to match the rest of the drapery. There is some evidence of wood worm in the bottom of the figure.

(c) Christ: The dead Christ’s body is smaller than that of the Madonna. He is carved from a separate block, attached with dowels at the back and upper thigh to the Madonna’s knees, and is supported across the shoulder-blades by the Madonna’s left arm. There is a large gap between the two figures, spanned by the dowels which connect them; Christ does not actually come in contact with the Madonna’s lap.

Christ’s hair and beard are carved with many small, wavy, incised lines. His hair falls to meet the beard at the jaw-line and completely covers the figure’s ears. His forehead is high and round, there are some remnants of faded red polychrome (representing blood caused by the crown of thorns of the passion) at the hairline. The brows are crescent-shaped and are not painted, although the manner in which the polychrome is chipped makes them appear as if they were. The deep-set eyes are slightly open.
The sclerae are painted white and the pupils and irises are painted with a sepia coloured polychrome. Like the Madonna, Christ’s nose is long and triangular, although his nose is more finely rendered. The space between the figure’s nose and mouth is quite long; he does not have a moustache, nor is a philtrum carved. The mouth turns up at the corners slightly. The top lip is not carved and the bottom lip is only indicated by a slight rise. The mouth is slightly agape, and the inside is touched with red. The beard follows the jaw-line, incised with the same small wavy lines as the hair, and becomes longer and slightly forked on the chin. His neck is short and thick, like that of the Madonna.

The musculature beneath Christ’s skin is skilfully alluded to with the pectoral muscles, breast bone and the line of the stomach muscles all delicately carved. He has a C-shaped wound carved in his right side, with faded red polychrome representing his blood emerging from it and falling on his cream-colored skin. The distance between his shoulders and waist is quite short. He has an almost feminized figure -- the torso comes in drastically at the waist and then rounds outwards for his hips. Christ’s perizonium is tied over the left hip and carved in the same sort of small, deeply cut, curved overlapping folds as the Madonna’s collar, with an additional vertical bit of cloth between his legs. Much of the polychrome on Christ’s torso and the top of his perizonium has chipped away.

Christ’s arms are missing from just before the shoulders. They appear to have been originally carved separately, and in the stump of the
right shoulder a large hole with the broken-off dowel still intact, can be seen.

The legs are short in proportion to the rest of the sculpture. This is accounted for mostly in the upper leg between Christ’s hips and knees, while the length of the lower legs is fairly proportionate to the rest of the figure. The legs are carved in soft, rounded shapes and painted with the same cream-colored flesh-tone as the rest of the figure. Red trickles of blood can be seen running down the outside of his outside leg and on the top of his foot. The toes are anatomically accurate, but the rest of both feet are constructed of drastically rounded shapes, and the distance between the ankle and the heel is very short.

5. Identification of the subject: This image of the Pietà shows the Madonna holding the body of the dead Christ in her lap in the conventional manner. Devotional images of this type became popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and continued throughout the Renaissance. As is typical of medieval portrayals of the pietà, the body of Christ is depicted much smaller than that of the Madonna, perhaps alluding back to images of the Madonna and Child.

---

685 Hall, 246.
6. Comments:

Comparisons

The Museum Pietà is the one of three surviving wooden examples of this subject in Ireland, and nothing is known of this sculpture’s history prior to the mid-twentieth century when it was bought by the National Museum from a Dublin salesroom. There are very few representations of the pietà extant in Irish stone sculpture; however, one example dating to the second half of the fifteenth century from Strade, Co. Meath (Fig. 182) has certain similarities to the Museum Pietà. In both, the Madonna is slightly heavy-set and wears a long veil which becomes a cloak over her shoulders. The veil in both examples is cut square across the forehead and the hair does not show from underneath it. The figures of Christ are depicted much smaller than the figures of the Madonna.

Of the extant wooden sculpture in Ireland, the Museum Pietà seems to have the most in common with the Kilcorban St. Catherine (Fig. 155). They both have elliptical eyes, straight, triangular noses and proportionately small mouths. Although the figure of the Madonna is more heavy set then the St. Catherine, they both have ovular faces lacking any indication of cheek bones. The vertical folds in both figures are carved in gradual undulations, and there is a relative lack of modelling of the drapery on the upper portion of the cloaks. This, when taken in conjunction with the evidence of the Strade Pietà, would seem to indicate a similar date for the figure, possibly in the late fifteenth century. However, owing to the provincial nature of the carving and a lack of provenance there is not

---

686 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland”, 61-62.
enough evidence to firmly date this sculpture. It may be later. Utilizing a scientific method of dating would be beneficial in establishing a firm date for this artwork.

It is also worth noting that the information currently provided about this figure on the museum label and in the interactive touch screens in the “Out of Storage” gallery in the National Museum of Decorative Arts at Collin’s Barracks, is inaccurate. The information provided therein, including the registration number, belong to the smaller figure of the Pietà, listed under *Figures of Undetermined Date*, “Small Museum Pietà”, p. 583.


---

**JCA-L-018: Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist (Fig. 183 - Fig. 184)**

1. **Location:** Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford City, Co. Waterford (WMT 1994.005).

2. **Date:** Late 15th / early 16th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. 90 cm, W. 30 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: Two blocks have been fused together lengthwise with
dowels, the front half of the sculpture is a separate piece of wood from the
back half.

(d) dowel holes: Four visible dowel holes can be seen from the front. There are
two filled in dowel holes on the top of the hand, and one on the right side
of that arm just below the end of the sleeve. Another filled in dowel can be
seen near the right knee. The two blocks of the figure are held together
from the back with two large dowels. The dowel by the figure’s knee,
visible from the front, appears to be one of them. A metal loop protrudes
from the back of the sculpture.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is entirely covered in thick putty-coloured
paint, where the paint has chipped one can see that there are several layers
of paint visible, including the dark brown and cream-colored layers seen
on the other Holy Ghost figures.

(f) general condition: The top half of the figure is well-preserved. The index
finger of the figure’s right hand is missing, as is the tip of the thumb on
the left hand, which holds the book. From below this point, the damage
from decay becomes increasingly worse towards the bottom of the figure.
Large pieces of wood are missing from the bottom of the carving,
including the figure’s right foot and ankle, as well as the front half of his
left foot. The lamb’s two back legs are missing as well as half of one of its
front legs. Pieces of drapery and of the rectangular background are
missing towards the bottom of the carving as well. Several wood-worm
holes are visible in the bottom portion of the sculpture.
4. Description:

(a) head: The figure has a short, round, forehead and prominent cheek bones. His eyes are double-lidded ellipses that are deep-set and close to the brow. He has a long narrow nose with deeply gouged nostrils with a long moustache that completely fills the area between his nose and lips. His lips are thick and both upper and lower are carved. His beard does not extend all the way up his jaw line, but rather is like an overly large goatee. The long beard is sharply forked, and carved in long incised lines that follow the shape of the beard. The forks of the beard protrude out into space from the face at an angle. They do not rest against the neck at all. Little of the neck can be seen underneath the beard. The figure has very thick hair, carved with curling incised lines around his face. The hair is a little longer than shoulder-length and falls behind the figure’s back. The head is large in proportion to the body.

(b) body: The figure is made of two separate pieces of wood doweled together from the back, the joint runs along the profiles of the figure. The shoulders are broad compared to the rest of the body, but slightly narrow in proportion to the head. On the figure’s left shoulder is an object that is used to fasten his cloak which MacLeod believes is a paw.\(^{687}\) It is an object made up of indeterminate, lump-like shapes. It is flat on the bottom and has a divot in the middle of both the front and the side.

\(^{687}\) MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital Waterford,” 96.
The figure is composed of rounded shapes which convey a certain sense of muscularity. He wears a knee-length garment with only very faintly incised grooves for folds. The lightly bevelled folds in his undergarment fall at a gentle diagonal from right to left. This garment has slits that extend to about mid-way up the thigh, through which his legs protrude. The high collar is notched and meets the neck. He wears a cloak that is slung from his right shoulder, diagonally across his left knee. It is very pouch-like, especially since one of his hands seems to reach into one of the deep folds. The right arm is bent at the elbow and the hand seems to reach into the pocket-like drapery fold. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that this impression is a result of damage to the figure; the finger that would have pointed towards the lamb is missing which makes the hand look like its grabbing for something. A fold of the drapery has been broken off just past the knee, causing the cloak to appear more pouch-like.

The short sleeves of the figure’s tunic are tight to his arm and end just above his elbows. The sleeves are very deeply undercut. His arms are well proportioned to the rest of his body, but the hands are large. The left hand holds a closed book resting at hip level on the front of his body. The tip of the thumb of this hand is missing. The book, spine facing up, is small in comparison to his hand. There are two filled in dowel holes on the top of the hand, and one on the right side of that arm just below the end of the sleeve.
The right knee and shin protrude out from underneath the cloak. There is much damage to the left side of the knee and to the drapery beside it, although the leg itself is relatively well intact to just above the ankle. On the back of the figure around ankle level, large chunks of wood are missing from rot and decay. There are worm holes all throughout this area. Dark brown paint can be seen where a section of the wood is missing at the back. This same dark brown shows through the putty colour on the entire figure.

From about the level of the lamb, the back block of wood is largely missing on the right side from decay. The back section is higher on the right than on the left. Also on the right, the wood seems to slope forward toward the bottom. It is shaped like a tombstone at the top, right side. On the left, the figure is free standing and carved in the round to about shoulder blade height, at which point the backboard emerges out gradually to meet the wall. The back of the carving is flat.

(c) lamb: There is a figure of the Agnus Dei carved from the front block of wood. It stands in front of John’s partially extant left foot. The wood that the lamb is carved from is much deteriorated. Its back legs are completely missing, as is half of one of its front legs. Its one remaining intact leg is riddled with wood-worm holes. The lamb’s bottom has mostly decayed away as well. The lamb’s ear, closest to the viewer, is no longer extant, but the other tiny, upstanding, triangular ear is. The lamb’s face is largely worn away, but a tilted elliptical eye, nostrils, and slit-like mouth can still
be made out. The head is very dog-like, but the body is very woolly and lamb-like. The wool of the lamb is carved in little chips.

5. Identification of the subject: The saint is depicted bare legged, accompanied by the *Agnus Dei*, and carrying a book. John the Baptist is frequently depicted with bare legs and wearing clothing made of animal skins -- the strange clasp of this figure’s cloak may be the animal paw that MacLeod identifies it as. The book that the saint carries could symbolize his role as the messenger of Christ. In Byzantine art, St. John the Baptist was sometimes shown with angels’ wings, since both he and they are messengers. St. John the Baptist is frequently depicted with the lamb, as he is seen here. In earlier renderings the saint is shown holding the lamb, but in this example the animal runs along at his feet. The saint’s now missing finger may have pointed towards the lamb. Although several figures of St. John the Baptist are extant both in Irish stone sculpture and in English alabaster work, no parallels in Ireland have yet been found for the lamb being located at the figure’s feet. The symbol of the lamb had its origins in a gospel passage (John 1:36) that states, “And as he [John the Baptist] watched Jesus walk by, he said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God.’”


688 Ibid.
689 Hall, 172.
Dating and Comparisons

Both MacLeod and Hourihane suggest a possible date in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century for this figure. The sharply forked beard and hairstyle of the piece is very reminiscent of English alabaster work of the fifteenth century, although the lamb running alongside the figure of St. John, rather than being held by him, may possibly indicate a later date. According to MacLeod,

The Baptist in continental art was shown until the 14th century carrying a symbolic representation of the Lamb of God inscribed within an aureole. Thus he appears in monumental sculpture as at Rheims and at the north portal at Chartres, and in miniature carving such as Bishop Grandisson’s famous ivory diptych. In Ireland also, he is shown until the 15th century, bearing the same hieratic emblem. Good examples may be seen on the Fitzgerald tomb in St. Werburgh’s Church and on the Clontuskert portal, which is dated to 1470… At a later period, however, the Lamb loses the nimbus, becomes naturalistic, runs on the ground, browses the desert grass, and caresses the Precursor. The lively lamb which accompanies the Waterford St. John suggests that the figure is late 15th or early 16th century.690

This small figure of St. John the Baptist shares the standard iconography of the earlier Fethard St. John the Baptist. Both figures are bare-legged, wear clothing made of animal skins and are accompanied by the symbol of the Agnus Dei. The Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist’s head is very similar to examples seen in English alabaster, including a panel from the second half of the fifteenth century currently in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

---

690 MacLeod, “Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” 94.
(Fig. 185). It is possible that the woodcarver used an English alabaster of the saint for a model.

**Restorations**

There is extensive damage from decay to the bottom of this figure. However, since the decay is localized mostly towards the bottom and back, it does not seem that the figure was left to the elements. Instead, it was perhaps left lying on a damp floor or leaning against a damp wall for a significant length of time, causing damage to the wood. It seems to have wholly escaped the hands of the iconoclasts. Like the other Waterford figures, this small image of *St. John the Baptist* is in need of conservation. The many thick modern layers of paint should be removed in order to reveal the medieval polychrome underneath, and conservation of the wood should be undertaken.


---

**JCA-L-019: Our Lady of Dublin** (Fig. 186 - Fig. 191)

1. **Location:** Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church, 56 Aungier Street, Dublin 2.

2. **Date:** Early 16th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. 183 cm (approximately)

   (b) type of wood: Oak
(c) number of blocks: Three blocks. Both the Madonna and the Christ-Child are
carved from the same block of wood. The Child’s arms are carved from
separate pieces. His extended left arm is not original to the sculpture.

(d) dowel holes: There are many dowel holes in the back of this figure. There are
approximately ten holes each measuring about a centimetre in diameter
filled in with plaster, and several smaller ones of about a half-centimetre
in diameter, some with small wooden pegs still intact. The dowel holes
can all be found along the flat outer radius of the figure’s back, around the
hollow. Additionally, there is a small dowel hole in the end of the Christ-
Child’s foot, in the portion where the toes are missing. Presumably the
arms of Christ are attached with dowels and possibly the Madonna’s
repaired finger.

(e) evidence of polychrome: There is very little polychrome remaining on this
piece, however there are small traces of gold leaf, yellow and white paint
(possibly the remnants of the thick white emulsion that was removed from
the figure in 1914). 691

(f) general condition: There is some decay along the edges of the Madonna’s
cloak; however the damage is very minor except for at the very bottom of
the figure. The decay becomes quite severe along the bottom of the
Madonna’s drapery. There are several small chunks of the wood missing,
and in places, especially on the left side of the figure, there is evidence of

691 Daphne Pochin Mould, *Whitefriar St. Church: A Short Guide*, (Dublin: Carmelite Publications,
1964).
active rot. The Christ-Child’s lips look as if they have been cut off, only the incised line of the mouth remains. Also the toes of the Child’s most prominent foot have been sawn off. Evidence can be seen here of an attempted repair in the form of a small dowel hole. The Child’s extended arm is a replacement, likely dated to the nineteenth century. The Madonna’s finger, positioned below the pomegranate, has been broken off and then repaired.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna wears a very modern-looking crown that appears to be made of plaster board or papier mâché. It has high, triangular crenulations and is covered with gold-coloured paint, rhinestones and glitter in blue, green and red. Beneath this gauche crown, the figure’s elegantly sculptured hair is parted in the middle and incised deeply with wavy lines which emerge from the forehead and temples. The hair appears to have been brushed back towards the back of the head and is fullest in line with the cheekbones. It falls in front of the Madonna’s shoulders in two locks on either side of her neck. From photographs, it is apparent that underneath the crown the top of the Madonna’s head is flat (Fig. 190 - Fig. 191).

*Our Lady of Dublin* has a high, rounded forehead. The brow is gently carved over clearly incised, double-lidded, almond-shaped eyes. The face wears a calm expression. The nose is long and delicate, with the nostrils clearly carved. The figure’s mouth is small and the lips are thin
and turn down at the corners. The philtrum is clearly carved and there are slight creases from the corners of the nose to the corners of the mouth. The chin is small and round in the full, ovular face. The jaw-line is soft. Because the head is tilted downwards, a subtle fold of skin is carved between the jaw and the neck. The Madonna’s neck is wide and not particularly long. The head is disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of the figure.

(b) body: Our Lady of Dublin is flat-backed and hollowed from about the shoulder level. The Madonna’s body is slight and appears to be swathed in voluminous amounts of fabric. The figure has a very slight sway. Her shoulders are small and rounded. The bodice of the Madonna’s dress is tight and rounded over her bosom. It has a seam carved down the middle of it. From behind her neck, what seems to be a thinner piece of fabric comes down and is tucked into the crest of the bodice. This section of cloth forms a V-shaped collar. She wears a long, heavy, hooded cloak. Her arms are kept close to her body. On the left arm, it appears that the Madonna’s sleeves are tri-layered. The first layer of the sleeve is tight to the wrist, and only the very edge of it can be seen. The second layer falls loose from this and the third layer over top of it seems to be the very wide sleeve of the cloak. On the right arm, only this third layer can be seen, as it falls past the wrist.

The semi-reclining Christ-Child is held slightly below and in front of the Madonna’s bosom. She supports him underneath the armpit with her
left hand and at the feet with her right hand. She draws the fabric of her
dress across her body and uses it to help support the Christ-Child. She
holds the fabric pinned beneath her left hand, against the Child’s side. The
bones in her left hand are delicately carved, her extended finger below the
pomegranate appears to have been broken off and repaired.

The folds of the fabric of the Madonna’s gown, as it is held
underneath the Child, at first follow the line of his body. As the folds
become wider, they also become more horizontal and eventually begin to
decline in the opposite direction to the angle of the Child’s body. Below
these creases, the folds of the dress become long and V-shaped, falling to
about the same level as the bottom of the cloak. Below, the creases of the
Madonna’s dress are predominantly vertical. The folds of the cloak, as it
hangs from her arms, are predominantly horizontal. There are a few box-
shaped folds, and on the left side towards the back of the figure, the folds
become fluted. The edge of the cloak on this same side falls in a sort of
‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern.

The left side of the figure is bevelled towards the back from just
below the shoulder to about 40 centimetres above the bottom. The back is
deeply hollowed.

(c) Christ-Child: The semi-reclining Christ Child is supported by both of the
Madonna’s hands and with the cloth of her dress. He is completely nude
except for a bit of the Madonna’s cloak which covers his genitals. This
Child is realistically portrayed with child-like proportions, chubby legs,
round stomach and fat rolls, rather than the small adult seen in so many other depictions. His legs are bent at the knees; the back leg, closest to the Madonna’s body, is propped up with the knee pointing towards the Madonna’s face. The prominent leg is turned so that the knee points out towards the viewer. The toes of this foot are missing and appear to have been sawn off, perhaps during an attempted repair. A small dowel hole can be seen here. The Christ Child’s body twists in his mother’s arms, the stomach and the back leg facing upwards, the torso and the head turning to the right. His left arm, a replacement, is extended outwards, and the overly large left hand is closed in a fist. The right arm reaches across his body and holds a pomegranate against the Madonna’s left hand.

The Child has a full head of curly hair. The hair is carved in deeply incised swirls all over his head. His facial features are very similar to those of His Mother. They have the same high, round forehead, faintly carved brow, clearly incised, double-lidded, almond-shaped, open eyes, and similar noses. The mouth of the Christ Child is almost completely missing. It appears to have been sliced off, only the deeply incised line that would have separated his upper and lower lips and the down turned corners of his mouth remains. The cheeks are very chubby and his small round chin emerges from the roles of fat underneath his jaw. The ears are deeply incised and seem to be more stylized than realistic.
5. Identification of the subject: This representation of the Madonna and Child shows the Madonna standing and holding the nude semi-reclined Christ-Child. The Christ Child is depicted nude, as he is often shown in Renaissance-era art, in order to place an emphasis on his humanity. The Christ-Child holds a pomegranate in his left hand. The pomegranate is an often used symbol of the Resurrection because of its classical associations with Persephone who returned to regenerate the earth every spring. The right arm (a replacement) is extended in a fist. The fist is pierced but empty. A wood cut that was executed shortly after the figure was restored in the nineteenth century (Fig. 140) shows that the Child held a baton or short sceptre in this hand.

6. Comments:

**History**

*Our Lady of Dublin* stands above the small lady altar in the Carmelite Church on Whitefriars Street in Dublin. The sculpture was purchased by the order in 1824 from a second-hand shop on Capel Street. It is said to have come from the pre-Reformation abbey of St. Mary’s in Dublin, the richest Cistercian monastery in Ireland. St. Mary’s Abbey was a favourite Irish resort for English

---


nobility, and the Irish Parliament occasionally met in its chapter house. When, in February 1539, the suppression of Irish religious houses was first decreed, an appeal was made to save St. Mary’s Abbey. The abbot of that monastery wrote asking that St. Mary’s be exempt from the general Dissolution, as did the Lord Deputy. However, the appeal fell on deaf ears and in October, 1539 the abbey was surrendered to the Crown.695

St. Mary’s Abbey was first converted into a munitions warehouse and then five years later, in 1543, it was granted to the Earl of Desmond on lease to serve as his residence during the Parliamentary session, during which time the figure of the Madonna may have remained at the abbey. Circa 1583, Queen Elizabeth granted the abbey to the Earl of Ormonde to use for stables.696 It was after the Abbey passed into the hands of Ormonde, that Petrie writes of the statue having been condemned to be burnt. “One half of it was actually burnt,” he writes, “the other half was carried by some devout or friendly hand to a neighbouring Inn-yard, where, with the face buried in the ground, and the hollow trunk appearing uppermost, it was appropriated for concealment and safety to the ignoble purpose of a hog-tough.”697

This fanciful tale of the burning, rescue, and subsequent concealment as a hog-trough, has little to substantiate it. There is no evidence of burning on the


696 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculpture in Ireland,” 56.

697 Petrie, 308.
wood, and relatively little decay. In fact, within the hollow of the wood –where the ‘slop’ would have lain – there is no evidence of decay whatsoever. Instead, this story told to Petrie by unknown persons was probably an attempt to explain the figure’s flat, hallowed back. It is not known then under what circumstances the Madonna survived. It was damaged, or possibly mutilated. The Child’s lips have been sliced off with a blade, as was one of his feet and one of his arms just past the shoulder. At some point the bright medieval polychrome was covered over with a white emulsion thick enough to obscure the figure’s features.

History first records *Our Lady of Dublin* in 1749, after its appearance at St. Michan’s, known as Mary’s Lane Chapel. The chapel had been built around 1700 in the vicinity of St. Mary’s Abbey, on the north side of the River Liffey. The Egerton manuscripts state,

“In St. Mary’s Lane is a parochial chapel; whose jurisdiction extends from one side of Boot Lane to one side of Church Street, inclusive. It was built by subscription obtained by solicitation of Dr. Cornelius Nary. ‘tis a large and irregular piece of building. The altar-piece is a painting of the Annunciation of B.V.M. and on the Epistle side stands a large image of B.V. with Jesus in her arms, carved in wood, which statue before the dissolution belonged to St. Mary’s Abbey.”

The Madonna and Child stood in St. Michan’s for another sixty years after the Egerton manuscript recorded its presence, but when a new church was built in

---

698 Egerton MSS Collection, British Library, 1 onwards. Specific mss. number unavailable. As quoted by Nicholas Donnelly, *Roman Catholics: state and condition of R.C. chapels in Dublin, both secular and regular, A.D. 1749*, (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1904), 12. I have not had the opportunity to go to the British Library to view the manuscript personally.
1816, the figure was abandoned in the old building which had been converted into a school. A few years later, in 1824, Fr. John Spratt, head of the Carmelite Church in Dublin, saw the figure in the window of a second hand shop and bought it.699

**Restorations**

Fr. Spratt had some restorations performed on the figure, most of which have now been removed. He had two feet added to the bottom of the statue, and repairs made to the bottom of the Madonna’s draperies.700 He replaced the missing and broken arm of the Christ Child.701 Of Fr. Spratt’s repairs, the only one remaining is the extended arm of the Christ Child, although the sceptre that it once held is no longer extant (Fig. 192). In 1827, the Carmelites brought the newly restored figure with them to their new church on Whitefriar’s Street. The figure became known as *Our Lady of Dublin* and has gained a significant following amongst the local community. With a view towards restoring the figure, in 1914, the Carmelites had the white paint which covered the figure removed (Fig. 193). The medieval polychrome came away with it. Thus the dark oak figure that we see today presents a very different picture than how this figure must have looked originally. MacLeod speaks of bright turquoise polychrome and gilding that remained in the inmost crevices of the figure’s draperies at the time of her writing.702 There no longer appears to be any evidence of the turquoise, although

699 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculpture in Ireland,” 56.

700 As evidenced by photographs.

701 This is shown in a woodcut illustration in Petrie, 308.
some traces of gold leaf remain. Additionally, there are spots of white and yellow polychrome. The figure has been further restored but no records of this restoration were kept. In this second restoration the repairs that Fr. Spratt had made to the bottom portions of the draperies and the replaced feet were removed.

**The Crown**

Underneath the modern crown of painted plaster and glitter, the Madonna’s head is flat with a grooved ridge (Fig. 190 - Fig. 191) to support her original crown. Writing in 1832, Petrie describes the original crown as “double arched… such as appears on the coins of Henry VII, and on his only.” Petrie also tells of its fate, “Within the last few years the ancient silver crown was taken from the Virgin’s head – sold for its intrinsic value as old plate, and melted down… The crown itself we have often seen exposed for sale in the window of the jeweller to whom it was sold.”

The description of the crown is interesting because the dating matches up so well with the style and design of the carving. However the crown’s survival seems somewhat inconsistent with the rest of the purported history of the statue. It seems unlikely that the crown would not have been taken during the statue’s supposed use as a hog-trough, or earlier when St. Mary’s was a munitions house or horse stables. Additionally, the description of the crown as being “double arched…such as appears on the coins of Henry VII and his only,” is somewhat troublesome. Upon examination of English coins from the reign of Henry VII,

---

702 Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished Papers, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Dublin, Ireland.

703 Petrie, 309.
none of the differing styles of crowns depicted on them appear to be double arched. It is possible that both the account of the crown and the story of the hog-trough are apocryphal.

Another mythical story that surrounds *Our Lady of Dublin’s* crown is that it was used to crown Lambert Simnel during his 1487 coronation in Christ Church Cathedral. However as Petrie alluded, and MacLeod detailed in an unpublished text from a lecture of uncertain date, the crown in question most likely came from a no-longer-extant figure of the Madonna from the church of Santa Maria del Dam. MacLeod states,

[St. Mary’s] Abbey stood in solitude, far away from the Hurdle Ford, the only bridge between the North bank and the city. It would seem strange to go beyond the walls to look for an improvised crown if there was any other within and close to the place of ceremony. The earliest reference to Simnel’s crown is contained in the preface to a contemporary poem from Waterford. The old manuscript is called “The Mayor of Waterford’s Letter,” and written shortly after the coronation. It says: “The crowne they tooke off the head of Our Lady of Damascus and clapte it on the boy’s head.” It would seem that the statue so casually referred to, was well known. Also as the city’s East Gate was commonly called Dames gate or Damask Gate it would seem that the crown was believed to have come from the quarter… The next reference to Simnel’s crown is contained in Ware’s *Rerum Hibernicarum Annales*, published in 1664… Under an entry for the year 1487 Ware describes the coronation… “The crown used,” continues Ware, “was borrowed from a statue of the Virgin Mary, preserved in a church dedicated to her name. “A statua Beatae Mariae Virginis in Ecclesia memoriae dicata, prope portam urbis, quam Dames Gate vulgo appellamus asservata mutuatum ferient.” Beside the Gate commonly called Dames Gate. The Church referred to

---

704 Duignan and Killanin, 228.
was Santa Maria del Dam, situate inside the city walls and close to the Eastern Gate.  

It would seem therefore that Our Lady of Dublin’s association with the coronation of Lambert Simnel is unfounded.

Provenance and Comparisons

Historically the origins of this figure have been a subject of much debate. George Petrie, writing in the 1832, suggested that Our Lady of Dublin is German, and “likely the work of Albrecht Dürer or of one of his followers”. However, it has never been proven that Dürer ever executed any three-dimensional work of art, and Our Lady of Dublin does not resemble closely enough any of Dürer’s prints or paintings to have been directly inspired by his work. Instead, the figure more closely resembles the work of one of Dürer’s German contemporaries, Tilman Riemenschneider. The facial features of Riemenschneider’s female figures, such as his sculpture of St. Barbara (Fig. 194), are reminiscent of Our Lady of Dublin. They both have clearly carved, double-lidded almond shaped eyes, softly moulded crescent shaped brows, high rounded foreheads, clearly incised philtrums and lips, and a soft folds of skin underneath small rounded chins. However, female figures by Riemenschneider tend to have more slender faces and throats and more angular jaw-lines. His treatment of the hair, although arranged similarly to that of Our Lady of Dublin, is more erratically carved; it is composed

705 Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished Papers, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 53, Dublin, Ireland.
706 Petrie, 308.
of more curling strands of hair instead of the long sweeping incised lines of *Our Lady of Dublin*. Additionally, Riemenschneider tends to sculpt more elaborately detailed bodices on the dresses of his figures when compared to the relatively simple bodice of *Our Lady of Dublin*. His treatment of the breasts is different as well, and the carving of the drapery found on the figures’ is wholly different. A Virgin and Child figure by Riemenschneider, now in the Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas (Fig. 195), shows the Child’s hair to be carved in a very similar style of clearly incised, small swirls, however the treatment of the two figure’s bodies are completely different. Riemenschneider’s Child does not have anywhere near the quantity of fat rolls found on the body of the Dublin Child. The faces of the two children are also quite different; the Dublin Child has a higher more rounded forehead than Riemenschneider’s. The ears of the Riemenschneider Child are carved in more detail and both the eyes and cheeks are more rounded. So, although there are several similarities between Riemenschneider’s figures and *Our Lady of Dublin*, the suggestion that the Dublin figure was carved by Riemenschneider has to be dismissed.

The composition and pose of the Dublin figure is similar to several other wooden German Madonnas. This can be seen in a Virgin of Mercy by Gregor Erhart (Fig. 196), circa 1502, destroyed during the bombings of Berlin in 1945\(^7\) and in another figure of the Virgin of Mercy by Hans Sixt von Staufen, circa 1521 (Fig. 197). The slight contraposto position of the Madonna in conjunction with a sprawled, twisting Child was a common mode of depiction in German carving.

and it is possible, that *Our Lady of Dublin* – due to the similarities that it shows to these German figures – is German as well.

The more common attribution of this figure during the twentieth century, as pointed out by several authors (Stalley, Hourihane, and on occasion, MacLeod) is that *Our Lady of Dublin* could be an English figure, due to its similarities with certain figures from Henry VII’s chapel at Westminster. The short proportions of the Westminster figures are very like those of *Our Lady of Dublin*. The long undulating vertical folds of the Dublin Madonna’s gown as well as the box shaped folds found on the front and sides of her skirt are paralleled in many of the Westminster figures. These types of folds can be seen on the figure of St. Edmund (Fig. 198), as well as on the figures of Mary Salome and St. Margaret (Fig. 199), the latter of which has a similar high rounded forehead and facial expression as can be seen on *Our Lady of Dublin*. Unfortunately, there is no extant figure of the Madonna and Child in the Lady Chapel of Henry VII at Westminster with which to compare the Dublin figure. The correlations between these sculptures and *Our Lady of Dublin* argue favourably that the Dublin figure may have been carved by the same school of sculptors as those who carved the figures for Henry VII’s chapel.

---


709 Hourihane, 988.

710 Catriona MacLeod, Unpublished papers, Box 51.


712 MacLeod, Unpublished papers, Box 51.
That St. Mary’s Abbey would be in possession of a masterful carving from the same school of sculptors as the Henry VII chapel at Westminster makes sense in terms of St. Mary’s history. St. Mary’s Abbey had a long history of association with England. During the twelfth century St. Mary’s was subject to both Combermere (in Cheshire) and Buildwas (in Shropshire), and was a large enough establishment that it later had two Irish daughter houses. St. Mary’s became a favourite of English nobility and officials visiting Ireland up to the time of the Reformation. It is not surprising then, that the Abbey might have been given, or perhaps purchased, a carving of the Madonna and Child by an important sculptor in Britain. Tantalizingly, H.J. Dow speculates that the Westminster figures had their origins in wood sculpture. She believed that the king’s joiner, Thomas Stockton, together with his cousin William Stockton, headed the school of Westminster sculptors. However, Philip Lindley convincingly argues against this theory, believing that the Westminster figures may not be by English carvers at all.

Lindley argues that the Westminster figures may have been rendered by sculptors from the Low Countries. He states, “Henry VII’s patronage, and that of his court, was dominated, with the key exception of architecture, by foreign artists.” Lindley goes on to say that the closest parallels to the stone sculpture

713 Stalley, The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland, 244.

of Henry VII’s chapel are found in the bronze statuettes on the grate of that same chapel, that these bronze figures were executed by a Dutch smith, and that the closest parallels that these bronze sculptures have are with other Netherlandish figures. He continues,

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a great influx of Low Countries craftsmen into London, and they dominated some crafts, such as stained glass painting. The style of glazing produced by indigenous craftsmen seemed old fashioned by contrast with that of the immigrants and royal court patronage decisively broke the stranglehold of the London guild…it seems likely that sculptors from precisely these areas came to London and worked for Henry VII… In exactly the same way that the work of English glaziers was rendered obsolete by Netherlandish workmen, so, perhaps, were English sculptures old-fashioned by comparison with Netherlandish images.  

It seems more than plausible then that the Westminster figures were carved by Dutch sculptors working in England, and by extrapolation due to the many stylistic similarities between the Henry VII chapel sculptures and Our Lady of Dublin, that Our Lady of Dublin, may have been carved by sculptors of that same school.

Artworks whose Netherlandish origins are undisputed reinforce this argument. A seated figure from Tournai (Fig. 200) shows the Madonna similarly garbed to the Dublin figure, with a reclining child held above a sweep of

---


716 Ibid., 291-292.

the Madonna’s drapery. The Madonna’s hair emerges from underneath her crown is feathered back away from her face in a similar manner and in both the pomegranate is prominently displayed. Of course, marked differences are apparent as well. The Madonna holds the fruit in the Tournai example as opposed to the Child in the Dublin figure. The Tournai Child is clothed, his hair is styled much differently, and of course the facial features are very different as well.

A standing limestone Madonna and Child group from Brussels (Fig. 201)\textsuperscript{718} seems to have more stylistic similarities to \textit{Our Lady of Dublin}. Both figures have the same sort of deeply carved V-shaped drapery folds cascading down the front of the figure, and the Child is held with a swath of the Madonna’s drapery, as was also the case with the Tournai example. Again, the same back-swept hairstyles can be seen below a flat-topped head, on which a crown would have been placed. In this case, the most marked resemblance is in the facial features and expression of the Madonna. The same sort of heavy-lidded almond-shaped down cast eyes can be seen in both figures underneath high-arched brows. The noses are long and straight in both examples and the lips diminutive. Both figures have a subtle double-chin. The most significant difference between the two figures seems to be in the heads of the two Children; however the head of the Brussels’ Child, according to Steyaert, appears to be a later replacement.\textsuperscript{719}

One final comparison to \textit{Our Lady of Dublin} involves a figure currently in the Church of Notre-Dame-Finistère in Brussels (Fig. 202). Interestingly, the

\textsuperscript{718} Ibid., 132-133.

\textsuperscript{719} Ibid.
The figure was at one time in Aberdeen, Scotland and was brought to Brussels in 1625, though Steyaert suggests an ultimate origin for the figure in Bruges, as “suggested by its overall type… and style… as well as a number of details (including the Madonna’s fleshy face, and the drapery motifs).” These same features, as well as the curled swirls of the Child’s hair, all resemble the Dublin statue.

7. Bibliography: Cochran (2004), 46-56, 208-213; Stalley (1987), 222-223, 236, 244; Bradley (1987), 269; Hourihane (1984), 987-988; O’Dwyer (1979), 77-78; MacLeod (1968), 318-319; Duignan and Killanin (1967), 226, 228; MacLeod, (1947), 55-57; Mahr (1932), 167; Stokes (1886), 10-11; Waterton (1879), 256, 305; Petrie (1832) 308; Archdall (1786), 147; Egerton Manuscript.

JCA-L-020: Killoran Madonna and Child (Fig. 203 - Fig. 204)

1. Location: Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. Date: Early 16th century.

3. Technical details:
   
   (a) dimensions: 94 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: It appears the figure was originally carved from one block,

---

720 Ibid., 204.

721 Measurement from Hourihane, I was not permitted to view the figure outside of its case.
although the current base appears to be modern.

(d) Dowel holes: There are three visible, but since the figure is displayed in a dimly-lit, locked case it was not possible to see if there are more. The three visible dowel holes are oddly placed, and do not seem to be there for reattachment of a now-missing portion of the figure. One can be seen midway down the drapery of the Madonna’s skirt, just to the right of centre and another can be seen on the right side of the figure’s chest, on a drapery fold of her cloak. The third is on the left side of the drapery of the figure’s skirts. All three are plugged with dowels and sanded smooth with the rest of the sculpture’s surface. They are also stained the same colour as the rest of the wood. They might be original to the sculpture, to repair knots or other flaws in the wood. Likely they were never meant to be seen, as the figure was likely to have been polychromed originally.

(e) Evidence of polychrome: The wood is stained a medium brown with tiny spots of light beige or off-white flecked all over the entire statue. These could be remnants of gesso, or possibly mould, but the dimly-lit case in which the figure is displayed, makes it difficult to determine. The Bradley and Egan both discuss the remnants of several colours on the figure, none of which are currently visible. Bradley states that the Madonna’s mantle would have been pale blue, that her veil was olive green and that her gown was scarlet. He goes on to state that the Child wore a white gown with a blue and gold-
leafed border. Egan states that since the figure’s discovery the wood was treated and polished with wax.

(f) general condition: There is active and extensive dry-rot in the figure, which is especially visible at the broken stump of the Madonna’s right arm and on the Child’s left shoulder, as well as in several places on the Madonna’s drapery. A long radial crack can be seen beginning at the inside of the Madonna’s bent right knee and continues up through her body, ending at her collar. There is another deep crack at the Madonna’s left wrist. The bottoms of the Madonna’s draperies have decayed, and her protruding foot and the surrounding area are especially damaged. This appears to have resulted from old rot, which is now covered by wood stain. The Madonna’s left arm is missing and exhibits active wood rot. The most noticeable and severe damage to the figure is the Madonna’s shorn off face and decapitated Christ Child. Both cuts seem to each have been executed with a single, clean pass of the blade, as does the Child’s now missing right hand. The Killoran St. Joseph, which is carved in a very similar style and scale to this figure and seems to have been originally intended to be paired with this Madonna and Child, has also had his face shorn off in a similar manner and may have been the result of intentional, iconoclastic damage.

---


723 Egan, 66.
4. Description:

(a) head: The flat top of the Madonna’s head appears original, perhaps indicating that the figure was meant to be displayed above the viewer’s head and wearing a now missing crown. *Our Lady of Dublin*, currently in the Carmelite Abbey on White Friar’s Street in Dublin, has a similar flat-topped head and wears a (modern) crown. *Our Lady of Dublin* is also carved in a similar style to the *Killoran Madonna and Child*, perhaps indicating a similar date and provenance. As mentioned above, the Madonna’s entire face and forehead are now missing. The remaining outer perimeter of her cheeks and jawline indicate that she had a soft, ovular face sitting atop a long neck with very subtly carved musculature. Her hair cascades in long, deeply carved waves both in front and behind her shoulders. A veil seems to emerge from the top of her head and falls behind her hair and shoulders.

(b) body: The Madonna wears a cloak carved in heavy folds draped over her narrow shoulders and fastened at the hollow of her throat with a tri-pointed fastener, similar to a fleur-de-lis, but old rot, dark wood stain, and less than ideal lighting conditions make it difficult to determine the fastener’s exact shape. Her tunic is carved in long, mostly vertical folds over her torso and breasts are not apparent. The robe is cinched at her waist, but no belt is visible, as if the fabric of the tunic was flounced out over it. Just below the Madonna’s waist, her heavy cloak is drawn across her body from her right side to her left, and is pinned in place by the
Christ Child’s body, supported in the Madonna’s left arm. Long, deep folds radiate out across the cloak from under the Christ Child, producing mostly diagonal and vertical folds on the front and right sides, and long loopy folds on the left profile. The cloak falls to the bottom of the figure, at which point the carving becomes obscured by rot and decay. One of her feet appears as if it once emerged from below her skirts and looks as if it may have been bare, but the current condition of the carving makes this difficult to determine. The Madonna stands in a slight contrapposto, holds the Child in her left arm, and with her hand holds onto his left leg just below the knee as the Child sits in the crook of her elbow. The Madonna looks as if she once gestured out with her right hand and arm, or perhaps held an object, but that arm is now missing, broken off just below the elbow where it emerges from her cloak.

(c) base: The figure’s base appears to be modern. It is a bevelled square with the corners cut off. It is about five centimetres thick and has many wood worm holes.

(d) back: The figure’s back appears to be flat, but due to the viewing conditions, it was not possible to get a good look at it, or to determine if the back has been hollowed out.

(e) Christ Child: The Child’s head is missing from the base of the neck and his right arm is missing from just below the elbow. There is severe rot currently destroying the left shoulder and upper arm. The Child sits up straight in the crook of his mother’s left arm and bends his knees, tucking
his legs underneath himself, slightly. He holds a ball against his lap with his left hand and appears to have once gestured out towards the viewer with his right hand, perhaps with a sign of blessing. The Child wears a long robe carved in deep vertical folds across his torso and in deep diagonal folds falling from his knees. The Child’s left foot is completely covered by his long tunic, although it appears that the toes of his right foot may have once peaked out from below the hem, although now they are damaged and largely missing due to rot.

5. **Identification of the subject:** This representation of the Madonna and Child shows the Madonna standing and holding the Infant Christ. He holds a globe that may have been surmounted by a small cross, and his pose indicates that he may have raised his other hand in a gesture of blessing. This was a typical mode of presenting Christ as ‘Salvator Mundi’, or saviour of the world. This same globe-with-a-cross symbol was also one of the insignia used by English kings. In the Madonna’s now missing right hand, she may have held either a lily, symbol of her purity, or a flowering rod of Jesse, symbolizing the genealogy of Christ.

6. **Comments:**

   **Dating and Comparisons**

   The *Killoran Madonna and Child*, along with its companion piece representing St. Joseph, appear to have been carved in the early sixteenth century and may well have been imported. Both Hourihane and Egan have claimed a French attribution for the piece. A stone Madonna and Child, known as *Notre-

---

Hall, 324.
*Dame de Langueur*, from Pagny-sur-Meuse (Fig. 207) shows several commonalities with the Killoran figures. The pose of the Child and modelling of the draperies are very similar to that of the Killoran Madonna and the treatment of the French figure’s hand is reminiscent of that of St. Joseph.

Both the *Killoran Madonna and Child* and the *Killoran St. Joseph* are carved in a very similar style and appear to have been made by the same sculptor or workshop. In Ireland, the figures seem to have the most in common with the similarly dated *Our Lady of Dublin*, reflecting the sculpture’s similar dates and possible continental connections.

**History**

According to Patrick Egan, the two *Killoran* carvings were discovered in 1953, within the high altar of Killoran Parish Church. This old altar was also carved of wood, but how the statues came to be located inside the altar is unknown. At the time of Egan’s writing in 1956 an older resident of Killoran recalled having “seen two blackened statues, about three feet high, lying upon a high mound of earth at the rere [sic.] of the church.”

Very little has been recorded about the history of this parish. The current Roman Catholic church dates to 1827 and it is not certain how old the “old altar” described by Egan truly is. According to O’Rorke, significant ruins of the medieval church remained in the vicinity in his day, including the entire eastern

---

725 Patrick Egan, 66.

gable and most of the southern wall.\textsuperscript{727} Nothing yet has been found regarding the foundation of this particular structure or its pre-Reformation history. The ruins appear to date to the fourteenth century.

According to local histories, a parish church was first established in Killoran in the seventh century, founded by St. Luaithreann (from whom the name Killoran derives, meaning essentially “church of Luaithreann”).\textsuperscript{728} Very little is known about her apart from her association with the Leyney (Luighne) barony, whose descendants, the O’Hara’s, owned large swaths of land in the vicinity of Killoran up to the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{729}

Although it is quite possible that the figures could have originated in France, perhaps they made their way to Ireland via England, given the connections between Sligo and England. Nearby Sligo town was founded by Anglo-Norman Maurice Fitzgerald and was, according to Terence O’Rorke, “stocked with English inhabitants” when it was under Geraldine rule. From 1237 to about 1333 the entire barony of Leyney was subject to the Normans, before it once again returned to the possession of the O’Haras.\textsuperscript{730} At the turn of the fifteenth century Sligo town was a prosperous and impressive place. The Four Masters describe that “its buildings of wood and stone were splendid.”\textsuperscript{731}

\textsuperscript{727} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{728} O’Hanlon, VI, 244.
\textsuperscript{729} Michael Farry, \textit{Killoran and Coolaney: A Local History}, (Trim, 1985), 35.
\textsuperscript{730} O’Rorke, I, 24.
\textsuperscript{731} O’Donovan, \textit{Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland}, 1396.
After being relatively absent for two centuries, the English reasserted themselves into the affairs of the region at the behest of Donnell O’Connor in his bid to gain the lordship of Sligo in the 1540s. From this point on, the British would be actively engaged in the area. In 1565 following the crown’s policy of “Surrender and Regrant”, Donnell O’Conner performed homage to the Lord Deputy Henry Sydney. Significantly, during this act of homage, O’Connor Sligo agreed that Queen Elizabeth was his liege Lady and sole ecclesiastical authority.\(^\text{732}\)

Two years later O’Connor accompanied Sydney back to England, during which time the formal surrender and regrant occurred. Part of the text of a letter that O’Connor received from Elizabeth before he returned to Ireland read,

> Lastly, we let you to understand that upon his humble and reasonable request, wee are well contented that the howse of the Freyerie of Slego, wherein, he sayeth, the sepulture of his ancestors hayth bene, shall be so preserved, as the Friars thear, being converted to secular priestes, the same howse may remayne and contynue as well for the sepulture of his posteritie, as for the maytenance of prayer and service of God.\(^\text{733}\)

The implication of this statement is that in 1567, some thirty years after the beginning of the Dissolution and Suppression, the largest ecclesiastical establishment in the urban centre of the region – the Dominican Friary in Sligo town – was yet undissolved. And, by the authority of the queen, it was to remain undissolved. Although no records remain for the small parish church in Killoran at this time, the fact that a much larger (and therefore, one could presume, more

\(^{732}\) O’Rorke, I, 118.

\(^{733}\) As quoted by O’Rorke, I, 123.
likely targeted) ecclesiastical establishment had thus far survived, provides us some hope that smaller churches in this region may also have escaped the Reformation’s initial onslaught.

Yet, the faces of the Killoran figures were hacked off in a violently deliberate manner, likely as in an iconoclastic gesture. As examined above, it seems highly plausible that the Catholic parishes in Sligo town and surrounding rural areas survived the initial dissolution and suppression. Most probably the damage exacted on the Killoran figures happened during the War of the Three Kingdoms or slightly later during the parliamentarian re-conquest of the island. In 1642, Sir Frederick Hamilton, a Scottish soldier who had been granted extensive lands in Ireland in return for his military service, raided and burned Sligo-town. The Dominican Friary, which had survived unmolested to this time, was also burned.

Around the time that the Dominican Friary in Sligo was burned by Hamilton’s troops, the hostilities in this area had greatly intensified and nearly all were accompanied by burning and destruction. A pamphlet sympathetic to Sir Frederick Hamilton was published in 1645 and records many of these raids. On February 4, 1642 the pamphlet records,

*Owen ô Rourke with his Brother Bryan Ballagh, and the Mac Glannahans to the number of 600 or 700 men from the Darty, encamped them-felves againe in the former place at our Lieutenants and John Murrayes houfes and haggards, falling to their old worke of burning, and fending away of our-Corne; The next day with a party of Horfe and Foote, we againe fell upon them as before, killing divers of them, their great Colonell being fhot*
through the hat and through the Pike neare his hand, we brought home to the Castle 3 of their ablest mens heads. The wives and boyes of our Souldiers loading themselves with the burnt Corne and pillage, we burnt thole houſes and what Corne in the haggards we were not able to carry with us, to prevent their further company there, they being too faire masters of the Field.\footnote{A True Relation of the manner of our Colonell Sir Frederick Hammtlons Return from London-Derry in Ireland, Being near 60 miles from his Castl and Garriffon, where he was at the beginning and breaking out of this Rebellion; with the particular Services performed by the Horſe and Foot Companies which he Commands, Garrifon’d at Manor-Hammilton, in the County of Leitrim, in the Province of Connaught. Together with fewerall other Letters, Petitions, and Paſſages, concerning the faid Sir Frederick Hammilton, Knight and Colonell (Pamphlet by anonymous author,1645, no printer stated), 22.}

Or, on April 9\textsuperscript{th},

A party of Foote was this night ſent to Glenden, some 5 or 6 miles off, where we kil’d and burned in their houſes neere 20 Rogues, bringing home a number of Cowes and Goates, and burning many Irish-houſes.\footnote{Ibid., 25.}

On May 18\textsuperscript{th}, the intended destruction of a monastery in Crewly, in Co. Fermanagh is recorded,

Intending towards the Fryers of Crewly, we found that houſe uncovered, and the Fryers fled…\footnote{Ibid., 27.}

On July 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1642 The Dominican Friary in Sligo was burnt,

Our Colonell with his Horſe falling upon a many good houſes full of people on this side of the Bridge, where he burned and destroyed all, appointing his Randevoes\footnote{rendezvous?} with the Foote at the South-weſt end of the Towne, where he croſt a Foard which brought him cloſe to the Friery, where the foote met and fired their brave maffe houſe and Fryery, where it is ſaid, we burnt a many good things, which
people had given in keeping for safety to the Fryers, and all their superfluous trumperies belonging to their Masse: It was thought some of the Fryers themselves were likewise burnt, two of them running out were killed in their habits…

Indeed, none of these were isolated incidents; the entire pamphlet is full of such accounts. It seems that deliberate, terroristic destruction aimed at the Irish “rogues” accompanied Hamilton’s men whenever they left Manorhamilton for well over a year. It is not difficult to imagine that the Killoran figures could have been damaged during one of these raids.

It is not known at what point the figures were hidden inside the parish church’s altar, the altar is no longer extant and no one I have spoken to recalls it. It seems likely that the figures were hidden by a local family during the intervening time and returned to the church in the nineteenth century.


---

738 A True Relation of the manner of our Colonell Sir Frederick Hamilitons..., 30-31.
JCA-L-021: Killoran St. Joseph (Fig. 205 - Fig. 206)

1. Location: Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. Date: Early 16th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 96 cm

(b) type of wood: appears to be oak

(c) number of blocks: One, plus a modern base.

(d) dowel holes: Three randomly placed, filled and sanded dowel holes can be seen. They are similar to those seen on the Killoran Madonna, but larger in diameter. They are about 3 cm across and are located on the figure’s lower draperies.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is stained the same medium brown as the Killoran Madonna and Child, and covered in tiny flecks of beige or off-white, which might be mould. No other polychrome is evident. Egan states that since the figure’s discovery the wood was treated and polished with wax.

---

739 The measurement is taken from Hourihane, as I was not permitted to examine the figure outside of its case. Hourihane, 1002.

740 Egan, 66.
(f) general condition: The patterns of damage to the figure of St. Joseph are very similar to those found on the *Killoran Madonna and Child*. Both the figure’s face and his left hand have been shorn off with a cut. There is active dry rot at the bottom front of his draperies and also on the top of his head, where a few large chunks of wood are missing. As in the Madonna, there is evidence of past rot towards the bottom of the figure, which is now covered over by the same medium brown wood stain which covers the rest of the figure. Unlike the Madonna, the figure of St. Joseph seems to have suffered from some water damage as well. The grain is significantly raised on much of the body, as well as on the top of the head, as if it had been immersed in water for some amount of time. The grain is not raised where the face was shorn off; leading one to suspect that the cut was made after the figure had been submerged.

4. Description:

(a) head: The forehead and entire front of the face have been shorn off in a clean cut, but most of the sides of the jaw, cheek bones and hair are intact. The figure has a strong jawline edged with a curly beard which is deeply incised with wavy lines. His hair is also wavy and falls to meet the beard on the sides of his face, ending just below where his ears would be, if not covered by the hair. The hair is also incised with long, wavy lines, although the carving here is somewhat obscured by what looks to be old water damage – the grain is significantly raised on the top of the head, as well as on most of the body. The figure has a strong, muscular neck and
his head is inclined downwards somewhat, suggesting that he was meant to be placed at a height above the viewer’s head, and looked down towards the viewer.

(b) body: The figure’s shoulder’s stoop somewhat, as he inclines his head downward. He places his right hand on his chest and seems to have once gestured outwards with his left hand. The left arm has been dismembered midway down the forearm, where his arm would have once emerged from the sleeve of his tunic. The sleeves of the tunic are very wide and hang loose from the figure’s arms.

The Killoran St. Joseph stands in a contrapposto position, with his right knee significantly bent under his heavy tunic. The figure wears voluminous drapery, including a tunic and thick cloak, which is drawn across his torso and fastened on his right shoulder with a circular pin. His cloak falls in long, loopy folds down the front of his body, beginning below where his right hand touches his chest. Under the cloak, St. Joseph’s tunic extends to the bottom of the statue. The bottom of the statue deteriorates into both old and active rot.

(c) base: The Killoran St. Joseph is attached to what appears to be a modern base, very similar to the one to which the Killoran Madonna and Child are attached. It is a bevelled square of wood with the corners cut off, about 5 centimetres thick. The base has many wood-worm holes.
(d) back: The figure appears to have been carved with a flat back, however the viewing conditions are such that it is not possible to determine if the back of the figure is also hollowed.

5. **Identification of the subject:** Identified by traditional attribution and pairing with the Madonna and Child. This is a bearded adult male saint who holds no icons or attributes.


7. **Bibliography:** Hourihane (1984), 1002-1003; Egan (1956-1957), 66.

---

**JCA-L-022: Unidentified Glendalough Saint (Fig. 208 - Fig. 210)**

1. **Location:** National Museum of Ireland, Reserve Collections - Antiquities Division, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (NMI A&I: 1930.211)

2. **Date:** Early 16th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. 30 cm. W. 10.5 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak

   (c) number of blocks: Single block extant. The figure originally held a separately carved object in his right hand, but this object is no longer extant.

   (d) dowel holes: There are four dowel holes in the figure and two small nail holes.

---

741 Hourihane, 981.
One dowel hole is found in the closed fist of the figure’s right hand, presumably for the insertion of some object which is no longer extant. In the stub of the ankle of the saint’s broken left foot appears to be a smaller dowel hole, perhaps from attempted repair. The final two dowel holes are oddly placed and of indeterminate purpose. They are located on the underside of the saint’s skirt to the front, and slightly outside, of his legs. There are two tiny nail holes in the figure’s back.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure appears to have once been entirely covered with gold leaf. Much of the gold leaf remains on the front of the figure, but very little remains on the back. There is a shiny varnish over the gilding and other areas of polychrome in several places. On the back, much polychrome remains. There appear to be at least two layers of a thick white, or cream-coloured, paint. The lowest of these layers has yellowed with age, while the upper most layer has greyed with age and dirt. This same polychrome clings in some of the crevices of the carving on the front of the figure. Red lead priming shows through in places, especially on the right shoulder blade. There are a few small spots of bright red polychrome on the back of the saint’s left arm. On the bottom of what remains of the base is a strange, thick substance, orange in colour. This is not polychrome; it is very thick and grainy. A small bit of this same substance clings to the right shoulder blade as well.
(f) general condition: Most of this figure is in fairly good condition. The most damaged portions are the saint’s face, and his feet. The toes of his right foot are gone, as is the entirety of his left foot and most of the base, with the exception of a small section extending from underneath the extant portion of his right foot back to the bottom drapery of his cloak. There is very little rot in the figure, and no evidence of wood-worm. The figure was covered with gold leaf, much of which remains.

4. Description:

(a) head: The hair sweeps back from the figure’s high square forehead and the sides of the face. It is carved in fine, long, incised lines. The hair completely covers the ears but is not long enough to touch the shoulders. It is, as Hourihane describes it, “orb-like”.742

Unfortunately the face is one of the most damaged areas of the carving. The forehead is high and square. The saint’s brows are crescent shaped. A chip is missing from the left eyebrow. The outline of his almond - shaped eyes is clearly incised, making the eyes seem to bulge out from their sockets. Most of the tip and bridge of the nose have been worn away, although both tiny nostrils remain. The figure wears a beard, but has no moustache. The philtrum is not carved; instead a singular ridge extends from the nose to the incised line of the slightly open mouth. The upper lip is not carved. The down-turned crescent of the mouth is deeply incised and the lower lip appears quite full. The beard emerges from underneath

---

742 Hourihane, 982.
the lower lip and falls in long, finely-incised, wavy lines from the lip to the collar. The strands of hair on either side of this part of the beard are shorter, also carved in fine, wavy, incised lines and fall to halfway down the length of the neck. The rest of the beard follows the jaw-line. The neck is cylindrical.

A lot of gold-leaf remains on the figure’s face, as well as on the front of his hair and neck. None of the gilding remains on the back of the head or neck, although much of the thick, whitish polychrome that covers most of the back of the figure clings also to the back of the head and neck.

(b) body: This figure wears a belted tunic with a round collar which meets his neck. The tunic has a seam carved down its middle, which extends from the collar to the belt. The saint wears a thick cloak draped over his broad shoulders. The folds of the cloak, which hang over the tops of his arms, fall in a ‘rippling-ribbon’ style pattern. The cloak sweeps backwards in order to allow the arms to emerge. The saint’s left arm is held straight in front of his body and he clasps a book in this hand, holding against the front of his thigh. The sleeves of his tunic are tight to his wrists. The book is carved in great detail in clearly incised fine lines. The pages of the book are carved separately from the cover. The cover is decorated with a rectangular design, and the ridges which bind the book across its spine are clearly indicated. The lower portion of the right arm emerges from the cloak at a perpendicular angle, making it appear as if it were bent at the elbow underneath the cloak. No movement can be seen under the cloak;
the elbow does not jut-out under the cloak, as it would if it were bent. The right hand is held against the saint’s body just beneath the belt and is closed in a fist. There is a dowel hole through the centre of the fist for the insertion of some no-longer extant object.

The figure’s cloak sweeps forward underneath his hands and closes around his body, meeting in the front so that the skirt of his tunic cannot be seen, save for a small portion directly underneath the belt. On either side of where the edges of the cloak meet, the cloth falls in a very stylized ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern. On the outside of these folds, the drapery is carved in very deeply-cut, vertical folds. The figure’s cloak-skirt is quite wide, especially at the upper thigh. The front of the cloak is approximately four centimetres higher than at the back. The back of the cloak meets the extant portion of the base. The back lacks the highly stylized decorative folds seen on the front of the figure.

The saint’s legs emerge below the cloak approximately halfway down the calves. The feet and base of the figure are much damaged. The left foot is completely missing from the ankle down and three of the toes are missing from the right foot. There is a small dowel hole in the broken stump of the left foot, probable evidence of an attempted repair. The ankles and surviving toes are modelled naturalistically. The saint wears sandals rendered in detail. The straps of the sandals extend up the leg up under the skirt. They consist of a series of perpendicular straps. A single vertical strap extends down the front and back of each leg, in the back the
strap joins with the sole of the sandal. The vertical strap in the front of each leg extends down the length of the foot of the extant right foot and terminates in a horizontal strap found just before the toes. Further up the foot is another horizontal strap, both of these join with the sole of the sandal at their bottoms. A strap extends from just below the ankle on the top of the foot back to the heel. There are two additional horizontal straps on each of the legs before the legs disappear underneath the bottom of the saint’s cloak.

The only extant portion of the base is found underneath the right foot. The base is one and a half centimetres thick and is carved from the same block of wood as the rest of the figure.

5. Identification of the subject: The identity of this figure is unknown. It has been hypothesized to be an image of St. Kevin, since the carving was found at Glendalough; however, there is no evidence to support this identification. Hourihane supposes that the sandals, in conjunction with the book in the figure’s hand, may indicate that it is meant to be one of the apostles.\textsuperscript{743} Based upon comparisons with apostle figures found in Irish tomb carving, I agree with this identification.

\textsuperscript{743} Hourihane, 982.
6. Comments:

**Dating and Comparisons**

The *Glendalough Saint* is very similar to several extant Irish stone figures from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Examples of such figures can be found at Strade, Co. Meath (Fig. 211), St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny city (Fig. 212), and Howth, Co. Dublin (Fig. 213). All are of similar proportions and their thick cloaks are edged with a distinctive zigzag drapery pattern which falls over their shoulders and down the length of the cloak. The figures of SS. Peter and Paul hold a book in their right hands and the symbol of their identity in the left, as the Glendalough figure would have done. The undulating vertical folds found on the Strade figures’ tunics are echoed in the folds found on the *Glendalough Saint*’s cloak. However, the figure that the *Glendalough Saint* bears the most resemblance to is that of St. Peter (Fig. 214), from the tomb of James Shortals and Katherine Whyte, in St. Canice’s Cathedral, in Kilkenny City, dated to 1507. Both figures have similar orb-like hair and facial proportions. They both wear large, heavy-appearing cloaks thrown over both of their shoulders carved in extremely stylized zig-zag folds on the lapels. Their tunics are carved in undulating, vertical folds and feature a prominent seem down the centre of their chests. They both hold a book in their left hand. The figure of St. Peter holds his identity symbol, a key in his right hand, as the Glendalough figure would have done, evidenced by the dowel hole located in his closed fist. The similarities between the Glendalough and the Kilkenny figures indicates a plausible dating for the Howth figure to the early sixteenth century, and the similarities between these
two figures found in terms of dress, stance and proportion to the figures of SS. Peter and Paul from Strade, as well as to the apostle figures from St. Canice’s, Kilkenny strongly suggests that the Glendalough figure was likely an apostle.

**History and Restorations**

This small figure was found by a ten year old girl amongst the ruins of one of the buildings near the lake at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, and was acquired by the National Museum in 1930. When the figure was found it was covered with a thick, greyish-white paint,\(^{744}\) remnants of which can still be seen on the back of the sculpture. Removal of this paint revealed gold leaf covering the front and profiles of the figure, but not its back. Although carved ‘in the round’ the back of the figure also is not modelled in as much detail as the front is. These factors may indicate that the back of the figure was not really meant to be seen. It was perhaps meant to be displayed in a niche of a retable behind the altar of a church.


---

**JCA-L-023: Fethard Christ (Fig. 215 - Fig. 217)**

1. **Location**: National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin -on loan

   (NMI : L1506A).

2. **Date**: Early 16\(^{th}\) century.

\(^{744}\) Unpublished Museum file record, National Museum of Ireland, NMI A&I: 1930.211.
3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 167 cm, W: 76 cm

(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Difficult to determine. There have been many repairs. Each of the thorns in the figure’s crown were carved separately and inserted into small holes; only two of these thorns are now extant. The rope that binds the figure’s hands is not carved, rather it is an actual rope apparently stiffened with gesso.

(d) dowel holes: There are several small dowel holes in the crown where the separate thorns would have been inserted. Only two of the thorns are extant, although there are many more holes. No other dowel holes are apparent.

(e) evidence of polychrome: This mostly nude figure is painted with a warm flesh-tone, which has largely flaked off. His mantle is painted with a bright red polychrome. The hair, beard and eyebrows are dark brown. Christ’s sclerae are painted white and the irises are dark blue. The pupils are indicated with black. There are touches of red around the figure’s eyes, the cheeks are blushed and the lips also are touched with red. The teeth which can be seen through the parted lips are painted white. The heavy crown of thorns worn around his head is burnt sienna, and the rope which

745 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 59 and Hourihane, 995.
binds his wrists is painted a slightly lighter shade of the same colour. There are touches of red on the face and neck, and even more on the mostly nude body of the figure. There are pronounced painted and carved scrapes on the knees in red, touches of red running along the shins, on the tops of the toes, and some on the backs of the calves. There is additional red polychrome on the torso, arms and hands. The overall effect of this is to make Christ appear bloody, wounded and suffering. The rock on which the figure sits does not appear to be painted, but rather the wood seems to have been varnished or waxed. The skull set in to the left side of the rock is white.

According to the paint analysis report for this figure, it has been painted seven times. The report speculates that the most recent of these repaints, being lead based, was pre-twentieth century, however photographic evidence from the National Museum files (Fig. 221), and a letter from November of 1932 indicate that the National Museum intended to remove the the more modern coats of polychrome, and that “new hands and part of a new face” be constructed. This work appears to have been carried out.

The base coat is a layer of chalk based gesso. Layers of dull red and violet / blue were found on the robe, grey and white on the skull. The original flesh tone was comprised of white lead mixed with vermillion,

and particular areas seem to have been painted much lighter than others. Traces of azurite found on the inner thigh and other shaded areas indicate that the sculpture was likely painted with shadows and highlights. The original rope was gilded over yellow bole. The hair seems originally to have been only varnished, and now painted. 747

(f) general condition: There are a few hairline cracks visible in the wood. The toes of the figure’s right foot are worn away as if from rubbing. There are some areas of decay along the edges of the drapery as well as towards the bottom of the rock. From MacLeod’s notes, it is apparent that the hands and the lower portion of the face have been reconstructed. Some additional restoration work was carried out in 2010, which is described below.

4. Description:

(a) head: The figure’s head is inclined slightly to the left and glances downwards. The face appears small in the long head. Most of his forehead is covered by the massive crown of thorns, and the sides of his face and chin are covered by the hair and beard. The heavy crown of thorns is comprised of three loosely braided strands. There are several dowel holes in each of the strands for the insertion of carved thorns. Only two of the thorns are extant. The thorns are tapered dowels that extend out from the crown about 2 centimetres. The figure’s long hair stays close to the head and falls

behind his back. It is carved with deeply incised wavy lines. The figure’s beard is approximately 10 centimetres long and extends from the face approximately 5 centimetres. It is carved with the same type of deeply incised wavy lines as the hair. The head is carved fully in the round.

    The figure’s face wears an expression of quiet sorrow. The eyebrows incline slightly upwards at the bridge of the nose, although not enough to make the brow furrow. The eyebrows consist of two thin brown lines that closely follow the line of the carved brow. Both lids of the almond-shaped eyes are carved; the eyes glance downwards and to the left. The sclerae are painted white and the irises are dark blue. The pupils are indicated with black. There are touches of red around the figure’s eyes. The long, straight nose is perhaps a plaster repair. Both nostrils are rendered and he has a pronounced philtrum. The lips are slightly parted and the tips of the upper teeth can be seen. The lips are touched with red polychrome, and the exposed teeth have been painted white. The figure’s top lip is fuller than the lower lip. The lower portion of Christ’s face appears to be a modern reconstruction.

(b) body: Overall, this figure is very shallow and the back is flat beginning at the shoulders, it is almost relief-like in appearance. According to MacLeod, the figure is hollow.\textsuperscript{748} The torso is very long and has a slight gothic-bend. The collar bone, breast bone, muscles of the shoulders and arms are all clearly carved. The pectoral muscles have also been indicated,

\textsuperscript{748} MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 59.
although not as clearly, and the nipples are not indicated. The rib cage is oddly short; it ends just below the pectoral muscles, but is very pronounced. No ribs are carved on the rib cage, instead, the clearly defined bottom line of the rib cage is made-up of a series of distinctive bumps and from each of these bumps a more faintly carved ridge radiates down towards where the navel would be, behind the crossed hands.

The figure’s arms are kept close to the body. They are short in proportion to the torso. Although slender, they have muscular definition, especially in the shoulder muscles and around the elbows. His hands are crosses at the wrist, but do not touch. These hands also are a plaster repair. The left arm is held against Christ’s stomach from just below his elbow to just above his wrist, at which point the wrist and hand jut out away from the body. The right hand and wrist cross over this one and held out in space closer to the viewer. A rope binds the wrists. It is tied very loosely; it passes twice over the top wrist, once under the bottom wrist and is then knotted in front of the bottom wrist. One end of the rope hangs down behind both hands, passes across the thigh of the right leg and clings to the inside of that same leg from the knee to where the rope terminates in the middle of the calf. The other end of the rope hangs from the knot, is draped across the left knee and hangs on the outside of that leg, terminating about three inches below the side of the knee. This appears to be an actual rope painted over with thick gesso to stiffen and hold it in place.
The figure’s hips are wide and fleshy. The red painted mantle is draped over and around the figure’s pelvis. There are many angular and box shaped folds throughout the whole cloth. The cloth partially covers the pyramidal rock on which the figure sits. His legs jut out sharply to the right, in the opposite direction of the inclination of the head – this helps to cause the S-shaped curve of the body. The legs are not nearly as long as they should be in proportion to the body. The shortness of the legs is mostly accounted for between the hips and the knees; the seated figure’s lap is far too shallow. The leg from the knee to the ankle is fairly proportionate to the length of the torso. The thighs are wide in proportion to the calves. On the knees of the figure, scrapes and tears in the flesh have been carved, and the effect of this is enhanced by red polychrome. There are other touches of the same red polychrome indicating Christ’s wounds over the flesh of the entire, nearly-nude, figure. Christ’s left leg is propped up higher than the right. The right leg extends out towards the viewer. The feet of the figure, particularly the right foot, which is both the farthest out in space and the lowest, are much worn, as if from rubbing.

(c) rock: The majority of the pyramidal rock structure on which the figure sits is covered by the drapery that has been previously described. Where the ‘rock’ is exposed, the wood is convincingly carved to resemble stone. The wood here does not appear to have been painted, but instead was either vanished or waxed. A skull without a jaw-bone has been carved into a crevice in the rock structure. The skull is painted white. There is a
significant crack in the wood of the ‘rock’ just to the left of the figure’s most prominent foot. The crack is about two centimetres wide, three and a half centimetres deep, and ten to twelve centimetres long, beginning at the base of the structure.\textsuperscript{749}

5. **Identification of the subject:** This figure depicts Christ on the Cold Stone, or perhaps a *Herrgottsrub* – Repose of the Lord.\textsuperscript{750} In this devotional image Christ appears in a scene not mentioned in the Bible, sitting on the rock of Golgatha, awaiting and contemplating his crucifixion. That this is the rock of Golgotha is evidenced by many other similar images which include the insertion of a skull into the rock, as can be seen in the *Fethard Christ*. Golgatha means literally “place of the skull”. It also has an addition allegorical meaning. During the Middle Ages, it was thought that the place of the crucifixion was also the burying place of Adam. The scene therefore calls upon the viewer not only to contemplate the crucifixion, but also reminds viewers of the original sin of Adam, the cause of Christ’s suffering. Although his arms are now missing, very likely they were crossed, pointed downwards and bound, as can be seen in many other depictions of Christ on the Cold Stone.

\textsuperscript{749} This crack was repaired during the 2010 restoration and was no longer observable in November 2011.

History of Herrgottsrub Images

Widespread devotion to Christ on the Cold Stone can be found throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Spain and Northern Europe. It is not known where the image of Christ on the Cold stone originated, although the largest concentrations of these images occur in northern France, northern Germany and the Netherlands. Its depiction is not confined to sculpture, but can also be found in prints, such as one found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Etampes in Paris from the fifteenth century (Fig. 218)\textsuperscript{751} and even in very tiny “prayer-nuts” like the one in (Fig. 219) from the southern Netherlands, circa 1500. The earliest depictions date to the second half of the fifteenth century and seem to reach the peak of popularity in the north circa 1500.\textsuperscript{752} Previous depictions of Christ do not seem to have the same emphasis on the body that can be seen in these and other contemporary artworks. According to James Marrow, worshippers in the late Middle Ages desired to depict in concrete and moving terms the suffering of Christ.\textsuperscript{753}

Though the Gospels do not mention such a pause in the Passion narrative as can be seen in Christ in the Cold Stone, the tendency in medieval devotion was to divide the story of the Crucifixion into “as many


\textsuperscript{752} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{753} James H. Marrow, \textit{Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative}, (Brussels: Van Ghemmert Publishing Company, 1979), 44.
sections as possible to extend the number of individual focuses for meditation.” 754 In this image, Christ seems to have momentarily withdrawn from the narrative of his martyrdom so that both he and the viewer might contemplate his anguish. 755

Scriptual Sources

Instead of drawing on the Gospel passion narratives, images such as this seem to rely much more heavily on prefigurations in the Old Testament of Christ’s suffering, as well on adaptations of these scriptures into vernacular literature and plays. These Old Testament allusions would have been very well known to the faithful due to their incorporation into the Holy Week liturgies. Psalm 27:7, recited on Good Friday, was taken to be a description of Christ as “the reproach of men and the outcast of the people,” and seems particularly appropriate to this type of imagery. Isaiah 53 (“the man with no beauty in him nor comeliness… the man of sorrows… thought as it were a leper”) and Isaiah 63:1-2 (“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe… Why, then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress?”) were also incorporated into the Masses in the days leading up to Easter and seem to be textual sources for these figures.


755 Ibid.
The extreme proliferation of wounding that can be seen on the *Fethard Christ*, found in the copious amounts of crimson polychrome used from head to foot as well as the deeply carved tears in the flesh of the figure’s knees, have their roots in Isaiah 1:6, which states, “From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there was no soundness therein; [only] wound and bruises and swelling sores.” Another allusion to the wounding of Christ was seen in Job 1:7, where wounds were described as being “from the sole of the foot even to the top of his head.”

One final scriptural passage on which images of Christ in Distress and Christ on the Cold Stone must have drawn, ought to be mentioned – Lamentations 1:2, “O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” Though it contains no similes or metaphors that could be easily translated into visual imagery, it seems to most closely embody the spirit of these images. Its prominence in the liturgy and in medieval devotional literature makes it a likely model as well for images of Christ on the Cold Stone.

**Vernacular Sources**

These scriptural references were taken to even farther extremes in Netherlandish vernacular literature, “Because there was no spot sound enough on Him to be covered by a pin point, no spot sound and whole

---

756 Marrow, 44.
757 Ibid., 47.
758 Marrow, 65.
enough on Your sacred and precious body, which had received more than a thousand wounds.”

The red cloth on which Christ sits also seems to have been taken from references in vernacular literature based around the description of the man in Isaiah 63:1-2 quoted above. Ludolph of Saxony wrote, “Then the blood, being forced from his head by the thorns of the crown, and flowing forth abundantly, dyed His head and cheeks… The blood dyed His whole head, just as the blood drawn by the scourge and the bloody sweat dyed all the other parts of His body, so that we not only say that His hands, feet and sides were sprinkled with blood, but that Christ came from Bosra with all His garments dyed.” A Netherlandish Passion tract found in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 E 1, states on folio 237v, “so covered with His sacred blood that His holy hair was drenched; and our beloved Lord looked like a scarlet cloth fresh from the [dyeing] vat,” and more simply elsewhere in the same manuscript, “the Lord’s sacred body was dyed from the red blood as if it had been a red cloth.” Still other texts state, “His body was covered with blood as if a scarlet cloth had been pulled over it,” and that his body was “as red as a red cloth.”

---

759 The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 133 E 4, fol. 102v., as quoted by Marrow, 49.
760 as quoted by Marrow, 50.
761 Ibid., 51.
762 Boecken van die passie ons liefs heren Ihesu Christi (The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, Inc. 1 E 68), fol. 17v., as quoted by Marrow, 51.
Visual Sources

In addition to these textual sources, there were pre-extant visual sources for Christ on the Cold Stone as well. The imagery seems to have originated in earlier images of Job. The Image of Christ in Distress seems to have its origins in depictions of *Job in sterquilinio* (Fig. 220), the earliest of which appear (though clothed) in pre-iconoclastic Byzantine art and in later Spanish illuminations of the 11th century. According to Von der Osten, “It is only by the gestures of the other hand, by the boils instead of wounds which cover the body, by the larger context and facial type, that we know him to be Job and not Christ.”

The image type of primary concern to us here, that of Christ on the Cold Stone, also seems to take earlier images of Job as a model. Though rarer, there are still several representations of Job with his arms crossed downwards. The reliance on imagery of Job seems completely in keeping with the examination in textual sources of Job as an Old Testament prefiguration of Christ.

---

763 *Heimelige Passie*, 11. 753-754, as quoted by Marrow, 51.


765 Ibid., 156.

766 Ibid., 156-157.
6. Comments:

History

For a general history of the Fethard figures, please see the entry for the *Fethard John the Baptist*, section 6, p. 299.

The early history of this figure is not known. The first published account appears in 1874, in which the figure is referred to as a Man of Sorrows. According to Cantwell, this figure, as well as two other figures – a John the Baptist and a figure of God the Father from a Trinity group – was in the Catholic church in Fethard, Co. Tipperary, having been moved there from an older Catholic church in that town, c. 1822. The three figures were exhibited to the public on Trinity Sunday every year as part of a local ‘pattern’, when they were still kept in the older Catholic church. The pattern discontinued around the time of the building of the newer church. According to the same article, the figures were traditionally believed to have belonged to the “ancient church of the Holy Trinity” and that when that church “passed into the hands of the Protestants these figures were removed from that building and buried.”

However, there was more than one Church of the Holy Trinity in Fethard, and so precisely which church the figures belonged to is no longer known.

---

767 Cantwell, “Notes on the Fethard Carvings,” in *JRSAI* 3 (1874) 18-20.

768 MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland,” 59.
Restorations

In 2009-2010, this figure was conserved following a system failure within its case, resulting in a dramatic temperature shift and relative humidity change, which resulted in a flaking of the polychrome and a need to stabilize the entire figure. At that time, surface cleaning with cotton swabs and saliva was carried out and the entire figure was consolidated using a 2% solution of Paraloid B72, in acetone. Further consolidation was carried out in particular areas of the figure using a higher percentage (5-8%) of Paraloid B72 in acetone. The figure’s pigment was analyzed in 1997, the results of this analysis can be found above.\textsuperscript{769}

The lack of restoration records or access to restoration records for all of the Irish wooden figure sculptures has been a great hindrance to their study; however in the case of the \textit{Fethard Christ} some clues exist to what work might have been carried out prior to 2009, both in photographic evidence and in letters between the Museum and various people associated with the Augustinians of Fethard from 1932-1980. In November of 1932 it was initially suggested that the more modern coats of polychrome be removed from the figure, and that “new hands and part of a new face” would need to be constructed.\textsuperscript{770} From a photograph taken before the restoration of the figure (Fig. 221) it can be seen that a pair of crude

\textsuperscript{769} Nieves Fernández, “Man of Sorrows (Fethard), Reg. No: L1506A” Conservation Treatment Record, National Museum of Ireland, 19 January, 2010.

\textsuperscript{770} Ibid.
forearms and hands from an earlier ‘restoration’ were removed and replaced by the more delicately modelled plaster ones currently on the carving. Thick over paints to the figure were removed and cracks in the wood just before the shoulders – which from their jagged edges do not seem to be original – were repaired. The lower portion of the nose and possibly the mouth and beard also seem to be plaster reconstructions made at this time. The Fethard Christ’s beard is rendered in a very similar manner to that of the Glendalough Saint, which was acquired around the same time that restorations were undertaken on the much larger Fethard figure. One wonders if the restorer modeled Christ’s beard on that of the Glendalough saint.

At least part of the rope is a replacement as well, since the only extant portions of the rope in the pre-restoration photograph is the part which lies against the figure’s legs. A letter from Breandon O Riordain, Director of the National Museum to Prof. F.X. Martin of the Augustinian House of Studies in Ballyboden, Co. Dublin dated 18th June, 1980, states that when the Fethard Christ was received by the Museum it was ‘in very bad condition with dry rot and furniture beetle,’ and that the wood was subsequently treated and strengthened. An earlier letter from an unknown person associated with the National Museum, dated 12th March,

---

771 Breandon O’Riordain to F.X. Martin, 18 Jun 1980, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.
1948 and addressed to Canon Ryan, specifies that the wood was treated with Biotex and that the wood was ‘strengthened from behind’. 772

Placement in the Church

The proportions of the carving suggest that the figure may have been intended to have been placed at a height above the viewer’s head. The Fethard Christ has an elongated torso. The distance between the hips and knees is quite short, while the length of the calves is fairly naturalistic. When the viewer stands at the same level as the carving these proportions seem odd, however if the figure were placed above the viewer’s eye-line the torso would appear shorter due to visual foreshortening. The short length of the upper legs of the seated figure would help to keep the knees from blocking the viewer’s sight of the body, and the more natural length of the calves – the portion of the carving most directly in the viewer’s line of sight – would appear completely in keeping with the rest of the carving when the torso was shortened with perspective. This technique was known from the late thirteenth century in Italy in the work of Giovanni Pisano, and was frequently used by Donatello in the fifteenth century. 773

Additional evidence that the Fethard Christ may indeed have been placed at such a height is found in the right foot. This foot is the lowest portion of the Christ figure and closest to the viewer in space, and it is much worn –

772 Unknown to Rev. Canon J.J. Ryan, 12 Mar 1948, National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

as if from touching or rubbing (Fig. 222). If the figure was placed at a slight height, it is possible this foot was the only portion of the figure which the viewer could reach, and devotion to the figure resulted in its constant touching.

Comparisons

Many of the figures of Christ on the Cold Stone studied by Emile Mâle remain in their original contexts, and have been placed at such a height on top of large wall sconces. One such figure can be seen at the Church of St.-Nizier in Troyes (Fig. 223). In this sculpture, we can see the same forward placed foot, elongated torso and short thigh in proportion to the shins. These features can also be seen in a figure at Sommery Church in France (Fig. 224).

Only one other figure carved of wood in Ireland depicts Christ on the Cold Stone, the Maynooth College Christ on the Cold Stone discussed below. However the style of carving and individual attributes, including the inclusion of the skull of Adam in the Fethard carving, suggests that the Fethard figure had a different model. An example of such a model may be a sculpture located in Burgos Cathedral (Fig. 225), but bearing stamps that reveal an Antwerpian origin. The stylistic parallels between the Burgos figure and the Fethard figure are striking. Both figures show Christ seated on an upraised rock, covered by similar overly large perizonium draped

---


775 Steyaert, 174-175.
across their laps, and forming large box shaped folds as the drapery falls. The elongated torsos of the two figures exhibit a slight Gothic bend. Both carvings wear an over-sized crown of thorns and incline their heads to the left. Their faces display a quiet sorrow. Each of the figures is roughly life-size. In both of the figures the feet are in exactly the same position, with the right foot placed in front and lower than the left. The placement of skulls, inset into the cloth-covered rock, is also similar.

One peculiar element of the carving of the *Fethard Christ* does not yet have an explanation. Ribs are not carved on the rather short ribcage, instead a series of ridges radiates out from the where the navel should be placed were it carved, to the bottom of the ribcage. This strange aberration in the figure’s anatomy is only seen in one other carving yet found, the figure of the dead Christ in the *Kilcormac Pietà* (Fig. 235). The anatomy of the shoulders of the *Fethard Christ*, extant portions of the arms and the legs is well studied, and oddities in the proportions of the rest of the figure seem deliberate. Therefore, the carving and placement of these ridges must also have resulted from a deliberate decision by the sculptor, and seem likely to have been modelled after an example which he had seen elsewhere.

7. **Bibliography**: Cochran (2004), 57-66, 170-176; Hourihane (1984), 995-996; MacLeod (1947), 57-59; Cantwell (1874), 18-19; McCarthy (1874), 20.
1. **Location:** The National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

2. **Date:** Early 16th century.

3. **Technical details:**
   
   (a) dimensions: H: 124 cm, W: 51 cm
   
   (b) type of wood: unknown
   
   (c) number of blocks: Unknown, there are no visible joints in the figure, except where the head has been severed and crudely reattached with a nail and gobs of plaster.
   
   (d) dowel holes: None visible.
   
   (e) evidence of polychrome: The entire sculpture is covered in medium-brown paint over what looks like a layer of thick white paint, or “emulsion”. There may be other polychrome under this emulsion, but the thick top two layers obscure it.
   
   (f) general condition: The arms are now missing and the head had been severed and reattached. According to the museum label, the damage is attributed to Cromwell’s soldiers. The feet as well as much of the base of the figure have been damaged by rot. The toes of the right foot are gone and most of the left foot is totally missing. There is still much active dry rot in the...
figure, the wood is in need of reconsolidation. There is a long, deep radial crack on the figure’s right side from the bottom of the base to under the Christ’s posterior. Another radial crack can be observed on the perizonium on the figure’s right hip.

4. Description:

(a) head: With the figure’s shoulders and arms now missing, his head appears almost too large for his frame. Christ has sunken, ascetic features, with prominent cheek bones, and a brow wrinkled with several thin furrows. His forehead is rounded; his nose is large and straight. His lips are parted and turn down slightly at the corners. His deeply sunk, almond-shaped eyes are downcast, and slight bags are just barely indicated underneath. The whole impression of the face is of weariness and resignation. Christ’s hair is parted in the middle of his head and falls in incised waves to the bottom of his beard. Christ’s beard and moustache are incised with fine, wavy lines and the bottom of his beard is slightly forked in the middle.

(b) body: The figure’s bent neck is mostly obscured in the front by his downcast head. The back of the neck is hidden by a large, clumsy gob of plaster affixed to the base of the neck, apparently as part of the repair attempt after the head had been severed. The collar bones are thin and sharp and all of the muscular and bone structure of the narrow rib cage is articulated under the figure’s skin. The sternum is carved in a series of gentle ridges and the nipple-less pectoral muscles are lightly carved over the ribs. The figure’s stomach is noticeably sunken beneath the rib cage, and the
abdominal muscles are gently indicated. Although the figure lacks a navel, the stomach does sink in slightly where one ought to be. Low slung on the figure’s hips is the perizonium, which is carved in staccato, vertical, ridge-like folds. The perizonium is wrapped tightly against Christ’s body, under his legs and at points both revealing and concealing his body. A large tuft of fabric from the perizonium emerges at Christ’s left hip, and cascades in dynamic zig-zag and box folds down the outside of the stone on which he sits. The figure’s legs are very thin, but their musculature is indicated in detail. His left leg is positioned slightly in front of the right leg and the feet of both are severely damaged from rot, as described above.

(c) base: The base is carved to look as if it were a series of jagged stones laid on top of each other horizontally to form a bench or low wall. The long end of cloth from Christ’s perizonium cascades down the right side of the base and is carved in many box-shaped and angular folds, until it, like the rest of the base, deteriorates from rot and inelegant plaster repairs towards the bottom. The ends of both of Christ’s feet are also deteriorated and largely missing due to rot where they rest on the base.

(d) back: The figure seems to be carved fully in the round, although I was unable to get a clear look at the back of the figure, due to its positioning against a wall.
5. **Identification of the subject**: This *Herrgotsrub* image depicts Christ on the Cold Stone.

For more explanation of this motif please see: *Catalogue*, “Fethard Christ”, section 5, p. 305.

6. **Comments**:

   **History**

   This figure is currently located in the National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, which was founded as a Museum of Ecclesiology, and still maintains a small collection of ecclesiastical objects. However, very little information about the origins of these objects has been preserved.

   According to MacLeod, the figure was given to the Rev. Dr. W. Moran, by the Caddell family of Harbourstown, Co. Meath, in whose family it had been passed down for generations. They believed that one of their ancestors had saved the partly mutilated figure from Cromwell’s soldiers during the sack of Harbourstown. A plaque which accompanies the figure reads,

   **D.O.M.**

   This statue has been Religiously Preserved and Venerated by Successive generations of the Caddell Family. At the Time of the Seige of Drogheda a Party of Cromwell’s Soldiers not being able to Seize the Castle of Harbourstown, Sacked the Chapel Mutilated this Statue and Carried off the Arms which were never Recovered.

   To Preserve the History of This Statue so much Valued Sophia Widow of Admiral Jerningham and Sister of the

---

late Robert Caddell of Harbourstown has Affixed this Tablet in the Year 1891.\textsuperscript{777}

The Caddell family preserved the figure for more than two hundred and fifty years, before giving it to the Rev. Dr. W. Moran.\textsuperscript{778} Moran was a Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St. Patrick’s College, and was appointed the museum’s first curator.\textsuperscript{779} It therefore seems likely that the Caddell family presented it to him, with the intent that it would be placed in the newly founded Museum of Ecclesiology.

Nothing is known of the figure’s history prior to its acquisition by the Caddell family. The story of deliberate mutilation by Cromwellian soldiers may be true. Certainly, the targeting of the head is consistent with iconoclastic mutilation seen in other extant figures. The arms may also have been removed in a later repair attempt. Perhaps already damaged from rot and decay, as can be seen to great extant in the base of the figure, they were removed, and new arms, now missing were installed. The remnants of dowels in the cut off portions of the figure’s shoulders testify to this theory.

\textsuperscript{777} The text of this plaque is also reprinted in: P.J. Breen and Niall E. McKeith, eds. \textit{St. Patrick’s College Maynooth Museum of Ecclesiology: A catalogue of Ecclesiastical items spanning two centuries of the history of the College} (Maynooth: St. Patrick’s College, 1995), 44.

\textsuperscript{778} Catriona MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval Wood Sculptures in Ireland”, \textit{JRSAI} 77, no. 1 (July 1947), 59.

Dating and Comparisons

This sculpture appears to date to the early sixteenth century and appears to have more in common with continental artworks than with many other figures currently extant in Ireland. In particular, the modelling of the chest is reminiscent of a figure from the southern Netherlands from c. 1480-1500 (Fig. 230) and the pose, hairstyle and delicateness of the figure is similar to another example found in the church of St.-Nizier, in Troyes, France (Fig. 223), dated to about the same time. One other figure in wood of Christ on the Cold Stone survives in Ireland, the Fethard Christ (Fig. 215), discussed above.

Conservation and Restoration

The Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone is badly in need of conservation. The modern layers of brown paint ought to be removed in hopes of revealing the original polychrome underneath. The extreme degree of rot in the base of the figure should also be taken care of, and the entire sculpture would benefit from the process of consolidation. Additionally, the carving is currently stored against a concrete exterior wall next to the museum entrance. It should be moved to a more interior location to better protect it from moisture and temperature changes.

1. **Location:** Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly

2. **Date:** 16th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: about 150 cm

   (b) type of wood: Unknown, the wood is entirely covered with polychrome

   (c) number of blocks: Although there is only one visible seem in Christ’s upper thigh, the figure must be carved of several blocks judging from its size.

   (d) dowel holes: The figure is poorly lit and placed at a height. One rectangular plug is visible at the bottom of the Madonna’s draperies, and another may be seen on the Madonna’s cloak, under the falling white drapery which she uses to support Christ’s arm. No other dowels or repairs are visible.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is entirely covered with polychrome in dusty, muted colours. This polychrome appears to be modern but not recent, perhaps dating to the early twentieth century.

   The Madonna wears a pale blue veil edged in gold paint, which becomes a voluminous cloak as it falls over her shoulders and across her lap. The inner edges of the veil are painted cream around the Madonna’s face. Around the top of her head, over her veil, a long cloth is wrapped like a turban and painted cream. This same carved cloth is then drawn around the Madonna’s neck, like a scarf. She grasps one end of it in her
left hand and uses it to support the arm of her dead son. The Madonna’s gown is painted a pink-tinged cream colour. The shadowed areas are enhanced with slightly darker polychrome in the crevices. It is cinched at the waist by a cream-coloured cloth, knotted in the centre. Her flesh tone is almost dusky. Her cheeks are blushed and her lips are touched with a nearly transparent red. The area around her eyes has been shaded with brown, giving the appearance of eye shadow. Her eye brows are each single, gentle crescents painted with a medium brown paint, the same colour that is used for both the hair of both figures. The Madonna’s eyelids are lined with black paint; the line of the upper lash is heavier than the lower lash. The eyes themselves are painted blue with a black pupil and lighter blue highlights. The sclerae are white. The stone that the Madonna sits on, only visible from an extreme profile view on either side, is painted a medium grey colour.

Christ’s flesh tone is considerably lighter than his mother’s, likely to denote the paleness of death. His perizonium is painted the same cream colour as the Madonna’s turban, and a gush of bright red blood pours out of the wound on his side. A small amount of this red polychrome also falls on the top of his perizonium. Christ’s hair, beard and eyebrows are the same medium brown colour as his mother’s hair. The lashes of his closed eyes are also outlined in brown. Red blood emerges from the stigmata on his hands and feet. The modern base is stained a light colour and is not polychromed.
(f) general condition: Overall, the figures seem to be in very good condition. The wood seems solid and there is no evidence of wood worm. At the very bottom, where the sculpture meets the modern base, evidence of old dry rot is present, although the wood there feels smooth and plasticized, as if it has been treated with some kind of wood consolidation agent. Christ’s left hand seems to have been broken off and reattached at the wrist using plaster. A few, small radial cracks are present in the carving. These can be seen towards the front of the Madonna’s draperies, and two very small ones can be seen in the cloth from Christ’s perizonium which hangs in the front. No other damage is visible on the carving. The back is flat and flush with the wall. It is not possible to tell if the figure is hollowed out at the back, though one would presume, due to the size and depth of the carving, that it would have to be.

4. Description:

(a) The Madonna’s head: The Madonna inclines her head down towards her son but looks out past him, towards the viewer. She wears a gentle, but blank expression on her face with no trace of grief, and in this regard is very different from the other pietàs surviving in Ireland. Her veil, which projects out from her face, has angular edges and corners framing her forehead, like the upper half of an octagon. Her forehead is smooth, and her eyebrows arch gently, raising slightly towards the centre. Her almond-shaped eyes are heavily lidded, both upper and lower lids are carved. Her nose is very narrow, but with a high profile, and the nostrils are fully
carved. A philtrum is indicated above the Madonna’s full, but tiny mouth. Upper and lower lips are of about equal thickness, the lips nearly seem to smile. The mouth has a rather high profile in the face. The figure’s cheeks are full and her chin is small and knobby. The Madonna has a slight double chin.

The musculature of the Madonna’s throat is gently carved and her hair is visible on the right side of her face, underneath her veil. It is carved in long, deeply incised, wavy lines. The turban is carved in many overlapping folds which follow the direction of the cloth. This same cloth is wrapped around the Madonna’s throat, over her veil on the right side, and pulled behind it on the left. This cloth covers the collar of her dress entirely.

(b) The Madonna’s body: The Madonna pulls the same cloth which is wrapped around her head and throat over her left shoulder and uses this cloth to hold her dead son’s forearm, evidencing the sacredness of Christ’s body. Her chest is flat, but the bodice is inscribed with two lines, one vertical and one horizontal. The horizontal line rises to a slight peak in the centre, like the top of a high corset, and the vertical line emerges from underneath it like a seam, and ends at the cloth tied around her waist. The Madonna’s veil becomes a cloak which falls heavily over her shoulders and in voluminous box-shaped folds all around her. The carved cloth from the skirt of her dress is like-wise carved in many voluminous, box-shaped folds. The base of the figure is very broad, it almost appears as if the
sculptor had seen Michelangelo’s Pietà (Fig. 236) and recast the sculpture in a more northern mould. The Madonna supports Christ’s head with her right hand, and his left forearm with her cloth and left hand. The Madonna’s right knee supports Christ’s rib cage, but her anatomy become confused on the left side. Christ’s body falls, and he appears to almost sit on her drapery, but the Madonna’s left knee is not visible at all. The drapery on this portion of her dress becomes even more elaborate, perhaps to disguise this confused portion of her anatomy.

(c) Christ’s head: Christ’s head is visible only in profile. His nose is long and straight, and the nostrils are fully and delicately carved. Christ’s eyes are slightly sunken, and the lids are closed in death. His brows lift up towards the centre slightly, as if to convey something of the figure’s previous suffering. His cheekbones are high, and the cheeks below are slightly hollow. The flesh of his face appears to be somewhat flaccid. It seems as if the sculptor gave a great deal of attention in making the figure appear dead.

Christ’s hair is carved in incised curls and waves. A single, curling, lock falls over each shoulder. The rest of Christ’s centre-parted hair falls back, away from his face, but is held close to the back of his skull by the Madonna’s right hand, which cradles his head. Christ has a full beard which is also carved in incised curls and waves; it is pointed and slightly forked. The hair from his moustache falls long and curling becomes part of Christ’s beard.
(d) Christ’s body: The musculature of Christ’s throat and body is well rendered and extremely detailed. He is of slender build, but still muscular. Prominent veins have been carved on the figure’s forearms, hands and calves (Fig. 234).

Everything about the sculpture’s pose suggests death. The body is totally lax. The back is arched in an uncomfortable position, supported by the Madonna’s knee. His head falls backwards, only held in place somewhat by his mother’s hand. His right arm falls towards the ground, and the fingers of his right hand curl closed in such a way that it simultaneously suggests rigor mortis and the way his hands might have curled around the nails. The Madonna picks up his left arm, and holds it by the forearm, using the cloth of her turban. The wrist collapses, and the hand falls down in a lax pointing gesture, reminiscent of Michelangelo’s Adam.

The musculature of Christ’s chest is well carved and veristically rendered, except for the musculature of the stomach. As can be seen on the *Fethard Christ* (Fig. 215), there is a strange star-shape in the muscles beneath the skin, which so far seems to be without parallel elsewhere.

Christ’s perizonium is tightly wrapped and carved in many decorative folds which follow the direction of the wrapping. A long tail of cloth falls from outside of Christ’s waist, falling on the inside of his mother’s knee, and helping to conceal the confused anatomy of her left leg.
Christ’s legs seem proportionately rather short when compared with the rest of the figure. Overall, his body seems rather small when compared to his mother’s but not in the drastic, doll-like way seen in many earlier figures. It seems that the sculptor was trying to reconcile a greater degree of realism in his depiction of the pietà, with the potential awkwardness of the traditional pose. Blood pours out of the wound on Christ’s side and from his stigmata. The blood appears to be raised up from the rest of the carving in slight relief, but it is not evident whether the figure has been carved that way, or if that effect is an effect of the build-up of polychrome.

5. Identification of the subject: This image of the Pietà shows the Madonna holding the body of the dead Christ in her lap in the conventional manner. Devotional images of this type became popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and continued throughout the Renaissance.780

6. Comments:

**History**

The label in the church records a detailed local tradition, redolent of many other oral traditions associated with surviving sculptures in Ireland,

Tradition says [the Pietà] was brought from abroad by a local lady and presented to the Carmelite Church in Kilcormac, where it soon became an object of wide-spread loving veneration. When the English invaded this area in 1548 they suppressed and burned the monastery. Local

---

780 Hall, 246.
people fought a bloody but victorious battle in the church grounds in order to save the statue from destruction. It was placed in Ballyboy Parish Church, where it remained until 1650, when, as historians record, a Cromwellian army was sent from Kilkenny into the midlands, by way of Cadamstown.

Tradition says their approach was observed from Knockhill and immediately two women named McRedmond rushed down to the church, removed the statue and hid it outside in a heap of rubbish. The Cromwellians stabled their horses in the church, but in the dead of night five or six men carried the statue across the river and fields and buried it in the bog of Ballybracken. They bound themselves to secrecy, and they all died with their secret, except the last who, when he was nearly ninety revealed it on his deathbed. This man, whose name was Coady, had to be carried to the bog on a stretcher to locate the statue. He pointed out the exact spot, marked by a bush, seventy yards north of the eastern end of Derrinboy, where it had lain hidden for over sixty years. They found it six feet beneath the ground and having retrieved it, gave it for safe-keeping to Fr. Lynam, the priest in charge of the parish, Fr. Lynam, probably a Franciscan, was registered in 1704 as Papist Priest of Eglish, Ballyboy and Druncullen, aged 46 and having lived in Lisduff. He regarded the statue as a gift and when he left the district he took it with him to Borrisokane.

The news caused consternation in Ballyboy and a party of armed horsemen was quickly organized to retrieve it, even by force if necessary. Led by Rigney and Molloy and accompanied by Naylor from Killoughy with a cart, they set out for Borrisokane. There they found the gate and church locked but met with no other opposition. Having taken possession of the statue, they returned home in triumph.

Tradition says they received a tremendous ovation from the crowds waiting their arrival in Kilcormac. The horsemen formed a guard of honour in the chapel yard and their beloved statue was placed in the Parish Church...
MacLeod also records a version of this story. According to MacLeod’s 1947 publication, tradition in her day recounted that the statue came from Italy, and was imported by someone of the Magawley family in the late sixteenth century and sent to the Carmelite Church. She also states that it was hidden in the bog, but according to her version, it was not until Emancipation (in the nineteenth century) that one old man was carried to bog, where he pointed out the figure’s hiding spot.\(^\text{781}\)

Like many of the tales of survival told about extant devotional sculpture in Ireland, that associated with the *Kilcormac Pietà* has miraculous overtones. The sculpture is very well preserved with none of the decay that one would expect to see on a figure buried for sixty years or more in a damp bog. Instead, stories like these should perhaps instead be read as meaning to convey the carving’s preciousness and the difficulty and lengths that people went to in order to preserve it.

**Comparisons and Dating**

MacLeod’s recounting of a tradition that the statue came from Italy is interesting in regards to the similarities between this figure and Michelangelo’s much more famous Pietà. Although I do not think that the Kilcormac figure came from Italy, it does seem that the sculptor was familiar with Michelangelo’s work, perhaps through prints which began to circulate in the mid-sixteenth century. Several aspects of the sculpture seem to be quotations of Michelangelo’s more famous work, including the broadness of the bottom of the Madonna’s body, the

\(^{781}\) MacLeod, “Some Late Medieval figure Sculpture in Ireland,” 62.
way in which she cradles Christ’s body, the proportions of his body in comparison
to hers, his pose and the calm tranquillity of the Madonna’s face, which all seem
to reference the St. Peter’s Pietà. However the style of the carving, evidenced in
the Madonna’s clothing and the box-shaped folds of her gown, seems distinctly
North European. The figure may not be an import at all, but rather the work of a
local sculptor aware of artistic trends happening on the continent. It is also
possible that the similarities between the Kilcormac figure and Michelangelo’s are
due to the use of common models from the Low Countries.

Two other sculptures of the pietà in wood survive in Ireland, neither of
which have any documentation of their histories prior to the twentieth century.
The Museum Pietà appears to be about a century earlier than the Kilcormac Pietà
and evidence for the Small Museum Pietà seems to indicate that, although a
sixteenth century depiction, it was likely imported to Ireland during the twentieth
century. The Kilcormac Pietà has more in common with several other large scale
figures of the same topic from Belgium, including a sculpture from Sint-
Laurentiuskerk in Bocholt (Fig. 237), one from the Eglise Saint-Etienne in
Bütgenbach (Fig. 238), and another from the Hôpital Notre-Dame à la Rose in
Lessines (Fig. 239).782


782 Joanna E. Ziegler, *Sculpture of Compassion: The Pietà and the Beguines in the Souther Low
JCA-S-001: Madonna as Star of the Sea (Fig. 240 - Fig. 243)

1. Location: The Dominican Black Abbey, Kilkenny City, Co. Kilkenny.

2. Date: Late 15th or early 16th century; said to have been imported in 1645.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: about 40 cm, W: about 13 cm

   (b) type of wood: unknown

   (c) number of blocks: Appears to be a single block.

   (d) dowel holes: There is one small dowel hole in the broken stub of the angel’s

      left arm. A large metal loop is affixed to the Madonna’s back between her

      shoulder blades.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The figures appears to have retained its original

      polychrome, applied over a coat of gesso, which is visible in places where

      the colour has flecked off. The Madonna’s long hair is painted dark brown

      and the skin of the Madonna, Child, and the angel which bears them up,

      are all the same warm tone. The eyebrows of both the Madonna and angel

      are picked out in dark brown, and the eyelashes of each are traced very

      thinly. The pupils of all three are painted in dark brown and the cheeks

      and lips are blushed. The Madonna wears a brick-red tunic, the collar of

      which seems to have been painted gold, as was, perhaps, her crown,
though both are so aged and dust covered that it is difficult to tell. Her voluminous cloak is the dark blue of a night sky and scattered with painted stars in asterisk-shapes. The lining of her cloak is painted white. Both the Child and the angel have the same dark brown hair as the Madonna. The Child wears a dark blue tunic, in the same colour as the Madonna’s cloak with some kind of undergarment underneath, the long sleeves of which can be seen on the Child’s arms. The polychrome on the Child’s face is much damaged, obscuring the figure’s features. The angel wears a brick-red garment with a twisted gold collar, similar to what the Madonna wears. His wings are painted with a yellowing cream-coulored polychrome, and the small carved divots, indicating feathers, are highlighted with a dark brown stain which collects in the recesses. The angel carries a shield, which perhaps at one point gave some indication of the sculpture’s ownership, but unfortunately, with the exception of a few unreadable ghost images and flecks of cream and black, the polychrome is now missing from the shield.

(f) general condition: With the exception of some chipped polychrome, the figure is in very good condition with almost no radial cracks and only small breaks to the extended limbs of the angel and Child. The angel’s left arm is missing from just below the shoulder, but some of the left hand remains intact where it held the shield. The paint and gesso are completely missing from the angel’s nose, and the gesso shows through on his right cheek. The Child’s left arm is also missing, from just above the elbow. It appears
to have been extended up and out, perhaps in a blessing gesture towards
the viewer, though his face turns away from the viewer, towards his
mother. Most of the polychrome on the Child’s face is either damaged or
missing entirely. The Madonna has only has minimal damage. A few spots
where the polychrome has chipped off can be seen, the most significant of
which can be seen on the Madonna’s forehead and tip of her nose. A thin
crack at her left wrist can also be seen, but both hand and arm are fully
intact. There is no evidence of rot or woodworm.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has an ovular face with a high, rounded forehead. Her
thin eyebrows are gently arched and her almond-shaped eyes are
downcast, towards the viewer. The Madonna has a long, straight nose the
nostrils of which are both evenly carved. A philtrum is just barely
indicated above her small, unsmiling lips. There are small dimples at the
outside corners of her mouth and her chin protrudes gently. In profile, the
Madonna’s jawline is shallow but strong. The Madonna wears a crown
surmounted by wave-like crests and is banded at the bottom by a series of
small balls, like a strand of beads or pearls. Her hair is combed back on
either side of her face, emerging from beneath the crown. It falls in long
waves and curls down her back, falling below her waist.

(b) body: The Madonna is standing in a motionless contrapposto position, with
most of her weight on her left leg as she holds the Christ Child on her left
side. She holds the Christ Child in such a way, as to seem to be showing
him off to the viewer, holding him out a little from her body, supporting him at the back and under his arms with her left hand, and wrapping her right hand over the Child’s feet and under his bottom. The Madonna wears a brick-red tunic carved with long vertical folds over her torso, and dynamic zig-zag folds on her exposed right sleeve. However, most of the Madonna’s body is obscured by the large, voluminous cloak which wears over her tunic. This tunic is carved in deep, angular and box-shaped folds and flutters back and forth on itself at the outside hem. The angular, zig-zag folds are especially evident when the figure is seen from its right profile. The cloak completely obscures the figure’s lower half of her body and feet.

(c) base: Madonna stands on the back of an angel bearing a shield. The angel has close-cropped curly hair, an ovular face, and similar features to the Madonna, including similar almond-shaped, downcast eyes, perhaps indicating that despite the smallness of the figure, that it was still meant to hung at a height above the viewer’s head. The angel turns back on itself, as if in mid-flight, inclining his head over his left shoulder somewhat, so as to look at the viewer. He arches his back under the Madonna’s feet, has his wings spread, and bends his knees so that the soles of his feet point upwards. His brick-red tunic is crossed by very stylized zig-zag folds across the chest, just below his collar, and the sleeve of his surviving right arm, is also decorated with similar zig-zag folds. The angel clutches a large shield to his torso and the overall impression of the little figure is
very dynamic. This figure was obviously meant to be hung, in a similar way to what it is now, as it would not stand up on its own.

(d) back: The back of the figures is flattened, but still carved. The Madonna’s hair cascades down her back past her waist, and an iron loop is affixed to her back at a point between her shoulder blades. Local belief is that the figure was grappled to the main mast of the ship that brought the papal nuncio, Rinuccini, to Ireland in 1645.

(e) Christ Child: The Child is held by the Madonna, out away from her body, and he twists in space, echoing the dynamism of the angel below, and in strong contrast to the solid, static pose of the Madonna. His right knee points out while he twists himself to look back at his mother’s face. His right arm is bent at the elbow, as he holds his hand to his stomach. He seems to have gestured up and out with his left arm, which is now missing from above the elbow. The Child, like the angel below, wears his hair in close cropped curls. Unfortunately, little can be told about the Child’s face as it is much damaged. Most of the polychrome from his little face is missing, which greatly obscures his features. The Child is very small in proportion to its mother.

5. Identification of the subject: The Dominicans in Kilkenny believe this to be an image of the Madonna as *Stella Maris*, or Star of the Sea, a popular title for the Virgin Mary by sea-faring people and coastal communities. This title derives from the Hebrew name of the Madonna, *Miryam*, which at times was interpreted as a
compound word, *mir-yam, yam* meaning ‘sea’ in Hebrew (Latin: *maris*). In the Vulgate, St. Jerome translated *mir* as *stilla*, or ‘drop’, in Latin, thus making the name *Miryam* in Hebrew, *Stilla Maris* in Latin, or *Drop of the Sea* in English. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the Latin peasantry would frequently substitute an *e* for an *i* in the spelling of words, thereby eventually changing this appellation of the Madonna from *Stilla Maris*, Drop of the Sea, to *Stella Maris*, Star of the Sea.\(^7\)

Although Kilkenny is an inland community, about 80 kilometres from the shore, the attribution of this figure as *Stella Maris* is likely attributable to the story of this figure’s origin. It is believed by the monks that this statue came from the mainmast of the ship which carried Archbishop Rinuccini to Ireland. The identification of this figure as *Our Lady, Star of the Sea* is reinforced by the many stars painted on her dark blue cloak. This polychrome is likely modern.

6. Comments:

**History**

Most of the information available about the history of this figure comes from a detailed label in the case below where this figure is kept in the residence of the Dominican monks in Kilkenny. The label reads,

> By immemorial custom, the seamen of all Navies give the ceremonial salute when they pass the mainmast of their ship. They do not know that they are saluting Something [sic.] which has been absent from British ships since the protestant [sic.] reformation. They are like the peers in the

British House of Lords, who incline in reverence to the empty throne. For, what is absent from the modern mast is the figure of Christ or Our Lady which of old hung there.

This graceful image of Our Lady and her Child is a relic of that time. It is said to have been grappled to the mainmast of the ship which carried Archbishop Rinuccini to Ireland. The sturdy grappling hook is still there. And the sharply-marked style of the statue is definitely the style of the Lowlands from which the Legate sailed to preside at the Confederacy of Kilkenny. How the statue came to this Abbey is lost in oblivion. But we can draw some reasonable and prudent conclusions from the fact that his relation with the Abbey was intimate (the Prior being his Theologian), and from the fact that he ordained twenty students to the holy priesthood for the Order and the Diocese of Ossory, in the sanctuary of the black Abbey.

Archbishop Gianbattista Rinuccini was papal nuncio to the Irish Catholic Confederates from 1645 to 1649, and was a powerful and controversial figure in his day. He exercised profound political influence amongst the Catholic Confederacy in Ireland, and was used at times by Rome as a diplomat to the courts of other European countries.

Rinuccini took a circuitous route as he travelled from Rome to Ireland. He travelled slowly up the Italian peninsula, pausing for several days in Florence, Leghorn, and to be feted in Genoa. Afterwards, rather than proceeding directly to the French coast, he instead went to Paris, conducting some diplomacy on

---


786 Hynes, 21.
behalf of the pontiff with the French crown. From Paris, Rinuccini travelled to St. Germain-en-Laye, in order to attempt negotiations with the Catholic English Queen, Henrietta Marie, who had formed a court in exile, and from there to La Rochelle, where he contracted for several Spanish and Flemish frigates to be used in the Irish service. These ships were to accompany the nuncio and his party on the treacherous Atlantic voyage from the shores of France to the western shore of Ireland, and assure their safety from privateers who the nuncio feared would kidnap him and take him to London.  

Through the intrigue of Cardinal Mazarin, the chief minister of France and Father O’Hartigan, an Irish priest at the French court, Archbishop Rinuccini was unable to get any of the ships for which he had arranged, and instead had to make the voyage on a single frigate, which was then at dock in Nantes, San Pietro, said by Rinuccini in his letters to have originated in the Loire. Hynes describes the San Pietro as a very well-armed ship, with twelve iron canons below deck, twelve bronze canons above, 4000 swords and muskets, 2000 pike heads and 300 pistols, all to be used in the Confederate cause.

That this small figure of the Madonna as Star of the Sea is associated with Rinuccini’s sea-voyage from La Rochelle to Kenmare, in Ireland, could have been personally very significant to the nuncio. According to Ó hAnnracháin, Rinuccini

---


790 Hynes, 30.
was justifiably worried about the dangerous Atlantic sea-passage. He eventually
had to be ordered out of France by Rome.Ó hAnnracháin states,

The marine voyage came close to fulfilling his worst
expectations. He was seven days at sea, during which time
he was unable to sleep owing to a combination of
seasickness and terror. For two days his small frigate was
chased by a much larger protestant privateer and the nuncio
was well aware that he faced immediate death or
incarceration if the pursuit proved successful. Quite apart
from fear and the Atlantic’s ungentle embrace, he was in
very poor health. On his arrival in the French capital he had
been stricken by a bad fever which had confined him for
nine days to the bed which he had so prudently carried with
him from Italy. He fell ill again in July, was still weak in
Paris three months later… as he entered the ship to Ireland
his ailment worsened dramatically… Having finally landed
in Kenmare, the archbishop of Fermo spent his first night in
a local cow byre, from which the beasts themselves were
not expelled.

Throughout such a traumatic passage, one can easily picture the devout
ecclesiastic setting his hopes and prayers on his deliverance by the Stella Maris,
conveyed by the little wooden devotional figure attached to the mainmast of the
ship. In fact, the evidence of the nuncio’s letters to Rome prove this to be the
case, however the figure that he speaks of is not a Madonna, but a figure of St.
Peter,

---

791 Ó hAnnracháin, 116.
792 Ibid., 117. Evidence for this is also bolstered by the nuncio’s own letters. See Aiazza.
It was noted when I ordered the frigate at Nantes, that the vessel was dedicated to St. Peter, whose gilded image was placed at the poop, and as she had come from the Loire to offer herself to me as it were, I hailed it as an omen that the Head of the Church on whom all missions depend, and who had inspired His Holiness to arrange and undertake my present one, would please also to conduct it to the end, and would show on every occasion how feeble are the forces of hell compared with the authority of the Keys; and truly I see the hand of the Saint in the miraculous issue of this pursuit, because notwithstanding all the advantages possessed by the enemy ship in size, wherewith to weather the storm, and its superiority in numbers of men and of ordnance twice as large as ours; it remained from the first far behind the little frigate, and after chasing us for a hundred miles or more, gaining scarcely any advantage on us, at last, an hour before the daylight failed, the great ship suddenly changed its course and sailed away in another direction. We all sung the hymn of thanksgiving with incredible devotion, and I recognized the protection of Saint Peter, not only in the issue, but that I had maintained the greatest confidence in it, even to the end… I am convinced that in spite of the incredible trouble I took to have a strong escort, Saint Peter willed that I should sail with his vessel alone, to be my only protector and deliverer from all perils.\textsuperscript{793}

If he in fact did develop a sentimental attachment to the figure through which he focused his prayers, it is not surprising that Rinuccini would choose to take it with him when disembarking in a dangerous and unknown country, especially as he had already accredited the intercession of St. Peter with his safety thus far. However, no evidence for this exists and the \textit{San Pietro} remained in Rinuccini’s service throughout his entire stay in Ireland, making it less likely that the nuncio would have removed the figure from the ship. From the evidence of his

\textsuperscript{793} Aiazza, Archbishop Rinuccini to Cardinal Pamphili, Limerick, October 16, 1645, 82-83.
letters, despite repeated attempts to procure additional ships from Flanders, Rinuccini was never able to do so. He frequently lamented that fact and discussed it often in his correspondence with Rome.

The situation for Rinuccini in Ireland quickly improved. He was feasted throughout Munster as he slowly made his way toward Limerick and the piety of the general population made a deep impression on the nuncio.⁷⁹⁴ He reached Kilkenny in November 1645. Throughout the rest of his time in Ireland, Rinuccini was to make Kilkenny, where the Supreme Council and General Assembly of the Catholic Confederates met, his base.⁷⁹⁵

Although Rinuccini’s relationship with the confederates was frequently cold and contentious, evidence suggests that the nuncio had a good relationship with the Dominicans in general and with Fr. Terence Albert O’Brien, prior of Kilkenny and Provincial of the Dominicans, in particular.⁷⁹⁶ The label describing the figure of Our Lady, Star of the Sea describes O’Brien as the nuncio’s Theologian, and states that on December 19, 1646 Rinuccini ordained several priests at the Dominican church in a large, public ceremony, I have yet to find any empirical evidence that the prior was in fact Rinuccini’s theologian, however,

⁷⁹⁴ Ó hAnnracháin, 117.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁹⁶ Rinuccini mentions Fr. O’Brien in a letter to Cardinal Pamphili, dated December 31, 1645 describing him as “a man of prudence and sagacity, [who] has been in Italy, and is …expert in the management of Church affairs,” Aiazzi,106.
Rinuccini’s ordination of several priests at the Dominican priory is confirmed by Hynes.\(^797\)

**Dating and Comparisons**

If this small figure was in fact brought to Ireland in 1645, it was already an older figure. Figures in similar styles from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries can be found in France and Germany especially. Similar examples can be found in St. Peter’s Cathedral in Worms, Germany (Fig. 244); Ravensburg, Germany (Fig. 245); St. Aldegundis Church in Emmerich, Germany (Fig. 246); in Zussdorf, Germany (Fig. 247); in St. Egidien’s Church in Glauchau, Germany (Fig. 248); in Colmar, France (Fig. 249) and in a figure originating from Lorraine, France (Fig. 250) now the Musée National de Moyan Àge in Paris. The similarities between these figures and the figure of *Our Lady, Star of the Sea* seem to indicate the Dominican figure may be German, or possibly French, and date to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, making it already old when Rinuccini arrived in Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century.

7. **Bibliography:** Fenning (1996), 17; Bradley (1987), 271; Clifford (1975), 15; MacLeod (1947), 57.

\(^{797}\) Hynes, 127. Hynes cites his source as the Rinuccini Mss., 1752. One presumes that this means that Hynes had access to the original Italian documents, rather than the Aiazza compilation and translation, which do not contain this information.
JCA-S-002: Our Lady of Waterford (Fig. 251 - Fig. 254)

1. **Location**: St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford City, Co. Waterford

2. **Date**: Late 16\(^{th}\) century.

3. **Technical details**:

   (a) **dimensions**: H: about 35 cm

   (b) **type of wood**: Uncertain, but due to scale and fineness of carving, perhaps limewood.

   (c) **number of blocks**: Four. The Madonna and Child are carved from the same block. The base is currently comprised of three separate pieces of wood which are joined at their corners at an angle.

   (d) **dowel holes**: There is one very small hole in the Madonna’s right shoulder.

   (e) **evidence of polychrome**: The entire figure is covered in polychrome. The Madonna’s face and hands, and the entire body of the Christ Child are covered with a pink-tinged flesh tone. Their eyelids, cheeks and lips are blushed pink. Both the Madonna and Child have light brown hair, and their eyebrows are faintly outlined in the same colour, with a single, hair-line stroke each. The Madonna’s upper lash-line is thinly outlined in black and her eyes, like those of her child, are a dark, grey-blue, with black
pupils and white sclarae. The Child is depicted completely nude, but the
Madonna wears voluminous, sumptuous garments. All of the Madonna’s
clothing appears to have been covered in gold-leaf. Overtop of the gold-
leaf, intricate patterns are drawn in burgundy and black polychrome. On
the Madonna’s torso, the gold leaf is left unadorned, but on the skirts of
her gown, complicated patterns of diagonal and horizontal lines,
interspersed amongst foliate patterns and dots, all in burgundy, give the
viewer an impression of rich brocade. On the Madonna’s veil, the gold
leaf is painted over with a thin layer of burgundy paint, but much of the
gold-leaf still shows through. On top of this thin burgundy layer, intricate
scroll-work is painted in black and towards the bottom of the back of the
Madonna’s cloak, much of the gold-leaf shows through, underneath the
small black scrolls. The overall effect is of heavy, sumptuous fabric, in an
almost Tudor fashion. The base of the figure, likewise, has been covered
with gold-leaf which is topped with an intricate burgundy and black
pattern.

According to a locally produced pamphlet on the figure, three
layers of paint were removed from the figure in 1932. Below these layers
was a coating of “wax or cement like covering.”798 MacLeod recounts
that when this covering was painstakingly removed, the original
polychrome, seen here as she describes, was found underneath.799

798 Henry Peel, “A Brief History of Our Lady of Waterford”, in Our Lady of Waterford, Marian
Dear Shrine, Locally produced pamphlet, unknown date.
(f) general condition: There is no visible rot or wood-worm, but a few radial cracks can be seen. There are two hair-line cracks on either side of the Madonna’s nose, and another one can be seen on her forehead. A larger crack goes through the middle of the Madonna’s torso from about breast-level to between her knees. On the left side of the figure a crack can be seen between the Madonna’s hair and veil. Another crack can be seen in the bottom of the figure at the centre-front which does not permeate the base (which, as mentioned above, is constructed of separate pieces of wood). The Madonna’s fingers of her right hand are damaged. The pinkie-finger has cracked off and is hanging from the rest of the hand and the thumb is completely missing.

There is a crack where the bodies of the Madonna and Child meet, although they seem to have been carved from a single block of wood and this crack does not separate Christ entirely from his mother. There are also two cracks in the Child’s right leg, (which the pamphlet provided about the figure by the church mentions, it states that repairs were made to this leg). One of these cracks is just below his knee and the other goes through the centre of his foot. Fine, hairline cracks can also be seen just below the base of Christ’s neck.

---

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a broad, square face with a short forehead and high, arched brows over large almond-shaped eyes. Each of the Madonna’s eyebrows is painted with a single thin line of medium brown paint. Both her upper and lower eyelids are carved and her eyes are deep-set. The Madonna glances down and slightly to her left, her head also inclines downwards, perhaps indicating that she was meant to be looking at the viewer and placed above his or her head. The Madonna’s cheeks are broad and fleshy. Her nose is naturalistically carved with a high bridge and undercut nostrils. A long, shallow philtrum is carved in the space between the Madonna’s nose and her upper lip. The Madonna’s upper lip is much thinner than the lower one. The corners of the Madonna’s mouth lift up almost imperceptibly at the corners, creating the tiniest of dimples. The Madonna has a strong chin, soft jawline and broad neck. The overall impression of both the Madonna’s features and expression is maternal.

The Madonna’s hair is parted in the centre of her head and falls across the top of her forehead in stylized waves which are deeply inscribed. A long veil falls from the top of the Madonna’s head, becoming a heavy cloak around her shoulders. On top of this veil is a proportionally large gold crown, studded with jewels.

(b) body: The Madonna stands in an unnatural contrapposto position. Her weight is placed on her straight, left leg and her right knee is drastically bent. The figure seems to lean slightly back and to the left. From the front, it almost
appears as if the Madonna’s back is arched, forcing the figure’s stomach out past her breasts, but without giving the impression that she has a pronounced gut. The Madonna’s right shoulder seems broad, whereas the left shoulder, behind the Christ Child, appears narrow. The Madonna holds the Child in the crook of her left arm. Her right arm is at her side, but gestures forward slightly. The fingers of this hand are badly damaged, and a sceptre is affixed by a small metal ring to her wrist to make it appear as if she was holding it in her hand.

The Madonna’s tunic has many folds and gathers, but these folds do not form an aesthetically pleasing pattern, or even really to have been planned. They cling to the body in such a way as to make the heavy drapery appear wet. The seemingly erratic nature of the folds is especially evident on the Madonna’s torso. Her sleeves are long and hang loosely from her wrists. Her heavy skirt falls over her feet, just exposing the tips of her shoes. The Madonna’s veil becomes a long, heavy cloak, as it falls across her shoulders, along the sides of her body behind her arms, and to the floor behind her.

(c) back: The Madonna’s back is carved, but flatter and in much less detail. A few long, vertical folds can be seen in the Madonna’s veil which reaches to the bottom of the figure in the back. Few other details are carved on the back of the statue, as if it were not intended to be seen. In contrast to the carving, however, the back is painted in exquisite detail as described.
above and extensively gold-leafed, perhaps implying that the current layer of polychrome is a recent addition.

(d) Christ Child: The Child sits on the Madonna’s stomach, near the crook of her left arm. The Child appears to be carved from the same block of wood as the Madonna. His body faces forward, but his torso and head twists to his right. The Child is depicted completely nude, except for his crown, and appears to be a toddler, rather than an infant. The Child looks up, over his right shoulder, towards his mother’s face. His features are convincingly childlike. His little cheeks are chubby, he has a tiny turned-up nose, low bridge, and his eyebrows lift up towards the centre inquisitively. He has a strong, round chin, soft jawline and long neck. His close-cropped hair is carved in soft curls. The Child’s shoulders collapse forward, he clutches something of indeterminate shape to his chest with his right hand, it may have been a bird but the shape now is indistinguishable. His left hand reaches back to his mother’s body behind him. The Christ Child’s knees are parted and his ankles nearly cross. His right leg is lifted higher than his left leg, as if the Child was caught mid-movement. The Madonna holds the Child under his bottom with her left hand.

(e) base: The base consists of three extant pieces of wood (there were probably four pieces originally) joined diagonally at the corners. It is carved to look as if it were made out of the twisted cords of a large rope. It is gold-leafed and painted with the same types of intricate patterns as can be seen on the
Madonna’s garments. The piece of wood on the back of the figure is now missing.

(f) accoutrements: The Madonna’s crown has a thick band which fits around the top of her head. Rectangles with concave edges, engraved on the inside with vine-like scroll patterns, alternate around this band with polished jewels. Tear-drop shaped amethysts can be seen on the sides of the crown and a small, round, blue stone, like a sapphire, is set into the front of the band. The stones and gold appear to be genuine. Above this band is a high crown of gold filigree work, which is much higher in the front than in the back. The filigree makes scroll and vine patterns and sun-like decorations can be seen surrounding some of the larger jewels. Small, colourless jewels which might be moonstones, have been polished but not faceted, are set in the front of the Madonna’s crown. A large, round, yellow stone, like a citrine, is on the left side of the Madonna’s crown, and a similarly cut amethyst can be seen on the other side. Situated behind the yellow stone on the figure’s left is a large clearish stone, like a pale aquamarine. It is cut in a similar manner. Both stones on the right side appear to be citrines. Smaller deep yellow stones stud much of the rest of the filigree work.

The Child also wears a small, gold crown engraved with extraordinarily tiny patterns that one almost needs a jeweller’s loop to see. The thick band of the crown is bordered on top and bottom by a small, twisted gold cord. Rectangular sections of engraved patterns are
interspersed with lozenge-shaped jewels. These jewels are dark red and may be garnets. The front of the crown band has three vertical ovular stones that are a cloudy blue-white, like a moonstone. Underneath these are five very tiny dark red stones, like the larger ones seen on the sides of the crown band and on alternating bands of the crown’s cap. The crown’s cap consists of many bands which radiate from the circlet, meet and dip down in the center of the head, where they are surmounted by a St. George’s style cross.

The Madonna holds a sceptre that is affixed to her wrist by a metal loop which also attaches to a loop on the rod of sceptre. The head of the sceptre is set with what appears to be seed pearls and amethysts and surmounted by a tiny cross.

According to the pamphlet, Messrs. Egan, of Cork, were commissioned in 1934 to make these crowns and sceptre, which were places on the figures that same year in front of a crowded congregation. Prior to that time, the figures wore two, small, silver crowns, which are still preserved in the archives of the Dominican Priory of Waterford.¹⁰⁰

5. Identification of the subject: Although this figure is locally held to be an image of “Our Lady of the Rosary”, the figure lacks the typical iconography found in such images. It does not hold a rosary. The association between this figure owned by the Dominicans, and the rosary likely has its origins in the Dominican’s own devotion to the rosary. According to tradition, the Virgin presented the rosary to

¹⁰⁰ Peel, locally produced pamphlet.
St. Dominic as an antidote to sin and heresy. October 7, 1571, the naval victory of the combined Papal, Spanish, Venetian and Genoese fleets over the Turks at Lepanto coincided with processions by the Rosary confraternity in Rome. Afterwards, Pope Pius V decreed that a commemoration of the rosary should be made ever after on that day. In 1573, at the request of the Dominican Order, the observance of this feast was extended to all churches that possessed an altar dedicated to the rosary. Two more major extensions of this feast happened in 1671 and 1716. In 1671, Clement X extended the celebration to all of Spain (not merely to churches which had rosary altars) and in 1716 it was extended to the universal Church.

In addition to Our Lady of Waterford, three other figures attributed as Madonnas of the Rosary are extant in Ireland from the time period surveyed. Each of these figures is also associated with Dominican foundations. One belongs to the Dominican Sisters, in Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Fig. 301). One, known as Our Lady of Galway (Fig. 311), belongs to the Dominican Fathers in Galway, and the last, known as Our Lady of Limerick (Fig. 276), belongs to the Dominican Fathers in Limerick. It is perhaps significant that the three other figures are all very similar in style and seem to date to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Perhaps these figures were imported to Ireland around the time of the

---


extension of the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in 1716 and the Waterford figure, already old and venerated by the Dominicans, became more closely associated with the rosary at this time.

6. Comments:

**Early History in Waterford**

This small figure appears to date to the late sixteenth century and is believed to have been imported from Spain by a Cistercian monk, Father Nicholas Fagan. Fr. Fagan was the bishop-designate of Waterford, but died in 1617 before he could be consecrated. 803 How the figure came to the Dominicans in Waterford is not known. According to MacLeod, at some point when the persecutions of the religious houses in Waterford worsened, the figure made its way from Waterford to the Dominican house in Limerick where it was kept until 1867 when the Waterford Dominicans were able to build their current abbey. 804

The Dominican friary in Waterford was officially dissolved in April of 1541, when the house and its properties were surrendered by the prior, William Martin. 805 According to Egan, the monastery contained,

A church, a chancel and belfry, a chapel, called our Lady’s Chapel, a cemetery, close, dormitory, chapel house, library, and hall, with two cellars beneath the same, a kitchen and a bakehouse, a chamber called the little hall, with two cellars


804 Catriona MacLeod delivers a brief account of Our Lady of Waterford’s history, but without providing many pertinent citations. See: MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 125.

beneath it, a chamber called the doctor’s chamber, and a cellar adjoined to the same, a chamber called the Baron’s hall, with three cellars beneath the same, a messuage now occupied by Edward Sherlock, another messuage in the tenure of William Wyse, and another in the tenure of Robert Gybbe, eleven acres of arable, and four of meadow, commonly called the King’s Meadow, near Lysdogen, within the franchises of the city, and a water course; the aforesaid buildings were in ruins and of no value, besides the reprises, but the hall and other premises were found of the annual value besides reprises of £5 6s. 8d. Irish money. 806

Egan appears to be quoting a document but does not cite his source. The Dominican friars continued to reside in Waterford (though not at the monastery) throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. Many of the friars during the seventeenth century were trained in Louvain. 807 The Order was formally re-established in Waterford in the 1860s, and the current church was dedicated in December of 1876. 808 According to Patrick Power,

In the current church is preserved a small antique statue of Our Lady with the Divine Child; this is of oak, about a foot high, and highly ornamented. It is said to have belonged to the old Dominican Priory of Waterford, upon confiscation of which it was brought to Limerick. At the restoration of the Order here the statue was returned to Waterford. 809

This story is seemingly at odds with the account given by MacLeod of the figure having been given to the Waterford Dominicans by Nicholas Fagan in the early

806 P.M. Egan, 514.
807 O’Heyne, 63.
808 Power, 286.
809 Ibid., 287.
seventeenth century. If the statue was in Waterford prior to the nineteenth century, perhaps it passed to Limerick at the time of the worst persecutions, not immediately following the dissolution of the monastery, but rather in the 1640s, at the time of Cromwell’s siege of Waterford. Cromwell’s forces advanced on Waterford in late November, 1649 following protracted fights beginning in Dublin and making their way slowly south since August of that same year. It seems possible, knowing the inevitability of Cromwell’s invasion, that the Waterford Dominicans could have sent their most treasured possessions west to Limerick. In addition to the figure of Our Lady, an old silver chalice which predates Cromwell’s invasion is also preserved by the Waterford Dominicans, though there is no similar tradition associated with the chalice that speaks of it having been sent to Limerick. That chalice is inscribed: “Ex dono Anasta. Maddan pro Fratribus, Predic. Residentibus Waterf. Anno Domini 1631.”

**History in Limerick**

The Dominicans in Limerick also suffered heavily throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From 1607-1644, it seems that there were never more than ten friars present in Limerick, and like many of their order elsewhere in Ireland, had been thrown out of their monastery. The provincial chapter ordered that Limerick be made a general house of studies in 1641. It may be because of this status that the Waterford statue was sent there.

---

810 MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 125.

811 Patrick Power, 287.

812 Coleman, 56-67.
It was only a few years, however, before Cromwell’s troops would also attack and occupy Limerick. Dominican prior, Terence Albert O’Brien, was killed during the siege of Limerick, yet the Dominican fathers remained in the city. Other Dominicans were killed, and one, Fr. David Roche, was sent to Barbados. Even after the edict of expulsion was issued in 1698, Dominican monks continued to reside in Limerick City, and according to Coleman, they used a large room in a house as an oratory.\textsuperscript{813} Maybe it was there that the figures of both Our Lady of Waterford and Our Lady of Limerick were kept for the next few decades, until the Dominican chapel on Fish Lane in Limerick was able to be opened. About this chapel, Carbery writes,

\begin{quote}
About 1735, they settled down immediately at the rere [sic.] of a house belonging to the Roche family, in Mary Street. Here, they built a chapel, over which they made a dwelling, or small convent, the entrance to which was in Fish Lane. It was called the Friary of Fish Lane. This chapel was erected immediately behind Mr Roche’s house, and as it were, under cover of the same, as can be seen at the present day. Doubtless this was arranged for the purpose of escaping the rigour of penal laws, at that time in full force. The chapel was a parallelogram about sixty feet long, and thirty broad. It was decorated in rather good taste. There were galleries all round, supported by accurately elaborated Corinthian pillars. The altar consisted of an entablature supported by columns of the same style. The painting over the altar was a crucifixion.\textsuperscript{814}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{813} Ibid., 56-57.

\textsuperscript{814} Dr. James Carbery, O.P., Bishop of Hamilton, Ontario and former prior of the Dominican monastery in Limerick, writing in the nineteenth century (death date 1887), Chronological Account of the Dominican Convent, Limerick, (Limerick, 1867).
Although, Carbery’s account makes no mention of *Our Lady of Waterford*, he does go on to give a lengthy account of *Our Lady of Limerick* in the Fish Lane Chapel. This does not, however, rule out the possibility that the figure of *Our Lady of Waterford* was is the possession of the Limerick Dominicans in the eighteenth century, only that Carbery did know or did not find it worth remarking on.

The consecration of the current Dominican church in Limerick occurred on July 6, 1816,\(^815\) and one presumes that the figure of *Our Lady of Waterford* would have also been moved to the new church and residence at this time by the Limerick Dominicans. A few decades later at the restoration of the order in Waterford, *Our Lady of Waterford* was returned to the community there.\(^816\)

**Dating and Comparisons**

Catriona MacLeod states that *Our Lady of Waterford* is a Spanish figure of the Seville school. Certainly this is in keeping with the tradition cited by MacLeod that the figure was brought back from Spain for the Waterford Dominicans by the Cistercian monk, Fr. Nicholas Fagan.\(^817\) Several comparisons with Spanish sculpture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to *Our Lady of Waterford* can certainly be made. A figure of the *Virgen del Socorro* (Fig. 255) in the Church of the Jesuit fathers in Toledo by Germán López holds an expressive

\(^815\) Coleman , 59.

\(^816\) Power, 287.

\(^817\) MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century”, 125.
Christ Child in a similar light way, as can be seen in the Waterford figure. The Child is depicted completely nude and the Madonna is similarly dressed in sumptuous fabrics, however the much larger figure by López is more expressive, and the garments billow in a baroque manner, evidencing its later date. Another figure by López, this one of St. Anne (Fig. 256) bears a greater physical resemblance to the Waterford Madonna. Their clothing styles and veils, even the broadness of the faces and sturdy necks are similar, though yet again, the degree of movement is much greater in the López figure.\textsuperscript{818} An earlier figure of the Virgin (Fig. 145), by Alonsa Cano and Pablo Legot is similar in attitude to \textit{Our Lady of Waterford}. Both depict serious, stoic Madonnas, clothed in rich, heavy fabrics with veils hold onto to their nude, naturally carved children.

Another likely possibility for the provenance of this figure is that it could have come from Louvain, where a convent of Irish Dominican friars was established in the early seventeenth century. This monastery, the Convent of the Holy Cross, was established for the training and preservation of Irish Dominicans away from the worst persecutions of the Suppression. Nearly all of the Irish Dominicans in the seventeenth century were trained in Louvain, and trips between Belgium and Ireland were frequent.\textsuperscript{819} Wooden devotional sculpture from seventeenth century Belgium and Spain are very similar, owing to the strong cross-cultural influence brought about by Spanish rule of a large portion of the Low Countries from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

\textsuperscript{818} Juan Nicolau Castro, \textit{Escultura Toledana Del Siglo XVIII} (Toledo: Instituto Provincial De Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos Diputacion Provincial de Toledo, 1991), 224-225.

\textsuperscript{819} O’Heyne, 277. Similar relationships also existed between Cistercian and Franciscan monasteries in Louvain and Ireland.
7. Bibliography: Peel (undated pamphlet); Duignan and Killanin (1967), 456; MacLeod (1947), 125; P. Power, (1937), 286.

JCA-S-003: Harbison Infant Christ (Fig. 258 - Fig. 260)

1. Location: The Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare

2. Date: Late 16th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: 42.3 cm, W: 19.6 cm

   (b) type of wood: Walnut

   (c) number of blocks: Currently one. Originally the figure would have been
       attached to a sculpture of the Madonna. Based on the hack marks on the
       Infant Christ, it was originally carved from the same block of wood as his
       mother.

   (d) dowel holes: There is a hole at about waist level with a metal rod which
       attaches to the base on which the figure is displayed. There is also a metal
       hook attached by two screws between the statue’s shoulder blades.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: Traces of a flesh colour can still be seen on the face,
       neck and legs and the outlines of the Child’s pupils and irises can still be
       seen dimly on the eyes. He looks off to his right. In the folds of his

820 Peter Harbison, “A 16th Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” in North Munster
garment, there are the remnants of a thick off-white colour, which could be either gesso or emulsion. There is a slight shine, perhaps glittery, that could be the remnants of gold leaf on the left knee of the Child. Some traces of a beige colour can be seen on the Child’s robes.

(f) general condition: The Child would have once been attached to a now-missing figure of the Madonna. There is no evidence of rot or woodworm. The curl in the middle of the Child’s forehead is worn away, as if by touching. The front portion of the Child’s feet are also missing the right foot, which projects forward, is also worn smooth whereas the back, left foot appears to have been cut-off. Christ’s arms have been hacked off cleanly. The sculpture has a few small radial cracks. There is one on the right side of the Child’s head which cuts through his curls to just in front of his ear. There is another radial crack on the figure’s neck on this same side. There are two other cracks on the back of the left side of the Child’s head and two long cracks running the length of the torso on the left side.

4. Description:

(a) head: The carving of the Christ Child’s head is very detailed. His features are Romanized and his hair is carved in swirling curls. The Child has a high, gently sloping forehead and subtly carved eyebrows. The ears are carved in great detail. His eyes are double lidded, deep set, wide open and glance off to the right. Christ’s nose is very prominent and straight with clearly defined nostrils. There is a very subtle indication of labial folds, the cheeks are very chubby and nearly seem to form jowls when the Child is
viewed in profile. He has a clearly carved philtrum above very distinctive lips. The upper lip is larger than the lower lip and carved in a wide “cupid’s-bow”. The bottom lip is thinner and rather straight. The Child has a knobby chin with a pronounced dimple. The neck is proportionally long and pillar-like; the musculature of the throat is not carved.

(b) body: The Christ Child wears a wide-banded collar. His arms are both cut off before the shoulder making his upper body appear very narrow. Below the collar, the Child’s garment falls in long, deeply carved vertical folds, the centre of which meets in a V-shape between his widely spread knees. The cloth of his robe lies smoothly across the tops of his thighs and then falls in clearly defined vertical folds from his knees and between his legs. The bottom hem of Christ’s garment seems to have more movement than the rest of the figure, there is a swirl to the portion of cloth between his ankles, as if he has just moved his right foot forward. Both feet are heavily damaged.

(c) base: The base appears to be much more modern than the figure. It is comprised as a flat wooden board with another small block of wood propped up under the Child’s back, left foot. The figure is attached to the base via a long metal rod that extends from the back of the base up to the small of the figure’s back, where it is inserted into a hole there.
(d) back: The Child’s back is carved in full detail down to where his bottom would have presumably been supported by his mother’s arm. From that point lower the carving has been totally hacked away in short chop marks, presumably to separate it from a Madonna figure.

5. **Identification of the subject:** This sculpture depicts a young child, seated and wearing a tunic. It likely depicts the Christ Child and seems to have come from a larger statue, depicting the Madonna and Child. From the style of the carving and areas of evident damage from where the carving of the Child was separated from that of his mother, it appears that the no-longer extant figure of the Madonna was likely standing and perhaps cradled the Child in her right arm.

6. **Comments:**

**Dating and Comparisons**

This small figure of the Christ Child belongs to Mrs. Sheelagh Harbison, of Inchiquin, Co. Clare. It is currently on loan to the Ennis Museum, in Ennis, Co. Clare. Mrs. Harbison is also the mother of art historian Peter Harbison. According to Prof. Harbison, local tradition held that the figure was found in a sand dune along the beaches of Liscannor, Co. Clare or perhaps from Spanish Point, Co. Clare, and that it was believed to have come from one of the wrecks of the Spanish Armada in 1588.\(^{821}\) Certainly the style of the figure seems to be continental, and Harbison’s comparisons of the small Christ Child to Spanish and Italian work of the mid-to-late sixteenth centuries seems apt. A figure of the

---

Madonna and Child, by Jerónimo Hernández de Estrada (Fig. 261), from the late sixteenth century, shows a Child with similar facial features and pose as the Harbison Infant Christ. This figure may give some indication of what the now missing figure of the Madonna, to which the Harbison Infant Christ was once attached, might have looked like. Another sculpture, this of a Standing Infant Christ by Juan Martínez Montanéz (Fig. 262) from the early seventeenth century also shares many common facial features with the Harbison Infant Christ.

History

Colonel John Macnamara of Corofin, Co. Clare had acquired the statue from his brother, George Unthank Macnamara, who died in 1919. 822 Following his death, the sculpture passes into Col. John Macnamara’s custody, who owned it until his death in 1932. When the colonel’s widow, Gertrude Macnamara, died in 1967 the figure passed into the possession of her niece, Sheelagh Harbison, who still owns it today. Nothing definite is known about the figure’s history prior to about 1905.

The association of this figure with the Spanish Armada is possible, if not entirely plausible. Many more objects from this period have been associated with the Spanish Armada by later generations than could possibly have come from those ships. There is however, one recorded instance of an Armada ship making

822 According to Prof. Harbison’s article, Colonel John Macnamara’s brother “…was the well-known antiquary George U. Macnamara, but the statue is not, to my knowledge, mentioned in any of the latter’s writings, nor did George’s son, Donough, know anything further about it.” Colonel John Macnamara was the husband of Prof. Harbison’s maternal great-aunt, Gertrude Macnamara. Harbison, “A Sixteenth Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” 37.
landfall near Liscannor. In September of 1588, sails of the Armada were seen from the Cliffs of Moher and were reported to the local sheriff, Boethius MacClancy. MacClancy, according to the Calendar of State Papers, immediately set out to prevent any of the Spaniards from coming ashore, and spent the night near O’Brien’s Castle in Liscannor. In the morning, a small boat came ashore from the Armada, and the persons aboard begged for water and supplies, but instead MacClancy arrested them. One man managed to escape and return to his ship, while the other was taken to the Protestant bishop of Kildare for questioning. His name was Pedro Battista and his ship was the Zuniga. The Zuniga’s crew was eventually able to obtain food and water by force, and finally left the bay on 12th September, 1588, a week after its arrival. This is the only recorded instance of the Spanish Armada making landfall near Liscannor, and these do not seem to be ideal circumstances for a statue like the Harbison Christ Child to make its way ashore, unless it was used as part of a barter attempt. There are no recorded wrecks of the Armada near Liscannor. Two other Spanish ships were wrecked further south in Co. Clare, one in Malbay and the other at Tromore. According to Harbison,

Although these ships foundered further south than Liscannor, Westropp made an interesting observation that the body of a person drowned off Kilkee in 1888 floated northwards and was washed ashore at Liscannor Bay. It is thus conceivable that objects from the two wrecks could have floated up the coast as far as Liscannor. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that our statue could have

823 For a complete list of known Armada wrecks off the Irish coast, see: Caoimhín Ó Danachair, “Armada Losses on the Irish Coast,” The Irish Sword 2 (1954-56), 321.
come from the Zuniga or from one of the wrecked
galleasses, as Co. Clare still preserves other objects which
are reputed to come from Armada ships.\textsuperscript{824}

So, while it is possible that this figure came from the Spanish Armada, it seems
much more plausible -- as pointed out by Harbison -- that it could have reached
Ireland via trade links with the continent. As pointed out by McNeill and
elsewhere, the smuggling of ecclesiastical objects into Ireland had reached such
proportions by 1593 that the High Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes ordered
that all ships coming from abroad be searched and all “copes, vestments,
chalices, idols, crosses and other superstitious relics” should be seized.\textsuperscript{825} As
Harbison states, “rather than being associated with the Armada, our statue is
probably better explained as being one of those many religious statues which were
brought secretly to Ireland in the second half of the sixteenth century.”\textsuperscript{826}


\textsuperscript{824} Harbison, “A Sixteenth Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” 40.

\textsuperscript{825} Charles McNeill, “Harris Collectanea de Rubis Hibernis,” \textit{Analecta Hibernica} 6 (1934), 427.

\textsuperscript{826} Haribison, “A Sixteenth Century Spanish Wooden Statue from Co. Clare,” 40.
(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Currently three or four blocks are visible. The body appears to be all one piece, and the head appears as if it were carved separately, although with how the figure is positioned, it is impossible to see, even with the aid of a ladder, if this is in fact the case. The staff of the crosier is a long dowel that has been fitted into a hole in the figure’s hand. The head of the crosier is carved separately from the staff. MacLeod says that staff is modern.

(d) dowel holes: The back not visible. Crosier staff is one long dowel inserted through the saint’s hand. Also, there is a dowel 2/3 of the way down the left inside of the cloak, and on the saint’s right shoulder towards the back there is one. This one is reddish in colour. There is a small dowel on the underside of the pointing right hand.

(e) evidence of polychrome: A thick putty-coloured paint overlays a layer of dark brown paint, both layers cover the entire figure. The dark brown paint is exposed in several places, especially on the undersides of the drapery folds.

(f) general condition: There are many radial cracks throughout the torso. The underside of the right arm appears to have been repaired with plaster.
4. Description:

(a) head: The head appears to be a separate block from the rest of the body. It appears that the neck sets into the collar; however the figure is placed too high for this to be clear. He wears a tall bishop’s mitre with an upraised cross on the front of it. The bottom of the mitre is carved in three bands, the widest one in the middle. The mitre sits across his forehead, covering the hairline on all sides, except where the beard, becoming sideburns, goes up underneath of it. The mitre has ribbons that fall from the back. The saint has a prominent brow. The eyes are set very close to the brow. The aquiline nose is finely moulded and the nostrils are carved. A long, drooping moustache fills the space between the nose and the lips and joins with the beard below. Sideburns in low relief emerge from underneath the mitre and follow the jaw-line to join with the beard as well. His bottom lip is thick and protruding, the top lip is not carved. The slight space between his moustache and bottom lip make it appear as if his lips were slightly parted. The saint’s beard is carved in wavy, deeply cut locks. His whole face is long, and his jaw-line is sharp on the sides. There seems to be a repaired crack on the left side of his face, but this is difficult to determine with how the figure is currently positioned. A small triangle of his neck shows on the sides between the ribbons of his mitre and his beard. The beard is squared off at the bottom and completely covers the neck in front, and meets the collar of his robe. His ears are small and barely carved.
(b) body: The body is very stiff; no trace of movement can be seen underneath the saint’s robes whatsoever. The figure is carved in the round, although it appears that the back is carved with less detail than the front. His body is cylindrical and his robe is carved in many small, erratic folds from the collar to the floor. About 30 centimetres from the floor the garment becomes tiered. The bottom tier does not reach the ground, allowing the figure’s round, amorphous feet to protrude from underneath. There is no true base, only cylinder of wood less wide than the bottom tier of the robe. The figure’s entire body is filled with radial cracks. The cloak, which is draped across his shoulders, form two semi-circular shapes on his chest where they are connected by a rectangular strip. His arms come out from underneath this cloak in a stiff manner and evidence of a past repair can be seen underneath of the right arm. Both hands wear large gauntlets. The right hand points out with the first two fingers and thumb, to the front and slightly to the side. The other hand holds the crosier. The curved end of the top of the crosier has been broken off. The staff, according to MacLeod, is modern. What is left of the damaged crosier top is carved in a foliate design.

There are two large, filled dowel holes in the figure, one on the inside of the cloak 2/3 of the way down, and one towards the back of the shoulder, both on the left side. These may be original to the sculpture and have been attempts to repair knots or other defects in the wood. They were likely not intended to be seen underneath the polychrome. There is a small
dowel on the underside of the pointing right hand. There is a large crack towards the back on the right side of the figure – it looks as if there used to be a knot here. The putty-coloured paint is chipping off in several places to reveal earlier coats of paint in both dark brown and white.

5. Identification of the subject: The identification of this figure is problematic.

According to MacLeod, the nuns, in whose keeping the figure was at the time, insisted that it was a figure of St. Bonaventure. However, MacLeod disagreed with this assessment, based on the figure’s attire, preferring instead to identify the figure as St. Patrick. If the figure were indeed St. Bonaventure, MacLeod points out, one would expect to find it attired in the clothing of a cardinal. The figure, with his tall mitre, is certainly that of a bishop.

Compounding the identification problem, Hunt points out that many figures in Ireland attributed as St. Patrick, may in fact, represent St. Thomas of Canterbury. This is usually the case when the figure in question represents an archbishop. The crosier that this figure carries does not have a cross staff, as is typically carried by an archbishop, however, it is possible that the original staff to the crosier had a cross bar that was not recarved on this replacement staff, only the head of which is original.

---

Hunt, Irish Medieval Figure Sculpture, I, 110.

Unlike the other figures from the Holy Ghost Hospital in Waterford, this wooden sculpture of a bishop seems to be post-medieval in date. It lacks the fluttering, expressive drapery folds typically seen in earlier figures. The figure likely dates to the Suppression era, is large scale – about life size – and rendered in a sophisticated, if unexpressive, manner. If it were in fact carved after the Dissolution, it may have always been in the Holy Ghost Hospital, in the walls of the old friary, thereby lending credence to its attribution as the Franciscan saint, Bonaventure. In both the stiffness of expression, scale, and small, erratic drapery folds, the sculpture seems to have the most in common with the Fethard Holy Trinity (Fig. 265).

It was perhaps during the respite from oppression during the Catholic revival, in the first half of the seventeenth century, that the figure was commissioned. The changes in the organization and impact of the Catholic Church were radical in the time period which is usually defined as the Catholic Revival, from 1603-1641. In 1603, after six decades of dissolution and suppression and the devastating effects of the Nine Years War, what was left of the Catholic Church in Ireland was extremely disorganized and weak. However, as Brian Mac Cuarta points out,

By 1641 the Catholic pastoral and diocesan infrastructure was a prominent feature of Irish society, a trend confirmed by the prominent role church personnel took in the formation and direction of the Confederation of Kilkenny (the Irish Catholic
government which controlled much of Ireland in the years 1642-9) at both central and local levels.\textsuperscript{828}

What this evidences is that the first half of the seventeenth century was a time, despite an oppressive and contentious relationship with government and protestant authorities, of flourishing and growth. If the evidence of surviving plate, vestments and funerary sculpture is to be believed, it was also a period of rich artistic patronage, during which time people attempted to replace much of the religious material culture lost during the Dissolution and plundered during the Nine Years War.\textsuperscript{829} That only a handful of wooden figures from this period survive, testifies to the disastrous effects of the Confederate Wars and later, Cromwell’s re-conquest of Ireland.


\textbf{7CA-S-005: Fethard Holy Trinity (Fig. 265 - Fig. 267)}

1. Location: National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin (NMI: L1506C).

2. Date: First half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 148 cm, W: 70 cm

\textsuperscript{828} Brian MacCuarta, \textit{Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland, 1603-41}, (Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2007) ii.

\textsuperscript{829} Ibid., 19.
(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Two main blocks are visible. The papal tiara is carved from a separate block of wood from the rest of the figure. The now missing cross and dove would have been carved from separate pieces of wood as well. In addition to the two main extant blocks, a small cross and ball which topped the tiara in 2004 were made from two sticks, a wire, and a painted ping-pong ball.³³⁰

(d) dowel holes: There are three are visible, still with dowels in them. One is located in the top, left side of the tiara, and the other two are located on the drapery of the cloak just below the figure’s right hand. They are all about 2.5 cm in diameter and of uncertain purpose. The area in which the dowels on the figure’s cloak are placed is upraised and rectangular, as if it were a repair attempt made below the current polychrome.

(e) evidence of polychrome: This figure is covered completely with modern polychrome. The cross and ball which surmounted the papal tiara in 2004 were covered in flaking gold paint. The round dome at the top of the tiara is painted a bluish-grey. Much of the rest of the tiara is gilded, with the exception of a row of triangular crenulations, which are painted red. The carved ‘jewels’ on the tiara are painted either greenish-blue, or silvery-white. The flesh-tone of the face is enhanced with a rose-colored blush on the cheeks and lips. The eyebrows and upper lashes of the eyes are

³³⁰This cross and ball atop the papal tiara were removed from the statue in 2009 and are now kept in storage at the museum. Nieves Fernández, “Holy Trinity (Fethard), Reg. No: L1506C” Conservation Treatment Record, National Museum of Ireland, 5 October, 2009.
denoted by single lines of thin, black, crescent-shaped paint. The sclerae are painted white. The irises are painted dark blue, and each have a small spot of white paint to denote reflected light. The inside of the nostrils are painted grey. The hair, beard, and moustache are painted grey with light brown paint applied over top of this while the paint was still wet. The figure’s robe is painted white. The outside of the red-lined cloak has a greyish-blue ground (the same polychrome as on the dome of the tiara) with a design of red and yellow fleur-de-lis painted over this. The edge of the cloak has traces of gold leaf. The hands are painted with the same flesh-tone as the face and the exposed of one of his shoes is much decayed but retains some traces of the blue-grey polychrome.

(f) general condition: There are several long radial cracks in the lower half of the figure. The exposed toe and to a lesser extent the drapery in the surrounding area, show some evidence of old rot. The cross and dove, which would have been carved from separate blocks, are no longer extant.

4. Description:

(a) papal tiara: The tiara is carved from a separate block from the rest of the figure. The top of the main portion of the tiara is an egg-shaped dome painted with a blue-grey polychrome. On the left side of this dome, towards the left, is a dowel hole with a slightly upraised dowel about an inch in diameter. It is painted with the same polychrome as the rest of the dome. Below this dome is a row of small, upraised, alternating clover and rectangular-shaped crosses. These are all gilded. The clover-shaped
crosses have a round wooden jewel carved in the centre of them, painted a silvery-white. The rectangular crosses have diamond-shaped upraised ‘jewels’ carved in the centre of them. These are painted blue-green. Beneath this row of crosses is a row of semi-circular crenulations which are also covered with gold. Each of these semi-circles has a small incised circle in the centre. Under the semi-circular crenulations is a row of larger alternating gold-leaf-covered clover and rectangular crosses, which have the same jewel and polychrome patterns as the top row. The crosses in this row are joined to each other by cleft cross shafts that link to the shaft of the next cross in the row. The ground behind this row of crosses is gilded as well. Below this middle row of crosses is a row of triangular crenulations, painted red. The red polychrome of this band of crenulations becomes the ground for the final row of alternating clover and rectangular crosses. The gold leaf, jewel and polychrome pattern, as well as method of linking the row of crosses together is exactly the same as in the previous row of crosses, with the exception of one of the round jewels, which is painted blue. This final row of crosses, located immediately above the band of the tiara, is mid-sized between the larger row of crosses in the middle of the tiara and the smaller top row of crosses. The band of the tiara consists of three separate bands, the top and bottom of which are thin and upraised. The middle wider band is depressed, and decorated with large carved wooden jewels, which are rectangular and diamond shaped. The paint on these jewels is green, dark blue, and purple, the rest of the
band is covered with gold leaf. The back of the tiara is flat and it is wider in profile than when viewed from the front.

(b) head: This figure has a long head, accentuated by the high tiara and long beard. The top of the head is flat where the tiara is joined to it just above the forehead. The eyebrows consist of two painted black crescents that follow the line of the carved brow. The bridge of the nose is thin and the long painted brows extend nearly meet above it. The eyes bulge and both upper and lower eyelids are carved. Even though the eyes are open very wide, much of the upper lid can still be seen. The upper lash of each eye is enhanced with a thin black line along the edge. The sclerae are painted white. The irises are completely surrounded by the sclera, and do not touch either the top or bottom lids. They are dark blue with small white highlights to indicate reflected light.

The nose is long and ends in an up-turned tip that clearly exposes the nostrils. The end of the nose is made up of round shapes. The cheekbones are high and the cheeks are blushed with a rose colour. The entire space between the nose and the mouth is taken up by the moustache, which is carved with very fine incised lines. The ends of the moustache flow down into the beard. Only the bottom lip of the mouth is carved. The beard and hair are comprised of small, erratic hair swirls. The hair remains fairly close to the head, beginning at the temples underneath the tiara, and completely covering the ears and neck. The beard falls on to the chest and completely covers the front of the neck.
(c) body: The figure has a flat back and is very shallow. God the Father wears a hooded cloak, draped across his shoulders, and drawn across his lap from left to right. The cloak is fastened in the centre with a large jewelled clasp. The clasp consists of a large blue-green diamond-shaped carved wooden jewel encircled by small round beads painted white and resembling pearls. The arms of the figure are exposed from underneath the cloak and rest on the figure’s lap from approximately the elbows down. The wrinkled white sleeves of the figure’s undergarment are tight to the wrist. The large hands are painted with the same flesh-tone as the face and are held cupped and palm-out. The patibulum of the no-longer extant cross would have been held in the figure’s hands. Red polychrome is used to denote the lining of the figure’s cloak. The outside of the cloak has a blue-grey ground with a design of red and yellow fleur-de-lis painted over this. Traces of gold leaf can be seen along the borders of the cloak. Shallow folds radiate out from the clasp which holds the figure’s cloak together. In the lower portion of the cloak, where it falls from the figure’s knees, much deeper vertical and horizontal folds can be seen. The figure’s left knee projects farthest out in space towards the viewer. The cloak falls approximately 30 cm from this knee and then falls at a gradual diagonal another approximate 30 cm.

The collar of the figure’s white tunic is not visible underneath his beard. Across his chest, the white garment has many small, vertical and erratic folds. At the waist, the tunic flounces over where the cloak has been pulled across the figure’s lap. On the sleeves, the small folds are
horizontal around the circumference of the arm. Near the bottom around the exposed toe, there is some evidence of rot both on the drapery folds of the garment and on the toe. It is also in this general area that most of the major cracking appears. Traces of the blue-grey polychrome remain on the toe.

The overall depth of the figure, especially of the torso, is very shallow. On the right side only, beginning where the cloak flairs out to expose the arm, is a long triangular shaped bevel that extends to the bottom of the figure and angles back to where it meets the wall. This triangular bevel is covered with white polychrome; it was possibly carved this way to fit the figure back into a niche.

5. Identification of the subject: This life-sized figure of an older man, seated and wearing a papal tiara, is most likely an image of God the Father from a Trinity Group, or Throne of Grace. The cross which he would have held in his outstretched hands is now missing, and the dove – representing the third person of the Trinity – has been missing since circa 1822, when the figure was moved into a new church. It is not known when the cross was lost. Images of the Trinity became popular in later medieval art and continued to be in use throughout the Renaissance, although it was more typical to depict God the Father wearing a crown as opposed to the papal tiara he is shown wearing here. In most images, God the Father holds either end of the patibulum in his hands and the dove is perched somewhere above Christ’s head. In other modes of depicting the Trinity, God the Father instead of
holding a crucifix, holds a book with the Greek letters Α and ω (or Ω) inscribed on it, or is positioned with the patibulum resting on his knees and holding a “napkin of the souls,” often in substitution of the dove. If this figure did in fact hold a cross, the back of the cross would have had to have been notched; the knees of the figure project out further than the level that his hands are held at, and so the patibulum of the cross would not be able to extend straight across from hand to hand unless notched at the back.

6. Comments:

History

For a general history of the three figures from Fethard, Co. Tipperary, please see the entry for the Fethard John the Baptist, section 6, p. 299 and Fethard Christ, section 6, p.413.

The Visitation Record of Archbishop James Butler, 1759, a manuscript in St. Patrick’s College, Thurles, records that the figure of the Trinity was known to be in the possession of the parish priest in 1759. The first published account mentioning the figure, by J.W. Cantwell, appears in 1874. He states that there were in the church “three very ancient and well-carved figures.” Cantwell identifies the Trinity figure as God the Father and goes on to say, “Now it is within the memory of persons yet living that a carved figure of a dove was placed in a remarkable niche in the old chapel adjacent to what we call the figures of the

831 Hall, 309.
832 Cheetham, 296.
833 Visitation Record of Archbishop James Butler, 1759, MSS. in St. Patrick’s College, Thurles.
Trinity; but that in the period of transition (c. 1822) from one chapel to another it was lost…**834

**Dating and Comparisons**

Although Hourihane assigns this figure an early sixteenth century dating,835 the style of the carving seems somewhat later. The manner in which this figure is carved would seem to indicate a post-medieval date. The curls of his beard and the folds of his cloak seem too erratic, and lack the sense of decorative design found in the drapery folds of medieval works. It is perhaps during the Catholic Revival of circa 1600-1640 that this figure was carved. In 1608 a charter was issued to the citizens of Fethard by James I, authorizing a fair to be held on the three days prior to the feast of the Holy Trinity.836 This sculpture may have been carved around that same time.

There are many surviving images of the Holy Trinity in Ireland, according to Helen Roe, more than thirty such images from the thirteenth-seventeenth centuries survive in different media.837 Several traits seen on the *Fethard Holy Trinity* can also be seen of other images of the Trinity in Ireland. The tall, papal tiara with the figure wears can also be seen in both a stone panel from Galway

---


835 Hourihane, 994-995.

836 MacLeod, “Some Late Mediaeval Wood Sculptures in Ireland”, 60.

Cathedral, dated to the seventeenth century (Fig. 268) and in a panel, currently set into a wall in the modern Franciscan Friary in Galway (Fig. 269) and dated to about 1630. The manner in which God the Father holds his hands to support the cross can be on the Limerick crozier (Fig. 270), commissioned in 1418, a figure on the Rice tomb in Waterford (Fig. 271), from circa 1478-87, and on the Girley finger ring (photo unavailable), dated to the sixteenth century.

It is also interesting to note in passing that there are several surviving images of the Holy Trinity in Ireland that are seen in conjunction with depictions of St. John the Baptist and of the seated Christ, as is the case with the Fethard figures. On a tomb panel from Ballynabracky, Co. Meath (Fig. 272) dating to the sixteenth century and on a tomb panel from St. Werburgh’s church in Dublin (Fig. 273), depictions of the Trinity are seen right next to images of St. John the Baptist. The combination of these two images may also refer to the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist described in Matthew: 3:13-17, “And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo the heavens opened to him: and

---

838 This panel depicting God the Father, along with separate panels showing the Madonna crowned Queen of Heaven, and a seated Christ after the crucifixion (the dove, according to Roe is a modern carving) is currently set into the wall above the altar of St. Nicholas in the modern Cathedral of Galway. According to Roe, they were originally designed for the chapel of the Blessed Virgin or as re-redos for the Altar of the Most Holy Trinity in the old church of St. Nicholas in Galway. By 1752, Roe recounts, the panels had been removed from their original contexts. Bishop Pococke mentioned them at that time as having been dug up from somewhere in the vicinity of St. Nicholas church. Roe, 134 and G.T. Stokes (ed.), Bishop Pococke’s Tour in Ireland in 1725 (Dublin:1891), 104-5.

839 Roe believes that this panel may have come from the tomb of Sir Peter French (d. 1631) and his wife, Dame Mary Browne. Roe also believes that this carving of the Trinity is highly derivative of the other image in Galway from St. Nicholas church. Roe, 135.

840 Roe, 139.

841 Ibid., 142.

842 Ibid., 145.
he saw the spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And behold a voice from heaven saying: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

In images that show the Trinity and a seated Christ, Roe describes the program as a modified *Throne of Grace*. In these depictions, both Christ and the dove have been rendered separately from God the Father, as can be seen in the stone panels in Galway Cathedral, and on the satin banner from the Rothe House in Kilkenny (Fig. 274) although in these two cases the three persons of the Trinity seem to play a subordinate role to the Madonna as *Queen of Heaven*. The three persons are also separated out in the stone panel from the Franciscan Friary in Galway. In all three examples, we see a post resurrection Christ, seated, wearing a cloak and holding a slender cross. It is clearly meant to represent Christ after the ascension, enthroned in heaven, and yet the iconography also clearly alludes to popular images of Christ as the *Man of Sorrows*, or *Christ on the Cold Stone*, as is seen in the Fethard figures. These images, then, of Christ in glory also simultaneously allude to his suffering and sacrifice. The fact that images of John the Baptist, and of Christ in a pose reminiscent of the Cold Stone, are seen frequently in conjunction with images of the Trinity may give evidence of a programmatic reason for the commissioning and survival of the three Fethard figures.

**Conservation and Restorations**

In 2009, this figure was conserved following a system failure within its case, resulting in a dramatic temperature shift and relative humidity change, which resulted in a flaking of the polychrome and a need to stabilize the entire
figure. At that time, surface cleaning with cotton swabs and saliva was carried out and the entire figure was consolidated using a 2% solution of Paraloid B72, in acetone. Further consolidation was carried out in particular areas of the figure using a higher percentage (5-8%) of Paraloid B72 in acetone. The figure’s pigment was analysed in 1997 by student Mary McGrath, but her report on this sculpture in missing from the National Museum file record.


JCA-S-006: Our Lady of Limerick (Fig. 275 - Fig. 277)

1. Location: St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick City, Co Limerick

2. Date: c. 1640

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 178 cm, W: 61 cm

(b) type of wood: Pine. The type of wood was discovered while the figure was being repaired in 2010.

(c) number of blocks: Many blocks which have been doweled together.

(d) dowel holes: A long metal rod anchors the figure to the wall behind her from


the centre of her upper back. No other dowels or holes are visible.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The entire sculpture is covered in thick, modern paint laid over a thick layer of gesso. The same warm medium flesh tone is used on the skin of the Madonna, Child and faces of the cherubim on the base. There is a light peach blushing on the cheeks and lips of each face. The Madonna’s hair and eyebrows are painted a rich chocolate brown, whereas the Child’s hair and brows are a much lighter brown colour. The hair of the cherubim is between the colours of the Madonna and Christ Child, as if the two paints had been mixed. Their eyes are light brown, with black pupils, a thick black upper lash line and white reflective dots painted in the eyes of each. The sclerae are white. Shading, like dark brown eye-shadow, is painted from the corners of the eyes up to the brows on each of the faces. On the cherubim, this shading also extends to slightly below the eyes, making them appear tired. The Madonna’s tunic is painted a yellowish-cream, and a darker cream is painted in the crevices of the carved folds. Thin bands of gold are painted on her collar and slightly thicker bands of gold are painted at the ends of her sleeves. A double line of gold with a thicker bottom line and a thinner top line is seen on the bottom hem of her skirts. The Madonna’s cloak is painted a vibrant sky blue, also edged in a double line of gold. The lining of the clock is a very pale blue, slightly tinged with green, as if it had been produced by mixing a little of the sky blue colour from the top of the cloak in with the yellowish cream paint that was used for the tunic. The Madonna supports
the Christ Child under his nude bottom with a white cloth, edged with a single band of gold. The crevices of this cloth are also deepened with the same darker cream color that was used in the crevices of the Madonna’s tunic. The cherubim’s wings are painted bright white, and the edges of each feather is picked out with a crescent of gold paint, making the cherubim appear as if they were wearing Elizabethan collars. Below the cherubim heads a bank of clouds can be seen, making up the very bottom of the base. These clouds are painted pale blue. The colour appears to have been produced by mixing the sky blue paint of the Madonna’s cloak in with the bright white of the angel’s wings.

(f) general condition:  There is damage to the left side of the base. Part of the backmost wing is missing, but this damage is painted over. Two radial cracks transverse the face of this same backmost-cherub on the left side. The back of his head is flat. The cherub on the bottom right of the base is also missing a chunk of wood from just below his jaw-line, between his head and wing, this damage appears to have resulted from rot. In the three cherubim on the front of the base, the cherub which looks up on the left has damage resulting from rot along the edge of its wing. The Madonna’s right arm appears to have some plaster repair on the sleeve toward the back. The polychrome is so thick on the figure that it difficult to determine damage and repairs. No woodworm is visible.
4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a high, broad forehead, arched eyebrows which raise
toward the centre, and a straight nose with a slightly uplifted, pointed tip.
The nostrils are unevenly carved. The Madonna’s eyes protrude gently
from the sockets, but owing perhaps to the layer of plaster which lies
beneath the polychrome, no crisply carved lines can be seen delineating
the eyelids and lash-line. The Madonna’s mouth is very small and seems
to turn down at the corners. As with the other features of the Madonna’s
face, the thick polychrome obscures the carved line underneath. The
Madonna has a very soft jaw and chin, and when viewed from the front,
appears to almost have none at all, making it appear as if her face runs into
her neck. Her neck is quite long and is about the same width as her face.
The Madonna has long, chocolate-brown hair, worn in a slightly off-centre
part high on her forehead. The carved locks of hair curve inward towards
her face. A long, thick lock of hair falls over the Madonna’s right
shoulder, ending at about her waist. The hair is wavy and deeply carved.
Her hair covers her ears on either side of her head. The Madonna’s head
turns toward her child, however the modern painting on her eyes makes it
seem as if she is looking past him.

(b) body: The Madonna stands in a contrapposto position, with her right leg bent
under her clothing. Her torso and head twist, forming a slight S-curve as
she turns towards the Child in her left arm. He sits in the crook of her left
elbow and her fingers spread and push deeply into the cloth with which
she supports him. The Madonna gestures out to side of her body with her right arm, bent slightly at the elbow, with her thumb and first two fingers touching. Strung between the hand of outstretched arm, and wrapped around the Christ Child’s shoulders, is a long metal rosary, strung with amber-coloured beads and a brass or tarnished silver crucifix. The Madonna’s robe has a broad, twisted collar. The twists are highlighted with gold paint. The robes’ bodice fits rather loosely, with many folds and gathers across the figure’s torso. The sleeve of the Madonna’s right arm is also loose, with a tight wrist. A twist of fabric cinches her robe at the waist. The Madonna also wears a large and voluminous cloak. It falls over her left arm and shoulder and falls in fluttery folds from her elbow down to the base of the figure. From behind, the heavy cloak is pulled across her waist and is held in place by the same hand which supports the Christ Child. It falls in a series of large folds and gathers down her right side. The skirts of her robe are only visible in a gap running up the figure’s left side and on the front of the bottom of the figure, where they fold over each other like a fan where the cloth rests on the base. The Madonna’s feet are not seen at all.

(c) back: The back of the figure is flat, but because it is displayed in an elevated niche, it is not possible to determine if the back is hollowed out. However, due to the date of the figure and similarities to the two similar figures in Galway, it is likely not hollowed.
(d) Christ Child: Unlike the figures in Galway, the *Limerick Christ Child* is carved from a separate block of wood from his mother. He is shown nude and seems completely engaged with the Madonna. He sits up in his mother’s arm and looks directly at her face. He gestures inward, touching his own chest with the tips of the fingers of his right hand. His left arm projects out to the side of his body, in the direction of the viewer, with his hand turned inward towards the Madonna. The Child’s thumb and middle finger touch, almost as if in imitation of the similar gesture made by the Madonna. His legs appear to kick, the right knee is raised and the right foot hangs in the air. His left leg is also bent, but the foot rests on a fold of cloth from the Madonna’s cloak. His legs appear to be positioned this way so as to preserve his modesty.

The Child’s face has chubby cheeks and large eyes which look directly at his mother’s face. His nose is small, and his tiny lips lift up at the corners. His eyebrows are arched like his mother’s and also seem to lift up at their inner corners. His hair is very wavy and full, but his left ear, which faces out towards the viewer, is exposed. One curly lock falls in the middle of his forehead.

(e) base: The base of the figure is comprised of six cherubim emerging from a bank of clouds underneath. Each cherub is comprised of a head emerging from wings, which resemble Elizabethan collars. The feathers are scalloped and edged in gold paint, arranged in two rows underneath the cherubim heads. The feathers become larger on either side of the angel
heads, as they become more wing-shaped. The faces are very fat, as if they were filling their cheeks with air and blowing zephyr-like winds.

(f) accoutrements: *Our Lady of Limerick* is displayed with a crown and large rosary. The rosary is very long with amber coloured beads and both the centre and the crucifix in either brass or tarnished silver. It appears to have only thirteen decades. The centre is heart-shaped and the ends of the budded crucifix are trefoil-shaped. The little figure of Christ appears worn, as if from touching. The Madonna’s crown is very high in the front and comprised of what appears to be open foliate silver work. It is surmounted by three trefoils. In the centre of the crown a large flower is made up of what appear to be glass jewels, with four large petals and four small petals, with the bottom-most large petal now missing. This flower is surrounded by many small pearl-like beads. Running underneath this flower, through the foliate background is a wave of lozenge-shaped yellow glass jewels, dipping underneath the flower and rising to crests on either side. Silver flowers throughout the foliate are studded with round, clear-glass stones at their centres. The base of the crown has alternating yellow lozenges and round clear glass jewels. Two of the yellow lozenges are missing from the centre-left.

6. **Comments:**

   **History**

   Catriona MacLeod recounts an interesting story about the history of this figure. She states,

   It was brought, [the Dominicans of Limerick] say, from Flanders in 1640, and given to the fathers of St. Saviour’s in reparation for the unjust condemnation to death of Sir John Burke, of Brittas, Co. Limerick, in 1607. He was arrested while Mass was being celebrated in his house on the Feast of the Rosary. Dominican tradition holds that in 1640, the first year of their return to St. Saviour’s, Patrick Sarsfield, nephew of the condemning judge, presented two gifts to the convent – a silver-gilt chalice and the carved wood Madonna. The statue and chalice were offered in reparation for the martyrdom of Sir John Burke.\(^{845}\)

   The engraving around the base of the chalice (Fig. 278), at least partly confirms this tradition. It reads, “Orate pro anima Patritti Sarsfield et Elenorae Whitaie qui hunc calicem fieri fecerant 1640. Spectat ad conventum Santi Salvatoris Limericensis. Ordae Predicatorum.” There is, as MacLeod also points out, no reason to discount the story which associates the chalice, which also is decorated with poorly rendered cherubim, and the Rosary Madonna.

   The Dominicans in Limerick suffered heavily throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From 1607-1644, it seems that there were never more

---

\(^{845}\) MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 122.
than ten friars present in Limerick, and like many of their order elsewhere in Ireland, had been thrown out of their monastery. However, during the more permissive climate of the Catholic Confederation they were able to return and, in 1644 the provincial ordered that Limerick be made a general house of studies.\textsuperscript{846} It is to this period that the importation of \textit{Our Lady of Limerick} is said to date.

It was only a few years, however, before Cromwell’s troops would also attack and occupy Limerick. The prior, Terence Albert O’Brien, was killed in 1651 during the siege of Limerick, yet the Dominican fathers remained in the city. Other Dominicans were killed, and one, Fr. David Roche, was sent to Barbados. Even after the edict of expulsion was issued in 1698, Dominican monks continued to reside in Limerick City, and according to Coleman, they used a large room in a house as an oratory.\textsuperscript{847} Maybe it was there that the figures of both \textit{Our Lady of Waterford} and \textit{Our Lady of Limerick} were kept for the next few decades, until the Dominican chapel on Fish Lane in Limerick was opened. About this chapel, Carbery writes,

\begin{quote}
About 1735, they settled down immediately at the rere [sic.] of a house belonging to the Roche family, in Mary Street. Here, they built a chapel, over which they made a dwelling, or small convent, the entrance to which was in Fish Lane. It was called the Friary of Fish Lane. This chapel was erected immediately behind Mr Roche’s house, and as it were, under cover of the same, as can be seen at the present day. Doubtless this was arranged for the purpose of escaping the rigour of penal laws, at that time in full force. The chapel was a parallelogram about sixty feet
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{846} Coleman, 56-67.
\textsuperscript{847} Ibid., 56-57.
long, and thirty broad. It was decorated in rather good taste. There were galleries all round, supported by accurately elaborated Corinthian pillars. The altar consisted of an entablature supported by columns of the same style. The painting over the altar was a crucifixion.\textsuperscript{848}

Carbery goes on to give a lengthy account of \textit{Our Lady of Limerick} in the Fish Lane Chapel.

The only article of furniture belonging to the original church of St. Saviour that was to be found in this chapel, was the oak statue of the Virgin and Child, which was made in Flanders in the early part of the seventeenth century, and which, after the final destruction of that church was buried in the ground for nearly a century. As soon as the fathers had their new place of worship completed, they brought their dear old statue of our Lady, and set it up in a shrine prepared at the Epistle side of the altar, where it continued to be an object of tender devotion to the faithful, who were ever alive to the pious traditions of the \textit{Fathers of the Rosary}, as the Dominicans were then frequently called. It is said that many great graces were obtained from God by the pious clients of Mary, who made their devotions before this shrine.\textsuperscript{849}

This account, written in the nineteenth century, also associates the figure with Flanders in the seventeenth century, and may document (or be the source of) the tradition which MacLeod recorded in the 1940s. Dr. Carbery also recorded that the figure was buried “for nearly a century”.\textsuperscript{850} As seen in many other

\textsuperscript{848} Dr. Carbery, O.P., \textit{Chronological Account of the Dominican Convent, Limerick}, (Limerick, 1867) as quoted by Coleman, 58.

\textsuperscript{849} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{850} An older, locally produced pamphlet states that the figure was buried just before the 1698 expulsion, and that the old church was demolished at that same time. Anonymous, \textit{A brief Account of Our Lady of Limerick, Celebrated Ancient Statue in the Dominican Chuch, Limerick} (Unknown date), 6.
accounts of extant figures in Ireland, this account of how figures survived is so common as to become a trope. The consecration of the current Dominican church in Limerick occurred on July 6, 1816, and one account states that the figure of Our Lady of Limerick was also moved to the new church on that day.

Vandalism and Restorations

In recent years, the figure has been subject to a series of attacks by vandals. In 2004, the sculpture was attacked, but the only damage sustained was that the rosary was broken and the crown, which appears to date to the early twentieth century, was torn from the figure’s head. In February of 2011, only a few months after I documented it for this catalogue entry, Our Lady of Limerick was attacked again, this time sustaining much more damage. A man came into the church in the afternoon and pulled the figure down from its niche above the lady altar. It crashed onto the stone floor six feet below. The Madonna’s head sustained the most damage. It was broken off at the top of the neck and the chin was quite damaged. The different blocks of wood, which were doweled together to make the large statue gave way when the figure crashed to the ground (Fig. 279 - Fig. 282). Randel Hodkinson of J. Hodkinson and Sons Ecclesiastical Decorators, and owner of the Hodkinson St. James, conducted the repairs to the figure. He repaired the figure in the same way it had been constructed, using wooden dowels were then glued and clamped in place. Some areas had to be filled and sanded smooth to match original. The gesso paste, which covered the entire

---

851 Coleman, 59.
852 Entry from the monastery’s records, published by Coleman, 59.
statue below the modern polychrome was repaired and then the figure was repainted. *Our Lady of Limerick* was reinstalled in its niche the Dominican church in October of 2011, behind a plexi-glass shield (Fig. 283). The repairs appear to have been made almost seamlessly; the only difference in appearance is that the Madonna’s mouth appears to smile more now then it did previously.

7. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 122-123; Coleman (1902), 58-59; Carbery (1867).

---

**JCA-S-007: St. Patrick / Berchán** (Fig. 284 - Fig. 286)

1. **Location:** St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin

2. **Date:** 17th century (?).

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) **dimensions:** H: about 45 cm

   (b) **type of wood:** Appears to be oak, although MacLeod states that it is pine.\(^{853}\)

   (c) **number of blocks:** Currently one. The bottom cannot be seen as it is hidden in the case. The arms are now missing just past the shoulders. They appear to have been originally carved from the same block as the rest of the figure and there is no evidence of attempted repairs.

   (d) **dowel holes:** Two plugged dowel holes are visible, directly in front of the arm-pits on either side of the figure’s chest. Another filled dowel hole, which is possibly a knot, can be seen on the right profile of the figure,

---

\(^{853}\) Catriona MacLeod, “Mediaeval Statues from the 17th Century,” 129-130.
about 1/3 of the way up the draperies of the skirt from the bottom of the carving. A fourth small filled dowel hole can be seen on the back of the figure’s left shoulder.

(e) evidence of polychrome: There is currently no evidence of polychrome. The wood has been stained a very dark brown colour. On the centre of the flat back of the carving the bare wood is visible. According to MacLeod, in her time traces of a flesh-toned polychrome could still be seen on the figure’s face.\(^{854}\) This is no longer evident.

(f) general condition: The arms are missing just past the shoulders and the breaks are uneven. The points of the abbot’s mitre have been broken off and the break is jagged. Evidence of old rot can be seen at these breaks, however, it appears to now be inactive and the dark wood stain covers over this area. No wood worm holes can be seen anywhere on the carving. There are some dents and marks in the wood surrounding the inlaid cross on the centre of the mitre. The nose appears to have been broken off and then sanded or worn almost smooth with the plane of the rest of the face. Overall the condition of the carving is good, the draperies, tresses of the hair and features of the face are deeply carved. The back is completely flat and not hollowed.

\(^{854}\) Ibid., 130.
4. Description:

(a) head: The saint wears a short abbot’s mitre. It is composed of two lozenge shapes front and back, connected by a strip of carved cloth along the bottom edge of the hat on the profiles of the head. A cap, which covers the top of the saint’s head, is also visible in the profile views of the figure. The front of the mitre has an inlaid cross pattée, also made out of wood. The mitre sits very low on the saint’s forehead. What is visible of the figure’s forehead is smooth, above a strongly carved brow. His eyes are sunk deep within their sockets and are opened wide. Both upper and lower lids have been carved and the waterline of the eyes is incised. The saint’s cheekbones are very prominent below the eye sockets and above the hollows of the cheeks. The saint’s nose, which appears to have once been large and long, is now mostly missing. It appears to have been sanded or worn flat with the upper plane of the face. A philtrum has also been carved and the lips are damaged, but can still be seen to have been thickly carved, with a pronounced and deeply indented vermillion border on the upper lip. The mouth seems to have been slightly open, as if the figure was speaking or breathing.

The saint turns his head a tad to the right and appears to glance slightly down, as if he were meant to be displayed a little higher than the viewer’s head. The saint has copious amounts of long hair, arranged in deeply carved tresses which fall over his shoulders. The saint also has a long and unruly beard. The moustache emerges from either side of the
philtrum and the beard emerges from along the sides and below the lower lip. The beard is deeply carved in the similar long, wavy tresses as can be seen on the saint’s hair. The beard is longer on the chin than on the sides of the face and falls to the middle of the saint’s chest, completely covering the collar of the figure’s garment.

(b) body: Although the saint’s head turns slightly to the figure’s right, the body is forward-facing. His arms are missing from just below the shoulders and the stumps are uneven, as if through an accidental break. The right shoulder is slightly higher and positioned a little further back than the left shoulder, to accommodate for the turn of the head. The figure appears to have a rather large stomach, he is almost as broad around the waist as he is at the shoulders, and his waist has a wider circumference than his hips. Deeply carved folds can be seen on the figure’s torso, radiating out from underneath his beard and splaying outwards as they fall down over the figure’s stomach. These folds are deeply carved and their edges are slightly rounded, either through wear or sanding.

The saint wears a low-slung belt carved to look like wrapped cloth. The belt is positioned over the saint’s hips, below the bulge of his stomach. The folds on the belt are very deeply carved and predominantly horizontal. The belt is approximately 4-5 cm thick. Below the belt, the carved cloth of the saint’s tunic falls in gently undulating waves. The folds on the skirts are also deeply carved. He barest indication of the saint’s legs can be discerned through the carving of the cloth, which appears to bulge.
somewhat where the figure’s knees ought to be, However, both knees appear to bend slightly in an un-naturalistic manner. The cloth of the skirt flares a bit towards the bottom of the figure, and some indications in the visible folds show that the feet were once carved and may have emerged from the bottoms of the skirt.

(c) base: The very bottom of the figure is not visible, because of the way the display case is made, and so it is not possible to tell if the feet or base is extant. From a photograph published by MacLeod in 1947, it appears that at least a portion of the figure’s feet and a thick base survived at that time.

5. Identification of the subject: The attribution of this figure as St. Patrick seems to be fairly recent. The first occurrence of this attribution appears in MacLeod’s article from 1947. 855 According to a letter found in the National Museum files between John Raftery and a Fr. Breen from Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow dated to 20 June, 1944, the first attribution of this figure after its discovery was that it depicted “St. Brochan” (St. Berchán), who was considered to be the patron of the district around Clonsast where the figure was found. 856 According to O’Donovan in the Ordnance Survey Letters from King’s County, St. Berchán’s feast day was celebrated on the 3rd of December. A church in Clonsast was dedicated to the saint as was a nearby well, Tobar Berachan, where a pattern was held annually on

855 Ibid., 130.
856 John Raftery to Fr. Breen, C.C., 20 June, 1944, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, NMI file IA.539.47.
the saint’s feast day.\textsuperscript{857} St. Berchán was a poet, included amongst the great Irish prophets, by Gerald of Wales.\textsuperscript{858}

The attribution of this figure as St. Berchán is interesting, given that he wears an abbot’s mitre. On the 17\textsuperscript{th} of September, O’Hanlon records the celebration of a feast day of a St. Berchán, who was an abbot and a scribe, attributed as the author of sixth century poem about St. Bridget. In some sources St. Berchán is also said to have been a disciple of St. Patrick.\textsuperscript{859} According to Hudson, Berchán of Clúain Sosta (Clonsast) was the best known saint of his name in the Middle Ages. He was said to have lived half of his life in Scotland and the other half in Ireland. He is among the bishops listed in the Book of Leinster.\textsuperscript{860}

6. Comments: Almost nothing is known about this figure’s history, prior to the twentieth century. According to a series of letters found in the National Museum files, the figure was first observed around the year 1929, when Fr. Breen of Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow heard of the existence of a statue of “St. Brochan” (St. Berchán), then in the possession of Mr. George Waldron of Clonsast, Co. Kildare. A letter written by Fr. Breen, dated to 22 June, 1944 states,

\textsuperscript{857} John O’Donovan, \textit{Ordnance Survey Letters: Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of King’s County Collected During the Progress of the Ordnance Survey} (Dublin: Four Masters Press, 2008), ‘Portarlington, Dec 22, 1837’.

\textsuperscript{858} For a thorough discourse on the identity of this saint, see: Benjamin Hudson, \textit{Prophesy of St. Berchán, Irish and Scottish High Kings of the Early Middle Ages} (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 105-121.

\textsuperscript{859} O’Hanlon, Vol. IX, 435-431.

From what they told me it was found by Mr. Waldron’s wife’s people some years previously in Clonsast. And it was believed to represent St. Brochan the patron of the district. I saw it about 1929 and had some statues made which bore a certain resemblance... When MacLeod published the figure three years after this letter was written, she did not explain why the attribution had changed from St. Berchán to St. Patrick.

MacLeod’s account of the figure is essentially the same as that found in Fr. Breen’s letter. She states that the figure was then in the possession of Mrs. George Waldron, of Church Farm, Clonsast, Co. Kildare, and that it came from her grandmother, whose maiden name was Johnson and whose people were from Ballintogher, Portarlington, Co. Laois. MacLeod states that the figure is “no earlier than the 17th century”, which I agree with.

It is not known at what point Mrs Waldron’s family discovered the figure, although, according to the letter of 20th June, 1944 from Raftery to Breen, Raftery states that he was told by a Fr. Nicholas Cullen that the figure was found in a bog near Clonsast. This same source, however, states that the discovery happened in

---

861 Fr. Breen to John Raftery, 22 June, 1944, C.C., Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, NMI file IA.539.47.

862 In a photo-caption found in MacLeod’s unpublished master’s thesis, she refers to the figure as St. Brochan, and states, “Some of the locals insist that this figure is St. Patrick — a modern attribution.” Catriona MacLeod, “Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland until the 17th century,” Master thesis, University College Dublin, 1944.

863 MacLeod, “Mediaeval Statues from the 17th Century,” 129-130.
which Fr. Breen discounts in his reply, stating that he saw it as early as 1929.\footnote{Fr. Breen to John Raftery, 22 June, 1944, C.C., Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, NMI file IA.539.47.}

After MacLeod’s publication of the figure in 1947, there are no further accounts of it until October of 1991, when Victor Jackson, archivist of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, phoned Raghnall Ó Floinn, then Assistant Keeper of the Irish Antiquities Division of the National Museum. According to a note found in the museum file records written by Ó Floinn, Mr. Jackson stated that he had recently acquired the figure from two elderly sisters (names not provided) who lived in Co. Offaly. The statue was said to have been in the sisters’ family for several generations “and was always said to be a statue of St. Patrick”\footnote{Museum file note written by Raghnall Ó Floinn, 11 October, 1991 (Unpublished) NMI file IA.261.91.}. It seems plausible that these sisters could have been the descendants of Mr. and Mrs. George Waldron.

In the same file record, a letter from Raghnall Ó Floinn to Victor Jackson from 27 October, 1991 states that Mairead Dunlevy of the Art and Industry Division examined the sculpture and believed the sculpture to date to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. In part, she based this dating on the existence of “other figures of this type [representing] products of an unidentified sculptor of
the period." I have not encountered any other similar figures, although I have seen a photograph (Fig. 287) found in MacLeod’s unpublished files in the National Museum that shows one of the reproductions made by Fr. Breen, circa 1929. One wonders if at some point Dunlevy had also come across these replicas and mistook them for original works.

7. Bibliography: Cochran (2004), 75; MacLeod (1947), 129-130.

---

JCA-S-008: St. Dominic  (Fig. 288 - Fig. 290)

1. Location: The Dominican Black Abbey, Kilkenny City, Co. Kilkenny

2. Date: 17th / 18th century (?).

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: about 107 cm  W: about 38 cm

(b) type of wood: A sign next to the figure says “Irish oak”

(c) number of blocks: Currently one block, however it seems as if the now-missing arms were originally carved as separate pieces. Evidence for this exists the carving of the saint’s belt, which continues fully carved into the hollow of the wood where the arms would have been.

(d) dowel holes: None visible.

---

(e) evidence of polychrome: The majority of the figure’s habit and belt are covered with a green-tinged cream polychrome, which may be aging house paint or white wash. Underneath most of the polychrome on this figure, this same layer of aging paint can be seen, most notably under the jaw-line, on the shorn-off lower lip, nose eyes and brow. The entire figure was likely entirely white-washed at one time, as was common practice during the Reformation and Suppression periods. The figure’s face is painted with a mauve polychrome. The top of the figure’s tonsured head has traces of a much lighter flesh tone and a smear of a wood stain that can be seen on a nearby windowsill. The left side of the figure’s belt also appears to have been painted with that same wood stain. The tonsure is painted dark brown. The cloak is painted with a black paint which over runs its carved borders, covers areas of former rot and drips in places on to the tunic. It appears to be modern. The clothing resembles a traditional Dominican habit. Calcium deposits, or some other white substance, can be seen on the bottom of the tunic, where the figure rests on a stone.

(f) general condition: This figure, while never a sophisticated carving, has also been heavily damaged. The entire bottom of the sculpture seems to have been cut off and both arms are now missing. There is a hole in the left side of the cloak, from rot, at about the place where the arm would have been. The edge of the figure’s cloak also has large chunks of wood missing and active dry rot can be seen at the bottom front of the figure, near where the wood meets the stone base. A long radial crack runs up the front right side
of the figure from the bottom to about mid-thigh level. A second radial crack can be seen to the left side of the front of the figure’s body. Three chop marks can be seen in the front panel of carved fabric of the figure’s habit, the highest one at just below belt-level. The back of the left ear is missing along with nearly the entire right ear. The facial features also appear to have been shorn off at some point, but prior to the white-washing of the figure. The eyes, nose and lip, while not completely removed, have been sliced nearly flush with the rest of the face. This appears to be deliberate mutilation and not repair related. A story about the figure can be seen in a nearby display-case, which states that Cromwellian soldiers used their bayonets to mutilate the facial features and chop off the arms.

4. Description:

(a) head: The figure has an ascetic, skull-like face, with sunken cheeks, deep naso-labial folds and pronounced hollows, out of which the eyes once protruded. As mentioned above, the facial features have been shorn flush with each other in a deliberate manner. The brow would have once been more prominent and the ovular eyes are set in close to the bridge of the nose. The nose appears to be a large wedge-shape, with barely any indication of nostrils, however like the other facial features, the nose is cut and heavily damaged. In profile, the nose barely protrudes past the figure’s cheek bones. There is a fairly large distance between the bottom of the nose and the top of the upper lip, which is barely indicated. A
philtrum is carved and the lips are parted, as if the figure were about to speak. The bottom lip, although sliced off, is very thick. The chin below is small and pointy.

The figure has a tonsured hairstyle with a fringe of black painted hair set high on the head and continuing around the entire circumference of the skull. The bottom edge of this fringe is notched seemingly to indicate separate locks of hair. The dome of the head is left bare, as was common in monastic tonsured hairstyles. The figure’s neck is proportionately very thin with a deep hollow, adding to the overall ascetic impression that figure’s face gives.

(b) body: The figure has a very cylindrical body with uneven and pronouncedly sloped shoulders. The figure wears a typical Dominican habit with tunic, cincture, scapular, cappa and capuce. A hood can be seen emerging from the capuce at the figure’s neck. The tunic and scapular are both carved with shallow vertical folds, resembling the fluting on a column, from about the level of the cincture down. Very faint folds are carved above this level, but disappear by chest level. The entire capuce is perfectly smooth, and the cappa is smoother towards the top, with undulating vertical drapery folds becoming more pronounced, the closer to the bottom of the figure one looks. The folds are especially pronounced on the inside of the cappa, which due to the pose of the figure is also the most visible part of this garment. The bottom of the figure looks as if it has been cut off. The
carving ends abruptly at a level which proportionately seems to be just above the ankle.

(c) base: No carved wooden base is currently extant and the figure rests on what appears to be the remnants of the bases of two elaborately carved engaged stone colonettes.

(d) back: The figure is carved in the round and lacks the flattened hollow back that is typical of medieval wooden devotional sculpture. The back however is carved in only minimal detail. The hood is carved along with a few undulating vertical folds on the back of the cape. I was able to determine this through touch, but was unable to move the figure so as to physically see the back or photograph it.

5. Identification of the subject: St. Dominic, late twelfth and early thirteenth century

Spanish saint, was the founder of the Dominican Order of mendicant friars. The saint is identified here by tradition and by his white habit with black cappa and his tonsured hair style.

6. Comments:

Possible Iconoclastic Damage

This penal figure of St. Dominic was made by a carver of rudimentary skill and has been much damaged since it was carved. The type of damage done to the figure’s face, in which all of the features seem to have been sheered flat, appears deliberate. In other examples of devotional sculpture in Ireland, specifically the Killoran Madonna and Child (Fig. 203) and the Killoran St.
Joseph (Fig. 205), the faces of the figures were also shorn off in what appears to be a deliberately iconoclastic gesture. In the case of St. Dominic, the damage is not as complete as can be seen in the Killoran figures, making it difficult to determine if this damage was done with iconoclastic intention. According to MacLeod, the Kilkenny Dominicans in her day believed that the statue was seized, mutilated but later rescued. The monks then hid the figure until it was safe to display it once more.\textsuperscript{868} Amongst the Kilkenny Dominicans with whom I spoke, there was no recollection of this story, but in a case next to where the figure is displayed in the residence is a small note which reads, “The features were said to have been mutilated and scarred by the bayonets of the Cromwellians and the arms cut off at the shoulders.”

**History**

Blackfriar’s Abbey, the Dominican monastery in Kilkenny was dissolved in 1541.\textsuperscript{869} For the next sixty years there are no records of the Dominicans in Kilkenny, but they re-enter history in a dramatic way in 1603. According to Coleman,

Father Edward Raughter, a Dominican friar, assisted by some in the town, came to the Black Friars, then used as a session house, and breaking down the doors pulled down the benches and seats of justice, building an altar in the place of them, and commanded one Bishop, dwelling in part of the abbey, to deliver him the keys of his house, who

\textsuperscript{868} MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century”, 129.

\textsuperscript{869} Archdall, 372-373.
was to take possession of the whole abbey in the name and right of the friars, his brethren.  

Father Raughter and his brethren must not have been able to remain in the monastery long, however, because the monastery was taken again by the Dominicans during the Confederate occupation of Kilkenny, after which they were able to remain for almost a decade.  

In 1650, the friars again had to flee the abbey when Cromwell took over the city. Throughout the seventeenth century, Dominican friars from Kilkenny continually travelled between the island and the continent, most frequently Spain and Belgium. Many completed their education at Louvain and Burgos.  

In 1744, the Kilkenny Dominicans were again evicted, this time from the malt-house where they had reportedly been living since 1698, and were not allowed to live in community in Kilkenny again for several years, although many monks continued to reside separately in the city. One can easily imagine that it might have been during this era that the rudimentary figure of St. Dominic, evidently of loving but unskilled workmanship, was carved. In 1775, the monks were permitted to lease the ruins of their old monastery, where they built a new, small convent. They returned their church to use in 1814.

---

870 Coleman, 28.
871 Ibid., 28-29.
872 O’Heyne, 31-39.
873 Coleman, 29.
874 Ibid.
It is difficult to conduct a stylistic analysis for such a provincial and highly damaged carving. However, it is worth noting, in brief, that the columnar shape of the figure’s draperies carved in undulating vertical folds with little to no movement underneath is reminiscent of the more sophisticated carving of the *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure* (Fig. 263), dated to the first half of the seventeenth century. It is not possible to specifically date this figure of *St. Dominic*.

7. **Bibliography:** Fenning (1996), 19; Duignan and Killanin (1967), 325; MacLeod (1947), 129.

---

**JCA-S-009: Multyfarnham St. Francis / Anthony** (Fig. 291 - Fig. 294)

1. **Location:** National Museum of Ireland –Decorative Arts and History, Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (on loan from the Franciscan Libraries of Ireland as part of the exhibition, *Franciscans in Ireland*.) Formerly located in the Franciscan Friary, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath.

2. **Date:** Late 17th / 18th century (?)

3. **Technical details:**
   
   (a) dimensions: H. 61 cm, W. 22 cm (at shoulders).

   (b) type of wood: Oak.

   (c) number of blocks: One block is extant. It appears that the no longer extant wrists and hands were carved from separate blocks. The base is separate and appears modern.
(d) dowel holes: There are two visible, one in each stump of the arm, each measuring 2 cm in diameter. The hole in the right arm still holds a portion of the broken dowel. The other hole is empty and quite cleanly carved.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Streaks of dark brown polychrome appear sporadically on the back of the figure from just below the belt to the bottom of the carving. This same polychrome is found on the back of the left arm, on the figure’s belt, and on the tonsured hair. A small amount of a pale, pinkish flesh-tone can be seen around the figure’s ears and on the back of the jaw.

(f) general condition: The front of this figure is in excellent condition, however the back of the figure has been damaged by wood worm, some of which may still be active. This damage is at its worst on the back of the left arm and shoulder. The back of the hood as well as some of the large worm-holes have been filled in with brown putty. There are several chunks of wood missing from the bottom of the back of the statue, especially towards the right side. It appears that a portion of the bottom of the figure may have been removed when it was attached to its current base.

4. Description:

(a) head: This figure of a monk wears a tonsured hair style cut high above his ears. The face is expressively and veristically carved. The forehead is short under the fringe of the tonsure and the clearly cut brows are crescent-shaped. The eyes are deeply set and double-lidded. The nose is
long and realistically modelled. The figure has a wide philtrum over thick
lips, and the naso-labial folds between the nose and the corners of the
down-turned mouth are clearly carved. The jaw is short and square; the
ears are long. The hood of the figure’s habit comes up high behind his
head, only a small portion of the neck can be seen in the front.

(b) body: This solid oak figure is fully carved in the round, although the back of
the figure is somewhat less detailed than the front. He wears a full length
Franciscan habit carved in long, undulating folds and tied around the waist
with a knotted rope belt, which hangs to the bottom of the figure in the
front. The belt is carved in diagonal notches and has three groups of three
knots each on the hanging portion of the belt. On the rope around the front
of the figure’s waist two groups of three knots each can be seen and an
additional group of three knots are found on the back of the figure’s waist.
The back of the hood, which comes high above the rear of the head, is not
pointed on the bottom, whereas most Franciscan habits are. Over the
figure’s shoulders is a drape of cloth which is round in the front and long
and pointed in the back. This point falls to just past the rope belt. The
stomach swells slightly above the belt, the bulge of the thigh muscles can
be seen and the right knee projects pronouncedly. The bottom of the figure
appears to have been cut off.

Both of the figure’s arms are bent at the elbow and held out in
front of the body; the left arm is held slightly higher than the right arm. A
portion of both forearms and hands are missing. The break in the arms
occurs underneath a projection of the sleeves. There are large dowel holes in these smooth breaks, and a portion of the dowel is still intact in the hole in the right arm.

5. **Identification of the Subject:** There is very little with which to identify this figure, especially since the hands, which may have held symbols of its identity, are missing. It shows a monk in the robes of a Franciscan, implying that it may be either St. Francis or St. Anthony.

6. **Comments:** Conlan states that a figure of St. Francis and a figure of St. Louis of Toulouse were dug up beside the Adare friary in the twentieth century. There is some ambiguity as to whether this sculpture is that figure of St. Francis. It is very similar in style to a figure of *St. Louis of Toulouse* (Fig. 297), which may be the one that Conlan refers to, although neither show the kind of damage one would expect to see on a figure long buried and the style of the carvings suggest that they were carved substantially later than Adare’s medieval heyday.

The friary at Adare was established in 1464 and remained inhabited until 1578. In 1633 a respite from the suppression of the monasteries allowed the friars to return, however they seem to have disappeared again by the mid-eighteenth century. The style of the carving suggests that the figure dates to the late seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. It may have been imported from Louvain. The College of St. Anthony established there by the Irish Franciscans was one of

---


the most important centres of Franciscan learning on the continent between the years 1606 and 1793.\textsuperscript{877} The details of the circumstances under which this figure and its companion, the figure of \textit{St. Louis of Toulouse}, were found are not available.\textsuperscript{878} If the sculpture of St. Francis was in fact found buried as is said, it could not have been interred for long. Wood decays quickly under such circumstances. The front of this figure is virtually free from decay, and the back of the carving is not sufficiently decayed to suggest that it was buried since the time of the occupation of the friary at Adare. If the statue had been buried at the very end of Franciscan’s residence at Adare, which Conlan places in the mid-eighteenth century,\textsuperscript{879} there is still a lapse of approximately 150 years for it have been interred before it was found. The carving could not have remained in such an excellent state of preservation under these circumstances. This brings into question the manner in which it is said to have been found.

The other surviving figure of St. Francis / St. Anthony, called the \textit{Louvain St. Francis} (Fig. 369) shows significantly more decay and corruption. It is a better candidate for having been buried and later re-discovered, owing to the extreme damage found on the figure, however both Mailan Doquang and Conlan state definitively that both the \textit{Louvain St. Francis} and the sculpture of \textit{St. Clare} (Fig. 367) were brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard


\textsuperscript{878} Mooney states that the figure of St. Francis / Anthony was dug up in Adare in the early part of the twentieth century. He makes no mention of the figure of St. Louis. Mooney, “Franciscan Architecture in Pre-Reformation Ireland, Part II,” 131.

\textsuperscript{879} Conlan, \textit{Franciscan Ireland}, 105.
Walsh. It appears that Doquang’s information came from Conlan’s 1977 publication on St. Anthony’s College in Louvain in which Conlan states, “Fr. Walsh … shipped most of the books and some other items back to Wexford, including statues of St. Anthony and St. Clare. Problems with customs blocked their entry for several years, but they were eventually housed in a special library in Wexford friary.” Fortunately, Conlan also included pictures of the two figures, which allow us to state unequivocably that it was these two figures that have been traditionally associated with St. Anthony’s College in Louvain (Fig. 295 and Fig. 296).880

A portion of the bottom of the Adare figure appears to have been cut off, possibly when the current base was attached. The entirety of the figure is excellently carved in naturalistic proportions, except for the distance between the knees and the bottom of the carving, which is too short. Additionally, the bottom of the draperies ends abruptly, which also is not in keeping with the naturalism of the rest of the carving. This suggests that perhaps 5 cm or so have been removed from the bottom of the figure.

Upon the statue’s discovery, it was brought to the Franciscan Friary at Limerick, where it remained for some years in the library there. It was later brought to the friary at Multyfarnham, where I first viewed it in 2004. It is

currently on display at the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts and History at Collin’s Barracks, in Dublin.


JCA-S-010: St. Louis of Toulouse (Fig. 297 - Fig. 300)

1. Location: Kept in the office of Fr. Joe McMahon, Provincial Secretary, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, 4 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8

2. Date: Late 17th / 18th century (?)

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: 112.5 cm, W: 36 cm

   (b) type of wood: Oak.

   (c) number of blocks: The figure appears to be carved from a single, un-hollowed block of wood. This is especially evident on the bottom of the base, on which an entire cross-section of the block of wood can be seen. A decorative border, also carved of wood, appears to have been applied to the upper edge of the base of the figure at one point. It is now missing on all but the figure’s left side.

   (d) dowel holes: None visible.
(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is well covered in polychrome. The face is covered in a thick layer of a pale flesh-tone, with delicately blushed cheeks and lips. The eyebrows are painted in two gently curved arches, thicker towards the bridge of the nose. This same black paint is used to line the upper lash and on the saint’s hair. His irises are dark brown with black pupils and a white painted dot of reflected light. The sclerae are white. The paint on the figure’s head and hands appears to be modern.

The polychrome on the sculpture’s flowers, base and habit appears to be much older, although it is difficult to determine whether it is original. No earlier layers of polychrome are evident. The flowers, gathered in a fold of cloth near the waist line of the figure’s habit are painted cream, red and blue with gold centres. The entire front of the habit is painted in a gold, floral, brocade-style pattern on a dark background. The gold appears crackled. This same pattern can still be seen faintly on the base of the sculpture. The back of the sculpture, which is carved fully in the round, is not painted, as if it were intended to have been placed against a wall or in a niche. The figure’s toes are painted an old, pale flesh-tone with a slightly yellowish tinge, in dark brown sandals.

(f) general condition: Although a few decorative strips are now missing from the upper border of the base of the figure, the sculpture is otherwise in very good condition. There is no evidence of rot or woodworm, and the carving seems completely intact, which the exception of the strips previously mentioned and possibly an object once held in the figure’s right hand.
4. Description:

(a) head: The figure has a strong, square jawline with a high forehead and a high, large mass of curly hair. The extreme height of the hair is especially evident in profile. The eyes are deeply set under a pre-dominantly straight carved brow line. Both upper and lower lids a gently carved. The nose is rather broad across the bridge, and is high in profile. The underneath of the nose is predominantly triangular. Nostrils are carved and enhanced with paint, but do not appear entirely naturalistic. A slight indication of a naso-labial can be seen emerging from the corners of the nostrils. The mouth is small, and the thin lips appear pursed. A slight indication of a philtrum can be seen above the upper lip. The chin is broad and square. The ears are stylized to appear almost like question marks on the sides of the figure’s face. The neck is not especially long or broad and is largely hidden by the high collar formed by the hood of the saint’s habit.

(b) body: The figure wears a hooded Franciscan habit, with a cappa, tied at the waist with a cincture, or carved rope belt. This belt is carved with deeply incised diagonal notches, intended to simulate the twist of the rope. The belt is tied on the front of the figure’s right side. The portion which falls down along the figure’s skirt is tied in four barrel knots. This is an unusual number. Typically, Franciscans belonging to the first order tie their cinctures in three barrel knots to represent their three vows, of chastity, poverty and obedience. Franciscans of the third order typically tie their cinctures in five knots to represent the five wounds of Christ. I have not
come across an explanation as to why this particular figure would have been carved with four groups of knots.

The saint holds the beads of a rosary against his hip in his left hand. He simultaneously uses this same hand to support a swath of fabric from the skirts of his habit, to hold his attribute, a bunch of flowers. Both the bodice and skirt of the figure’s habit is carved in long, broad, undulating folds. His left leg is prominent and evidently bent at the knee underneath the fabric of his garment. The figure’s right leg, however, appears very straight as does his back, lending an unnatural appearance to the figure’s pose. In order to accommodate the bent leg, the saint is given an extra-thick sole on the bottom of his left foot. The bottom of the figure’s skirts are carved in two tiers, with the upper tier ending on the figure’s right side, just a little above ankle level. The bottom tier on the right side falls all the way to the figure’s toes. On the left side, the top tier ends at the toes of the elevated left foot.

The back of the figure is fully carved, although the details are somewhat flatter than in the front. A large, pointed hood is carved, as is the notched cincture and long undulating folds of the figure’s habit, which fall to meet the base in the back of the figure.

5. Identification of the Subject: This figure has been tentatively identified as the thirteenth century saint Louis of Toulouse by Fr. Joseph MacMahon, Provincial secretary of the Franciscans of Ireland, and noted scholar of early modern Irish Franciscan history. This attribution is very plausible given the regal painting of
the figure’s habit and flowers which he carried in his mantle. St. Louis of Toulouse was the son of Charles II, king of Naples and Sicily and Mary, the daughter of Stephen V of Hungary.\textsuperscript{881} He was also the nephew of Louis IX of France, and therefore is frequently depicted wearing a garment decorated with golden fleur-de-lis, which may be alluded to here in the golden vegetal brocade painted on his Franciscan habit. According to Hall, Louis is also frequently depicted with a sceptre and crown at his feet, to represent the throne of Naples, which he renounced in order to become a friar. It may be a sceptre that was once held in the figure’s hollowed out right hand.\textsuperscript{882}

Finally, I have had difficulty tracking down a published scholarly source which related the story of the flowers held in the saint’s mantle. However, Fr. MacMahon related a story to me about the saint which may account for this unusual attribute which I have found corroborated by a website owned by the secular Franciscan Order. This story relates that as a child, St. Louis of Toulouse used to sneak food from home to take to the poor and sick. Once, he was leaving with a roasted pullet under his mantle, when he encountered his father. His father asked what he was carrying, and when Louis opened his mantle, the pullet had been replaced with a large bouquet of flowers.\textsuperscript{883}

\textsuperscript{881} Francis Xavier Weninger, \textit{Lives of the Saints, compiled from authentic sources; with a practical instruction of the life of each saint for every day in the year} II (New York: P. O’Shea, Publisher, 1876), 226.

\textsuperscript{882} Hall, 194.

\textsuperscript{883} Fr. Joe MacMahon, Provinciar Secretary of the Franciscan Order in Ireland, interview with author, November 2010 and <http://www.franciscan-sfo.org/sts/S0819loui.htm>, accessed on December 22, 2011.
This figure is atypical from other depictions of St. Louis of Toulouse also in the fact that he is shown here in Franciscan habit. This may indicate that the figure was in fact originally made for the Franciscans themselves. Typically, St. Louis of Toulouse is shown wearing the robes of a bishop. Louis was consecrated as bishop of Toulouse at a very young age; he died at twenty-three years old.\textsuperscript{884}

6. Comments: Almost nothing is known about the history of this figure. There is no mention of this figure in the chronicle of the Adam and Eve friary and it is uncertain how it came to be in the Dublin monastery. It may be the figure of St. Louis of Toulouse which Conlan mentions as having come from Adare, although like the \textit{Multyfarnham St. Francis / Anthony}, it shows no evidence of having been long buried. For a history of the friary at Adare as it may pertain to these figures, please see: \textit{Catalogue}, Figures from the Suppression, “Multyfarnham St. Francis / Anthony,” section 6, p. 514.

These two figures are very alike in pose. Both figures exhibit a very straight back in conjunction with an awkward, forward-stepping \textit{contrapposto}. The folds of their draperies are rendered in similar ways as is the style of their habits. These commonalities suggest that the two figures were associated with each other in some way. They may have emerged from the same carver or workshop. The dating of both this and the \textit{Multyfarnham St. Francis / Anthony} have been very difficult to establish.

\textsuperscript{884} Hall, 194.
Fr. MacMahon suggested another possible origin for the figure of *St. Louis of Toulouse*. He stated in an e-mail to me that when the college at Multyfarnham was opened in 1899, it was dedicated to St. Louis of Toulouse, although there are no photographs or other evidence which confirms that this figure was ever there. If this is indeed the case, the *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony* and the figure of *St. Louis of Toulouse* may indeed be much later than the late seventeenth / early eighteenth century dates given here. Fr. MacMahon believes that the sculpture came to the Dublin friary between 1981 and 1990.


---

JCA-S-011: Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Fig. 301 - Fig. 305)

1. **Location**: Dominican Convent, Taylor’s Hill, Galway

2. **Date**: Late 17th to mid 18th century.

3. **Technical details**:

   (a) dimensions: H: about 100 cm

   (b) type of wood: Uncertain, as entire figure is covered in polychrome.

   (c) number of blocks: Currently three. The Mother and Child are carved from different blocks and are attached to a separate base.

   (d) dowel holes: There are two visible dowel holes on the lower left of the

---

885 Fr. Joseph MacMahon, e-mail to author, January 26, 2012.
Madonna’s skirt. They do not seem to be integral to holding any of the separate blocks together, and may instead be plugs used to mask a knot or other defect in the wood.

(e) evidence of polychrome: There is a thick layer of polychrome over a white base covering the entire figure. The paint on this figure is so thick that it makes the statue appear to be made of plaster. The polychrome appears to be modern as it covers over areas that have obviously been repaired. The robin’s egg blues and rosy pinks chosen for this figure are reminiscent of 1950s Technicolor. The skin of both the Madonna and Child is painted a warm beige colour. The cheeks and lips are strongly blushed with a rosy pink, and the hair and eyebrows of the Madonna are a painted a warm medium brown, while the Child’s hair and eyebrows are a slightly lighter shade of brown. Both have dark blue eyes with exceptionally large irises rendered on top of white sclerae. The flesh coloured polychrome on the Child covers his entire nude body. The polychrome is evidently newer than some of the previous damage done to the figure, as it also covers over some attempted repairs. The Madonna wears a white veil, a cream coloured dress (with ochre shading in the recesses of the folds) and gold painted trim at the collar. She has a robin’s egg blue cloak that has a band of painted gold near its outer edge. The lining of this cloak is a slightly pinker shade of cream than the Madonna’s dress. The Madonna stands on a small bank of swirling clouds bursting with the heads of putti. The clouds are painted the same white as the Madonna’s veil, shaded with
robin’s egg blue in the crevices. The putti’s faces are painted with the same warm beige colour with rosy cheeks and lips as the Madonna and Child, large dark blue irises on white sclerae and share the same medium brown polychrome that is found on the Madonna’s hair. These putti and clouds sit atop a wide, low bevelled base, painted a dirty sea-green.

(f) general condition: The wood is in generally good condition, with no evidence of rot or woodworm. The statue has sustained some damage over the years, however, According to Sr. Rose O’Neill, in the 1970s the Madonna was put up against the chimney wall in the chapel of the old convent. The heat caused a long, lateral crack to form from the top right side of the Madonna’s head down along her right side to the base of the figure.\textsuperscript{886} This crack is very deep, but does not penetrate all the way through the statue. The Child’s left leg has been broken off at the knee and reattached using what appears to be a cloth and plaster bandage. The flesh coloured polychrome covers this attempted repair, which is now beginning to fray. The Child’s outstretched left arm also may have been repaired at some point, although this is less obvious. On the inner forearm there is a lumpy area which might be a repair that is now obscured by the modern layers of polychrome.

\textsuperscript{886} Sr. Rose O’Neill, Interview with author, March, 2010.
4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has full cheeks, a soft jawline, and a small, rounded, slightly cleft chin. Her hair falls in a mass of waves, parted in the middle of her high, gently sloping forehead, revealing only her earlobes and falling onto her shoulders. The Madonna has heavy-lidded eyes which are downcast, presumably to look toward the viewer. Both upper and lower eyelids are carved. Her long, straight nose has a very high profile in contrast to the rest of her face, which creates a Neo-Classical look. The nostrils and philtrum are fully delineated. Her mouth is very small – no wider than the width of her nose – with full, cupid’s bow lips. She has a long but broad neck with a small fat roll as she begins to incline her head down towards the viewer. The Madonna’s veil sits high on the back of her head and wraps around to her left side and falls over the front of her shoulder.

(b) body: The dynamic pose of the Madonna, together with the swirling fabric of her dress, veil and cloak, make this figure seem as if she has only just now appeared before us. She reaches her right hand out towards the viewer and supports the Child in the crook of her left arm, holding on to his bottom using her cloak to separate the wide-spread fingers of her left hand from his nude little body. The Madonna’s veil, which sits high towards the back of her head, is blown backwards as if by a gust of wind and then swirls around her body, falling over her left shoulder, cutting a sharp diagonal across her chest and then is tightly wrapped around her upper right arm.
Her cloak also falls over her left shoulder and the voluminous draperies cascade over her left arm. She uses some of this cloth as a barrier between her hand and the Child’s naked bottom. She reaches her right hand out towards the viewer, or perhaps as a steadying motion, to compensation for all the evident wind and movement in her clothing. The falling diagonal of the cloak around the middle of the Madonna’s body mirrors the diagonal of the veil above it. The cloak falls below the waist of her dress to just past her knees. The edges of the cloak lift up slightly, as if being blown, and swirls by the same divine wind as her veil. The skirt of her dress swirls inwards creating a dynamic sense of movement in this piece.

(c) base: This Madonna of the Rosary has a double base. The first uppermost base is carved from the same block of wood as the rest of the Madonna’s body. It consists of swirling clouds and putti heads, aiding in the impression of this Madonna appearing as if a heavenly apparition, rather than actually sharing the same temporal space as the viewer. There are three putti heads with small wings emerging from either side, alternating with swirling clouds on this uppermost base. The heads are rendered in a similar fashion to that of the Christ Child, with full, chubby cheeks, double chins, heavy lidded eyes and thick wavy hair. Each putto looks out in a different direction with mouths agape, as if they are blowing the winds which swirl the Madonna’s clothing. The clouds between the putti heads consist of deeply cut spirals that resemble large cinnamon buns. These cinnamon-bun-clouds continue across the back of the sculpture,
whereas the putti heads are only rendered on the front. Below this base is a second, less ornamental, base constructed from a separate piece of wood. It is low and flat with a bevelled edge and is painted sea-green.

(d) back: In contrast to the dynamic carving on the front of the figure, the back is extraordinarily static. Although the back of the sculpture is fully carved (unlike earlier medieval figures which typically have hollowed backs) this carving is relatively flat. This would seem to indicate that the back of the figure was not meant to be seen, but unlike the earlier figures, was probably not directly hung or placed up against a wall, but rather set into a high niche, perhaps not unlike the current displays of similar statues at the Dominican Father’s Church in Galway or Our Lady of Limerick in Limerick City.

(e) Christ Child: The Child appears ready to take off in flight out of his mother’s arms. He extends both arms up and to the left while simultaneously lifting his left leg. This action both creates a dynamic sense of movement in the little figure and also helps to hide his nudity from the viewer. He sits in the crook of his mother’s left arm and is supported underneath by her left hand. The Child has chubby cheeks, heavy-lidded, downcast eyes, a weak jaw-line, double chin, and a tiny mouth. He has a prominently carved philtrum. His cupid-bow lips, like his mothers, are parted as if to speak or breathe. He looks down and to the right, in the opposite direction of the Madonna’s leftward glance. Presumably both figures are meant to be looking at the viewers from a height.
accoutrements: The statue was displayed holding a rosary, and with crowns atop both figures’ heads. The crowns were likely not part of the original design. They are attached via nails, four in the top of the Madonna’s head and one in the top of the Christ Child’s head. The inside of the Madonna’s crown is inscribed “Souvenir of Golden Jubilee of Mother Rose Blake, 1st July 1922”. Sister Rose Blake was prioress many times during her life. She served her community thusly from 1886-1889, from 1898-1904, and from 1910-1916.\textsuperscript{887} The crown is silver, topped with a high fleur-de-lis and set with brightly colored purple and red faux jewels. The Child’s crown is also silver, but not inscribed. There is a stamp evident on the cross which surmounts the apex of the crown, but this stamp is difficult to read. It appears to say “DG” followed by two open rectangles and an X, or possibly an S. This is likely indicative of the silversmith. Although I have not yet been able to discover what silversmith this stamp denotes, it is worthwhile to mention that Galway was particularly well known for its silversmiths in the eighteenth century and the Dominican Sisters owned some pieces of note, including a chalice and bowl stamped “MF 1714” for Galway silversmith Mark Fallon and the year in which those pieces were made.


In addition to the *Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill*, three other figures attributed as Madonnas of the Rosary are extant in Ireland from the time period surveyed. Each of these figures is also associated with Dominican foundations. One belongs to the Dominican Fathers, in Waterford, though this figure’s attribution as an image of Our Lady of the Rosary may post date the sculpture by many years. One known as *Our Lady of Galway*, belongs to the Dominican Fathers in Galway, and the last, known as *Our Lady of Limerick*, belongs to the Dominican Fathers in Limerick.

6. Comments:

**History**

The Dominican convent in Galway is the earliest foundation of nuns of that order in Ireland. Formed during Rinuccini’s nunciature, they were recognized as a community in 1643. These were turbulent times for the formation of a new convent. Little is known of the first decade of the community’s history, but by 1651, Cromwellian soldiers had Galway under siege. By September, the city was almost completely blockaded. Limited supplies of food coupled with a swollen population, due to the crowds of people from the countryside who had taken

---

refuge in the city, made famine a real possibility. That winter was harsh and in early 1652 an epidemic of the plague broke out. Within two years, more than a third of the population of Connaght had died.  

When Galway fell to the Parliamentarian forces in April, 1652 the fourteen Dominican Nuns were forced to flee the country, dispersing to convents all around Spain, where they remained for more than thirty years.

In 1686, after the ascension of the Catholic King James II the previous year, two of the sisters were called back to Ireland to re-establish their convent in Galway. These sisters, Sr. Julian Nolan, age 75 in 1686, and Sr. Mary Lynch, about 60 years old, made the voyage from Bilbao to Galway and re-established their community at the home of the Catholic Mayor of the city, Sir John Kirwan, and began receiving novices.

It was possibly from Spain, at the time of Sr. Julian Nolan and Sr. Mary Lynch’s journey, that the Madonna of the Rosary entered Ireland. This would be only 15 years after Pope Clement X extended the veneration of the rosary to all of Spain, where it had special significance, and it is not implausible that the sisters might bring an image with them for use in their newly re-established convent. The figures owned by the Dominican sisters and the Dominican fathers are so similar that they could have some from the same workshop, implying that they were likely imported at the same time. Interestingly, Ó Héideáin states that Galway

---

889 O’Neill, 11-12.  
890 Ibid., 14.  
891 Ibid.
Mayor John Kirwan and his wife, Mary, presented a silver crown for the statue owned by the Dominican Fathers in 1683. That this crown was in the possession of the Dominican Fathers at the time of the expulsion of 1698 is evidenced by a receipt preserved in the Dominican Fathers’ records. This receipt was given to the Fathers after they left their most valuable possessions in the care of a local merchant, Vallentine Browne. It is very detailed and includes minor items as well as those that would have been more costly. The crown is listed as “a silver crown for the Image of our blessed Lady,” a second crown is listed only as “one smale silver crowne,” (could this have been for an image of the Christ Child?) and “sevrall smale coatts for ye Image of Jesus”. The carvings themselves are not listed, nor are these three items listed together on the receipt.892

This small crown still survives and is engraved with that date. Yet, the Dominican Sisters had not yet re-established their convent in 1683. This may mean that the figures were imported a few years apart, or that the crown was originally intended for a different figure of the Madonna. Also, while there are other seventeenth century artefacts preserved by the Dominican nuns at Galway, including an embroidered chasuble (Fig. 306) and a chalice veil,893 however the figure of the Madonna of the Rosary is not held in similar regard as these other


893 According to Helena Concannon, a scrap of old paper was found tucked inside the cloth of the chalice veil, which read, “Brigit Kirwan, Galway the 5th of November, 1682”. Brigit Kirwan was one of the novitiates which Sr. Julian Nolan and Sr. Mary Lynch accepted when they re-founded their convent in Galway. It also seems very likely that Brigit Kirwan was a relative of the Mayor, Sir John Kirwan, who provided his house to the returned sisters. Helena Concannon, “Historic Galway Convents: II. The Dominican Nuns” in Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review 39, no. 153 (1950), 68.
early objects by the sisters, leading one to believe that the statue was not associated with the second foundresses.

The optimism of James II’s reign was short lived. Following the birth of his son, James’ Protestant subjects began to panic at the idea of a Catholic dynasty, and invited William of Orange to invade and take the throne. James fled first to France and then to Ireland in 1689. William followed James, and landed at Carrickfergus in 1690. Many battles were fought up and down the western coast. The battle of Aughrim, one of the bloodiest of that conflict, was fought in Co. Galway less than forty miles from Galway city. The fighting in Ireland between these two parties lasted until 1691.

In 1698, all of the Catholic clergy were banished from Ireland. The circumstances in which the Galway Dominican nuns were left is vividly described by O’Heyne,

> The grates being broken on the vigil of the apostles SS. Philip and James, and they were all obliged to change the religious habit. It was deplorable to witness the lamentations of the dear sisters which moved some of the very Protestants to compassion. After the community of the Galway fathers had gone to France about the twentieth of May, there was no one to minister to these daughters of ours, still remaining under strict enclosure until the very last day allowed by Parliament before the dispersion and abolition of all religious communities… When the cloister was broken into and they were all clothed in secular dress, this dear mother [Julian Nolan] feared that they would not obey her and would go running about the town; and about that she frequently consulted me… She wished to bring

---

894 O’Neill, 16.
them to France, but I persuaded her to remain at home, for various reasons not necessary to be mentioned now.\textsuperscript{895}

According to O’Neill, the sisters remained scattered about town for only a short period of time after the dispersion, after which they were able to re-assemble and live in community again.\textsuperscript{896}

Several more dispersals of Catholics from Galway happened during the first decade of the eighteenth century. The convent in Galway was frequently invaded by soldiers looking for priests. A letter from 1714 written by an imprisoned priest, Fr. Thomas McDermott, states that the sisters had been expelled from their convent three times during the two months that he spent in a Galway gaol.\textsuperscript{897}

The sisters held on for two more years, but in March of 1717, eight of the Dominican nuns left Galway. Six of the sisters went to Dublin and two to Brussels. The rest lived mainly apart, around Galway. Later that year, six of the community went to Madrid and sought refuge at various convents. At least two lived out the rest of their lives in Spain, dying in 1749 and 1767.

The Dominican convent in Galway was re-established for a third time in 1719 and although persecutions continued for the next several decades, the community continued to grow, and by 1730, twenty-four new novices had

\textsuperscript{895} O’Heyne, 159-165.

\textsuperscript{896} O’Neill, 17.

\textsuperscript{897} Hugh Fenning, \textit{The Irish Dominican Province 1698-1797} (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1990), 76-77.
professed and the convent was enlarged.\textsuperscript{898} According to O’Neill, a room on the first floor of the nunnery had been set aside as a chapel, and a large wooden altar was held therein. For this altar, a large cloth was embroidered by Sr. Margaret Joyce, bearing the date 1 May, 1726, in the centre of which is a sizable depiction of Our Lady of the Rosary (Fig. 307).\textsuperscript{899}

**Dating and Comparisons**

It is not possible to say whether the embroidered image is modelled after the *Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill*. The hair and clothing of the embroidered Madonna is very different than that in the wooden example, although the pose of the Child and the way that the Madonna holds him under his bottom with her left hand and the cloth of her cloak is similar. There is noticeably less movement in the pose of the embroidered Madonna, and no swirling clouds, but the putti are present, now flitting about the figures’ heads.

When Catriona MacLeod first published the sculpture in 1947, she stated only that this figure and the very similar figure owned by the nearby Dominican Fathers in the Claddagh in Galway, were both carved in the Italian baroque style of the late seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{900} Indeed, the figures’ dramatic presentations, swirling draperies and dynamic poses are typical of the baroque style, although its

\textsuperscript{898} O’Neill, 23.

\textsuperscript{899} Ibid., 24.

\textsuperscript{900} MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17\textsuperscript{th} Century,” 123.
attribution as Italian is not certain, and it may be better placed in the early to mid
eighteenth century.

Many fine objects were donated to the Galway Dominican nuns in the
1730s and ‘40s, including a silver pyx dated 1733, a silver sanctuary lamp dated
1739, a silver chandelier for the chapel from 1742, candlesticks, and altar plate. It
seems plausible that given the amount of fine donations given to the sisters at this
time, coinciding with the foundation of their chapel and the style of the *Madonna
of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill*, that the carving could also have been given to (or
purchased by) the sisters at this time. Their interest in Our Lady of the Rosary is
made evident by the embroidery on the altar cloth, regardless of whether the cloth
pre- or post-dates the sisters’ acquisition of the wooden figure. A date in the mid-
eighteenth century may also be significant because it shortly follows the extension
of the celebration of the feast of the rosary to the universal Church in 1716, which
helped to popularize depictions such as this.\(^{901}\)

The movement and theatrical presentation of *Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill* is similar, though on a smaller scale, to that found in the mid-eighteenth century depiction of the same subject in Santa Caterina a Formiello in Naples (Fig. 308) or in Guido Reni’s *Immaculate Conception* (Fig. 309) from 1627. The classicised profile, like that seen in Nicola Grassi’s painting of the
*Rosary Mother of God with St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi* (Fig. 310) from

the early eighteenth century, may indicate a dating for the Taylor Hill carving in
the early eighteenth century.

No reference to this figure which pre-dates MacLeod’s publication in 1947
has yet been found. In 1879, a little more than thirty years after the Dominican
sisters moved from their convent on Kirwan’s Lane to Taylor’s Hill, they
expanded their church by adding a transept, in order to provide room for two side
altars, one dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and the other to St. Joseph. The
Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill was likely placed in that chapel. In the
1970s, the figure is known to have been in the chapel, because it was at that time
that the wood was cracked after having been moved up against the chimney wall.
MacLeod does not state where the figure was kept during her time. This sculpture
is no longer in display. It is now kept in a storage room in the new convent.

7. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 123.

---

JCA-S-012: Our Lady of Galway (Fig. 311 - Fig. 313)

1. Location: Dominican Friary, the Claddagh, Galway, Co. Galway

2. Date: Late 17th to mid 18th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: 98 cm, W: 34 cm at the base and arms.

   (b) type of wood: Unknown, the wood is completely hidden from view by the

       modern polychrome.

902 O’Neill, 108.

537
(c) number of blocks: Two. The Madonna and Child appear to be carved from separate blocks of wood, but unlike the Madonna of the Rosary from Taylor’s Hill, there does not appear to be a second, separate base.

(d) dowel holes: None visible, but I was unable to gain access to the shrine in order to view the figure closely.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is completely covered in a thick layer of modern polychrome, which partially obscures the carving. The polychrome on this figure appears to be very recent, and seems in some ways to be less sympathetic to the carving than the paint on the Rosary Madonna from nearby Taylor’s Hill. The Madonna, Child and putti all share the same warm beige skin tone, and faintly blushed cheeks. Although each of the figures has parted lips, there has been no attempt by the painter to differentiate the inside of the mouths from the lips, covering both with a smear of apricot polychrome. The Madonna’s hair is painted a rich, chocolate brown as is the hair of the putti. The Child’s hair and eyebrows are a lighter brown. The Madonna’s eyebrows are high crescents, painted in the lighter colour of the Child’s hair and then gone over with chocolate brown hash marks, making them almost appear bushy. The Madonna’s upper eyelids are strongly outlined in black, meant to simulate the look of eyelashes, and a faint black line for the lower lashes can be seen underneath the bright, white sclerae. There is a warm pink dot on the inside corners of the eyes. The Madonna looks down towards the viewer, slightly to her left. Her dark blue irises are filled with white dots
of painted light and black pupils. Between her heavy-lidded eyes and eyebrows, faint dark brown shadowing has been painted at the inner and outer edges, seemingly to simulate eye shadow. The Child and putti all have similarly painted eyes, but in their cases the direction that the eyes are cast seems to be in conflict with the carving itself. The Child’s eyes are painted as if looking up and to the left, however, the way that his eyelids are carved would seem to indicate that he was intended to be looking downwards towards the viewer, as the Child from the similar sculpture at Taylor’s Hill is painted. The effect of this conflict is that it makes the Child appear sleepy. The putti’s eyes all look slightly up and to the right, no matter the direction that their heads face. The Madonna wears a cream coloured veil with a band of painted gold at its outer edge. Her dress is also painted with a cream coloured polychrome, and edged in gold at its lower hem and at the wrist. The deep recesses of the drapery folds on both the dress and veil have been accented with ochre shading. A carved oval clasp, painted gold, sits at the centre of the Madonna’s throat. It appears that it was carved there as a fastener for her cloak, but this portion of the carved fabric has been incorrectly painted cream to match her dress. The rest of the Madonna’s cloak has been painted a vibrant cerulean blue, edged in gold paint. The clouds beneath her feet, out of which the putti emerge, are also painted cerulean and the putti’s wings are shaded with the same colour on a white base.
(f) general condition: It is difficult to tell what the condition of the wood might be underneath the thick layers of modern polychrome. Additionally, this figure was viewed from a distance of about 3 meters back and 2 meters below. From this distance, the wood appeared to be in good condition with no evidence of rot or wood worm. A few hairline cracks could be seen. The first thin crack extends down the right side of the Madonna’s body from about the level of her breast and ending at the knee.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a soft, ovular face, with full cheeks and a small double chin. Her nose is long and straight with a slightly bulbous end and small, delicately carved nostrils. Her almond-shaped eyes are heavily lidded and protrude gently from the sockets. They glance downwards, towards the viewer. The Madonna’s brows are arched and slightly raised, making her appear interested in the viewer. Her forehead is short and her thick hair is parted in the middle and cascades in blown-back curls on either side of her face. Only the very bottom of her earlobes can be seen and her head is supported by a thick, pillar-like neck. A white veil billows back from the middle of the Madonna’s head. Atop her head, the Madonna wears a metal crown set with red, purple and clear glass jewels. It seems to be a more elaborate version of the crown belonging to the Madonna of the Rosary owned by the Dominican Sisters nearby.
(b) body: The Madonna stands in a contrapposto position atop a small bank of swirling clouds and cherub heads. Her veil, which blows back dramatically to the right as if caught in a huge gust of wind, is brought forward and drawn tightly across the figure’s torso, from her right shoulder, down diagonally to wrap behind the left side of her body at the waist. Beneath this, another garment is clasped at her throat with a gold brooch. It is painted the same cream colour as her veil and gown. The Madonna wears a heavy cloak draped across her left shoulder and drawn around her body at the waist, pinned in place by the body of the Christ Child, whom she cradles in her left arm. The left hand is oddly modelled, the back of the hand is extremely broad and flat and no differentiation is made between the thumb and fingers. The style of modelling seen in the left hand is not in keeping with the delicate carving of the rest of the figure and a long crack which extends across four of the fingers looks more like of the type seen in plaster work than in wood. It appears to be a later plaster repair, although without out closer examination this is difficult to determine. She gestures outward toward the viewer with her right hand, delicately touching her thumb and middle finger together. A long rosary has been looped around this extended arm. The overall impression of this figure is that she as just appeared, her draperies swirl and are blown back as if the figure had just swept in and suddenly came to a stop. The peaceful expression of her face and calm pose of her body underneath her
clothing seems to belie any impression of movement given by her clothing, giving the overall impression of a divine apparition.

(c) base: The base is composed of three cherub heads interspersed among swirling clouds. All three cherub heads resemble that of fat children, with full cheeks and prominent double chins. Their hair is thick and wavy and their expressionless features are similar to those of the Christ Child — heavily lidded eyes which glance out towards the viewer under thickly painted, arched brows. The cupid-bow lips of all three are parted and painted so as to accentuate that parting. On either side of their heads the swirling clouds begin to take on shapes that resemble small angel wings, but those shapes are undefined and amorphous and could be seen as either wing or cloud.

(d) back: The figure was placed high above the viewer in a roped-off shrine. The back was not visible.

(e) Christ Child: The Child is delicately perched in crook of his mother’s left arm, supported under his bottom by her left hand. The Child does not seem to sit solidly in his mother’s arm, but rather almost floats there, kicking his legs up in an unnatural, but strategic way, protecting his modesty. His small nude body is chubby, he has thick rolls of fat on his thighs and torso. The Child gestures out to the viewer with his left hand while raising his right hand in benediction. His small feet appear to have been subject to some plaster repair. The toes are undefined which is not in
keeping with the very detailed style of the rest of the carving. The Child’s face is very full, with big cheeks and a double chin and his features, which are set close together. He has heavy-lidded, almond-shaped eyes, arched brows, a small nose and tiny cupid-bow mouth. The painting of the eyes is not in keeping with the carving. The carving seems to indicate that the Child was meant to be glancing downwards toward the viewer, but the painting causes the Child to gaze off into the distance, despite the fact that the eyelids droop, making him appear sleepy. Like the cherubs below on the base of the statue, the Child’s head is topped with a thick mass of wavy brown hair.


6. **Comments:**

**History**

The Dominican fathers, to whom this figure belongs, founded their priory in Galway in 1488. The monastery, which formerly belonged to the Premonstratensian Canons, was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and was known as St. Mary’s on the Hill. At the Dissolution, the Dominicans were able to remain in residence until at least 1570, when the lease of the Dominican monastery was acquired by the Galway Corporation. It seems however, that the friars were

---

903 Coleman, 71.

904 Ibid.
permitted to continue living in the city of Galway, although it is not certain where. In 1587, a figure of the Virgin Mary, the predecessor of the present Our Lady of Galway, continued to be an object of veneration. Pope Sixtus V granted a plenary indulgence in that year to anyone who venerated that statue on the four feasts of the Madonna (the Visitation, Annunciation, Purification and Nativity).\textsuperscript{905}

As persecutions worsened throughout Elizabeth and James I’s reign, evidence for Dominican activity in Galway dissipates almost entirely. However by 1629, according to the Provincial’s records, Galway had four priests, five professed clerics and a few novices.\textsuperscript{906} This made Galway the largest Dominican community in the country at that time. The recovery of the priory is likely due to the policy, adopted in 1610, of training Irish Dominicans on the continent. Eventually, the Dominicans even founded colleges of their own, in Louvain (c. 1623), Lisbon (c. 1635), and Rome (c. 1677).\textsuperscript{907}

The community continued to thrive for the next two decades, and in 1643 a convent of Dominican nuns was also founded in Galway. However, the relative peace that Catholics had found in Ireland during the Confederacy came to an end with the Cromwellian reconquest of the island. After the fall of Limerick in 1651, Galway became the last outpost of the confederate army. As Cromwell’s troops drew closer, it was decided that the Dominican church would have to be levelled. It stood just outside the city’s western walls, and had, only nine years prior, been

\textsuperscript{905} I have been unable to locate the text of this document. See Ó Héideáin, 24.

\textsuperscript{906} Coleman, 71.

\textsuperscript{907} Ó Héideáin, 25.
captured and used as a battery from which English forces attacked the town.\textsuperscript{908} A formal agreement was drawn up with the Dominican community, stating that the corporation of Galway would re-build the church in the future.\textsuperscript{909} In 1652, after several months of siege, plague and deprivations, the city of Galway fell to parliamentarian troops, led by Sir Charles Coote. The Dominican fathers scattered and fled to the continent for safety.\textsuperscript{910}

In the 1660s, work began on rebuilding the Dominican monastery at its former site. Sir Oliver Plunkett described the new church in 1674 as “the best and most ornamented church that is in the entire kingdom.”\textsuperscript{911} This is the earliest time period from which the figure of \textit{Our Lady of Galway} could date. The rosary Madonnas owned by the Dominican sisters and the Dominican fathers are similar enough that they could have come from the same workshop, which might imply that they were imported at the same time. However, Ó Héideáin states that Galway Mayor John Kirwan and his wife, Mary, presented a silver crown (Fig. 314) for the statue owned by the Dominican Fathers in 1683.\textsuperscript{912} This small crown still survives and is engraved with that date. Yet, the Dominican Sisters had not

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{908} Coleman, 71-72.
\item \textsuperscript{909} The complete text of this indenture is published in Roderic O'Flaherty, \textit{A Chorographical Description of West or H-air Connaught}, ed. James Hardiman (Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1846), 274.
\item \textsuperscript{910} Ó Héideáin, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{911} Cardinal Moran, \textit{Memoir of the Ven. Oliver Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, Who Suffered Death for the Catholic Faith in the Year 1681} (Dublin, Browne & Nolan, 1895), 170.
\item \textsuperscript{912} Ó Héideáin, 65, 68.
\end{itemize}
yet re-established their convent in 1683. This may mean that the figures were imported a few years apart, or that the crown was originally intended for a different figure of the Madonna.

The Dominican sisters returned from Spain in 1686 and re-established their convent; a record from 1686 shows that the Dominican fathers were thriving at that time. The community consisted of twelve priests, five novices and two lay brothers. This was to prove yet another short period of respite. Following the birth of Catholic James II’s son, the king’s Protestant subjects began to panic at the idea of a Catholic dynasty and invited William of Orange to invade and take the throne. Much of the fighting in this conflict took place up and down Ireland’s western coast. James II lost, and the Protestant William and Mary took the throne, jointly. In 1698, all of the Catholic clergy were banished from Ireland and the Galway Dominican fathers again fled to the continent.

Luckily, the Galway Dominicans were able to preserve many of their most precious belongings by giving them over to a local merchant, Vallentine Browne, for safe keeping. The receipt with which Browne provided the Galway Dominicans gives an interesting picture of what their most valuable possessions would have been,

Jesus, Maria. To all Christian people to whom these presents shall come, I, Vallentine Browne, of Gallwey, Merchant, sendeth greeteing. Know you that I the sd Vallentine hath received into my custody and keeping, to be kept safe as my owne goods or property, the several

913 Coleman, 72.
914 O’Neill, 16.
goods following: videlicet, elleven casulas, one canopy, two red dalmaticas, two cappas whereof one white and the other red, two small frontales, ten ould silk scarfes, six bursas, five pallas, five vellums, sevrall smale coatts for ye Image of Jesus, two silke coatts for to make antependiums of sadd coloure, thirteen towells, four albs, two peir of beads, two singing books, four antipendiums, five corporals, one altar stone, one girdle, ten amicts, one smale chest wherein are the silver plate of the convent, videlicet, ten silver chalices, whereof four are gildet wh gould, one silver ciborium, one silver remonstrance, a silver crown for the Image of our blessed Lady, two smale silver ampullas, and one smale silver crowne, one smale box containeing bills and bonds and other papers belongeing to the convent, a big brass ringeing bell belongeing to the chaple and a brandiron, from and by the hands and delivery of Gregory ffrench FitzRichmond, by the consent, assent and approbation of the Society or Community of the Dominicans fryers of our blessed Lady’s Chappell in the West of Gallway, whereof the sd Fr. Gregory ffrench is prior att present… as witness my hand this fifth day of April, 1698. Memorandum it is the reall intent and meaning of the above nam’d Vallentine Brown, and so declares at the possession heerof, that he will keepe all the above goods for the use of the above Frs. Pryors and community the best of his power skill and caring and deliver them also at any tyme demanded.\(^{915}\)

It is interesting to note that the statue of Our Lady of Galway is not included in Vallentine Browne’s list, although several items, which may have belonged to that figure, or perhaps its predecessor, the image of the Madonna for which Sixtus V gave a plenary indulgence, are included. The small crown donated by John and Mary Kirwan in 1683 maybe indicated in the receipt as “a silver crown for the Image of our blessed Lady.” Another crown listed as “one smale silver crowne,”

\(^{915}\) Ó Héideáin, 67-68 and Coleman, 72-73.
no longer extant, may have been for the Christ Child of this, or a former image of
the Madonna and Child as might the “sevrall smale coatts for ye Image of Jesus”.
The receipt, though interesting, does not provide firm evidence as to whether the
current image of Our Lady of Galway was acquired by the Dominican fathers
before or after the expulsion.

It took several decades, yet again, for the community of Dominican
Fathers to rebuild to its former numbers. In 1704, six years after the expulsion,
only three Dominicans can be found in Galway. In 1720, a community of seven
could be found there, and in 1731, the same number, plus three novices. A
statement, “the west Chapel was built and made use of time out of mind,” written
down in 1731, makes it clear that the priors had returned to their former chapel.
This church, built in the 1660s, seems to have remained in use until 1800. The last
dispersal of the community occurred in 1744, although according to Ó Héideáin,
“it caused the brethren… no more trouble than to get out of the house, leaving
some cakes and wine for the sheriffs, until the token search was over.”916

**Dating and Comparisons**

The two Madonnas of the rosary in Galway may date to the early
eighteenth century, after persecutions had abated. Certainly the Dominican
monastery in Galway maintained strong ties with the continent following the
monks’ return from the expulsion. In 1735, Ó Héideáin speculates that of the
fourteen members of the Dominican monastery listed only four were in residence,

---

916 Ó Héideáin, 30.
while the rest were at various places on the continent.⁹¹⁷ Beginning in the 1720s, the Dominican nuns had also begun rebuilding their material possessions, and several fine donations from this period are still owned by the sisters. This period of acquisition, coupled with less rigid reinforcement of the penal laws, and the theatrical style of the image, all serve to give it a date in, perhaps, the early eighteenth century. For comparisons to similar continental works, please see: Catalogue: *Figures from the Suppression*, “Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill”, section 6, p. 536.

A little more is known about the history of Our Lady of Galway, than its sister statue at Taylor’s Hill. According to Ó Héideáin, there is a local tradition that the statue was buried for a time, although this is a common ‘trope’ told about the figures, and owing to the exceptionally well-preserved state of Our Lady of Galway’s wood, unlikely to be true. Ó Héideáin also states that a local resident, Martin Rainey, whose father was seven years old in 1891 when the current church was built, recalls a tradition in his family that Our Lady of Galway was in a corner of the 1800 church.⁹¹⁸

For a while after the building of the current church, the figure was kept in the priory, until it was placed in its current position above the Lady Altar in 1922. The rosary which the figure holds was donated on 22 May, 1922 by “a sea-faring man named John Clancy” who lived in the Claddagh.⁹¹⁹ Although the early-

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., 65.
tenth century mosaic surrounding the figure of the Madonna alludes to an annual blessing of Galway Bay and its fisher man which occurs on the feast of the Assumption, the sculpture itself is not utilized in this event.\textsuperscript{920}


\textbf{JCA-S-013: St. Anne Teaching the Virgin (Fig. 315 - Fig. 317)}

1. Location: Private chapel in the residence of the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church, 56 Aungier Street, Dublin 2.

3. Date: 18th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: Figure of St. Anne is approximately 30 cm, overall height of the carving about 38 cm.

(b) type of wood: Unknown, but the small and very fine details seem to indicate that it is carved of a fine grained wood like limewood.

(c) number of blocks: It is impossible to determine the number of blocks because of the polychrome, but the sculpture appears to have been carved of a single block. Evidence of a single bock can be seen in the manner that St. Anne is joined to the seat of the throne and how the edge of her gown overhangs the base in the front of the carving. It is further evidenced by

\textsuperscript{919}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{920}Ferghal MacEoinín O.P., Dominican priest in residence at St. Mary’s, Galway. Interview with author, (March 2010).
the way St. Anne’s hand is joined to the back of the Madonna. Every
detail is carved out and there appears to be very little evidence of the
block, making it difficult to believe that this could all be carved from a
single block of wood, even though it appears so.

(d) dowel holes: A single hole can be seen in the tops of St. Anne and the
Madonna’s heads, each about the width of a nail-hole. This may be
evidence that a separate crown or nimbus was once attached to the figures’
heads.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Although chipped in places, the sculpture retains
what appears to be its original fine polychrome, covering nearly the entire
figure. Where the polychrome has chipped a white layer of gesso is
visible. A pale and slightly dingy flesh-tone covers St. Anne’s face and
hands. The same colour has been used to paint the Madonna’s head, neck
and arms. This flesh tone appears much shinier than the polychrome used
on the rest of the figure, as if it had been painted over with a clear coat,
which seems to seal in dirt underneath producing its slightly dingy colour.
The paint has small chips at St. Anne’s right eyebrow and on the tip of her
nose. Chipping can also be seen on the Madonna’s left temple and on the
upper jaw-line on the left side of her face. Another small chip can be seen
in the centre of the Madonna’s right cheek. Extremely small, fine lines in a
light brown colour have been used to paint the individual hairs of the
figures’ eyebrows and eyelashes. The width of each of these tiny lines is
less than that of a human hair. The sclerae are painted a greyish-white, and
the bottom lid of each is ever so slightly rimmed with pink. The irises of both figures are painted blue-grey with black pupils. Each iris is outlined with a very fine black line, and touched with a small dot of white polychrome to portray reflected light. The lips are touched with russet.

St. Anne wears a light grey wimple, also covered in clear coat, and a veil in black and much worn gold-leaf. Although much of the leaf has chipped or is covered in dust, tooled patterns of flowers can still be seen around the hem of the veil and very fine horizontal lines can be seen on the rest of the fabric, as if it were meant to mimic minuscule gold threads.

St. Anne wears a cloak and gown painted with a cream colour and decorated with a beautiful and highly detailed floral pattern of roses, green leaves, aged so dark that they are almost black, and gold-leafed leaves and scallops, also tooled with tiny dots and lines. The sleeves of St. Anne’s under-tunic have been painted a brick red colour, the same that was used on the roses of her gown, and enhanced with similar gold ‘threads’ as can be seen on her veil. The back of St. Anne’s body has been painted, but in far less detail, it is mostly an aged red colour and has none of the sumptuous detail that can be seen on the front of the figure. The back of her skirts, which can be seen from the back of the sculpture underneath her throne have not been painted at all, and here the bare wood is apparent.

The Madonna’s hair is exposed and painted the same warm brown colour that can be seen on the both figures’ eyelashes and brows. Along the top of her forehead and at her temples, very small hairs have been
painted, to represent escaped strands of hair. She wears a gold-covered headband in her hair.

The background of the Madonna’s dress has been painted blue-grey and has been covered over with the same floral design that can be seen on her mother’s gown. The tooling of the gold leaf is similar. The Madonna wears a V-necked gown with a scalloped border at the waist. Both of these have been enhanced by a wide gold border with dotted lines tooled into the gold-leaf. The Madonna stands on top of a thick red cushion, painted the same colour as the roses and the sleeves of her mother’s under-tunic, enhanced with very fine gold ‘threads’. Gold-leafed tassels are carved at each of the three visible corners.

The two figures hold a book between them. The cover of this book is barely visible, but appears to have been painted brown. The pages are an aged and dirty white with faded black squiggles representing the writing. The base of the figure is painted solid black, and the high-backed throne on which St. Anne sits has been painted in an exquisitely subtle and detailed fashion. It is painted in two colours of brown, a dark brown and a lighter brown, in leaves and foliate patterns behind St Anne’s back, perhaps to represent tooled leather or a highly detailed carved pattern. These details have also been enhanced with gold-leaf, tooled in tiny scallops. The finials and bosses along the sides of the back of the throne have also been covered in gold-leaf, as has been the carved fringe along the undersides of the chair-seat and the arm rests.
(f) general condition: The detail of the carving of this figure matches that of the painting, and the overall impression is one of extreme preciousness and sumptuousness. This sculpture appears to be in very good condition. The forward corner of the book is missing, and there is some small evidence of dry-rot at the tips of the finials, otherwise the carving is intact. One small hole at the corner of St. Anne’s left eyebrow may be an indication of wood-worm, however since this is the only hole visible on the entire carving, this seems unlikely. Even the extremely delicate, protruding fingers of both St. Anne and the Madonna remain intact and undamaged.

4. Description:

(a) head: St. Anne looks out and slightly down towards the viewer, as if she were meant to be placed slightly above eye-level. Her deeply arched brows are distinctly carved and her eyes are carved in incredible, veristic detail. Her cheek bones protrude and the cheeks below are slightly sunken. The slightest indication of bags under her eyes, and sagging jowls can be seen. She is portrayed as an older woman.

St. Anne’s nose is prominent; it is thin but with a high profile. A wide, deep, but short, philtrum is carved above her mouth. The saint’s lips are parted as if she were speaking or breathing. The corners of her mouth indent slightly at the corners and she has a wide cupid’s bow. Her mouth is small but her chin is broad and pointed.

The figure wears a wimple across the top of her forehead and under her chin. The wimple is carved in many erratic horizontal folds on
her throat and across the top of her chest. Overtop of the wimple is a veil that falls in a fluttering fold over her left shoulder and onto her chest. The veil appears to blow back behind her right shoulder, as if the saint has moved suddenly.

(b) body: Beneath the saint’s wimple, the top-most portion of her gown emerges, carved in an inverted-V. The sleeves of this top gown fall in loose folds at her elbows, revealing the tighter sleeves of the under-tunic underneath. The over-sleeves are carved in very gently and almost imperceptible undulating vertical folds as they fall down her arms, and deep, rolled gathers at the large cuffs at her elbows. The material of the under-sleeves appears to be carved in an almost twisted pattern, which again is so gently carved as to be almost imperceptible. St. Anne’s gown is belted with what appears to be a small carved rope at her waist. She points towards the book and the viewer with right hand. She clasps the Madonna around her back with her left hand.

St. Anne wears a voluminous cloak wrapped around her waist, falling slightly below her rope-belt. The top of the carved fabric is folded over itself and is deeply undercut. More subtly carved V-shaped folds are carved where the cloak falls on her lap. The cloak falls at a diagonal from where it is gathered high on her left side under the book, across her lap and over her right knee, at which point it appears to blow backwards against the leg of her throne. The skirts of the saint’s gown are carved deep, almost sharp, vertical folds. The way that her legs are crossed at the
ankles with left knee projected forward and right shin prominent has been skilfully rendered under the voluminous fabric of her skirts. The skirts of her gown are so long that they completely cover her feet and fall slightly over the front of the base.

(c) back: The back of the sculpture is fully carved in detail, but is not painted in detail. The back of the throne is completely flat, but fully carved out. The back of St. Anne’s cloak is also rendered in deeply carved diagonal folds. Likewise, the bottom back of her skirts can be seen under the seat of the throne and have also been carved in deep vertical folds. A wavy fringe has been carved under the seat of the throne and is only visible on the sides and back of the figure. The chair rails have all been fully carved and rendered the whole way around the carving.

(d) Madonna: The figure of the Madonna is much smaller than that of her mother. She stands on a large cushion in order to see the book that she holds in her mother’s lap. The Madonna has a high forehead and prominent Roman profile. Brow is clearly but gently carved. She also looks out towards the viewer, but in the opposite direction from her mother’s gaze, and seems to indicate with her right index finger a passage in the book to a viewer on the other side. The Madonna’s eyes are clearly but gently rendered and both upper and lower lids are indicated. Her cheeks and lips are much fuller than those of her mother, and her chin is smaller. Her lips are slightly open as if she was talking and there is the slightest indication of teeth. Her hair is parted in the middle and combed back over a gold
headband that crowns her head. The Madonna’s hair is carved in many, fine but deep lines, giving the impression of actual hair. Her hairstyle covers the tops of her ears but leaves her lobes exposed and her neck bare. A tiny hole in one of the Madonna’s ear-lobes maybe an indication that the figure once wore some kind of earring.

The Madonna has a proportionately long neck. Her gown has a V-shaped collar tooled with very small dots. She wears a hooded cloak over her shoulders, which subtly blows back from the figure. Her voluminous sleeves have been pushed up to her elbows leaving her forearms exposed. At the edges of her sleeves, cloak, and hood, the wood is very sharply carved and deeply undercut. On the Madonna’s left side, which faces towards the viewer, a beautiful scalloped hem can be seen carved at the waist of the figure’s gown, as if the blouse and skirt were separate garments. A small portion of the cloak which has fallen over the front of the figure blows back drastically between her left arm, the hand of which clasps the book, and the curved arm of the chair which protrudes out between the bodies of St. Anne and the Madonna. This tendril of carved fabric is rendered in a fluttering, rippling-ribbon style drapery fold. The Madonna’s gown falls in long, deeply and sharply rendered vertical folds which fall past the Madonna’s feet. The fabric of the Madonna’s gown seems to twist slightly, as if to indicate movement, and she stands in a slight contrapposto position, with her weight placed on her left leg, and her right knee slightly bent under the ample fabric of her skirt.
(e) base: The figures are carved on top of a large rectangular base, approximately 5 cm high comprised of torus and fillet moulding on top of a carved plinth base. The entire base is carved from what appears to be the same block as the rest of the carving.

(f) throne: St. Anne sits on a high backed throne, the top of which is carved in three lobes, the central of which is highest. These three lobes are topped with three large finials. The carving of the chair back is flat, but enhanced by detailed polychrome, perhaps to look like tooled leather. The profile edges of the seat back are with small carved bosses resembling nail heads. The arms of the chair are also rendered in detail. They curve like claws at their ends. Underneath the seat a gold thread fringe has been carved which is only visible at the sides and back of the sculpture. Chair railings have been sculpted towards the bottom of the legs at the sides and back of the sculpture.

5. Identification of the subject: This is a depiction of St. Anne teaching the Virgin Child.

St. Anne was one of the most venerated saints during the middle ages, after her daughter. The cult of St. Anne arose first in Byzantium, with churches in her honour erected in Jerusalem and Constantinople in the sixth century. The saint became popular in the West following the proliferation of relics associated with the saint following the Crusades. At least six heads of St. Anne could be found in churches across Western Europe and many bodies’ worth of bones are preserved

---

as relics of the saint. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the cult of St. Anne grew so popular that some were concerned that it would eclipse that of the Virgin. This devotion coincided with popularization of the idea of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, promoted by the Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites, Franciscans and Jesuits. Although not made church doctrine until 1854, those who accepted the Immaculate Conception believed that in order for the Madonna to be a perfect vessel for Christ she had to be wholly without sin, even at the moment of conception. This sinless conception by the Madonna’s mother, St. Anne, and her father Joachim, as well as the relationship of St. Anne to Christ as his grandmother, resulted in the saint’s day being introduced to the Roman calendar in 1480 by Pope Sixtus IV. In 1494, Anne’s renown was further enhanced by the treatus, De laudibus santissimae matris Annae tractatus, written by German humanist Johannes Trithemius. By the sixteenth century St. Anne was so popular that Anne was even used as a male name.

St. Anne is typically portrayed, as she is seen here, as an old woman in a long cloak over a red dress (representing love), with her hair covered, indicating her status as a married woman. In Spain, her cloak is painted cream, as can also be seen here on the cloak and on the figure’s outer-most gown. The colour cream

922 Ibid.
923 Ibid., 122.
925 González Gómez, 122.
being linked with the concept of hope in Spain. St. Anne represents hope because she carried the Virgin Mary, the “hope of the world”, in her womb.\textsuperscript{926}

Images of St. Anne teaching the Virgin Child became popular in the eighteenth century, partially because of the intimacy between the two figures as depicted in these works, but also because of its relationship to the ideals of the Enlightenment. The Academies specifically promoted this type of image because of its relationship to the spreading of science and culture. St. Anne is shown teaching the Virgin Child to read and represents a model for enlightenment society. In essence this specific iconography sanctified learning and teaching.\textsuperscript{927}

6. Comments:

Devotion to St. Anne in Ireland

Evidence for the popularity of the cult of St. Anne in Ireland can be found in many places. A triptych which also depicts St. Anne teaching the Virgin, who then passes the teaching on to the Christ Child, can be found in the National Science Museum at Maynooth College (photo unavailable). This painting appears to date to the seventeenth century and may be Netherlandish in origin. In Youghal, Co. Cork a convent was founded in the late twelfth century in honour of St. Anne. In 1352, a Dublin Provinical council ordered that the saint’s feast day be kept as a day of holy obligation and in 1430, Henry VI of England allowed a chantry to be founded at St. Audeon’s church for St. Anne. According to

\textsuperscript{926} Ibid., 121.

\textsuperscript{927} Ibid., 130.
MacLeod, a fifteenth century fresco was discovered there in 1887 depicting St. Anne teaching the Virgin, but that it has since been destroyed.

Very little is known about this figure definitively. There are no oral traditions associated with the figure, nor was MacLeod able to gather anything about the sculpture’s history when she was working in the 1940s. At the time of MacLeod’s writing, the small sculptural group was the focus of a popular devotion amongst city workers, this popularity seems to have died out, and the carving is currently kept in a private chapel within the residence of the monastery.

**Dating and Comparisons**

MacLeod identifies this sculpture as a seventeenth century Spanish carving, however I believe that it is more likely to date to the eighteenth century. The style of the carving is similar to other works from Spain at this time and is in keeping with the Enlightenment ideals of the age, as explained above. One Spanish sculpture of *St. Anne teaching the Virgin* (Fig. 318), dated to the eighteenth century, is very similar in pose to the carving in the possession of the Irish Carmelites. This sculpture, from the Colegio de las Hermanas de la Cruz, in Valverde del Camino, in Huelva, Spain, shows St. Anne indicting a passage to the Virgin in the book which they hold between them. Like the Dublin statue, St. Anne also touches the Virgin Mary on her back while they hold the book between them. St. Anne sits, while the Virgin stands beside her. Both are sumptuously garmented with extremely detailed polychrome. Even the nimbus and crown that the two figures wear are intriguing in the context of the Dublin carving. The nail-holes found in the heads of the Carmelite statue in Dublin evidence that they also
wore a nimbus and crown, like that shown in the sculpture from Spain. The
carving of the sculptures’ bases is also similar. As will be examined below, an
eighteenth century Spanish provenance for the Dublin sculpture also makes sense
in terms of the history of the Carmelite Order in Ireland.

History

Although circumstances of the foundation of the Carmelite Order are
obscure, it seems to have been founded in Egypt in the region of Mount Carmel
during the late twelfth century as an eremitical group.\textsuperscript{928} However, by the
thirteenth century, with their entrance into Europe and the establishment of
Carmelite monasteries within urban centres, the Carmelites gradually became a
mendicant order.\textsuperscript{929} The first recorded reference to the Carmelites in Ireland
appears in a Charter of 1271, approximately one hundred years after their
foundation, granting the monastery in Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow royal protection
for five years.\textsuperscript{930} A Carmelite monastery in Dublin was founded a short time later,
around the year 1280, near the current Provincial House on Whitefriars Street.\textsuperscript{931}

\textsuperscript{928} Benedict Zimmerman, "The Carmelite Order" in \textit{The Catholic Encyclopedia} 3( New York:
November, 2011).

\textsuperscript{929} Peter O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order in Pre-Reformation Ireland”, in \textit{Carmelus XVI}, 1969, 2.

\textsuperscript{930} Public Records Office, Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls C 66/89, as
quoted by O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order in Pre-Reformation Ireland”, 2. The original source was
destroyed when the Public Records Office burned in 1922, I am unsure what copy O’Dwyer saw in the
1960s.

\textsuperscript{931} O’Dwyer,"The Carmelite Order in Pre-Reformation Ireland”, 2.
By the year 1500, there were at least twenty-five Carmelite monasteries in Ireland.\textsuperscript{932}

Many, though not all, of the Irish Carmelite foundations were dissolved at the start of the Suppression in the 1530s and 1540s. However, monasteries in more remote locations, far from the Pale, permitted the government of the Irish Carmelite Province to continue operating, in Rathmullen, Co. Donegal, under the protection of Red Hugh O’Donnell, for another fifty years following the Dissolution. The flight of the earls in 1607 effectively removed protection from the brothers and resulted in the final suppression of the order soon after.\textsuperscript{933}

In the first four decades of the seventeenth century the number of Irish Carmelites diminished considerably, although the Carmelites in Dublin were able to establish a chapel, which was known to exist in 1631, and in 1697 they acquired a residence in Cornmarket (an area of Dublin), where they lived until 1728.\textsuperscript{934}

Throughout the era of Suppression, dynamic communication and travel is evident between the Irish Carmelites and those on the continent. From 1630, a small number of French and Belgian Carmelites came to Ireland to educate novitiates.\textsuperscript{935} In 1649, letters from two Irish Carmelites survive in Renne

\textsuperscript{932} Ibid., 8.


\textsuperscript{934} Peter O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order in Post-Reformation Ireland”, in Carmelus XVI, 1969, 264.

\textsuperscript{935} Ibid.
evidencing their education in the area. Another letter in the archives at Renne states the extreme need for ecclesiastical objects in Ireland,

It is absolutely necessary for the religious who go to Ireland to have the altar ornaments (missal, charts, candlesticks, etc.) and cloths, as such things are not found in that country… some books also, because one should not hope to find any there.

An Irish Carmelite is found working as a chaplain to the Irish soldiers in the employ of the Duke of Parma in 1703. Remarkably despite continued penal laws, in 1704 novitiates were sent from France and Spain to be educated in Ireland. By the 1730s, the Carmelite Order was again flourishing in Ireland, despite the on-going prevalence of the Penal Laws. The order was canonically re-established in 1737, placing it under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception and St. Patrick. This event may be extremely significant in the context of the Dublin carving, as St. Anne’s cult had been consistently promoted in relation to the belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Also at about this same time,

---


940 González Gómez, 122.
the Carmelite brothers in Dublin relocated from Cornmarket to Ashe Street, where a Carmelite monastery, church and school were opened. The association between the themes of St. Anne teaching the Virgin, the patronage of the Immaculate Conception and the opening of a Carmelite school all at around the same time provide many good reasons as to why the Irish Carmelites in Dublin might want to acquire, or were given, this small carving of St. Anne teaching the Virgin.

The acquisition of such a figure from Spain may be attributable to the close relationship between the Irish Carmelites and those in Spain, where the majority of Irish Carmelites were sent to be educated. The relationship with Spain was in fact so close that one document from the eighteenth century promoting the re-establishment of the Irish Province stated, “when restored it would belong to the Spanish nation, as happens in civil affairs, because they derived from Spain and as such they are treated [in Spain].” According to O’Dwyer, on July 12, 1738 a Commissary General was appointed in Spain to manage the affairs of the Irish.

The close relationship between Spanish Carmelites and those in Ireland, coupled with the style of the carving and similarity to other eighteenth century Spanish images of the same theme of St. Anne Teaching the Virgin Child provide

---


942 Archives of the Order Rome, Spain 1728-88, II as quoted by O’Dwyer, “The Carmelite Order in Post-Reformation Ireland,” 266.

943 Ibid.
evidence that the Carmelites on Whitefriars Street in Dublin have in their possession an extraordinary Spanish carving of the eighteenth century.

7. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 127-128.

JCA-S-014: Marino Nursing Madonna (Fig. 319 - Fig. 321)


2. Date: 18th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 127 cm W: 81.3 cm

(b) type of wood: Oak

(c) number of blocks: Although there are no apparent divisions between blocks of wood, the sculpture is entirely too large to have been carved from a single block. Despite this, Christ appears fully joined to the Madonna’s lap, and his draperies join with those of his mother. The Madonna’s draperies also seem to merge with the wood of the swirling clouds.

(d) dowel holes: None visible, however the height and distance at which figure is displayed preclude a close examination of the carving. Additionally, the polychrome and gesso layers appear to be quite thick.

944 NMI Loan Register: NMI DF L1546, August 1, 1956.
(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure is entirely covered in thick polychrome.

In places where the polychrome has chipped a thick layer of almost plaster-like gesso can be seen. The Madonna and Child both have a pale flesh-tone, which is warmly blushed with a brownish-red colour on the cheeks, eyelids, fingers and on the Christ Child’s toes. The Madonna’s hair is a warm burnt sienna brown, and her eyebrows are outlined in the same colour. The Child’s hair is a similar colour, but of a slightly lighter tone, as if some of the colour of his flesh-tone had been mixed in. The Madonna and Child’s upper lashes are lined with black, and it appears that their bottom lashes may be lined with the brown colour of their hair. Their lips are a brownish-red, a darker version of the colour which blushes their cheeks. A navy blue scarf has been wrapped through the Madonna’s hair. She has pulled the end of the scarf over her left shoulder. It falls on top of the Madonna’s collar on the left side. The sleeves of her under-tunic are also navy blue, with what appears to be a 1 cm wide gold-painted cuff about 4 cm from the ends of her sleeves. Her dress is a deep brick red colour, with a thin gold border at the edge of her skirt and delineating the seams at her shoulders. She wears a twisted belt, also painted gold. The lining of the Madonna’s dress, visible where she opens her collar to expose her breast, is painted cream.

The Madonna wears a navy blue cloak, pulled across her lap, under the Christ Child, from the right side of the figure. It has a decorative border carved in relief and painted with gold along its bottom edge. This
border is consists of a series of horizontally-oriented ovals, lined up end-to-end, between two solid lines of gold. Above the top-most line is a wave pattern, with stars surmounting each crest. The lining of the cloak is cream coloured. The Madonna’s sandal is painted brown and the cloud on which she sits has been painted powder blue.

The Christ Child is nearly nude, except for a white swaddling cloth wrapped around his bottom. Using his left hand, he braces a large gold between his and his mother’s bodies.

(f) general condition: Overall, the figure appears to be in good condition. There are a few areas where it appears the paint has chipped, but there is no evidence of dry-rot or wood worm visible. A few radial cracks can be seen, particularly in the centre of the Madonna’s torso, between her breasts and across the toes of her exposed left foot. The figure is placed at a considerable distance from the viewer, making it difficult to see any hair-line cracks which may be present.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna inclines her head down, to the left, to look at the viewer.

Her face is distinctly non-symmetrical. The left eye is placed lower than the right eye and seems to look in a slightly different direction. This asymmetry appears to be in the carving itself, rather than in the polychrome. The left cheek also appears somewhat slacker than the right cheek. These problems are somewhat surprising, given how masterfully
the Madonna’s body and draperies are rendered. However, when the figure is viewed straight on the faces of both figures are visible only in profile and the overall effect is much more beautiful.

The Madonna has a high, smooth forehead. The hair is parted in the centre, swept back away from her face, and gathered in the cloth of the scarf which she wears in her hair. Faintly incised lines appear to have been carved in the Virgin’s hair, as if to delineate individual strands. Her eyes are downcast. Both upper and lower lids are carved. The bridge of the Madonna’s nose is straight and high in profile. The underside is triangular and the nostrils are fully carved. A philtrum is lightly indicated. The Madonna’s mouth is extremely small, barely wider than her nose. The upper and lower lips are about the same width, the upper lip has a deeply indented vermilion border. Her chin is small and knobby, it appears to project out almost as far as the Virgin’s lips. Her jawline is not sharply delineated, and her one visible earlobe, on the right side of her face, appears to be too low. The Madonna’s neck is long and broad, without clearly indicated musculature.

(b) body: The Madonna’s body is beautifully carved. Her head is inclined down over her left shoulder. The Madonna’s dress is open to the waist, exposing her left breast, which she grasps in her left hand, holding her exposed nipple between her index and middle fingers. The lining of her dress is clearly carved. A small string is carved in relief, emerging from the corner of her right collar. The Madonna appears to sit in a swirling cloud. The
Child sits on her right knee, and the Madonna appears to grasp her son around the lower back, using the cloth from his perizonium to hold him.

The Madonna’s dress is belted around the waist. Lightly carved folds can be seen emerging vertically from above and below the belt. The belt itself is carved in a loose twisting pattern.

The Madonna’s hips are wide, and her body seems to twist in an almost serpentine way. Her legs, which are crossed at the ankles, with the right foot forward, turn towards the figure’s right, while her head and upper body twist towards the left. When viewed in profile, both figures seem to look in the same direction. The Madonna wears a cloak pulled across her lap from the right side, underneath the Christ Child. It is carved in many decorative folds, a V-shaped fold, reminiscent of earlier, medieval folds, can be seen between her knees and the swirling and almost fluttering fold, can be seen on the figure’s left side, exposing the white lining of the cloak. The bottom of the Madonna’s skirts are very long with deeply carved folds, only the Madonna’s toes of her left forward foot can be seen emerging from underneath them.

(c) Christ Child: The Child has a small, chubby face, with an extremely high, rounded forehead. His hair is carved in soft swirls all around his head, he has a pronounced double-chin and very full cheeks. Like his mother, the Child’s left eye is placed too low in his face and points a different direction than his right eye. His visible right earlobe also seems to be positioned too low, on the side of his face. The Child looks outwards, and
slightly up. His nose is small and rounded, it appears to be a naturally carved child’s nose. He has a pronounced philtrum and his mouth is small, but his lips are full. The lips are parted and the Child seems to simultaneously smile and speak.

The Child’s nearly nude body is very chubby and carved in rolls of flesh. He has a pronounced navel. The Christ Child raises his right arm and holds his hand in a gesture of benediction. He holds a large golden ball with his left hand, resting his forearm on the top of it, and bracing the ball between his and his mother’s bodies. The ankles of his small, chubby legs are crossed, with his left ankle overtop of his right. He rests his right foot up against the inside of the Madonna’s left knee. The Child wears a low-slung perizonium, which preserves his modesty, and seems to billow back behind him in a very baroque way.

(d) cloud: The Madonna sits in a swirling bank of clouds, especially visible on her left side. These clouds are deeply carved swirls and scallops, highly dynamic and very abstracted. They convey a strong sense of movement and drama to the sculpture.

(e) base: The base is triangular and dark brown. A small brass plaque is affixed to the left side of the base. It reads, “Presented by the late Patrick Cahill, Esq., Optician.”

Although Child is not actually shown nursing in the Marino carving, the Madonna’s bared breast makes the meaning of the figure apparent and recalls the earlier medieval tradition.

6. Comments:

**History**

This figure was given on permanent loan to the National Museum of Ireland on August 1, 1956 by Brother M.F. Ó Donnchú of St. Mary’s Training College, in Marino, Co. Dublin. It was purchased by Patrick Cahill, an optician, from an antiques dealer on Aungier St. in Dublin, sometime before 1928 and donated to the Christian Brothers, who ran St. Mary’s Training College. For McLeod’s 1947 article she interviewed a Brother Martin, then in Marino, who said that he could recall the old polychrome which covered the sculpture before it was repainted, however no description of the old polychrome is given. Brother Martin also stated that there used to be an old yellowed piece of paper affixed to the back of the statue which explained its history. By the time of MacLeod’s writing this paper was no longer extant and nothing more about the history of the figure was known.

---

945 Museum loan records (Unpublished file record), NMI DF L1546.

946 MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century”, 124.
St. Mary’s Training College, where the Marino Nursing Madonna was kept for at least thirty years, was opened in 1905. In 1929, St. Mary’s College was recognized as a teacher training college by the Irish Department of Education. The Congregation of the Christian Brothers was founded in 1802 in Waterford, by Edmund Rice, when he opened up a school for poor and destitute boys. The schools run by the Christian Brothers became known for their strict discipline, and in recent years criticised for the corporeal punishments and sometimes abusive behaviours imposed by the brothers on the students and orphans within their care.

In stark contrast to this modern reputation, is the image of the benevolent and nurturing *Marino Nursing Madonna*. This is an especially potent and apt image to have been placed in the teaching college of an Order whose primary call was to take care of orphaned and derelict boys. The Brothers were meant to nurture, parent and educate the boys in their care in the same way that the Madonna nurtured, parented and educated the Christ Child.

**Dating and Comparisons**

As MacLeod points out, the theatrical presentation of the *Marino Nursing Madonna* is typical of the late baroque style. The Madonna sits in a swirling bank of clouds and her hair and garments are dramatically blown back by a

---


949 MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century”, 124.
heavenly gust of wind. The Child, solemn though nearly nude, raises his hand in blessing while his mother grasps her left breast in an exaggerated manner. The base of the sculpture slopes forward, but not with as drastic of an angle as MacLeod suggests. I disagree with her assessment that the figure was meant to be displayed at an extreme height, akin to that seen on the figure of St. Andrew on the pediment above the main altar in the Roman baroque church of St. Andrea al Quirnale (Fig. 322). The sculpture is currently displayed at such a height at the National Museum of Decorative Arts, and it does not appear to be shown to its best advantage. As discussed above, although the figure and profile of the sculpture are masterfully carved, when both sides of the face are visible (as is the case when the sculpture is placed a few meters above the viewers’ heads) the features become ugly and asymmetrical. I believe that the right side of the Madonna’s face was not meant to be seen, as would be the case if the sculpture was displayed at only a slight height. It may still have been placed above an altar but at a lower height, equivalent to the manner in which the Kilcormac Pietà is currently displayed.

MacLeod, the only scholar to have previously published this figure, does not speculate as to its provenance. It may have been carved in Ireland, or perhaps imported during the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The histrionic baroque style is similar to that seen in other seventeenth and eighteenth century polychromed figures still extant in Ireland, including the figure of Our Lady of Limerick (Fig. 275), and the two rosary Madonnas in Galway (Fig. 301 and Fig. 311). It also

950 Ibid.
recalls several continental depictions of the Madonna and Child appearing to saints or patrons, including the *Madonna di Foligno* by Raphael (Fig. 323), *The Madonna and Child appearing before St. Philip Neri* by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (Fig. 324), or the small terracotta model of a Virgin and Child in a bank of clouds by Flemish sculptor, Peeter Scheemaeker (Fig. 325). Interestingly, this last example, dated to around 1702, was created as a model for a larger wooden carving commissioned by the Duchess of Arenberg. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to find an image of the larger carving. Its location *in situ* may provide some clues as to how the Marino carving was originally intended to be displayed. The Neo-Classical profile and dress is also seen in the Scheemaeker model, and in other eighteenth century artworks, including Angelica Kauffmann’s *Cornelia presenting her children as her treasures* of 1781 (Fig. 326). The late baroque-cum-neo-classical style of the sculpture would seem to indicate a date for the *Marino Nursing Madonna* in the eighteenth century. Without knowing anything further about the figure, it is impossible to say where it may have been prior to showing up in the antique dealer on Aungier Street, or whether the figure is indigenous or imported.

7. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 124.
JCA-S-015: Navan Crucifix  (Fig. 327 - Fig. 330)

1. Location: St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath

2. Date: 1792

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: Life size. Its dimensions are previously unpublished and the figure is displayed above the altar in the Navan church at such as height as to preclude measuring.

   (b) type of wood: Limewood

   (c) number of blocks: There are no visible junctures between blocks, but owing to the scale and pose of the piece, it must be comprised of several blocks.

   (d) dowel holes: None visible.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The entire figure is covered in naturalistic polychrome. Christ’s hair, beard, eyebrows and eyelashes are all painted a warm chestnut colour. His sclerae are an aged cream colour and his irises are the same warm brown as his hair and Beard. The pupils have been picked out in black. Christ’s lips are slightly blushed. His skin appears slighted tanned, with yellow and sometimes greenish undertones. Rivulets of thinly painted red polychrome, in both brighter and darker colours run down the figure’s arms, from the stigmata which pierce his hands. More

---

can be seen where the nail pierced his crossed feet. The carved wound in Christ’s left side is also painted with this same combination of red polychrome, which convincingly looks like drying blood.

The perizonium is painted with a cream coloured polychrome and is bound with a carved wooden rope, painted with the same brown paint as can be seen on Christ’s hair.

(g) general condition: The figure appears to be in very good condition. There is no evidence of dry rot or wood worm visible from the ground below where the figure is displayed. The sculpture appears to be wholly intact, there are no visible missing pieces.

4. Description:

(a) head: Christ’s head turns to the right and bows, almost in death, although his eyes are still slightly open and appear aware. His hair is parted in the middle and is deeply carved in incised waves and curls. The hair blows back from Christ’s face, and fans out in tendrils onto his right shoulder. He has a short, rectangular forehead over delicately carved eyebrows, which raise up in an expression of pain towards their centre. Christ’s nose is long and narrow, becoming increasingly narrower towards its tip. The nose has a high, triangular profile, and large nostrils above a deeply incised philtrum. His mouth is tiny and held slightly open, as if he were breathing through it. The upper lip is broader than the lower lip and has a very pronounced ‘cupid’s bow’. The upper portion of the chin is bare and the figure is carved without a moustache, however a thick, curly beard is
carved along jawline, and continues to meet the hairline behind the ears, rather than in front. Long sideburn can be seen on the sides of the face, but they do not join with the rest of the beard. Christ’s ears are prominently and naturalistically carved. The eyes are downcast, but still open. They are clearly incised and deeply set. Christ has high cheek bones and full cheeks. Slight indications of naso-labial folds can be seen emerging from the corners of his nose.

(b) body: Christ’s muscular body, is as Harbison points out, “a fine academic essay in the best tradition of Greek and Roman sculpture.” Every muscle is articulated and the surface of the wood has been so highly polished to appear as if a fine sheen of sweat were clinging to his body. The sculpture has a bodily presence enhanced by both its life-size scale and naturally rendered, though slightly exaggerated, anatomy.

Christ spreads his arms on the cross. His hands are pierced through the centre of their palms and his fingers curl in slightly. The muscles in his arms strain with the weight of his body and the veins in his forearms bulge. Christ’s chin rests on his chest as his head turns toward his right. His chest appears inflated, as if he has just taken in a large breath of air. This helps to convey a certain dynamism to the piece which is betrayed by the exhausted pose of the figure’s head. His feet are crossed at the ankles and pierced through the tops of his feet. The muscles in each leg appear to be held with incredible tension. A swirling and billowing perizonium is

---

wrapped around Christ’s hips and appears to be held in place a carved wooden rope intertwined with the fabric.

4. **Identification of the subject:** This is a life-sized image of the crucified Christ. The image of Christ on the cross is the central image in Christian art and the primary focus of Christian contemplation. Christians believe that through Christ’s suffering and death on the cross, he brought about the possibility of man’s redemption. The earliest surviving images of this type date to the sixth century, but were really popularized during the Carolingian era, in the eighth and ninth centuries. For many centuries Christ was depicted open eyes and alive on the cross, however by the eleventh century, depictions of the suffering, corporeal Christ became prevalent from thereon out. \(^{953}\)

6. **Comments:** This beautiful life-sized figure of the crucified Christ was carved by sculptor Edward Smyth in 1792. It is the only surviving wooden devotional sculpture in Ireland for whom the artist is known. Edward Smyth’s origins are obscure. He was born in the late 1740s and attended the Dublin Society’s Art School, and was apprenticed to the sculptor, Simon Vierpyl. \(^{954}\) The first known work by Smyth was a statue of Dr. Charles Lucas, M.P. (Fig. 331), a commission which Smyth won in a competition held by the Dublin Merchants in 1779. Smyth was later engaged in making funerary monuments and mantle pieces, while he continued in Vierpyl’s employ and later in Henry Darley’s workshop, an eminent

---

\(^{953}\) Hall, 81.

builder also based in the centre of Dublin. While working under Darley, Smyth became known for his plasterwork and carved panels.\footnote{Lenehan, 67.}

In 1781, London architect James Gandon arrived in Dublin to build a new Custom House along the river Liffey. Gandon engaged Darley’s company to carry out the stone masonry, who recommended Smyth’s work as a sculptor for the project. Nearly all of Smyth’s work for the Custom House was destroyed during the War for Independence, although the heads representing the rivers of Ireland which he carved on the keystones above the main doors and windows on the façade, still survive (Fig. 332).\footnote{Ibid.,} Gandon continued to receive major commissions in Dublin and frequently used Smyth as his sculptor. In 1782, Gandon engaged Smyth to create three allegorical figures for pediment of the House of Lords (now the Bank of Ireland building on College Green) and to do much of the stucco work on the interior dome of the Four Courts as well as the roofline sculptures, completed in 1796.\footnote{Ibid., 71 and Barrows, 63.}

It is clear, however, that during this time Smyth continued to take smaller private commissions, including the Navan Crucifix, the artist’s only known work in wood.\footnote{Leask, 75.} On the 9\textsuperscript{th} of August, 1792 a notice appeared in the \textit{Dublin Evening Post},

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Lenehan, 67.} \footnote{Ibid.,} \footnote{Ibid., 71 and Barrows, 63.} \footnote{Leask, 75.}
\end{footnotesize}
Statuary. An inimitably fine piece of sculpture is at present exhibited at the Dublin Museum, Mary Street. It is a CRUCIFIXION, large as life – from the chisel of Mr. Smith [sic.] – an Irish artist – who already stands eminently distinguished by the superior excellence of his productions in his professional line. To him the City of Dublin owes the beautiful statue of LUCAS at the Exchange – that of the Marquis of Buckingham – the emblematic figures of the new Custom-house – the statues erected at the House of Lords, etc., etc.

Besides the novelty of the admirable piece of sculpture – the first of its kind ever attempted in Ireland – it has strong claims to public admiration. It is indeed but truth to remark that if there is anything like divine inspiration in sculpture, Smith in the accomplishment of this figure has caught the flame – the exact proportion and symmetry of the whole exactly corresponding with the description of the Divine Person, the correctness of the anatomy, with the beautiful composure of the countenance when the last breath of life has departed, and all convulsive motion seems just to have left the Scared Body – added to the simple and solemn manner in which this awful subject is displayed, makes it impossible to behold it without feeling the strongest emotions of grief and veneration.

This fine piece of sculpture, which is as large as the human figure, we hear has been executed through the means of a liberal subscription of the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Navan, as an altar piece to their chapel.959

In this newspaper notice we have not only a valuable record of the public reception of the Navan Crucifix, but also evidence for changing attitudes towards Catholicism and its material culture at the end of the Penal era. Not only was this adulatory description published in a newspaper paper, but the artwork itself was publically exhibited in the Dublin Museum, before it was placed in the church at Navan.

959 As quoted by Leask, 74-75.
FIGURES OF INDETERMINATE DATE OR IMPORTATION

JCA-ID-001: Small Museum Pietà (Fig. 333 - Fig. 334)


2. Date: Mid 16\textsuperscript{th} century, possible 20\textsuperscript{th} century import.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H: 28 cm, W. 16.5\textsuperscript{960}

(b) type of wood: limewood, or possibly sycamore\textsuperscript{961}

(c) number of blocks: Single block

(d) dowel holes: There are two dowel holes in this piece. One is in the bottom-centre of the base of the figure; the dowel is still in the hole and has been cut flush with the base. It is of unknown purpose. The second is empty and is in the break at Christ’s right wrist. This hole pierces the carving completely, and was either to reattach the broken portion of the arm, or perhaps was used to affix the figure to a wall.

(e) evidence of polychrome: The flesh of both the Madonna and the dead Christ is painted with a cream-colored polychrome. The Madonna’s cheeks are brightly flushed with carmine, but the individual facial features are not

\textsuperscript{960} The measurements given in the museum record (H. 72 cm W. 33 cm) appear to belong to the much larger pieta currently on display in Collins Barracks. There seems to be much confusion in the NMI records between these two objects.

\textsuperscript{961} Within the same entry of the Museum files the wood is listed both as limewood and as sycamore. The acquisition record lists the wood as limewood.
picked out in polychrome on either figure, with the exception of Mary’s eyebrows and eyes, which are outlined with yellow ochre. Christ’s hair and beard are painted the same yellow ochre. The Madonna’s veil/cloak is painted dark blue, which in places appears to have yellowed to green. Her dress is painted an orange-red colour which in places, particularly on her knees, has turned into a burnt sienna. The colour changes in the polychrome are possibly the result of a coat of varnish which may have yellowed with age. The Madonna’s shoe, which peaks out from underneath her dress has both brown and black polychrome. Bright red paint, largely worn away, emerges from the wound in Christ’s side. Christ’s perizonium is painted with the same yellow ochre as his hair and beard. The mound of earth on which the figures sit is bright green. Traces of gesso can be seen underneath the polychrome in places.

(d) general condition: Overall the carving is very well preserved. The polychrome is worn and in some places has yellowed. The bottom portion of Christ’s right arm is missing and there are several small worm holes, similar to those seen on the Crucifixion Group at Loughrea\(^{962}\), throughout the carving, especially on Christ’s leg.

\(^{962}\) See Catalogue, *Figures of Indeterminate Date*, “Kilcorban Crucifix,” p. 622, “Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna,” p.629, and “Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist,” p. 630. It would be interesting to determine conclusively what woods both the Kilcorban group and the Small Museum Pieta were carved of to determine if these types of woodworm hole are specific to a certain wood.
4. **Description**: This is a very small carving with a flat, hollowed back. The Madonna sits upon a green mound and holds the dead Christ in her lap. “2-1953” has been engraved on the back of the piece. The sculpture is small and flat, almost more of a relief than a free-standing work.

(a) **Madonna**: The figure of the Madonna is larger than that of the dead Christ. She gazes down at him. The Madonna wears a long veil which becomes a cloak as it falls over her shoulders. The Madonna’s hair cannot be seen underneath the veil. The short fringe of the veil is carved in wide, undulating ridges. Along the sides of her face, the veil falls in a long ‘rippling-ribbon’ pattern. This pattern continues along the edge of the cloak, behind the leg of the dead Christ, to the bottom of the figure. The Madonna’s forehead beneath the fringe of the veil is very short. Her brow is carved in two crescents. She looks at her dead son’s face with narrow, down-cast eyes. The Madonna’s nose is straight and the nostrils are carved. A philtrum is just barely indicated. The corners of the Madonna’s mouth turn down in sadness. Her head is inclined towards the left. The features of the Madonna’s face are highlighted with yellow ochre. Her entire expression is one of dejection and despair.

The Madonna supports Christ’s head with her right hand. Her other hand grasps his body at his right hip. The Madonna’s right knee is raised considerably higher than her left knee. She supports Christ’s body underneath his right arm-pit with the upraised knee, and underneath his bottom with her lower left knee.
The cloak falls over the Madonna’s shoulders, down to the bottom of the figure. Where the cloak falls over the Madonna’s arms, the wood is carved in a zigzag pattern. On the Madonna’s gown, the folds closest to her collar follow the concave of the collar. Below this, they abruptly become vertical ridges that extend from underneath the folds of the collar to behind the dead Christ’s body. From either side of the Madonna’s upraised (right knee) the fabric falls in more zigzag folds. The cloth is pulled tight over the knee and falls in long vertical folds over her shin. The drapery folds are dynamic and expressive. The toe of the figure’s shoe, painted with brown and black polychrome, peaks out from underneath the skirt of her gown. The fabric of the gown curves gracefully upwards to accommodate the foot, and then falls back down over the green mound.

(b) Christ: Christ’s body is mostly nude with the exception of the perizonium wrapped around his pelvis. It is painted yellow ochre and carved in a series of small horizontal folds. Christ’s body is supported in the Madonna’s lap as previously described.

Christ’s shoulder-length hair is painted with a yellow ochre polychrome, parted in the middle and carved in a series of ridges which ends in two curls on either side. His facial features are similar to the Madonna; they have the same brow carved in two crescents, straight nose and down-turned lips. He has a high, round forehead. Christ’s eyes are closed as in death; both upper and lower lids are carved. The space
between his nose and lips is taken up by his moustache. His beard is forked.

The anatomy of Christ’s torso is well carved. His right arm falls lifelessly, the hand resting near the Madonna’s foot. The bones in Christ’s hand are delicately carved. The other arm is wedged between Christ’s body and the torso of the Madonna. The bottom portion of this arm and the hand are missing, or perhaps they were never carved. There is a dowel hole here, which may have been to reattach the broken portion of the arm, although it appears quite large to be for this purpose. Another possibility is that the bottom portion of this arm was never carved and the dowel hole was used to affix the carving to a wall. The ribs and breast bone are deeply incised, and the muscles of Christ’s arms and leg are realistically rendered. Only his right leg was carved, the left was not. The wound in Christ’s side is carved as a deep gash in the right side of his chest. Bright red polychrome drips from this wound.

5. **Identification of the Subject:** This image of the Pietà shows the Madonna holding the body of the dead Christ in her lap in the conventional manner. Devotional images of this type became popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and continued throughout the Renaissance.\(^{963}\) The slightly smaller body scale of Christ’s body in relation to his mother may allude to images of the Madonna and Child.

\(^{963}\) Hall, 246.
6. Comments:

Dating

This small Pietà was acquired by the National Museum in 1953 from the Reverend Mother of the Columban Sisters’ Motherhouse in Cahercon, Co. Clare. Nothing else is known about the sculpture. The drapery folds appear distinctly Northern European, and as the National Museum files suggest, it maybe German or Netherlandish work. Hourihane assigns the carving a date in the mid-sixteenth century, at the beginning of the suppression of the religious houses in Ireland. During the Suppression, religious images continued to be imported into Ireland from continental Europe, as is evidenced by many other examples in this catalogue. Close ties with Spain, the Netherlands and France is evidenced both by the fleeing of persecuted Irish monastics to those areas as well as in the documented continental training of priests at that time.

History

The Columban sisters had only been founded about thirty years prior to the time of the carving’s donation to the National Museum, as a group of nuns who wished to be missionaries to China. The impetus for the foundation of this order began in 1916 with the establishment of the Maynooth Missionary to China, which began the novitiate of priests specially trained for missions to China. Also

---


965 Ibid.

in 1916 a meeting was held in Dublin calling for laywomen to take the habit and train as nursing and teaching nuns to work alongside the priests of the Maynooth Chinese Mission. Modelling their rules on those already established by the Sisters of Charity and studying under that order’s direction, the first Columban sisters professed at their new motherhouse in Cahercon, Co. Clare in 1924. Two years later the first six of the Columban Sisters departed for Shanghai.\footnote{Ibid., 453-454.}

According to Fairbairn,

From Shanghai this first band proceeded six hundred miles by river-steamer up the Yang-tse to Han-Yang, where the pioneer priests were already working. The Chinese Civil War was already at its height and anti-Christian feeling, stimulated by the Communists, ran high… They had not been there a year when unrest in the area made the Vicar-General insist on their return to Shanghai. They sailed on the river-steamer – the last to leave among nearly three hundred European refugees – accommodated in the native-quarters near the kitchen. Yet, after an exile of seven months, they were able to return, since General Chiang-kai-shek’s army was restoring order in the Central China area. During the next two years they learned Chinese, visited the sick, opened a dispensary, and began to wear down the hatred and suspicion of the “foreign dogs” which had first been howled at them. By 1929 Bishop Galvin… thought they might dare to begin work in outlying districts. Six more Sisters came out from Cahiracon, and a convent was nearly finished for a second foundation at Yuin-Lung-Ho when Communist bandits burned the whole town – and the convent. But if Mohammed could not go to the mountain, the mountain certainly came to Mohammed. A swarm of refugees from the devastated district arrived in Han-Yang, and was accommodated by the Sisters in a large building acquired by the Bishop; and after their needs had been
attended to, a catechumenate was begun among them and numerous conversions made. 968

Other harrowing adventures and trials of the Columban Sisters in China are related by Fairbairn and it seems that while on their mission, the sisters were constantly under attack by the Communists, natural disasters, disease and the Japanese. Yet they continued to make converts, establish orphanages and hospitals, and expand their mission to other districts in China.

Aquisition

It is not known how the small Pietà, now owned by the National Museum, came into the possession of the Columban sisters. The sculpture is obviously much older than the Columban order and probably of foreign manufacture, but the theme of compassion and empathy inherent in the subject of the Pietà seems especially apt for these traveling missionary nuns, who would spend their days caring for orphans and nursing the sick and dying in foreign lands. It does not seem likely that the sisters would have bought the figure on the continent themselves. Aside from a trip in April of 1947 by the Mother-General of the order and a former Mother-General to Rome to have their Constitutions approved by the Pontiff, 969 there are no other documented travels to continental Europe by the sisters. All of their voyages seem to have taken place from Cork harbour to the Far East, which likely took them south around the horn of Africa, far away from Northern Europe.

968 Ibid., 454.

969 Ibid., 460.
It is possible that it was brought into the order by one of the novitiates, having been preserved through the Suppression by one of their families or that it could have been donated by the Sisters of Charity, who helped train the first group of Columban nuns, and on whose Rules, those of the Columban Sisters were based. However, the foundation of the Sisters of Charity in Ireland only dates back to 1815 and they too would have had to acquire the statue from elsewhere.

One also wonders if this figure was taken on some of the sister’s mission trips, or if it remained always at the motherhouse in Cahercon. Its lightness, small scale and universally communicable theme would have made it easier to transport and proselytize to those unfamiliar with the mythology of Christianity.


---

JCA-ID-002: Hodkinson St. James (Fig. 335 - Fig. 337)

1. Location: Private collection, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick, Co. Limerick

2. Date: Late 17\textsuperscript{th} / early 18\textsuperscript{th} century, possible 19\textsuperscript{th} century importation.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: about 122 cm

   (b) type of wood: Unknown, does not appear to be oak.

   (c) number of blocks: The figure appears to have been originally carved from a single block of wood. The current right hand is a replacement.
(e) dowel holes: Many strangely placed, plugged dowel holes are evident, at least eight of which are visible from the front of the figure. These seem to be original to the figure and may have been plugs to repair knots or other defects in the wood. Likely these plugs were not intended to be seen and would have been covered over by polychrome in the figure’s original state. There are also four metal loops attached to the figure; two on the back and two on the sides of the base.

(f) evidence of polychrome: Two very old and cracked layers of polychrome are visible on the figure’s face. The top layer is paler than the warmer under-layer of skin tone. The top layer is painted with a faint blush on the cheeks and traces of carmine on the lips. The beard is painted black and there are also traces of black on the crescents of the eyebrows and on the upper eyelashes. The sclerae have been painted cream and faded dark circles are still apparent for the irises and pupils. Traces of black paint can still be seen on the underskirts of the figure. In the crevices of the wood all over the entire carving can be seen a darker colour, which does not appear to be polychrome. This may be either traces of an old stain or perhaps wood oil.

(g) general condition: Although most of the carving is beautifully preserved and the sculpture is, for the most part, intact, it is still in need of some conservation. Several areas of dry rot can be seen, particularly around the base and forward left foot, as well as in the drilled out portion of the figure’s right arm where the replacement hand is meant to be attached. The sculpture is also riddled with wood-worm holes, only the head seems
to be free of them. As mentioned above, the original right hand is missing and the current hand, which is not attached, is a replacement.

4. Description:

(a) head: This figure of a bearded male saint has a short, flat forehead, with a prominent brow. The crescent-shaped eyebrows are carved and enhanced with black polychrome. They seem to lift up slightly, and the eyes look up and to the right. It seems as if the figure is seeing something behind the viewer, at a great distance. The figure has a straight, prominent nose, with a high bridge. The tip of the nose is somewhat bulbous and the nostrils are deeply carved and naturally rendered. The saint has prominent cheek bones and slightly sunken cheeks. Although the figure wears a beard and a moustache, the moustache seems to emerge from the outside of the saint’s nostrils, leaving most of the space between the figure’s nose and upper lip bare. A deep, wide philtrum is carved. Both upper and lower lips seem to be of equal thicknesses and the lips are slightly parted, as if the figure were about to speak. Most of the chin is bare and rounded. The saint’s beard follows his jawline and appears to emerge from the very bottom of his chin. The hair is longer on the chin than on the sides of the face. It is forked in the centre of the chin and carved in two swirls of hair, each of which curls outwards. There are no sharply carved lines on either the beard or the moustache, only soft, gentle forms, appearing like tufts of hair. The hair on the saint’s head is long, falling behind his shoulders and cascading in curls onto his upper back. The hair is parted in the centre of
the figure’s head and falls along the side of his face, covering his ears and curling back, away from the face. The saint’s neck is naturalistic without appearing too muscular. It is neither exceptionally long nor short.

(b) body: The saint’s collar is buttoned with a large, carved, disc-like button at the hollow of his throat. The collar bones are not visible. He wears a pilgrim’s caplet with a wide, pointed collar. A wrinkle is carved in the fabric of the collar on either side of the large button, to show that the cloth pulls there. The edges of the caplet seem to flutter, as if blown by a gentle breeze. On his chest, affixed to the caplet on either side, are two large scallop shells, with two crossed sticks behind each of them. These crossed sticks are pointed and notched at the bottom and surmounted by carved knobs at the tops, reminiscent of a pilgrim’s staff. The combination of scallop shell (James’ emblem) and pilgrim staff combines to form a version of the arms of St. James.

The saint’s tunic emerges below the short caplet and falls in many vertical pleats down his torso to the top edge of the voluminous cloak wrapped around his waist. Similar pleats have also been carved on the tunic’s sleeves. The sleeves appear to have been rendered to resemble light, voluminous fabric. Cuffs have been carved to appear as if the fabric has been rolled back, away from the hands. The cuffs hang a little loosely at the figure’s wrists. The saint gestures inwards with his left arm, bent at the elbow with the fingertips of his left placed in the centre of his chest, in a gesture reminiscent of that seen on the Killoran St. Joseph (Fig. 205).
The figure gestures outwards, down and back with his right arm. The pleating on the sleeve is visible on a small portion of the sleeve that is visible below the caplet and above the cloth of the cloak, which has been wrapped around his lower arm. The right hand is missing and the wrist area has been hollowed out in a rounded, conical shape to accommodate a replacement hand. This replacement hand is no longer attached to the figure, but is still extant and kept by the figure’s owner.

At the saint’s waist, a large and voluminous cloak has been wrapped around his body and the lower right arm. A thick fold-over has been carved at the top of this cloak, and the drapery folds run mainly horizontally on this portion of the figure. Below the doubled over fabric, the drapery folds fall diagonally down to the bottom of the fabric. Many of these folds are deeply undercut and resemble other folds seen in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century artworks. On the figure’s right side, the cloak falls all the way to his foot. On the left side, the cloak is hiked up higher, revealing the bottom edge of his tunic and bare ankle. The saint’s feet are bare and carved as part of the same block of wood as the round, disc-like base. Both the base and feet are much damaged from dry-rot.

(c) back: The sculpture is carved fully in the round, however the back is somewhat flatter and less detailed than the front of the sculpture. Both caplet and fabric fold from the top of the cloak continue around the back of the sculpture. The cloak falls all the way to the base of the sculpture in
back. A portion of the tunic has also been extended to the base of the figure in the back, below the cloak. This appears to have been done in order to strengthen the figure and increase its stability.

Only the sides of the hair, the portions which can be seen from the front of the figure, are fully rendered on the back. The centre portion of the hair is not carved long in the back, although long incised marks have been made on the back of the head to indicate strands of hair.

(d) base: The base is round and disk-like. It is approximately seven centimetres thick. The base is carved from the same block of wood as the rest of the sculpture. There are several severe cracks running through the base, a large hole in the centre, and many portions of the wood are missing along the edges. There is much evidence of dry-rot. Two metal loops have been attached to the profile sides of the base. It is not immediately apparent what these loops may have been used for.

5. Identification of the subject: St. James Major was one of the twelve apostles of Christ and one of the sons of Zebedee, the brother of St. John the Evangelist. The two brothers were referred to as the “sons of thunder” in Mark 3:17. He was martyred by Herod Agrippa I.

According to tradition, St. James Major preached Christianity in Spain prior to his death, and after being killed, his body was miraculously translated to Compostela, a coastal town in Galicia, in northern Spain. The church which held the remains of the saint, Santiago de Compostela, became one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations of the middle ages. The scallop shell, frequently found on
the shores of Galicia, became associated with the saint and the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

6. Comments:

Dating and Comparisons

The Hodkinson St. James appears to be dated to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and likely has a north European origin. The style of dress is very similar to another figure of St. James Major located in Sint-Pauluskerk in Antwerp (Fig. 338) also dated to the seventeenth century. Both figures wear the pilgrim’s caplet, with fluttering edges and a pointed collar held closed by a single, disk-like button. Both wear a voluminous cloak wrapped around their arms and torso at the waist, carved in similar folds, though the folds are more numerous on the Antwerp figure. Most interestingly, both figures wear very similar insignia on their caplets, the scallop shell overtop two crossed pilgrim staves. This same insignia and a similar pilgrim’s caplet can also be seen on an early eighteenth century figure of St. James in St. Virgil parish church in Rattenberg, Tyrol, Austria (Fig. 339). Although the carving of the Austrian figure appears significantly different from that of the Hodkinson St. James, the beard and moustache-styles of both figures are similar.
History

According to the figure’s owner, Randel Hodkinson, a church restorer in Limerick, Co. Limerick, the figure of St. James Major was given to his grandfather, who was also a church restorer, in the 1950s by the Sisters of Mercy, in Adare. The figure would have been thrown away otherwise, because of its poor condition. Mr. Hodkinson was not aware of anything else about the figure’s history.970

The Sisters of Mercy was initially founded by Catherine McAuley as a lay order in 1827 and converted into a religious order in 1831. The purpose of the order was to care for the poor, sick and those in need of education. The founding members were trained in their novitiate by the Presentation Sisters at George’s Hill, in Dublin,971 who themselves were only founded about eighty years earlier.972 It is possible that the figure of St. James Major, which appears to date significantly earlier, was brought into the order by one of the novitiates, or perhaps was given to the order by the Presentation Sisters, however, the most likely candidate for the origins of this figure seems to be that it was either already in Adare when the Sisters of Mercy arrived in 1854,973 or that it was bought on the continent by the 2nd Earl of Dunraven and was later acquired by the order.

970 Interview with Randel Hodkinson, April 2010.
973 According to the Limerick Chronicle, “The new Convent at Adare, prepared by the Earl of Dunraven, was yesterday occupied by a branch of the Sisters of Mercy from this city. Miss Honora
The Sisters of Mercy were invited to Adare by Edwin Wyndham-Quin, the 3rd Earl of Dunraven, to live and run a school on the property of the old monastery, the residential friary buildings of which were renovated by the Earl for this purpose. The original convent was built to accommodate seven sisters and the original school had two rooms, but, according to the *Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, as the duties of the sisters increased, the earl enlarged the convent and assigned it an endowment. After one hundred and twenty years, the Sisters of Mercy withdrew from the convent in 1973, and two sisters commuted from Rathkeale for two years, until 1975 when the school was turned over to lay administration.

The Holy Trinity Abbey in Adare, Co. Limerick appears to have been founded in the 1230s. Dedicated to St. James, it was the only Trinitarian monastery founded in Ireland. According to a story related by Caroline, Countess of Dunraven, the monastery was founded by Gregory of Dunbar, the Earl of March, in thanks for the Trinitarians in Aberdeen for sending a contingent to Algiers to rescue the earl’s nephews, who had been captured by Turkish pirates. The Scottish priest who had lead the expedition, Fr. John Cummins, was

---

Meehan, daughter of Mr. Thomas Meehan of Crossagalla, was received into the Presentation Convent, Sexton-street, on Thursday, the Right Rev. Dr. Ryan, R.C.B., acting as celebrant. Mass was said by the Rev. Dr. Meehan, P.P. of Glenroe and the visitors were entertained to breakfast.” “New Convent at Adare,” *The Limerick Chronicle*, April 22, 1854.


976 *Holy Trinity Abbey Church, Adare* (Locally produced booklet), 2.
made the first prior of the new monastery. The abbey was founded in Adare at the behest of the Earl of Kildare, with whom the Earl of Marche was acquainted.

Prior to the Suppression, the abbey produced many noted writers, a Provincial-General of the Trinitarian Order, a Provincial of the Catholic Church in Ireland, as well as a number of bishops and archbishops. Only a few passing notations about the monastery can be found in any of the annals, detailed accounts of which are given in the Dunraven’s Memorials of Adare. When the abbey was suppressed in 1539, several of the monks were killed. A century later, we find evidence of Irish Trinitarian monks traveling back and forth between Adare and Spain, where they established an English college in Seville, evidencing both the continued presence of Trinitarian monks in Adare as well as strong connections between those monks and Spain in the late seventeenth century.

977 This story appears in the Life of Father John Comyn as quoted by Caroline Wyndham-Quin, Countess of Dunraven and Edwin Richard W. Wyndham-Quin, Earl of Dunraven, Memorials of Adare Manor (Oxford: Messrs Parker, 1865) 38; it is corroborated by Douglas’ Peerage of Scotland, which states: “Patrick, fifth earl of Dunbar, founded a monastery of Red Friars at Dunbar in 1218.” Douglas also states that “Patrick, the eighth Earl, in 1290, is called the Comes de Marchia, being the first designated by that title.” Sir Robert Douglas, The Peerage of Scotland; containing an historical and genealogical account of the nobility of that kingdom, From the Origin to the present Generation: Collected from the public records and ancient chartularies of this nation, the charters and other writings of the nobility, and the works of our best historians, (Edinburgh, James Donaldson, 1768) 439, 440. The Wyndham-Quins also state that the Trinitarians were sometimes referred to as the Red Friars in England owing to the red and blue cross pattée on their white habits.

978 Domingo Lopez, Noticias historicas de las tres florentissimas provincias del celeste orden de la santissima Trinidad, redempcion de cautivos, en Ingleterra, Ecocia, y Hibernia (Madrid: Josep Rodriguez y Escobar, 1714), 340.

979 Wyndham-Quin, Memorials of Adare Manor, 46.

980 Ibid., 47.
Importation

Despite the strong connection between Spain and Adare (and even the subject matter), our figure does not appear to be Spanish. No directly comparable figures from Spain have yet been found, and the style of the Hodkinson St. James seems more idealized and less visceral than Spanish art of that period. Instead, it seems more plausible that the Hodkinson St. James was a nineteenth century importation of an older figure, perhaps by Windham Wyndham-Quin, the second Earl of Dunraven and his wife Caroline Wyndham-Quin during their continental travels in the 1830s. The Dunravens travelled extensively for several years, visiting Wales, England, France, Belgium, and Flanders. Fortunately, the Countess of Dunraven kept diaries of her trip in which she wrote detailed accounts of the places that she visited and the artworks which she viewed. In February and March of 1835, the Countess seems to have spent a considerable amount of time visiting the churches in and around Paris, and took great care to chronicle many of the artworks which she saw there. Unfortunately, she kept less detailed accounts of their purchases while traveling, although two entries may be of interest here. In Paris on the 20th February, 1835 the Countess writes, “Drove out with dear Windham and he chose a great many curious antiquities for ornamenting the den house at Adare…”\footnote{Caroline Wyndham-Quin, Countess of Dunraven, Unpublished papers, the Dunraven Collection, University of Limerick, D3196/E/2/37.} Even more significantly, on the 25th of September, 1835 in Antwerp, the Countess writes,
We went out again sight-seeing. Went first to the Church of St. James, whence is Rubin’s tomb, and a large family picture of his which is beautiful, there are several there very fine pictures and such beautiful sculpture and patterns that altogether it is considered the finest church in Antwerp. We went from there to the church of St. Paul where we had been the day before and there Windham purchased some beautiful carvings for the Gallery at Adare. We were quite charmed with them and we then went back to the Museum and copied some of the patterns there and in short were very busy the whole morning.982

One wonders if the Hodkinson St. James could have been one of the antiques purchased in Paris, or, more intriguingly, one of the carvings purchased from St. Paul’s in Antwerp. St. Paul’s is the same as Sint-Pauluskerk, mentioned previously as a comparison figure. One other carving, a didactic panel of The Deposition (Fig. 340) which can currently be seen in the Adare Cultural Centre seems to be of Netherlandish origin and is another likely candidate for having been purchased by the Dunravens in Antwerp. This sculpture is believed to have also been at the Holy Trinity Abbey Church prior to being put on display at the Adare Heritage Centre in 1994.983

Two other figures now in the Adare Cultural Centre, and formerly belonging to the Sisters of Mercy in Adare, should also be considered in relation to the Hodkinson St. James, a figure of the Madonna and Child and a figure

982 Ibid., D3196/E/2/38.

983 Local historian, Noel Hogan was unaware of the specific history of the Deposition but believed that it came from the Holy Trinity prior to being put on display at the Heritage Centre. Interview with Noel Hogan, Adare, Co. Limerick, April 2010.
attributed as St. Joseph (Fig. 344 and Fig. 346). Although the carving styles of these figures and the Hodkinson St. James are very different, it is worthwhile noting the similarities in dress between the Adare St. Joseph and the Hodkinson St. James. Both figures seem to be attired in a style typical of the late seventeenth century, have wide pointed collars, and buttons with single wrinkles, indicating the pulling of the cloth. The edges of the collars in both cases seem to ripple slightly. Yet, the overall impression is that the Adare St. Joseph is a much more modern figure than the Hodkinson St. James. One wonders if the sculptor, perhaps working in the mid-nineteenth century, was looking at an older figure, like the Hodkinson St. James and emulated its style.


---

JCA-ID-003: Madonna of Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Fig. 341 - Fig. 343)

1. Location: Dominican Convent, Taylor’s Hill, Galway

2. Date: Mid 18th – mid 19th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H. about 122 cm

(b) type of wood: Uncertain, maybe oak

(c) number of blocks: One block of wood. Instead of being carved in the round or

---

984 See Catalogue: *Figures of Indeterminate Date*, “Adare Madonna and Child, Section 6, p. 614 for a full discussion of the dating of these figures.
flattened as is common, the back of the figure appears to have been formed by the shape of the outside of the tree trunk from which the bark has been removed.

(d) dowel holes: There are many dowel holes throughout the figure. It appears that whenever a break occurred the broken off pieces would be re-affixed using a dowel. On some pieces this seems to have happened multiple times, resulting in multiple dowels and holes on the same pieces. Many of these previously reaffixed pieces are again detached from the sculpture, revealing many dowel holes.

(e) evidence of polychrome: Polychrome covers the entire figure and appears to be applied over a layer of gesso or white paint. The statue is quite dirty which obscures the colours of the polychrome somewhat, causing them to appear somewhat greyer than they would be if cleaned. The Madonna wears a white veil over her chocolate brown hair. Her flesh tone is pale and her dress is painted burgundy. The Madonna’s cloak is sky blue and edged in gold paint (not leaf) and the belt tied around her waist is painted gold as well. The Child’s skin tone is a slightly darker, warmer colour than his mother’s and he holds a royal blue globe surmounted by a gold cross. His hair is a lighter, warmer brown than his mother’s and both have delicately blushed lips, the painting of which does not extend to the edges of the carving. The Madonna has brown eyes without pupils on top of white sclerae, outlined in the same brown as her hair. Her eyebrows are gently arches picked out in the same colour brown. The Child’s eyes are
royal blue on top of white sclerae, outlined in the chocolate brown of his mother’s hair. His small eyebrows are painted the same colour as his hair. The Madonna’s sandals and base are painted brown.

(f) general condition: The figure is in very poor condition. There is a lot of dry rot, and seemingly active wood worm. Many pieces have fallen off and are collected in a box on the shelf next to the figure. There are several large cracks and in many places the sculpture seems to be crumbling away into dust.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a square face with full cheeks, dimpled chin and slight double chin. She has a long, straight nose, which in profile continues in a nearly straight line from her forehead, giving the impression of a rather classical profile and reminiscent of various images from the Neo-Classical period. The tip of the nose is rather thick and the nostrils are rendered. Her eyes are fully carved underneath the brow bone with both upper and lower eyelids. A philtrum is indicated above her small, smiling mouth and the distance between the nose and mouth is relatively short compared to the length of the chin. She has a long, columnar neck and a strong jaw-line. The Madonna wears a long white veil that is carved to appear as if it is made from a thick, heavy material. It has thick, mostly vertical drapery folds and begins just forward of the crown of the head and falls to the bottom of the statue in the back. The Madonna’s brown hair is
parted in the centre of her forehead and falls over her ears, revealing only
the lobes, before disappearing underneath her veil.

(b) body: Despite her feminine face and dress, this figure has a rather mannish
body. She has relatively broad shoulders, narrow hips, no breasts, a solid,
firm stance, and large feet and hands. The overall impression of the figure
is one of handsomeness rather than prettiness. Her figure, like her face, is
also reminiscent of the Neo-Classical style. The Madonna’s long veil falls
behind her shoulders to the base of the statue in the back. She wears a
long cloak with a think gold border. This border is carved as well as
painted and is held together by a strap which passes between the two sides
that carved in similar thickness to the cloak’s border and also painted gold.
The cloak falls over the Madonna’s shoulders and is carved without
drapery folds on the upper torso. The Madonna’s arms emerge from under
the cloak, which is brought up under the figure’s right arm, across her
body, and held in the left hand against the Christ Child’s bottom. The
Christ Child sits in the crook of the Madonna’s left arm. The figure’s
right hand is missing, although a now detached replacement hand sits in a
box on the shelf next to the figure. This replacement hand appears to
gesture out towards the viewer and does not hold anything. It is
impossible to know how accurately this reflects the original. The
Madonna’s dress is carved with many, long, undulating folds that make
the figure’s body appear much like an ionic column, only broken by the
fluttering ribbon of a belt which is tied around her waist. Her feet are large
and sandaled and stand on top of a semi-domed circular base. The right foot is part of a section of wood that has become completely detached from the sculpture, and sits on the floor next to the main body of the statue. Another long radial crack extends from the figure’s right shoulder down to the break of this separated piece of wood. The crack appears to go nearly the whole way through the figure, and without conservation, will likely separate from the rest of the carving in the not too distant future. A third deep radial crack emerges from underneath the Child’s feet and extends down the length of the cloak where it is drawn across the figure.

(c) back: The most idiosyncratic portion of the figure is its back, which was described by its keeper, Sr. Rose O’Neill, as resulting from the shape of the tree trunk from which the figure is carved. It is flat at the back of the head and along the left side of the figure. The right side of the back of the figure is deeply hollowed, and as Sr. Rose observes, this seems come from the natural form of the tree as opposed to having been deliberately carved this way. The back does not appear to have been intended to be seen. Large sections of dry rot and wood worm can also be observed on the back of the figure.

(d) Christ Child: The Child is quite large and gives the impression of being a toddler rather than a baby. He is completely nude although a carefully positioned globe and his crossed legs preserves his modesty. He sits in the crook of his mother’s left arm, he throws his right arm behind his mother’s neck and looks out at the viewer. The Madonna grasps the
Child’s bottom firmly, using her cloak to separate her hand from the Child’s body. Many of the Child’s facial features resemble his mothers. He has a similar small, smiling mouth, square forehead, double chin and straight bridge of the nose. His facial proportions, however, are more child-like. His hair is parted in the middle and falls in thick waves around his head, covering his ears except for the bottom of the lobes. He has the same pillar-like neck as his mother and similar broad proportions.

5. Identification of the subject: This is a standing image of the Madonna and Child, in which the Christ Child is depicted nude, placing emphasis on his humanity, and holding the globe of the world.


   Much of the damage that this figure exhibits may be due to the conditions under which it was kept in at the Dominican Sister’s previous convent on Taylor’s Hill. The Madonna was kept on a window sill in the novitiate. The window was frequently left open, exposing the statue to the elements. Additional damage was sustained during the sisters’ move to their new convent, during which time several pieces were knocked off of the figure. These pieces are currently stored in a small cardboard box near to the figure’s current location in a storage room at the new convent.985

985 Interview with Sr. Rose O’Neill.
Dating

Although MacLeod mentioned this figure in a publication from 1947, her brief comments are not very illuminating.

At Taylor’s Hill, Galway, the Dominican Nuns also have a Penal Madonna. It is clear from the pose, the treatment of form and drapery that it was copied from one of their continental 17th century figures.986

To my knowledge, the only other possible pre-1800 figure known to have belonged to the sisters is the Madonna of the Rosary (Fig. 301), dated in the current study to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries and by MacLeod to the seventeenth century. It is entirely plausible that the sisters would have owned other figures from that time period, however this is not known empirically and there do not seem to be any true similarities between this figure and the Rosary Madonna.

The Madonna of Taylor’s Hill, Galway appears to be of skilled, but provincial workmanship. The details of the Madonna’s drapery folds, her bare feet and hands are all well-rendered and the pose and expression of the Christ Child are endearing. Yet there is no movement below the draperies and an odd piece of wood was selected for the carving. The back of the figure appears to be made from the exterior of the trunk of the tree from which the figure was carved. A large natural-looking canker, or depression, can be seen running along the back

986 MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 131.
of the sculpture’s right side extending from the base of the sculpture to the back of the figure’s head.

The dating of this figure is problematic, although it seems to have be of neo-classical influence, suggesting that the figure may date anywhere from the mid-eighteenth century up to the mid-nineteenth century. The figures’ solid proportions, classical profiles, and columnar draperies all evoke the neo-classical style, but the provincial style of the carving prevents a closer dating of the sculpture.

The *Madonna of Taylor’s Hill* is in desperate need of conservation there is considerable damage from active dry-rot and potentially active wood worm.

7. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 131.

---

**JCA-ID-004: Adare Madonna and Child** (Fig. 344 - Fig. 345)

1. **Location:** Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick

2. **Date:** Late 18th – mid 19th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: 97 cm, W: 38 cm

   (b) type of wood: Uncertain and stained a very dark brown.

   (c) number of blocks: It appears to be carved from one block.

   (d) dowel holes: There are none visible, however I was not permitted to view the figure outside of its case.
(e) evidence of polychrome: A light coloured paint can be seen in many of the crevices of the Madonna’s drapery folds. It is difficult to determine what colour this polychrome may have been because of the layer of brown wood stain over it. There are also two small flecks of red paint which can be seen through the stain on the drapery folds that fall across the Madonna’s left shoe.

(f) general condition: The statue is very damaged. There are many wood worm holes and the edge of the drapery which falls from the Madonna’s left arm is damaged by rot. There is some kind of patching substance, resembling putty, on the bottom hem of the Madonna’s garments and perhaps on the shoes as well. This is obscured by the brown wood-stain, making it difficult to say with certainty. The Christ Child’s right arm is missing below the elbow and the Madonna’s right arm has been sheared off below the shoulder, it looks as if the break might have occurred from a radial crack.

4. Description:

(a) head: The Madonna has a high forehead and wears her hair parted in the middle, beneath a heavy veil. The carved hair appears to be loosely gathered behind her neck and covers her ears. It is deeply carved in stylized grooves to indicate separate locks of hair. Her veil sits high on her head and falls stiffly behind her shoulders. The Madonna has very strong angular features, with a very clearly defined brow, large double-lidded
eyes which slope downwards at the outside corners and a very prominent, triangular nose with wide, clearly defined nostrils. A broad philtrum is indicated. Her mouth appears rather grim; it is very wide with thin, flat lips. The Madonna’s jawline is shard and angular, ending in a short, pointy chin. The entire head is inclined downwards and slightly to the right, following a general rightward lean in the whole figure. The throat is long and muscular.

(h) body: The entire figure leans downwards and to the right. This is not a natural stance. It is possible that the sculpture was intended to be placed at a height and look down at the viewer, but this does not negate the overall awkwardness of the carving. She stands in an unnatural contrapposto, with her right knee bent. It gives the impression that her left leg is long than her right. She holds the Christ Child in her left arm, but he appears too large to be supported the way that he is. The Adare Madonna wears a cloak spiralled around her body, over her tunic. The cloak is wrapped around the figure’s shoulders, apparently from right to left, judging from the orientation of the carved drapery folds, which are very stylized and deep, almost rectangular. The cloak can be seen again wrapped around the Madonna’s hips, again from right to left and is then draped over her left arm. It folds over on itself somewhat at the upper edge and a few long, loopy folds hand down her right side to her knee. The left side of the cloak is carved in long fluted folds on her left side, emerging from behind the Christ Child. The bottom hem of the cloak hangs nearly to just below
the figure’s knees. The Adare Madonna’s tunic is carved in very regular, stylized rectangular folds on the torso to the belt and again below the belt to the point where the cloak cuts across the figure. There are a few long fluted folds in the tunic between the Madonna’s legs below the cloak and two odd looking horizontal folds on each of the Madonna’s feet, where the lower portion of her draperies fall across them. Her feet are proportionately very large and her shoes are very plain. There is no base.

(i) back: Because of the sculpture’s position in the case, it was not possible to observe the figure’s back.

(j) Christ Child: The Christ Child is proportionately very large. His limbs are quite thick and strangely muscular for a child. The Child is depicted nude but without anatomical differentiation. The Child’s facial features are nearly identical to his mother’s, but with fuller cheeks. His hair is long, especially towards the back, falling past his jawline. It is carved in thick, deep grooves emanating from a centre part and bordered by a wavy fringe. The Child’s head is inclined downwards. His left hand rests on his left knee, and his right arm, though missing from the elbow down, appears as if it once gestured out towards the viewer, perhaps in benediction.

5. Identification of the subject: This is a standing depiction of the Madonna and Child, with the Christ Child depicted nude and held in his mother’s left arm.
6. Comments: Catriona MacLeod dates the *Adare St. Joseph* and the *Adare Madonna and Child* to the end of the eighteenth century and recounts that the figures, according to local tradition, were associated with the Franciscan ministry in Adare.\(^{987}\)

When I spoke with local historian, Noel Hogan, he recounted a different story to me, saying that the Madonna and Child and St. Joseph were reputed to have come out of the ground in Adare 150-200 years ago, although he did not know from precisely where. If the figures spent anytime buried, it could not have been long, as they do not display the kind of damage one would expect from timber long buried.

I believe that MacLeod did not see the Adare figures in person, as she describes the Madonna as “almost life-sized” and the sculpture is significantly smaller than that and says that the *Adare St. Joseph* was carved of a block of Scots pine and the figure does not appear to have been carved out of pine. I am willing to accept MacLeod’s dating of the *Adare Madonna and Child* and *St. Joseph* as the earliest date that the figures could have been carved; however there is a graphic, geometric quality to the carving that seems at odds with most examples of eighteenth century sculpture. The difference in carving styles may indicate that it was carved, as MacLeod suggests, by a local carpenter rather than a sculptor, however this is still at odds with the figure’s clothing style.

Although the carving styles of these figures and the *Hodkinson St. James* are very different, it is worthwhile noting the similarities in dress between the

\(^{987}\) Despite the fact that Adare Friary burned in 1647, the friars remained in Adare until the end of the eighteenth century. MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the Seventeenth Century”, 130.
Adare St. Joseph and the Hodkinson St. James. Both figures seem to be attired in a style typical of the late seventeenth century, have wide pointed collars, and buttons with single wrinkles, indicating the pulling of the cloth. The edges of the collars in both cases seem to ripple slightly. Yet, the overall impression is that the Adare St. Joseph is a much more modern figure than the Hodkinson St. James. One wonders if the sculptor, perhaps working in the mid-nineteenth century, was looking at an older figure, like the Hodkinson St. James and emulated its style.


JCA-ID-005: Adare St. Joseph (Fig. 346 - Fig. 347)

1. Location: Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick

2. Date: Late 18th – mid 19th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H: 103 cm, W: 30.5 cm

   (b) type of wood: Both MacLeod and the museum label say scots pine, however this is really only evident in the right arm, which is a later replacement, and in the base which also is a separate piece of wood.

   (c) number of blocks: The figure is currently comprised of three blocks. The right arm which holds the crucifix has been replaced from about elbow-level down and the base, which may also be later than the rest of the figure, is also a separate block from the main art of the carving.
(d) dowel holes: There are none visible when the sculpture is viewed within the case, but two nails can be seen in the portion of the drapery which falls below the figure’s left hand at a place where the wood appears to have been sheared off.

(e) evidence of polychrome: A dark brown wood-stain covers the entire figure and no other polychrome is visible.

(f) general condition: Overall, this figure is in much better condition and represents more sophisticated carving than the Adare Madonna, with which it is displayed. As mentioned above, the right arm, including the hand and crucifix, appears to be a later replacement and the base may also not be original to the sculpture. Additionally, a portion of the Adare St. Joseph’s draperies, which fall from his left arm have been sheared off. There is extensive repair and remodelling in wood putty on the left foot and the draperies on the back left of the statue looks to have active dry rot. A few small wood worm holes can be seen the left shoulder.

4. Description:

(a) head: This figure of a male saint has a sensitively carved face. He inclines his head to the right and seems to glance slightly downwards, as if meant to be placed at a height. He has a high, strong, square forehead, brows that seem to lift up slightly at the inside corners in what appears to this viewer to be an expression of compassion, and deep set, almond-shaped eyes. The eyes are double lidded. The saint has high cheekbones and a straight,
prominent nose that is naturalistically carved. He has a wide mouth and the lips are parted as if he were speaking. The saint has a full beard and moustache, giving the impression of having a strong jawline and chin underneath. His hair is parted in the middle and falls in thick locks on either side of his face, over his ears, and just past the saint’s jawline. Just enough carved detail is given in the hair, moustache and beard to create the impression of natural hair, without too much fine detail. The musculature in the figure’s neck is carved naturalistically.

(b) body: The Adare St. Joseph wears an unusual tunic with a collar that resembles a modern curved, spread collar from a man’s dress shirt. The upper portion of his tunic is also carved with a seam where the two sides of his shirt meet and is held together by four visible buttons. The garment dimples slightly at the buttons to suggest tension on the fabric. There are a few gently indicated vertical folds on either side of the buttons on the figure’s torso and several that follow the diameter of the figure’s arms on his sleeves. The overall impression that this creates is of a slightly baggy man’s dress shirt. The Adare St. Joseph also wears a heavy cloak draped over his left shoulder and slung across his left arm. From behind him, the cloak is brought around from the figure’s right side and wrapped across his body from just above his waist. The saint holds the cloak in place with his left hand. The cloak falls to just past the figure’s knees and doubles over itself in a large, voluminous drape at the waist on the figure’s right side. Below his cloak, the saint’s tunic falls over his feet and rests on the
base. Many, mostly vertical folds can be seen on this portion of the figure’s garment. His lower right arm holds a crucifix which strongly resembles many of the extant Franciscan Penal crosses from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but this portion of the statue is a later repair and cannot be used to date the rest of the figure. One cannot determine, what, if anything, this figure held in this hand originally. The Adare St. Joseph stands in a well-executed contrapposto position. His right shoe looks convincingly like an old leather shoe and the edges of the sole are clearly delineated. The left shoe has been heavily repaired with wood putty and is thus rather shapeless and non-descript.

(c) base: The figure stands on a flat, circular base approximately 4 cm thick and only a little wider than the figure itself. The base appears to be modern.

(d) back: It was not possible to determine anything about the back of the figure because of the manner in which it was displayed. It was not possible to see the sculpture outside of its case.

5. **Identification of the subject**: This figure is customarily attributed as St. Joseph. This attribution is likely accurate, owing the sculpture’s association with the *Adare Madonna and Child* and its possible date in the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century. The sculpture does not seem to have an icon by which to identify it.


7. **Bibliography**: Duignan and Killanin (1967), 53; MacLeod (1947), 130.
JCA-ID-006: Kilcorban Crucifix (Fig. 348 - Fig. 349)

1. Location: Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. Date: Late 18th - early 19th century.

3. Technical details:

   (a) dimensions: H. about 46 cm

   (b) type of wood: Sycamore

   (c) number of blocks: The figure is carved from one block and attached to a cross comprised of two separate pieces of wood. The cross is may be modern.

   (d) dowel holes: There are none visible, however there is a large screw projecting from the stump of the left shoulder.

   (e) evidence of polychrome: The figure has a greenish skin tone, with several discoloured patches where either the wood shows through or where plaster patches are. The colour of the wood is a warm light brown, occasionally whitish from gesso. The plaster patches are darker brown. The hair, eyebrows, beard and shading around the eyes are painted dark brown. Bright red paint, representing blood, cascades from the wound in Christ’s side, down his torso and onto the perizonium. Red paint also cascades

---

As noted by MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary figures,” 198.
from the nail in the one partially extant foot. The perizonium is painted a
very dark blue.

(f) general condition: Both of the figure’s arms are missing from just before the
shoulder. There are some splinters of wood emerging from the right
shoulder and an old screw can be seen on the left shoulder. The right leg
is intact until a break about halfway through the foot. The left leg is
broken halfway through the shin. There is a chunk of wood missing from
the left hip from rot. The wood is pitted with many tiny woodworm holes.
The current cross looks quite new.

4. Description:

(a) head: Christ’s head inclines towards his right shoulder, and the figure’s eyes
are closed in death. The hair is parted in the middle and scored with many
fine lines. It remains very close to the head and neck and falls in two
spiral curls on either side of the figure’s neck, ending at the top of the
collar bone. The wood is scored diagonally on the curls. The back of the
head is not carved in much detail. The ears protrude somewhat.

The figure has a heavy brow, and the painted eyebrows nearly
meet in the middle. The eyes bulge out from the deep sockets. They are
almond-shaped and closed. The natural shadows of the carving around the
eyes are enhanced by dark brown paint.

The nose is long and thin. There is no indication of nostrils,
however the philtrum has been carved. Deep naso-labial folds have been
carved from the corners of the nose to the corners of the mouth. The mouth is deeply bevelled and the lips are blushed. The beard follows the jaw-line and is slightly forked. There is no moustache across the top lip. The goatee portion of the beard emerges from the corners of the mouth. The figure has a proportionately long neck.

(b) body: The figure’s neck emerges from clearly carved collar bones. Both of the arms missing from just before the shoulders, but judging from the form of the pectoral muscles, collar bones, and the angles of the breaks in the figure’s shoulders, it seems that the arms were in a V-shaped position, similar to that of the Ballyhaunis Cricifix (Fig. 361).

There is a wide distance between the figure’s collar bones and nipples. The entire torso is elongated, especially when compared to the relatively short legs. The nipples and navel are all carved as small knobs. A long crack that has been patched with plaster can be seen running nearly the whole length of the torso, from the collar bone on the right side of the figure down to the navel. The pectoral muscles are well defined. There is a small notch carved underneath the right pectoral muscle to indicate the wound in Christ’s side from which much painted red blood cascades. The ribs fall in the wrong direction and the stomach bulges below the waist.

The perizonium is tied at Christ’s left hip, and the many small, erratic folds fall downwards at an angle towards the right side. A chunk of the wood is missing at the left hip from rot, where the knot of the perizonium appears to have been carved.
The legs are very short in comparison to the long torso. They are well muscled and did not cross, causing the figure to have been affixed to the cross with four nails instead of three. This is made apparent by the extant left foot where the hole from the nail can be seen, and the painted blood that flows from this wound is plentiful.

5. Identification of the subject: For a general explanation of images of the crucified Christ, see: Catalogue, *Figures from the Suppression,* “Navan Crucifix,” section 5, p. 579. This figure of Christ on the cross is shown with his eyes closed in death and nailed to the cross with four nails instead of three, the two feet having been nailed separately.

6. Comments:

   Previous Publications

   Coleman, writing in 1902, states: “there are three wooden statues belonging in former years to this (Kilcorban) chapel… they are the statue of Our Blessed Lady, referred to by O’Heyne, a statue of St. Peter and another of St. Paul, all about two feet in height.”

---

989 Coleman, 87.

990 MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” 203.
been estimated at a glance, one would not mistake them for being of comparable
size to the significantly larger Kilcorban Madonna. Additionally, the figure of the
Madonna from the Crucifixion group is obviously feminine and no ecclesiastic (as
O’Heyne was) would mistake the painting of “B.V.M.” on the base of the figure
as indicating anything other than “Blessed Virgin Mary”. The figures of Sts. Peter
and Paul mentioned by Coleman may be lost figures. It is not known when these
crucifixion figures were discovered, or whether they were ever definitively
associated with the Kilcorban church.

The figures of the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist are so similar to
the figure of the crucified Christ in both form and facial features that they must
have been carved by the same artist. MacLeod suggested that the figures once
surmounted a rood screen in the church at Kilcorban, however the carvings are
quite small, and the figures typically found on rood screens are much larger. The
figure of the crucified Christ may be of a Counter-Reformation type, as suggested
by MacLeod. The feet are not crossed, necessitating the use of four nails to affix
Christ to the cross. The manner of depicting Christ having been fixed to the cross
with four nails instead of three is also seen on examples dated to the thirteenth
century. In addition, the manner in which the Kilcorban Crucified Christ’s head
and upper body veer towards the left is reminiscent of certain eleventh century
examples, including a crucifixion figure from St. George’s Cathedral in Cologne
(Fig. 350), currently in the collection of the Schnütgen Museum. The compactness
of the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist also echo eleventh century examples.

991 Ibid., 198.
Comparisons

Several other similar crucifixes have been found, including the *Tynagh Crucifix* (Fig. 359), the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix* (Fig. 361), the *Tralee Crucifix* (Fig. 362), and a lost crucifix from Mullagh, Co. Galway (Fig. 351). These surviving, small-scale crucifixes show other similarities besides their uncrossed feet. The heads of the *Kilcorban Crucifix*, the *Tynagh Crucifix*, the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix*, and the lost *Mullagh Crucifix* all incise toward the right. Their eyes are closed in death and they exhibit similar facial proportions. Their hair and beard styles are very similar, as is that of the more provincially carved *Tralee Crucifix*. The perizonia of all but the *Tralee Crucifix* are carved with the knot on the left hip, with folds emerging from the knot and falling downwards to the right side. Elongated torsos are evident on all the examples, and an unusual emphasis on the nipples can be seen on both the *Kilcorban Crucifix* and the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix*. All of these traits, when taken together seem to evidence a common model, perhaps dating to the eleventh century.

Possible Association with the Lough Derg Pilgrimage

In a discussion with Griffin Murray, curator at the Kerry County Museum, he suggested to me that the *Tralee Crucifix* might have been influenced by the crucifixes associated with the Lough Derg pilgrimage. The pilgrimage to St. Patrick’s Purgatory, a cave on Station Island in the middle of Lough Derg, dates back to the middle ages. The earliest reference to this pilgrimage dates to the 1180s, and is contained within the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* which

---

992 Interview with author, October 2010.
widely circulated across Europe.\textsuperscript{993} Another reference to the pilgrimage occurred in the sixteenth century in the \textit{Register of Primate Dowdall of Armagh},\textsuperscript{994} and in the eighteenth century the Lough Derg pilgrimage is referred to as one of the four main pilgrimages in Ireland in the \textit{Life of St. Kevin}.\textsuperscript{995} Pilgrims travelled from all over Europe to lock themselves in a small cave, through which it was believed that St. Patrick, and Knight Owein after him (chronicled in the \textit{Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii}), descended into Purgatory and thereby absolved themselves of sin.\textsuperscript{996}

Precedent has already been established associating crucifixes with the Lough Derg pilgrimage, although previously the crucifixes associated with this pilgrimage have been of the type commonly referred to as “penal crosses”.\textsuperscript{997} These crosses are typically carved from a single piece of wood with the figure of Christ carved in high relief on a broad cross, graphically inscribed with other symbols of the crucifixion and resurrection.\textsuperscript{998} One man, Thomas Campbell Foster, wrote about his experience on the Lough Derg in 1846, saying,

---

\textsuperscript{993} Peter Harbison, \textit{Pilgrimage in Ireland, the monuments and the people} (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 53.

\textsuperscript{994} Ibid., 52.

\textsuperscript{995} Ibid., 51.


\textsuperscript{997} P. Ó Gallachair, “Pilgrim crucifixes of Lough Derg,” \textit{Clogher Record} 5 (1965), 296.

\textsuperscript{998} Many penal crosses survive in Ireland, most dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They form a distinct and clearly defined subgroup of Irish sculpture and have been extensively published by other scholars. As such, they are not covered by this catalogue. Some of the best information on the penal crosses is contained in A.T. Lucas and H.G. Tempest, “‘Penal’ Crucifixes,” in \textit{Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society} 13, no. 2 (1954), 145-174.
As I drove down the road to the lake, some children ran out of two or three peasants' huts on the roadside, with handfuls of rudely carved little wooden crucifixes, to offer me for sale. These are sold to the pilgrims on their way to the 'station,' and are afterwards preserved by them with the greatest devotion, as proofs or trophies of their pilgrimage. I bought a child's handful of these crucifixes for a shilling. 999

On such figure, called the O'Donnell Crucifix (Fig. 352) is kept in a case at St. Mary’s Church on Station Island. On its reverse side, the cross is inscribed with the date 1792. This date represents the date that the carving was originally bought and used in devotional exercises at Lough Derg. This, and other penal crosses like it, are small scale and sturdily constructed. They are carved from a single block of wood with little or no undercutting, making them sturdy enough to be brought on pilgrimage. Many, like the O'Donnell Crucifix, and depict the Christ figure without his feet crossed. Many also depict the figure of Christ with clearly defined ribs which slant downwards like the Kilcorban Crucifix.

The crucifixion figures under discussion here do not seem to be made sturdily enough to have been safely or comfortably carried on pilgrimage, and generally are too large in scale. They seem more likely to have been used on altars in rural churches. Perhaps the Kilcorban, Tralee, Ballyhaunis, Mullagh and Tynagh crucifixes were carved in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and may have been inspired by an older crucifix, perhaps on Station

Island, or borrowed certain traits from the wide spread penal crucifixes of Lough Derg.


JCA-ID-007: Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna (Fig. 353 - Fig. 356)

1. Location: Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. Date: Late 18th - early 19th century.

3. Technical details:

(a) dimensions: H. about 36 cm

(b) type of wood: Sycamore

(c) number of blocks: Single block

(d) dowel holes: None

(e) evidence of polychrome: The figure wears a black veil that becomes a cloak over a dark maroon dress. The flesh-tone, like that seen on the Kilcorban Crucifix and on the Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist, is greenish. The hair, eyebrows, details and shadows around the eyes are all painted dark brown. The scleras are painted white, the pupils and irises are indicated by brown dots that have a marked outward divergence.

As noted by MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary figures,” 198.
(f) general condition: The top of this figure’s head is has evidence of some
damage from rot. Like the other two figures in this grouping, the Madonna
is pitted with many tiny wood worm holes.

4. Description: This standing figure is very strangely proportioned with a very long torso
and extremely short legs, as judged by the placement of the hips. The hips
are placed in such a way as to make it appear that the figure was kneeling,
except that the Madonna’s long, finger-like toes peak out from beneath the
front of her robe. No movement is evident beneath the figure’s clothing.
The figure leans forward quite drastically; this is especially apparent from
the side, but not immediately evident from the front.

(a) head: The top of the head shows some surface rot which may still be
active. The smooth veil is carved straight across the figure’s forehead.
Very dark brown hair emerges from the veil from about halfway down the
face. Her forehead is short and her brow is heavy. The eyebrows are
long, thick and straight. The painted lines nearly meet and do not follow
the carved line of the brow. The nose is long and thin; it is broken on the
left side. The figure’s eyes are downcast but open. The painted eyes have
a slight outward deviation; they do not look in the same direction. The
space between the nose and the lip is long and the upper lip is not carved.
The bottom lip has been carved but is not painted. The incised line of the
Madonna’s mouth is accented with darker paint. Her chin is pointy and her
face is broad across the cheek-bones. The shadows of her collar bone and
the creases of her neck are emphasized by painted shadows.
(b) body: At the collar bone, the figure’s chest projects out farther than her chin although the breasts are not indicated. The veil becomes a cloak that is fastened just below the figure’s collar bones by a band that stretches across the Madonna’s chest, with four beads in the shape of a flower or a cross, in the centre. The cloak conforms to the outline of the Madonna’s body. The dress’s sleeves extend to just past the wrist. A small gap is carved between the end of the sleeves and the wrists. The figure’s hands are long and thin, almost claw-like; they are held in a gesture of prayer but do not meet. The only folds in the cloth of the figure’s garments are at the bottom hem, near the base. These folds are lightly rendered in diagonals extending upwards to the figure’s right. The thick, disc-like base is carved from the same block of wood as the figure. The sides and back of the base are painted black, and the front is a painted a yellowing white. On the white portion, the initials “B.V.M.” are painted, identifying this figure as the “Blessed Virgin Mary”.

5. Identification of the subject: Depictions of the crucifixion frequently include images of the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist. This is intended to depict John 19:26-27, which states, “when Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.”

JCA-ID-008: Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist (Fig. 357 - Fig. 358)

1. **Location:** Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. **Date:** Late 18\textsuperscript{th} - early 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H. about 36 cm

   (b) type of wood: Sycamore\textsuperscript{1001}

   (c) number of blocks: Single block

   (d) dowel holes: None

   (e) evidence of polychrome: This figure has the same greenish flesh-tint as the other two figures in this grouping. His hair, beard, and some of the facial details are picked out in a dark brown polychrome. The sclerae are painted white, and the robe is painted black. The base of this figure is painted brown.

   (g) general condition: The hands of this figure are missing and like the other two figures from this group, is full of tiny wood worm holes throughout the entire carving. There is a crack in the front of the base which has been

\textsuperscript{1001} As noted by MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary figures,” 198.
repaired with plaster. Large chunks of wood missing at the back of the base from active rot.

4. Description:

(a) head: The head of this figure is nearly identical to that of the Crucifixion figure, although the eyes of St. John the Evangelist are open and downcast, the ears project out even farther, and the hair falls behind the figure’s back. The irises consist of a thin black line encircling a thin white line around a black pupil. The hair parted in the middle and scored with many fine incised lines. It is tucked behind the ears, painted brown and remains very close to the head; it ends at the back of the neck at the collar. *St. John the Evangelist* has a similar heavy brow, almond-shaped eyes, long thin nose, and a similar mouth to the Christ figure. The beards are nearly identical.

(b) body: This figure wears a simple tunic with a high, wide collar. At the collar, the paint does not completely follow the carving, the polychrome overlaps the neck slightly. St. John’s body has similar proportions to the Madonna figure with an elongated torso and very short legs. From the placement of the figure’s hips, it appears as if the figure is kneeling, however, like the Madonna, long, finger-like toes peak out from underneath the front of John’s robe. No movement is evident beneath the clothing, and there is little indication of anatomy. Both of the arms of this figure are bent at the elbow, and held up against the body in a similar prayer pose as that of the Madonna figure; however the left arm is raised higher than the right, so
the no longer extant hands would not have been held at the same level.

The base of the figure is thick and disc-like.


---

**JCA-ID-009: Tynagh Crucifix (Fig. 359 - Fig. 360)**

1. **Location:** Clonfert Diocesan Museum, St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. **Date:** Late 18th – early 19th century.

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: about 60 cm

   (b) type of wood: Unknown. The wood is entirely covered with thick polychrome.

   (c) number of blocks: Due to the way that the figure is displayed, on the floor of a vestments case, it was not possible to determine definitively how many blocks comprise the figure. It appears that the extant portion of the figure
is made from a single block of wood. Presumably each of the arms would have been carved from separate pieces of wood.

(c) dowel holes: There are no dowel holes visible. The figure is attached to the cross at his bottom, his shoulders, and via a nail driven through the palms of his hands, although the right is currently only crumbled plaster surrounding the nail in the cross. Nails have also been pounded through each of the separated feet, however they do not attach to the cross. The ends of the nails hang in the air between the bottom of the figure’s feet and the cross.

(d) evidence of polychrome: The polychrome appears thick and modern. The sculpture looks as if it were entirely covered with the flesh tone paint, and the other colours were then applied over this layer. In some areas a darker flesh tone can be seen underneath the modern, paler colour which covers the figure. All the paints used appear very matte and inexpertly applied. The perizonium is painted with a thin layer of dark navy blue, similar in colour to that seen on the Kilcorban Crucifix. A vibrant, though also thinly painted, red polychrome is used to depict blood emerging from the wound in Christ’s side and feet. The hair, beard, eyebrows and eyelashes are all picked out in a thin, medium-brown paint. A darker brown can also be observed in the hair and beard. The lips have been painted a pink colour that appears to have been made from a mixture of the flesh tone polychrome and the vibrant red used elsewhere to depict blood.
(e) general condition: There is what appears to be active woodworm throughout the head, torso and legs of the sculpture. The fingers of the left hand have cracked off and are missing. The right arm appears to be made entirely of plaster and the right hand is currently just a crumbling mitt made of plaster. This figure is badly in need of conservation and better storage conditions.

4. Description:

(a) head: The proportions and features of the *Tynagh Crucifixion* figure’s head are similar to those seen on the *Kilcorban Crucifix*, although the *Tynagh Crucifix* is carved in less detail. The hair and beard are merely painted on, although contrary to what MacLeod says, the facial features are carved. The eyes are closed under low brows, and the brow ridge is carved. The nose is long and triangular, although due to the figure’s position within is case it is not possible to tell whether the nostrils are indicated. A slight indication of naso-labial folds can be seen, and the philtrum is carved. The figure’s lips smile and the whole expression is one of peaceful repose. The chin is both broad and pointy, and appears carved with the intension that a beard would be painted on it, even if there are no incised lines present in this area of the carving. His head hangs onto his chest and lolls to the right side.

(b) body: Christ has a long torso, carved without the obvious musculature apparent in the *Kilcorban Crucifix*. Neither nipples nor navel are carved. The pectoral muscles are lightly indicated. The wound in Christ’s side has
not been carved, and is only indicated with paint on the right side. Folds are lightly carved on Christ’s perizonium, but are not as clearly defined as in the Kilcorban example. The perizonium appears to be gathered on the figure’s left hip, although under the current viewing circumstances this is difficult to discern. Christ’s legs appear proportionate to the length of the torso. The ankles are not crossed and the feet are nailed separately. The musculature of the legs is softly moulded and the feet are carved in detail, perhaps in more detail than is evident on the rest of the carving.

Christ’s arms reach upwards in a wide “Y” pose, dissimilar to the drastic “V” indicated by the musculature of the Kilcorban Crucifix, or in the intact figure from Tralee. Both arms appear broken at the elbow, and the right arms appears to be a plaster replacement from at least this juncture, and possibly all the way from the shoulder. The right hand is a crumbling mitt of plaster. The left arm, although also broken at the elbow, appears to be made of wood, and possibly original. The figures are the left hand are cracked and broken.

5. Identification of the subject: For a general explanation of images of the crucified Christ, see: Catalogue, Figures from the Suppression, “Navan Crucifix,” section 5, p. 579. This figure of Christ on the cross is shown with his eyes closed in death and nailed to the cross with four nails instead of three, the two feet having been nailed separately.
6. **Comments:** For a general discussion of the similarities and possible common origins of the *Kilcorban Crucifix*, the *Tynagh Crucifix*, the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix* and the *Tralee Crucifix*, see: Catalogue, *Figures of Indeterminate Date*, “Kilcorban Crucifix,” section 6, p. 622.

The *Tynagh Crucifix* was discovered in 1942 in the sacristy of the Tynagh Catholic Church. At the time, the Tynagh Church also housed the *Kilcorban Crucifixion Scene*. According to MacLeod, the figure was in very poor condition when it was discovered as a result of damp and dry rot.\(^{1002}\) Patrick Egan states that when the figure was found it was being held together entirely by its outer layers of paint, but “has since been hardened by expert treatment.”\(^{1003}\) Nothing else is known about the figure’s history.

7. **Bibliography:** Egan (1956/1957), 67; MacLeod (1945), 200-201.

---

**JCA-ID-010: Ballyhaunis Crucifix** (Fig. 361)

1. **Location:** Augustinian Friary, Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo

2. **Date:** 18\(^{th}\) century (?).

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: Unknown, but appears to be small in scale.\(^{1004}\)

   (b) type of wood: Unknown, but fine grained.

\(^{1002}\) MacLeod, “The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” 200.

\(^{1003}\) Egan, 67.

\(^{1004}\) I was not able to observe this figure personally. No measurements have been previously published for the figure.
(c) number of blocks: The figure of Christ is comprised of three separate pieces of wood. Christ’s head, body and legs are all carved from a single block, and the arms are each rendered separately. The cross is comprised of two separate pieces of wood.

(c) dowel holes: None are visible in the photographs, but presumably the arms are attached using dowels and the suppedaneum also appears to be attached to the main-beam of the cross, although it is not immediately evident how it is attached. Each of the hands is nailed separately to the cross-beam through their palms and the feet are separated and individually nailed to the suppedaneum.

(d) evidence of polychrome: It is not possible to tell from the black-and-white photograph published by Harbison whether the sculpture has been painted or not. If it is painted, then the paint is monochrome.

(e) general condition: Small wood worm holes can be seen in the figure’s head, right arm, particularly near the shoulder, and in the upper legs. A few scattered wood worm holes can also be seen in the torso and at the left wrist. Harbison believes that the arms are replacements; however that does not seem immediately evident from the photograph, and the style of the carving in the arms seems in keeping with that of the rest of the sculpture.

---

Harbison, *The Crucifixion in Irish Art*, 64.
4. Description:

(a) head: The figure has a simply carved ovular face, with a long chin. The forehead is high and rounded. The eyes are closed in death and protrude from their sockets. They are almond-shaped with a single incised line in the centre of each and look something like coffee beans. The nose is long and wedge-shaped, with clearly incised naso-labial folds. The mouth if indicated by a single, small incised line. Neither the beard nor moustache are carved. The hair remains close to the head, is depicted with long, straight, incised lines and falls over the figure’s right shoulder. The head inclines towards the right, but does not loll onto the chest. The neck is broad.

(b) body: Christ has an elongated torso in comparison to its shorter legs. The pectoral muscles are clearly carved and rendered in a similar manner to those seen on the Kilcorban Crucifix. The nipples, also like the Kilcorban Crucifix, are clearly defined, small nobs on the chest. Ribs are indicated in a series of hatch marks which have been tapped into the wood. A high arch, separating the ribcage from the abdomen is deeply carved. A light indication of a navel has been incised just above the perizonium.

The Ballyhaunis Christ’s perizonium appears to be an even more stylized version of the one that the Kilcorban Christ wears. Like that of the Kilcorban Christ, it is gathered on the figure’s left hip and is tied in a large knot, with a portion of loose cloth cascading down. The folds on the rest of the perizonium seem to emerge from this knot and fall slightly
downwards, towards the right. The whole torso appears to bend towards the right.

The musculature of the Ballyhaunis Christ’s legs seems more naturalistically rendered than that of the torso, even if they are proportionately rather short. The ankles are not crossed and the toes are delineated by four straight hatch marks at the end of each foot. Small nails have been driven through the tops of each foot, and may also attach the figure to the suppedaneum on which his feet rest.

The area where the carved pectoral muscles meet the deltoids in the figure’s arms is unusually thick in comparison to the rest of the carving, and the way the musculature of the arms is rendered is somewhat less naturalistic than that of the legs. This may be what prompted Harbison to speculate that the Ballyhaunis Christ’s arms are later replacements. The fingers of Christ’s left hand appear to curl in around the nail that has been driven through the centre of the figure’s palm, however the ends of most of the fingers appear to be missing. Presumably the right hand would have been rendered in a similar manner; however most of this hand is now missing. A portion of the palm, with the nail intact can still be observed, as can the bottom joint of each of the index and middle fingers of this hand.
5. Identification of the subject: For a general explanation of images of the crucified Christ, see: Catalogue, *Figures from the Suppression*, “Navan Crucifix,” section 5, p. 579. This figure of Christ on the cross is shown with his eyes closed in death and nailed to the cross with four nails instead of three, the two feet having been nailed separately.

6. Comments: Nothing is known definitively about the history of this figure, prior to its discovery in the early twentieth century. It was found inside the O’Gara altar-tomb in the old friary church. This altar was constructed in 1739, but the crucifix may have been inserted later. According to MacLeod, this altar was associated with Archbishop Bernard O’Gara of Tuam, who built the altar-tomb in his thatched penal chapel in the corner of the ruined monastery. When the altar-tomb was removed in the early twentieth century, the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix* was found underneath. This may indicate that the Ballyhaunis Crucifix was used as an altar cross at one point.

For a general discussion of the similarities and possible common origins of the *Kilcorban Crucifix*, the *Tynagh Crucifix*, the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix* and the *Tralee Crucifix*, see: Catalogue, *Figures of Indeterminate Date*, “Kilcorban Crucifix,” section 6, p. 622.

---

1006 MacLeod dates the discovery to 1910, whereas Harbison dates it to 1908. MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” 132; and Harbison, *The Crucifixion in Irish Art*, 64.

1007 Harbison, *The Crucifixion in Irish Art*, 64.

1008 MacLeod, “Medieval Statues from the Seventeenth Century,” 132
1. **Location:** Kerry County Museum, Tralee, Co. Kerry (KCM.8.2008)

2. **Date:** 18th century (?)

3. **Technical details:**

   (a) dimensions: H: 61 cm, W: 23 cm

   (b) type of wood: Unknown.

   (c) number of blocks: The figure of Christ is carved from two separate pieces of wood. The body appears to have been made from a naturally Y-ing branch from a tree and the head is carved separately and attached with a dowel. The cross is comprised of three separate pieces of wood; the main-bar, cross-bar and suppedaneum are all rendered separately.

   (c) dowel holes: The Christ’s head appears to be attached to his body via the use of a dowel. No other dowels are visible. The figure is attached to its cross by nails in the hands and in the remains of the separated feet. It is possible, although not immediately evident, that glue has also been used to hold the figure in place.

   (d) evidence of polychrome: The figure is entirely covered with a layer of beige polychrome. Where this paint has chipped, an older warm flesh-tone can be seen and quite a bit of red paint. A white layer of gesso can be seen
underneath all of this. Splotches of dark brown paint can be seen in several places on the figure, evidence of transfer and over-paints from the dark brown paint on the cross underneath the figure. This is especially evident on the figures back, legs, and the remnants of the feet. Four fingerprint smudges of this same dark brown paint are visible on Christ’s perizonium. Evidence of a thin white paint can be seen over top of the beige in the crevices of Christ’s perizonium. Small dashes of modern red polychrome demarcate the wounds on Christ’s forehead and on the palms of his hands underneath the nails.

(e) general condition: The figure’s feet are broken off at the level of the nails. There are no other cracks are evident in the sculpture, although there appears to be some damage to the wood in the centre of the figure’s chest. The only rot evident on the entire sculpture is on the main-beam of the cross underneath Christ’s body.

4. Description:

(a) head: The features of the face have been abstracted into geometric shapes. The head is long and rectangular. The hair remains close to the head and falls to the jawline, incised with many thin, straight lines. The bottom of Christ’s hair and the ends of his moustache meet. Around the top of Christ’s forehead the crown of thorns is carved in a shallow double strand.

The two carved arches of Christ’s eyebrows join in a long loop to from the long, narrow nose. The eyes are two incised gashes, as is the mouth between the moustache and beard. The long triangular beard is
incised with many thin, long, straight lines, like the hair. It is triangular in shape and rests on the figure’s chest.

(b) body: The figure’s body appears to have been made from a Y-branch of a tree; it appears sling-shot like. This causes the figure’s arms to be raised at a much higher angle than is typically seen in depictions of the crucifixions. The hands are small, flat and ovular. Four incised marks delineate the fingers. Small nails have been driven through the centre of the palms. There is no indication of carved musculature in the arms or chest. An indent has been carved into the upper chest, where the beard rests, to make the two pieces of wood fit together better. A vertical notch has been carved on the right side of the figure’s chest to indicate the wound in Christ’s side.

The perizonium is carved as a simple tube with chisel-carved notches around its bottom border. The figure gradually narrows towards the bottom, presumably reflecting the shape of the branch from which it was carved. The legs are very short in comparison to the figure’s chest. An incised line extends from the figure’s feet almost to the perizonium, separating the legs. The figure’s ankles are not crossed, necessitating the use of four nails instead of three. The feet are broken off at the point where the nails have been driven through the tops of the feet.
5. **Identification of the subject:** For a general explanation of images of the crucified Christ, see: Catalogue, *Figures from the Suppression*, “Navan Crucifix,” section 5, p. 579. This figure of Christ on the cross is shown with his eyes closed in death and nailed to the cross with four nails instead of three, the two feet having been nailed separately.

6. **Comments:** The origins of this figure before it entered into the possession of antiques dealer Maurice O’Keeffe in Tralee is rather convoluted and obscure. The sculpture was acquired by the Kerry County Museum in 1992. The first account of how the figure was found states that it was found in a skip by a traveller at Geoffrey Place in Tralee, outside of a building that was being renovated. This building was the old County Hall, which had been burnt down by the Black and Tans on 31st October, 1921 and was later used as a cinema, a theatre – *Siamsa Tíre* (the National Folk Theatre), a bowling alley and a night club. The crucifix was supposedly found in the building when it was being renovated from *Siamsa Tíre* into a bowling alley.  

---


1010 Kerry County Museum file record, Griffin Murray, dated 9 December, 2008.
According to the museum file notes,

[Maurice O’Keeffe] told me it had been found in a skip by a traveller outside the building, who, Mr. O’Keeffe told me, asked permission if he could take it. He then brought it to Mr. O’Keeffe’s shop down the street. Mr. O’Keeffe recounted that, after bargaining with the man, he agreed to pay him £100 for it. However, he said he would not hand over any money to him unless he told him exactly where he had got it from. Mr. O’Keeffe had a radio programme on Kerry County Radio at the time and spoke about his discovery on air after the event. Five minutes after the show was over he got a call from Mr. John Griffin who offered to buy it from him on behalf of the museum.\textsuperscript{1011}

In another story, attributed to County Kerry archaeologist Michael Connolly, the antiques dealer acquired the sculpture from the owners of a house on Staughton’s Row in Tralee, who found the figure during renovations.\textsuperscript{1012}

According to the museum file notes, Griffin Murray spoke with someone who worked for \textit{Siamsa Tíre} when it was still housed in the old County Hall. That person thought it highly unlikely that the crucifix was ever in that building and that it would not have been deliberately left behind. A note contained in the museum file record also mentions that the Dominican monastery was being re-roofed around the same time that \textit{Siamsa Tíre} moved, and that the crucifix may have come from the Dominicans instead.\textsuperscript{1013} These two buildings were across from one another on the same street. The figure’s true origins remain uncertain.

\textsuperscript{1011} Kerry County Museum file record, Griffin Murray, dated 24 June, 2008.

\textsuperscript{1012} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1013} Kerry County Museum file record, Griffin Murray, dated 9 December, 2008.
For a general discussion of the similarities and possible common origins of the *Kilcorban Crucifix*, the *Tynagh Crucifix*, the *Ballyhaunis Crucifix* and the *Tralee Crucifix*, see: Catalogue, *Figures of Indeterminate Date*, “Kilcorban Crucifix,” section 6, p. 622.

7. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.
JCA-AA-001: Fethard Madonna and Child (Fig. 363 - Fig. 364)

1. **Location**: On loan and in storage, National Museum of Ireland –Decorative Arts and History, Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (NMI: L 1974 ?).

2. **Date**: 16th century (?)

3. **Dimensions**: H: 67 cm

6. **Type of Wood**: Oak

7. **Comments**: A lengthy file on this figure was found in the records of the National Museum, however the sculpture itself was unable to be located while I was there, and it was presumed lost. Recently, it has come to my attention that the sculpture has been located and recently viewed by a group of school children from the figure’s home parish in Fethard, Co. Tipperary. This figure is thoroughly described by Catriona MacLeod in Appendix V of Butler’s *The Friars of Fethard*. MacLeod believed that the sculpture was Flemish and dated to the sixteenth century.

8. **Bibliography**: MacLeod (1975), 44.
JCA-AA-002: Madonna and Child (Fig. 365 - Fig. 366)

1. **Location:** Franciscan Monastery, Waterford

2. **Date:** 17th – 20th century.

3. **Dimensions:** “nearly life-size”

4. **Type of Wood:** Oak

5. **Comments:** I was mistakenly told that this figure was purchased from Lourdes during the twentieth century. However, after re-reading MacLeod’s account of the figure, I feel that it should be included in the catalog as a figure of indeterminate date. MacLeod believed the figure was of Irish manufacture and dated to the seventeenth century, from photographs, the style of the figure seems to me to be somewhat later, and warrants a closer examination.

6. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 131.

---

JCA-AA-003: St. Brendan

1. **Location:** Newmarket Church, Knocktopher, Co. Kilkenny

2. **Date:** Unknown

3. **Dimensions:** Unknown

4. **Type of Wood:** Unknown

5. **Comments:** I have recently come across a letter in the National Museum files dated 4 September, 1936, which reads, “Bro. Vergilius, Clara, Co. Offaly, called today and informed me that there is in the above chapel a wooden
statue (of St. Brendan in episcopal robes) discovered during the cleaning of St. Brendan’s well, Aughavillar, Offaly in the (very dry) summer of 1887. The statue is in a wonderful state of preservation, even the decoration on the vestments being clearly discernible. The Rev. canon Rochfort, Newmarket, Knocktopher, Co. Kilkenny, is the P.P. of the parish in which the statue is kept.” This ought to be investigated to determine whether the figure is still extant.

6. **Bibliography:** NMI file record: IA.9.36
APPENDIX B: ACQUISITIONS OF DEVOTIONAL FIGURES FROM 1100 - 1800 IN THE POST-SUPPRESSION ERA

Despite the lack of associated records with the below figures, I have decided to classify them as recent acquisitions for the purposes of this catalogue for several reasons. First, all have been unambiguously described as such being of foreign manufacture in whatever few records for them exist. This lack of ambiguity suggests definite knowledge that the figures were imported, which may in turn imply that they were imported within recent times. Secondly, three of the figures (the Hunt Madonna and the Madonna and Child CG 003 from the Hunt Collection and the Spanish Madonna from the National Museum) are in an excellent state of preservation, which is atypical for similarly aged (and indeed much younger) figures from Ireland. Thirdly, no pre-twentieth century records or pre-modern religious traditions are associated with any of the figures. Finally, Catriona MacLeod was likely to have been aware of the existence of most (if not all) of these figures but never included them in any of her publications. MacLeod worked at the National Museum for most of her career and surely would have encountered the Spanish Madonna at some point in time. MacLeod also likely met and knew John Hunt, who in addition to being a prominent collector, dealer, and connoisseur, was also a noted art historian and medievalist, like herself. MacLeod’s decision to exclude these works from her publications guides me to view these carvings as recent acquisitions. As such, they are included in Appendix B.
FIGURES IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

JCA-AB-001: St. Clare (Fig. 367 - Fig. 368)

1. **Location:** National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History, Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (on loan from the Franciscan Libraries of Ireland as part of the exhibition, *Franciscans in Ireland*).

2. **Date:** Early 17th century; imported 1826.

3. **Dimensions:** H. 81.5 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Limewood

5. **Comments:** This figure, along with the *Louvain St. Francis*, once stood in Saint Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain, Belgium. The college was founded during the Suppression, in 1607. The number of Irish Franciscans had declined during the persecutions of the suppression, and in order to stem this trend and promote Catholicism in Ireland, Pope Paul V issued a Bull of Foundation on 3 April, 1607.\(^{1014}\)

This sculpture has been dated by Mailan Doquang to the late seventeenth / early eighteenth centuries,\(^{1015}\) however to this author it appears to date to the early seventeenth century. Conlan states that these sculptures of St. Clare, along with the Louvain St. Francis, were brought

\(^{1014}\) Conlan, *St. Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans Louvain*, 4-5.

\(^{1015}\) Doquang, “Statue of St. Clare,” 167.
from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard Walsh after the college at Louvain was dissolved.\textsuperscript{1016}


JCA-AB-002: Louvain St. Anthony / Francis (Fig. 369 - Fig. 370)

1. Location: National Museum of Ireland –Decorative Arts and History,
   Collin’s Barracks, Dublin 7 (on loan from the Franciscan Libraries of Ireland as part of the exhibition, \textit{Franciscans in Ireland}).

2. Date: 18\textsuperscript{th} century; imported 1826.

3. Dimensions: H: 74.5 cm

4. Type of Wood: Limewood

5. Comments: This figure, along with the \textit{St. Clare}, once stood in Saint Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain, Belgium. The college was founded during the Suppression, in 1607. The number of Irish Dominicans had declined during the persecutions of the suppression, and in order to stem this trend and promote Catholicism in Ireland, Pope Paul V issued a Bull of Foundation on 3 April, 1607.\textsuperscript{1017} This sculpture has been dated by Mailan Doquang to the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{1018} Conlan states that these two sculptures were brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in

\textsuperscript{1016} Conlan, \textit{St. Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans Louvain}, 44. Jennings states that the library of St. Anthony’s College, Louvain was brought to Ireland in 1822, not 1826 as Doquang states. Jennings, 458; Doquang, “Statue of St. Clare,” 166.

\textsuperscript{1017} Conlan, \textit{St. Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans Louvain}, 4-5.

1826 by Father Richard Walsh after the college at Louvain was dissolved.\textsuperscript{1019}


\begin{center}
\textbf{JCA-AB-003: St. Assicus} (Photo unavailable)
\end{center}

1. Location: St. Mary’s Parish, Sligo, Co. Sligo
2. Date: Unknown; imported in the 1950s.
3. Dimensions: Unknown
4. Type of Wood: Unknown
5. Comments: This figure was purchased in an antique shop in London in the 1950s because it was believed to represent the Irish Bishop Assicus of Elphin. I have been told about the existence of this figure but have not seen it personally or in a photograph.

\begin{center}
\textbf{JCA-AB-004: Zurich Madonna} (Fig. 371)
\end{center}

1. Location: Private ownership by Tim O’Neill, Sandymount, Dublin.
2. Date: Unknown; imported 2009.
3. Dimensions: H: 53 cm
4. Type of Wood: Unknown
5. Comments: This figure was purchased in an antique shop in Zurich,

\textsuperscript{1019} Conlan, \textit{St. Anthony’s College of the Irish Franciscans Louvain}, 44. Jennings states that the library of St. Anthony’s College, Louvain was brought to Ireland in 1822, not 1826 as Doquang states. Jennings, 458 and Doquang, “Statue of St. Clare,” 166.
Switzerland by calligrapher, Tim O’Neill in the summer of 2009. The back of the figure is flat, but not hollowed.


FIGURES IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND COLLECTION

JCA-AB-005: Christ after the Scourge (Fig. 372)

2. Date: Unknown
3. Dimensions: H: about 35 cm
4. Type of Wood: Unknown.
5. Comments: Cannot locate the museum register record for this item.

JCA-AB-006: Small Madonna and Child (Fig. 373 - Fig. 374)

2. Date: Early 16th century, likely 19th century acquisition.
4. Type of Wood: Fine grained, possibly walnut or limewood.
5. Comments: This small figure appears to be of North European origin. Nothing
is known about its history, or how it came to the National Museum of Ireland. No registers, museum files, or NMI number has been discovered for this carving. A similar carving of St. Anne, the Virgin and Child (Fig. 375) is in the possession of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which originiated in Mechelen, Belgium. According to the file record, many similar images were produced for export, were relatively inexpensive and popular for home use.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously Unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-007: St. Christopher (Fig. 376)**

2. **Date:** Late 15\textsuperscript{th} - early 16\textsuperscript{th} century; imported 1885.
3. **Dimensions:** H: 66 cm
4. **Type of Wood:** Unknown
5. **Comments:** The museum file register states that this figure is Flemish and dates to the fifteenth century. It was purchased for £20 from a Van Herck on Marché au Lait in Antwerp. There are several similar examples in the V&A’s collection, including a statuette of c. 1520 by the Master of Elsloo (Fig. 377), from Limburg in the Netherlands.
6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.
JCA-AB-008: French Madonna and Child (Fig. 378 - Fig. 379)

1. **Location:** On display, National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin (NMI: A&I 1896:145).

2. **Date:** 14th century; imported 1896.

3. **Dimensions:** H: 132.7 cm, W. 38 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Oak

5. **Comments:** According to the Museum Register, this fourteenth century French figure was purchased from the Peyre Collection in 1896 for £80.\(^{1020}\) The previous owner of this sculpture referred to in the register is likely Emile Peyre, who was a noted Parisian collector of medieval and renaissance artifacts. In 1889, John Pollen visited Peyre’s home on behalf of the South Kensington Museum, London (which would later become the Victoria and Albert Museum). Pollen said that Peyre’s collection, “fills a large house, 124 Avenue Malakhoff, from ground floor literally to attic – Rooms, passages, stair wells &c.” In 1895, the South Kensington Museum purchased more than three hundred items from Emile Peyre, the year before the National Museum of Ireland purchased the *French Madonna* from Peyre. In 1897, Peyre sold Isabella Stewart Gardner thirty objects.

\(^{1020}\) National Museum of Ireland Register, Art and Industry Division, 1896.
and left more than four thousand items to the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*,
in Paris.\(^{1021}\)

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-009: Mourning Figure from a Crucifixion (Fig. 380 - Fig. 381)**


2. **Date:** Late 15\(^{th}\) century; imported 1896.

3. **Dimensions:** H: 116.2 cm, W. 27.9 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Oak

5. **Comments:** Like the *French Madonna* and the small *St. Catherine*, this sculpture also came from the Peyre Collection. The National Museum register records that the sculpture is French and dates to the fifteenth century. The style may place it in the early sixteenth century.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

---

\(^{1021}\) Victoria and Albert Museum, “Emile Peyre,” http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/people-pages/emile-peyre/ (accessed on February 3, 2012). Corroborated by V&A files: MA/1/P1086/1-3; MA/2/P7/4; MA/30/174-75; MA/32/49-50; and List of Objects in the Art Division South Kensington Museum acquired during the Year 1895. Arranged according to the dates of acquisition, with appendix and indices. (London: HMSO, 1897).
JCA-AB-010: St. Catherine (Fig. 382 - Fig. 383)


2. **Date:** Early 16\(^{th}\) century; imported 1896.

3. **Dimensions:** H. 29 cm, W. 11.4 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Unknown

5. **Comments:** According to the National Museum registers, this figure is French and dates to the first half of the sixteenth century. Like the *French Madonna* above, this small figure of St. Catherine also came from the Peyre Collection.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

JCA-AB-011: Immaculate Conception (Fig. 384 - Fig. 385)

1. **Location:** National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Collin’s Barracks, Storage (NMI: DF 1898:392.1).

2. **Date:** Early 18\(^{th}\) century, imported 1898.

3. **Dimensions:** H: 103.5 cm, W: 43 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Pine

5. **Comments:** This figure, dating to the early eighteenth century shows an Immaculate Conception image of the Madonna. It was purchased by the National Museum for £3 from the “Charles Sale” (it is unknown at present
what that sale was). It is listed as being English in the Museum register, but an old placard stored with the sculpture states that it is French.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-012: Spanish Madonna (Fig. 386)**

1. **Location**: On display, National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin (NMI: A&I 1936: 174).

2. **Date**: Early 13\(^{th}\) century; imported 1936.

3. **Dimensions**: H: 68.5 cm

4. **Type of Wood**: Walnut

5. **Comments**: According to the Museum Register, this figure, dated to the early thirteenth century, was presented to the National Museum in 1936 by the Marquis MacSwiney.\(^{1022}\) The Marquis MacSwiney is likely Valentine Emanuel Patrick Mac Swiney of Mashanaglass, Co. Cork. According to his obituary published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, MacSwiney entered into the service of Pope Leo XIII as a Chamberlein when he was a young man and was created a hereditary Roman Marquis. He was sent on diplomatic missions by the pope to both Spain and Portugal, and wrote important memoirs especially one entitled, *Le Portugal et le St. Siège, une ambassade a Rome*.\(^{1023}\) It may be while on

---

\(^{1022}\) National Museum of Ireland Register, Art and Industry Division, 1936.

one of these diplomatic missions that the Marquis purchased the *Spanish Madonna*.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-013: Four Evangelists (Fig. 387)**


2. **Date**: c. 1500; imported 1936.

3. **Dimensions**: H: 50 – 56 cm

4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown

5. **Comments**: According to the National Museum Registers, these four figures came from a rood screen, are dated to c. 1500 and are of the Exeter school. They were purchased from “Wolsey, London” in 1939 along with the *Unidentified Bishop* below. Wolsey may refer to a person or an antique dealer. A small fragment of the Exeter rood screen is preserved in the Hunt Museum in Limerick.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-014: Unidentified Bishop (Fig. 388)**


2. **Date**: 16th century; imported 1936-39.
3. **Dimensions**: H: 84 cm

4. **Type of Wood**: Limewood or Birch (Register identifies wood as limewood, old placard stored with the figure identifies it as birch).

5. **Comments**: According to the National Museum Register, this figure was purchased at the same time as the Four Evangelists, listed above. Like the Four Evangelists, this figure is listed as having been purchased from “Wosley, London.” The figure’s back is deeply hollowed, and the museum register states that it is Bavarian and dated to the sixteenth century.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-015: St. Barbara (Fig. 389)**


2. **Date**: Late 15\(^{th}\) – early 16\(^{th}\) century; unknown date of importation, loaned to the National Museum in 1948.

3. **Dimensions**: H: 91.5 cm, W: 31 cm

4. **Type of Wood**: Oak

5. **Comments**: This figure was given on loan to the National Museum on July 14, 1948 by V.R. Ed. Lambe Adm.[sic.] of Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Co. Cork. It is identified in the register as Flemish and dating to the fifteenth century, although a placard stored with the figure dates it to around the year 1500.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.
FIGURES IN THE HUNT MUSEUM COLLECTION

JCA-AB-016: The Hunt Madonna (Fig. 390)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (HCM 001)
2. **Date:** Early 12\textsuperscript{th} century; imported 1930s-1940s
3. **Dimensions:** H: 65.3 cm
4. **Type of Wood:** Limewood
5. **Comments:** This figure likely dates to the early twelfth century and may come from the Lower Rhine area of Germany. Grace Cantillon, docent at the Hunt Museum, recounted her memories of seeing the statue in the Hunt’s home in Lough Gur, Co. Limerick when she was a child. Cantillon stated that the Hunts were people who really lived with their artworks, and would move the figure around their house whenever the mood struck them. The sculpture was referred to as “the German Lady” and developed quite a following locally. People would knock on the Hunt’s door and ask to “have a word with herself” and then come in and pray before the statue.\footnote{024}

A master’s thesis was written on this figure in 1994 by Eleanor Johanna Franklin at University College Dublin. She states that the Hunts began collecting while in London in the 1930s and 1940s. Franklin

\footnote{024} Grace Cantillon, Phone interview with author, April 7, 2010.
believes that the *Hunt Madonna* was likely bought in a London show room at that time.  


---

JCA-AB-017: Madonna (Fig. 391)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (CG 001)
2. **Date:** 12th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).
3. **Dimensions:** H: 66 cm
4. **Type of Wood:** Limewood
5. **Comments:** Very little information is contained within the museum file record on this figure. It is compared with a Romanesque Madonna and Child in the National Museum of Poland. The dating and provenance of this figure is uncertain. This seated figure of the Madonna once held a figure of the Child in her lap, which has since been chiseled off. The toes of the Child can still be seen.

---

JCA-AB-018: Madonna and Child (Fig. 392)

1. **Location**: On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (CG 003).
2. **Date**: 12th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).
3. **Dimensions**: H: 82 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown
5. **Comments**: Believed to be French or Spanish, museum file notes compare the figure to another Romanesque carving of the Madonna and Child that was sold at auction by Sotheby’s in June 1993. That figure came from the Museum Van Stolk, Haarlem, Netherlands.
6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

JCA-AB-019: Crucified Christ (Fig. 393)

1. **Location**: On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (BM 007)
2. **Date**: 12th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).
3. **Dimensions**: H: 183 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown
5. **Comments**: Very little information is contained in the file record for this sculpture. It is speculated to be French and may date to the twelfth century.
6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.
JCA-AB-020: Bust of a Female Saint (St. Barbara/ St. Catherine) (Fig. 394)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (HCM 002)

2. **Date:** Late 15th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).

3. **Dimensions:** H: 73.8 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Unknown.

5. **Comments:** The museum file refers to Craggaunowen Castle, Co. Clare, where the figure was likely displayed at one time. The figure is compared with two sculptures of St. Barbara and another of St. Catherine owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

JCA-AB-021: Balthazar (Fig. 395 - Fig. 396)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (HCM 010)

2. **Date:** Mid-16th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).

3. **Dimensions:** H: 123 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Limewood

5. **Comments:** According to the museum files, this sculpture is believed to be south German and dated to the mid-sixteenth century. In 1952, John Hunt sold three life-sized wooden sculptures of the three kings to the Metropolitan Museum of New York (Fig. 397 - Fig. 399). These three
figures, dated to the late fifteenth century, originated from the high
altar of the Cistercian abbey, Lichtenthal, near Baden-Baden, Baden-
Württemberg, in Germany and were purchased by Hunt from Sotheby’s,
London in 1939. The figure of Balthazar in the Hunt museum
collection appears to be of a slightly later date than the three figures sold
to the Met.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-022: St. Anne, the Virgin, and the Christ Child** (Fig. 400)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (MG 039)

2. **Date:** Mid-16th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).

3. **Dimensions:** H: 107.5 cm

4. **Type of Wood:** Limewood

5. **Comments:** The museum file record states that this sculpture is believed to be

   German and dated to the mid-sixteenth century.

6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.

---

1026 “Melchior of the Three Kings of an Adoration Group,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*,
“Balthasar of the Three Kings of an Adoration Group,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*,
“Caspar of the Three Kings from an Adoration Group,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*,
JCA-AB-022: St. John the Evangelist (Fig. 401)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (MG 041)
2. **Date:** 17th century, likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).
3. **Dimensions:** H: 49 cm
4. **Type of Wood:** Pearwood or limewood
5. **Comments:** The museum files state that this sculpture was purchased in Spain.
6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished

JCA-AB-023: Christ emerging from a Chalice (Fig. 402)

1. **Location:** On display, Hunt Museum, Limerick (MG 042)
2. **Date:** Early 16th century; likely imported in the 20th century by John Hunt (b. 1900, d. 1976).
3. **Dimensions:** H: 10.5 cm
4. **Type of Wood:** Unknown
5. **Comments:** The figure is believed to be South German, very little information is present in the museum file record.
6. **Bibliography:** Previously unpublished.
JCA-AB-024: Immaculate Conception (Fig. 403 - Fig. 404)

1. **Location**: Storage, Hunt Museum, Limerick (HM 2002.097)
2. **Date**: Early 18th century; unknown importation date, possibly within Sybil Connolly’s lifetime (1921-1998).
3. **Dimensions**: H: 139 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown
5. **Comments**: This figure formerly belonged to designer Sybil Connolly, it likely dates to the early eighteenth century.
6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

FIGURES IN BUNRATTY CASTLE

JCA-AB-025: St. George and the Dragon (Fig. 405)

1. **Location**: Great Hall, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 92)
2. **Date**: 15th century; likely imported after 1953.
3. **Dimensions**: H: 180 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown
5. **Comments**: According to the museum file record, this 15th century south German figure is believed to retain its original gilding and polychrome.
   The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7th Viscount Gort and his wife, after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.
JCA-AB-026: St. Martin of Tours (Fig. 406)

1. **Location**: Great Hall, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 123)
2. **Date**: 16th century; likely imported after 1953.
3. **Dimensions**: H: 150 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Oak
5. **Comments**: The museum file record states that the figure of St. Martin is believed to be sixteenth century French, but that the horse is a twentieth century reconstruction. The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7th Viscount Gort and his wife, after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

JCA-AB-027: St. Anne, the Virgin, and the Christ Child (Fig. 407)

1. **Location**: Private Chapel, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 252)
2. **Date**: 15th century; likely imported after 1953.
3. **Dimensions**: H: 74 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Cedar
5. **Comments**: This figure retains traces of its polychrome. File records state that the figure is a fifteenth century French carving. The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7th Viscount Gort and his wife,
after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JCA-AB-028: St. Catherine (Fig. 408)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Location</strong>: Private Chapel, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 248)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Date</strong>: Early 16(^{th}) century; likely imported after 1953.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Dimensions</strong>: H: 110 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Type of Wood</strong>: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Comments</strong>: The museum file states that this figure dates to the early sixteenth century. It retains a significant amount of gilding on the saint’s cloak and traces of polychrome on the rest of the figure. The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7(^{th}) Viscount Gort and his wife, after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Bibliography</strong>: Previously unpublished.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JCA-AB-029: Crucified Christ (Fig. 409)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Location</strong>: Private Chapel, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 259)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Date</strong>: 14(^{th}) century; likely imported after 1953.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Dimensions</strong>: H: 130 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Type of Wood</strong>: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Comments</strong>: The cross for this figure is missing and the hands are quite</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
damaged. The file records state that it is a fourteenth century French carving. The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7th Viscount Gort and his wife, after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.

6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.

---

**JCA-AB-30: Carved figure (Fig. 410)**

1. **Location**: Robing Room, Bunratty Castle (Acc. 327)
2. **Date**: 16th century; likely imported after 1953.
3. **Dimensions**: H: 112 cm
4. **Type of Wood**: Unknown
5. **Comments**: The Museum files state that this is a sixteenth century carving of a priest wearing a dalmatic. The identification of this figure as an ecclesiastic does not seem immediately obvious. The artwork displayed in Bunratty castle was collected by the 7th Viscount Gort and his wife, after their purchase of Bunratty Castle in 1953. They were aided in their collecting by John Hunt.
6. **Bibliography**: Previously unpublished.
APPENDIX C: SELECTED LOST FIGURES

JCA-AC-001: Lettershendoney Madonna (Fig. 411)

1. **Last Known Location:** Lettershendoney, Co. Londonderry
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1993
3. **Comments:** This figure was discovered by two school boys, protruding from a pool of water in a bog during a summer drought in the 1980s. It is described as being a seated female figure with a small basket or bundle on her lap (perhaps a Pietà with only the decayed remnants of Christ’s body remaining?). I have been unable to locate this figure’s current whereabouts.

JCA-AC-002: St. Maolrúán (Fig. 412)

1. **Last Known Location:** Crossabeg, Co. Wexford
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** early 1990s
3. **Comments:** The earliest reference to this figure yet found comes from 1863. The author states,

   In one of my last visits to this neighbourhood, my attention was directed to a curious remnant of antiquity, which is a carved figure in oak, or some other dark and hard wood, about 28 or 30 inches in height, and said to be found about a century ago in a small valley on the townland of Ballynaleck, immediately adjoining the handsome cottage in
which the late-lamented Sir Francis Le Hunte resided. According to tradition, a monastery was founded at this place by St. Maulruain, who was Bishop of Tallaght, near Dublin, and died in the year 787. It is in the possession of David Curran, a small farmer who lives on the Artramont estate, who considers it to be an image of the saint who erected the monastery, or to whom it was dedicated; and has been preserved by him with reverence and care. When found, as we are told, in a well, by persons who were digging for money beneath a portion of the ruins of the monastery, it is said to have been in a state of comparative preservation, and was partially covered with gilding. At present, although the head, face, mitre, and right hand, are in a tolerable state of preservation, the lower part of the body and the legs are greatly worn, and present mere outlines of their original shape… On the eve of the anniversary of the saint whom it was supposed to represent, or of the day upon which it was found, the people at whose house it was kept, and where it has remained ever since it was found, were wont to bedeck it with garlands of flowers, and still look upon it as an object calculated to bring blessing on their house… It is also stated that repeated attempts were made to remove this relic out of the parish, but they invariably failed. Among these it is said that the person by whom it was found, who occupied the house wherein it is still kept, and to whom the grandfather of David Curran, the present occupant, was the successor, on removing to the barony of Forth, endeavoured to take this highly-valued relic with him. But whenever he entered the boat to cross the Slaney, there being at the time no bridge over the river, he was met with such storms and bad weather, that he could not succeed in accomplishing his object. He also, it is alleged, endeavoured to affect his desire by going round by Enniscorthy; but on arriving at the bridge of Ballinaslaney, no efforts could induce the horse that drew the luggage among which it was placed to cross the bridge; he therefore reluctantly abandoned all further attempts to remove it. Whether this remnant of antiquity be of Pagan or Christian origin, it is much regretted that it did not fall into other hands than those of the simple and
unsophisticated people, whose repeated dressings and floral decorations must have occasioned it more or less deterioration.

When MacLeod wrote about the figure of St. Maolrúán in 1946, it was still located in the Curran family cottage, though in a more damaged state than Lacy described. MacLeod claims that the figure was associated with a nearby well (which I have seen) and that the former name of the townland of Ballinaleck was formerly called Leac Mhaoilruain. She associated the bedecking of the figure with garlands of flowers described by Lacy with a local pattern on July 7th at the well, which by her time had passed out of practice.

When I was researching the figure in 2003, I spoke with its owner, Mrs. Philomena Mythen (a descendant of the Curran family) and the local parish priest, who informed me that the figure of St. Maol-Rúán had been stolen from Mrs. Mythen’s home in the early 1990s. Both told me of the many horrible things which had befallen the sculpture’s owner and her family since the figure was stolen and attributed these misfortunes to the owner’s inability to protect the carving.

1. **Last Known Location:** St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1984

3. **Comments:** In 1946, MacLeod stated in that this figure was sometimes referred to as Mo Cheallóg, and sometimes as St. Martin. She believed that the confusion arose when an annual pattern dedicated to St. Martin was transferred from Derrnahinch to Ballyhale, Co. Kilkenny in the nineteenth century, which may have ousted a local devotion to St. Mo Cheallóg, to whom the figure was, in her opinion, originally dedicated. Although the penal era figure originated in Ballyhale, by the time that MacLeod published, the figure was kept in a museum at St. Kieran’s College in Kilkenny City, where it remained until the early 1980s, when the museum’s collection was dissolved. Neither of the college archivists, Rev. Dr. Fergus O’Farrell and John Kirwan, knows of the figure’s current whereabouts. Records were not kept of the distribution of the museums artifacts.

    According to MacLeod,

    The figure is two and a half feet high, rudely carved on one side of a solid oak block. The saint is shown in an alb, cintured by a rope girdle, wearing an uncrossed stole with rather narrow ends and a cope, one end of which is swept across the front as though it were once held in position by the missing left hand. The treatment of the cope and the poor quality of the carving suggest that the figure is late.
MacLeod’s knowledge of the old pattern is drawn from an account

given by Hogan in 1884. He states,

Derrynahinch church was dedicated to St. Martin,
and his ‘Patron’ was observed there until recently
on the 11th of November… A public chapel was
probably open here about the year 1750 or 1760;
and its traditional history and observances always
assigned the patronage of the parish to St. Martin of
Tours, from which it appears that the present R.C.
church of Ballyhale is to be regarded, not as the
successor of the former chapel of the same place,
but as the representative of the ancient Irish church
of Derrynahinch, within the parish of which
Ballyhale is situated, and of which St. Martin has
always been esteemed the ‘patron’… I have been
informed by an aged person, a native of the place,
that about seventy years ago the ‘patron,’ which had
been previously on the Sunday next after the 11th
November (St. Martin’s day) in the churchyard of
Derrynahinch, was transferred to the chapel-yard of
Ballyhale, where it continued to be kept on the same
day for many years. One of the practices observed
at the “Patron” deserves to be noticed. A grotesque
figure, about four feet high, carved as a bishop in
pontifical, and was intended to represent the patron
saint, was carried in procession round the
graveyard. On one occasion, Father Charles
Kavanagh, the late P.P. and a rather primitive old
gentleman, was so enraged with the tomfoolery of
the proceedings, that he mutilated the face of the
statue with his walking stick, after which the
‘Patron’ was discontinued for some years. This
same statue, with its nose broken off, is now lying
on the first-floor of the old castle. The present P.P.,
Archdeacon O’Shea, on the completion of his new
church, had it dedicated to St. Martin, observes the
‘Patron’ festival according to its primitive
simplicity, as a day of solemn worship, and
abolished forever the nonsensical ceremonies of the
‘ould patron’ of St. Martin, about which I have been
hearing for as long as I have been able to remember.
MacLeod states that the figure was obtained for St. Kieran’s College Museum in 1873, however Hogan stated that the figure was still in Ballyhale when he published in 1884.

4. Bibliography: Hourihane (1984), 979-980; MacLeod (1968), 318-319; MacLeod (1946), 168; Hogan (1884), 44-45, 49.

JCA-AC-004: St. Natalis / St. Nadán

1. Last Known Location: St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny

2. Approximate Date of Loss: after 1967

3. Comments: According to MacLeod,

   A life-size wooden figure of St. Natalis, the King of Cashel’s son and founder of Kilmanagh monastery was preserved ‘from time immemorial’ in that district. In 1875 the statue passed from the custody of a poor man, who had kept it buried in the floor of his house for 15 years, to the fathers in charge of St. Kieran’s College museum, Kilkenny. Formerly this statue was frequently brought to Toberadoun (the saint’s well) by those who went there to pray. There the pattern day, a great local event, was held on July 31st.  

MacLeod states that the figure had been lost from St. Kieran’s College’s collection at the time of her publication in 1946, however the Shell Guide records the existence of this figure in 1967, but refers to it as a figure of St. Nadan. MacLeod does not discuss the figure of St. Nadan at all. I believe that figures of Sts Natalis and Nadan are the same, since both are

---

1027 MacLeod cites an interview with the parish priest of St. Mary’s Church in Kilkenny, Rev. J. Clohosey and a statement from St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny.
said to have come from the same small town of Kilmanagh in Co. Kilkenny and neither are discussed in the same publication.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Duignan and Killanin (1967), 135; Holohan, (1875), 33.

---

**JCA-AC-005: Mullagh Crucifix (Fig. 414)**

1. **Last Known Location:** Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1957

3. **Comments:** According to MacLeod,

   A few miles north-east of Kilcorban in the neighbouring parish of Mullagh, formerly Abbey Gormaconand once an important monastic centre, we find another link with the Kilcorban crucifix. There upon the high altar in the parish church stands a carved wooden crucifix. This figure measures only sixteen inches in length. Its quality is poor; and apart from the position of the head which falls forward, it is a close copy of the second and later Kilcorban Christ [the Tynagh Crucifix]. It is painted white and there is no sign of any gesso preparation on the wood.

   Although MacLeod believes that the figure dated to no early than 1839 (the foundation date of the church in Mullagh), she seems to have made her assessment based on the quality of the figure, rather than stylistic considerations. From photographic evidence, I do not believe that it is possible to date this carving stylistically. For a discussion on possible links between crucifixes of this type and the Lough Derg pilgrimage please see: Figures of Indeterminate Date, *The Kilcorban Crucifix*, p. 622.

   Egan records the existence of this figure in 1957, however his information
seems paraphrased from MacLeod. It is not possible to determine whether
Egan saw this figure himself.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1945), 201; Egan (1956/1957), 68.

JCA-AC-006: Thomastown Madonna (Fig. 415)

1. Last Known Location: Unspecified convent in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny

2. Approximate Date of Loss: After 1947

3. Comments: This figure was still extant at the time of MacLeod’s 1947
   publication, however she unfortunately provided very little information
   about the sculpture. MacLeod states that the statuette was brought from
   Spain in 1666 by wine merchant, Patrick Lincoln, who willed it to the
   Thomastown convent when he died.

   A slightly more detailed description of the figure is included in

   Carrigan’s *History of the Diocese of Ossory*. Carrigan states,

   The venerable old chapel of the penal times was taken down, about 1770, after the late parish chapel, in use till 1867, had been built *over and around* it. A prominent place in both these chapels was held by a beautifully carved statue of the Virgin and Child, said to have been brought from Spain by Patrick Lincoln, a wine merchant from Thomastown, who died in 1666. Mr. Lincoln’s widow, Mary Lincoln, otherwise Dobbin, who died in 1709, presented the statue with crowns of silver, in 1705. One account says that these crowns were afterwards stolen; according to another account, they were exchanged by one of the P.P’s of Thomastown for some articles of church plate. The statue, which is now stowed away in a room over the sacristy of the new parish church, has lost much

679
of its beauty, in modern times, by being smeared over with an unsightly coat of paint.

The current parish priest has no knowledge of the whereabouts of this figure.


JCA-AC-007: Loughrea Madonna (Fig. 416)

1. Last Known Location: Loughrea, Co. Galway

2. Approximate Date of Loss: after 1947

3. Comments: MacLeod mentioned this figure in her 1947 article, but did not say to what church or religious group it belonged. I could not locate it in St. Brendan’s Cathedral or in the Clonfert Diocesan Museum, both in Loughrea. About this figure, MacLeod only states that it is French, coated over with white paint and that the Child’s head is a modern reconstruction. Egan gives a little bit more information. He states that the white paint mentioned by MacLeod was removed, there was no earlier plychrome found underneath, although the face of the figure appeared to have been waxed and that the nose was found to have been damaged and then built up with plaster. Some wooden restorations to the figure were also discovered under the white paint, specifically to the base, and the head and shoulders of the Child.

JCA-AC-008: St. Clare (Fig. 417)

1. **Last Known Location:** Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway.

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1947

3. **Comments:** This figure was in the possession of the Poor Clares in Galway at the time that MacLeod published her 1947 article. When I spoke with them, no one recalled this figure or the sculpture of the *Infant Jesus* ever having been in their possession. According to MacLeod, the Poor Clares then believed that the *St. Clare* had been sent to their convent in the early eighteenth century from Spain or Flanders.

4. **Bibliography:** Duignan and Killanin (1967) 288; MacLeod (1947), 126-127.

JCA-AC-009: Infant Jesus (Fig. 418)

1. **Last Known Location:** Poor Clares Convent, Galway

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1947

3. **Comments:** This figure was in the possession of the Poor Clares in Galway at the time that MacLeod published her 1947 article. When I spoke with them, no one recalled this figure or the sculpture of the *St. Clare* ever having been in their possession. According to MacLeod, the figure’s left arm was hinged and able to be moved to display the orb, which at the time of her writing was lost. She believed the figure to be a late seventeenth century Spanish carving.
4. **Bibliography:** Duignan and Killanin (1967) 288; MacLeod (1947), 127.

---

**JCA-AC-010: Hone Christ / St. John the Baptist (Fig. 419)**

1. **Last Known Location:** Private possession of artist Evie Hone, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1947, Hone died in 1955, it is not known what happened to the figure after her death.

3. **Comments:** According to MacLeod’s brief description, this figure was carved of oak and 66 cm high.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 129.

---

**JCA-AC-011: Maynooth Penal Madonna (Fig. 420)**

1. **Last Known Location:** The National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1947

3. **Comments:** The National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College is currently unable to locate this figure. The very small and crudely carved figure was described by MacLeod as being only 12.5 cm high and carved of holly wood.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 132-133.
JCA-AC-012: Bruff Madonna (Fig. 421)

1. **Last Known Location**: Bruff, Co. Limerick

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: After 1947

3. **Comments**: According to MacLeod, this small figure, which she dated to the sixteenth century, was preserved by the Healy family in Co. Limerick for centuries. In my research, I was unable to locate this statue and Hourihane does not seem to have seen the figure personally; his catalogue entry seems derivative of MacLeod’s article. The figure was not known on the parish or diocesan level and the local parish priest knew of no families in the area by the name of Healy.

4. **Bibliography**: Cochran (2004), 75; Hourihane (1984), 993-994; MacLeod (1947), 57.

---

JCA-AC-013: St. Patrick (Fig. 422)

1. **Last Known Location**: St. Patrick’s Church, Kilkenny

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: 1940s / possibly after 1967

3. **Comments**: MacLeod states in 1946 that this figure was lost “quite recently”. An old photograph of the figure appears in Carrigan’s *History and Antiquities of Ossory*. Unfortunately no other information about the figure has been preserved. The *Shell Guide* claims that the figure was still located in St. Patrick’s Parish in 1967, but no further information is provided.
4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Duignan and Killanin, (1967), 327; Carrigan, Vol. III (1905), 234.

---

**JCA-AC-014: St. Peter**

1. **Last Known Location:** Kilcorban, Co. Galway.

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1902-1945

3. **Comments:** Coleman, writing in 1902, states,

   There are three wooden statues belonging in former years to this (Kilcorban) chapel… they are the statue of Our Blessed Lady, referred to by O’Heyne, a statue of St. Peter and another of St. Paul, all about two feet in height.

   MacLeod believes that Coleman misidentified the Madonna and John the Evangelist figures from the Kilcorban Crucifixion group (Fig. 353Fig. 357) as Sts. Peter and Paul. I find this doubtful, even if those two figures had become disassociated with the carving of the crucified Christ. Both figures are considerably smaller than two feet, and even if the heights had only been estimated at a glance, one would not mistake them for being of comparable size to the significantly larger *Kilcorban Madonna* (Fig. 46). Additionally, the figure of the Madonna from the Crucifixion group is obviously feminine and no ecclesiastic (as O’Heyne was) would mistake the painting of “B.V.M.” on the base of the figure as indicating anything other than “Blessed Virgin Mary”. The figures of Sts. Peter and Paul mentioned by Coleman may be lost figures.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1945), 203; Coleman (1902), 87.
JCA-AC-015: St. Paul

1. **Last Known Location**: Kilcorban, Co. Galway

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: 1902-1945


4. **Bibliography**: MacLeod (1945), 203; Coleman (1902), 87.

---

JCA-AC-016: St. Brendan (Fig. 423)

1. **Last Known Location**: Inisglora

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: c. 1917

3. **Comments**: This is one of the most published of all the lost figures. It was lost sometime after Westropp’s account of it in 1917. Lord Dunraven’s photo, published in 1875, shows the figure to be very much worn as if it had long been exposed to the elements. Both Westropp and Otway give the fullest accounts the figure.

   Westropp states,

   The curiously rude wooden figure of St. Brennan is in the larger oratory on Inisglora, and may be seen through the doorway in Lord Dunranven’s photograph. It is said to have been painted, but retains no trace. It was fibrous and weather-worn even when Otway saw it, and is now strangely crackled. Like the others of St. Molash on Inismurray, and the lost ones of Kilcarroll, Co. Clare, Templedahalin on Kerry Head, and that on St. MacDara’s Island, it was held in high esteem and accredited with curative powers. Giraldus tells us the same of other images of the Irish saints in his
day. Any man who thrice lifted the image at Inisglora with true faith could benefit women in childbirth. Ships used to dip their sails in reverence of the saint when passing Inisglora. I could not learn in the Mullet if the practice is maintained on our times.

According to Otway,

The chapel of St. Brenain (who is said to have erected all the buildings in the island) is a very rude structure, about fourteen feet long by eight or nine wide, and from the inclination of the upper part of the walls, it would seem that formerly it had a stone roof. It contains the statue of the saint… and the altar. The statue seems to have been once a good specimen of carving, and is said to have been painted, but time and weather have sadly defaced it. It is regarded with great veneration, and worshipped by devotees who come here to perform stations, and it is regularly kissed by every Roman Catholic visitant, whether on a station or not. The stations are performed round seven leachtas, or monuments – the penitent going round each, on his knees thrice; and upright, thrice. The most respected of these leachtas is that called ‘Leachta rillik Wurragh,’ or the monument of the reliques of Mary; this is seated on a mound which seems artificial… the well ‘tubber,’ is remarkable for growing bloody whenever a woman goes to draw water from it.

Although MacLeod cites James Henthorn Todd’s *Historia Britoria of Nennius*, neither Nennius in the original text, nor Todd in the footnotes mention the wooden figure of St. Brendan, though both record other traditions related to the saint which took place on Inishglora. O’Donovan includes a sketch of the figure in the original publication that does not

---

appear to have been reprinted in the 2009 edition. Dunraven published the only known photograph.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1946), 157; Westropp, (1917), 205; Otway (1841), 102-103; O’Donovan (1927), 106; Wyndham-Quin, (1875), Pl. xxiii.

---

### JCA-AC-017: St. Columba

1. **Last Known Location:** Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1898
3. **Comments:** According to Healy,

   The well of St. Columba, opposite the mote [of Inistioge], where pilgrimage of a very penitential kind along the course of the rugged stream was formerly performed on the Sunday within the Octave of the Saint’s Feast, June 9th. It is said that in ’98 a wooden image of the Saint, which was erected near the well, was destroyed by one of the yeoman, who being an iconoclast, flung it into the Nore.

4. **Bibliography:** Healy (1893), 83.

---

### JCA-AC-018: St. Brendan

1. **Last Known Location:** Clare Island in Clew Bay
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** after 1885
3. **Comments:** Wakeman provides no information about this figure, aside from its location and who it was said to depict. MacLeod repeated Wakemen’s information. He stated,

   Oaken statues of local saints would appear not to have been uncommon even in remote Western churches. One of St. Brendan remains on Clare Island, a second on Inis Glora.
A wooden statue of St. Ibar is recorded to have existed on the once celebrated island of Beg Erin, off the coast of Wexford.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1946), 157; Wakeman (1886), 223.

---

**JCA-AC-019: St. Carrol**

1. **Last Known Location:** Kilcarrol, near Kilrush, Co. Clare
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Between 1816 and 1917.
3. **Comments:** According to Mason who first documented the figure in 1816,

   The ruined church of Kilcarrol stands on a sequestered spot, within half a mile of Kilrush… In this old church are the remains of a worm-eaten wooden image, held in the greatest veneration by the peasantry; and near the church is a circular mound of earth and stones, from the top of which St. Carrol preached.

   Westropp mentions the figure, and states that it was lost, although he does not state how.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), Westropp (1917), 205; Mason, (1816), 433.

---

**JCA-AC-020: St. Ibar**

1. **Last Known Location:** Begerin, Co. Wexford
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1682
3. **Comments:** A figure of this fifth century saint was kept in a little church on Begerin, in Co. Wexford until the seventeenth century, when it was destroyed by iconoclasts in 1682. According to both Hore and MacLeod, locals used to take oaths upon the statue.
JCA-AC-021: Holy Cross Madonna

1. **Last Known Location**: Holy Cross Monastery, Thurles, Co. Tipperary

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: Unknown, after 1651 (the death of Malachy Hartry)

3. **Comments**: The *Triumphalia Chronologica Monasterii Sanctae Crucis in Hibernia* contains a lengthy account of a figure of the Madonna which was fantastically recovered in 1604 by some fishermen three years after being sunk on a ship off the west coast of Ireland. The statue was acquired by a nobleman, Terence Roe Mac Mahon, in Clare, and from him to the Baroness of Dunboyle, Lady Margaret O’Brien. When the abbot of the Holy Cross Monastery heard that the Baroness had the figure, he went and persuaded her to give it to the abbey, “that the statue of the Mother of God might not be separated from the saving Cross.” What material the Cross consisted of is not mentioned.

   Before being set up in monastery, the sculpture was hidden for a time in a granary, where it preserved the grain in the area where it was kept from rats and mice. After a time, the Madonna was brought to the monastery, where it was placed over the high altar, and a few years later a wooden case was made for it. In March of 1628, a very elaborate altar and tabernacle was constructed for the figure, the abbot,
erected a beautiful altar with different figures painted on it, which was placed over the arch of the high altar, and also a tabernacle supported by four columns and skillfully decorated with paintings in gold and silver and various colors, in which the aforesaid statue of the Mother of God is worshipped respectfully and devoutly by the faithful.

The figure is described as being “gracefully and artistically wrought” of cedar, and richly painted. In 1638, the figure was re-gilt, during which process a small piece of the wood of the figure was taken to a man with a swollen jaw. The fragment was applied as a compress and healed the man of his pain.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 121; Hartry (1895), 169-177.

JCA-AC-022: Our Lady of Trim

1. **Last Known Location:** Trim, Co. Meath

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1537-1641

3. **Comments:** Owing to the celebrity of this figure during the late medieval period, many extant references to *Our Lady of Trim* have survived, although none documents its appearance. The earliest extant reference so far found to *Our Lady of Trim* is in the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* in the year 1397, when Hugh Mac Mahon regained his sight after fasting at the figure’s shrine. According to a footnote in MacCarthy’s version of the *Annals of Ulster*, the renown of this carving is made evident by a grant from King Edward IV in 1462 to the abbot and convent of our blessed Lady of Trim,

...to establish a wax light to burn perpetually before the image in the church; and four wax lights to burn before
same during the Mass and Anthem of Our Lady, in honor of God and said Lady, for the good estate of Edward, his mother, Cecilia, and his children and for the souls of their progenitors and ancestors.

This same document is also quoted by Hardiman, I have been unable to locate the original and presume that it was destroyed by the fire at the Public Record Office in 1922. The next mention of the figure comes from 1412, in the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, the *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annals of Connacht*, and the *Annals of Loch Cé*, during which year the figure was said to have wrought many miracles. In 1444, it cured another man’s sight, gave “speech to a dumb man, and the use of his feet to a cripple, [and] stretched out the hand of a person to whose side it had been fastened…” In 1464, the *Annals of Connacht* record that the image “wrought great miracles this year.” A mention is given of *Our Lady of Trim* in a letter from Thomas Alen to Cromwell, in which Alen recounts that the dissolution commission hesitated before destroying the figure, then in the Augustian church. According to Alen,

> Seche papistes, ypocrites, and wurshippers of idolles, that they were not indited; whereat my Lord of Dublin, Mr. Tresorer, and the Maister of Rolles were veray angrie. Howbeit they could not remedie it. They threw wold not come in the chapel, where the Idoll of Trym stode, to thintent they wold not occasion the people; not withstanding, my Lord Deputie, veray devoutely kneleng befor Hir, hard thre or fower masses.

The *Annals of the Four Masters* record that the statue was burned in 1537 and the *Annals of Ulster*, as well as the *Annals of Connacht*, and the *Annals of Loch Cé* state that the figure was burned in 1538. Hardiman
records a letter from Protestant bishop, George Brown, to Thomas Cromwell from the State Papers of 1538 which bolster the annals’ dating of the destruction of the figure. The letter states, “There goithe a commen brewte amonges the Yrish men, that I entende to ploke down Our Lady of Tryme.”

It is also possible that the figure may have been hidden by the Hamons family at about that time, and not burned until a little more than a century later, as is recorded in Gilbert’s *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland*.

At this verie time the Irish bethought to garrison Trim, pursuant thereto all Westmeath forces and the Reyllies from the countie of Cavan marched thither, those had some inklinge that Coote was thither comeinge, though makinge the best speede they could, Sir Charles Coote arrived firste and had the towne without one blowe; the weather beinge somewhat could, whereof Sir Charles complained, and comaunded a fire to be made (he lodged in Mr. Laurence Hamons house), fuell verie scarce there; his son Ricc Coote… hitted vpon a great ancient portraiture, or image of Our Blessed Lady engraven in wood, kept with great veneration in the same house since the suppression of holy churche in Henry the 8 his time, which young Coote caused to be cutte and cloven in sunder, to make fire thereof for his father against his cominge in. Butt God Allmigh, the righteous judge, did not prolonge the punishment of this impietie, for as soone as Sir Charles thought to enjoy the benefitt of that transformed-diune fire, worde came to him that the Irish alreadie intred the towne; starting fourth, trompett sounded, and drum beaten, all ran to the allarum, beinge verie late in the eveninge. Sir Charles was shott, or otherwise wounded, and makeinge as much examination in this behalf as reasonablie I might, could never learne how or by whom he soe wounded, how ever, it beinge mortall,
he was conuoyed to his lodging deade... see how he payed for his firinge that night, sure he gaue an account in hell of it, for thither he receaued his ticket that night: this is the end of this tirant.

4. **Bibliography:** Bambury (2008), 1412.12, 1464.30, 1538.6; MacLeod (1947), 54; MacCarthy, (1895), 62-63, 625; Gilbert (1879), 32; Hennessy (1871), 143, 315-317; O’Donovan IV (1856), 751, 809, 937; O’Donovan V (1856), 1447; Hardiman (1843), 50-51; *State Papers of Henry VIII* 3 (1834), 103; Archdall, (1786), 577-578.

JCA-AC-023: St. Patrick

1. **Last Known Location:** Station Island, Lough Derg

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1632

3. **Comments:** Pinkerton quotes a letter from a Mr. Coppinger, who visited the little church on Station Island, and describes the contents prior to the chapel’s destruction by Bishop Spottiswood in 1632,

   The church is furnished at the east with a high altar covered with linen cloth, over which directly do hang the image of our Lady, with our Saviour in her arms; on the right hand hangs the picture of the three Kings offering their presents to our Saviour; and on the left hand the picture of our Saviour on the cross. Near the altar, on the south-side, there stands upon the ground, an old worm-eaten image of St. Patrick: and behind the altar, at the end of the stone work, another of the same fabric, older in appearance, called St. Avioge; on the right hand, upon the altar, stands one like the former, called St. Volusius.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Pinkerton (1857), 70.
JCA-AC-024: St. Avioge

1. **Last Known Location:** Station Island, Lough Derg

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1632


4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Pinkerton (1857), 70.

JCA-AC-025: St. Volusius

1. **Last Known Location:** Station Island, Lough Derg

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1632


4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Pinkerton (1857), 70.

JCA-AC-026: St. Sineach Mac Dara

1. **Last Known Location:** Cruach Mac Dara

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1600s

3. **Comments:** According to O’Flaherty,

   Over against Mason-head, southward in the countrey [sic.], lies Cruagh mhic Dara, a small high island and harbor for ships. This island is an inviolable sanctuary, dedicated to Mac Dara, a miraculous saint; whose chappell is within it, where his statue of wood for many ages stood until Malachias Queleus, Archbishope of Tuam, caused it to be buryed under ground, for special weighty reasons.
Williamson also mentions this wood figure and recounts basically the same information as O’Flaherty.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1946), 157; Williamson (1923), 75-76; O’Flaherty (1846), 97-99;

JCA-AC-027: St. Dominic

1. Last Known Location: Cork, Co. Cork

2. Approximate Date of Loss: 1578

3. Comments: According to Smith, in 1578 Mathew Sheyne publically burnt an image of St. Dominic that belonged to the Dominican Abbey in Cork, “to the great grief of the superstitious Irish of that place.” A contemporary account of this burning also appears in a letter from Lord Justice Druary to Sir Edward Fyton, on November 20, 1578, contained within the Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts,

Understanding of a notable idol or image of St. Sunday or St. Dominick, whereunto great offerings were made by night every Sunday and holiday, because time served not for us to stay in the searching out of it, we left commission with the Bishop, the Mayor, and other discreet persons, to enquire and search for the same, who, within two days after our departure, labored so diligently, though it was carefully shifted out of the way, as they found it, and burnt it at the High Cross openly, the Bishop himself putting fire thereunto, not without great lamenting of the people.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 55; Smith (1893), 20, 26; Brewer and Bullen, (1868), 143; Archdall, (1786), 67.
JCA-AC-028: Ballyboggan Crucifix

1. Last Known Location: Ballybogan, Co. Meath
2. Approximate Date of Loss: 1538
3. Comments: According to the *Annals of Ulster*, in the year 1538 the “Holy Cross of Baile-Ui-Bogan… [was] burned that year.”
4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 55; MacCarthy (1895), 625; Archdall, (1786), 515.

JCA-AC-029: St. Gobnait

1. Last Known Location: Kilgobinet, near Dungarven, Co. Waterford
2. Approximate Date of Loss: Unknown
3. Comments: According to Smith, Kilgobinet parish is encumbered with mountains, which feed great numbers of black cattle; and towards the N. part, with large tracts of bog, affording excellent turf. The church is situated towards the S. of the parish, on the side of a rocky hill, and dedicated to a female saint, called Gobnata, who, in the sixth century, was abbess of a nunnery, in a place called Borneagh, in the County of Cork. On the 11th of February, which is her patron day, the parish priest here exposes to view, a wooden painted image of this saint; great numbers flock together on this occasion, and everybody pays something for being admitted to kiss and handle it. Those who have traveled through Italy, are not surprised at this kind of devotion. His grace, Dr. Synge, by mistake, places this affair in the county of Cork, as I supposed, from this saint having been an abbess in that county, which gave his antagonist, Dr. Nary, a handle to deny the fact. But though his
grace mistook the place, the thing is no less true. There is also such another image of St. Gobnata, in the county of Cork, near Macromp, in the diocese of Cloyne, which was meant be his grace Dr. Synge.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 167; Smith (1774), 70-71.

---

**JCA-AC-30: Trinity**

1. **Last Known Location:** Monastery on Trinity Island, Lough Key, Co. Roscommon

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1466

3. **Comments:** According to the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, an image of the Trinity was burned by a candle in 1466 at the monastery on Trinity Island in Lough Key. The *Annals of Connacht* add that the candle was carried by the canon’s wife.

4. **Bibliography:** O’Donovan, IV (1856), 1045; Bambury (2008), 1466.29.

---

**JCA-AC-031: Unidentified Wooden Figure**

1. **Last Known Location:** Saint’s Island, Lough Ree, Co. Longford

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown, before 1816

3. **Comments:** Mason mentions a no-longer extant wooden figure from Saint’s Island, Lough Ree upon which people would swear, believing that if they swore falsely on it, they would die.

4. **Bibliography:** Mason (1816), 440.
JCA-AC-032: Coleraine Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** Dominican monastery, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1611

3. **Comments:** Archdall states,

   “Francis Porter, in his annals, tells a fabulous story of Bishop Babbington having attempted in vain to burn an image of the Virgin Mary… and the bishop (continues my credulous author) being instantly seized with a violent illness, died in the month of September, 1611.

   I have been completely unable to locate a copy of Francis Porter’s compendium of the *Ecclesiastical Annals of Ireland*, published in Rome in 1690.

4. **Bibliography:** Archdall, (1786), 84.
APPENDIX D: SELECTED LOST FIGURES OF INDETERMINATE MATERIAL, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN WOOD

JCA-AD-001: St. Ita

1. **Last Known Location:** Ballyheigue Chapel, Kerry Head

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Between 1774-1946

3. **Comments:** About the lost figure of St. Ita, formerly at Ballyheigue chapel, Smith writes,

   About two miles more to the W. is a small chapel, dedicated to an *Irish* saint, called *Mac-Ida*; where a rood, or image of the saint is kept, which is held in great veneration by an old *Irish* family named *Corridon*, who settled here some centuries ago, from the county of *Clare*, and brought their tutelary saint with them…

   MacLeod claims that this figure was preserved until 1756, but it is not clear where this date comes from. The figure seems to still have been extant at the time of Smith’s writing in 1774.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 156; Smith (1756), 211.

JCA-AD-002: Station Island Madonna and Child

1. **Last Known Location:** Station Island, Lough Derg

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1632

3. **Comments:** It is not clear if this image was a wooden figure. See Catalogue: *Appendix C: Lost Figures*, “St. Patrick”, p. 693.

4. **Bibliography:** Pinkerton (1857), 70.
JCA-AD-003: Castle Ellis St. John the Baptist

1. **Last Known Location:** Castle Ellis, Co. Wexford
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Before 1621
3. **Comments:** O’Sullivan Beare wrote that a Protestant bishop, Hugh Allen, attacked the Catholic church in Castle Ellis, Co. Wexford and despoiled the shrines of two figures, a Madonna and a figure of St. John the Baptist, to whom the church was dedicated. Bishop Allen stole the sculptures’ ornaments and caused the two figures to be pulled down from the altar. Almost immediately, Allen was seized with violent pains, and raging, fell to the ground. He beat his body against the stone floor until he died.
4. **Bibliography:** O’Sullivan-Beare (1850), 138.

JCA-AD-004: Castle Ellis Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** Castle Ellis, Co. Wexford
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Before 1621
3. **Comments:** See: Appendix D: Lost Figures, “Castle Ellis St. John the Baptist”, p. 700.
4. **Bibliography:** O’Sullivan-Beare (1850), 138.
JCA-AD-005: Navan Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** Navan, Co. Meath

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** July 1539

3. **Comments:** An act of Parliament dating to 1454 pertaining to the Navan Madonna was formerly kept in the Office of the Remembrancer of the Exchequer in Dublin. Although this act was likely destroyed when the Public Records Office burned in 1922, it was quoted by Hardiman, in whose day it was still extant. “The letters patents of the king be made… for taking into protection all people, whether rebels or others, who shall go in pilgrimage to the convent of the Blessed Virgin of Navan.”

   Hardiman also relates an account of a miracle performed by the Navan Madonna that was contained in an Act of Parliament at Drogheda in 1460, during the reign of Henry VI. It stated in part,

   [Thomas Bathe] not yet content nor satisfied of the intent and gratification of his said malice, caused certain of his servants to go to the Abbey of Navan, where the said Master John was, whom, out of the Church of Our Blessed Lady there they took, violently carrying thence to Wilkinston, holding him in prison there, where they cut out his tongue, and in their estimation, intension and purpose, put out his eyes; the which, so done, he was again carried to the said church, and cast there before our said Blessed Lady, by the grace, mediation, and miraculous power of whom he was restored his sight and tongue…

   The only other surviving account of this figure thus far found pertains to its destruction. According to Cogan,
The last abbot of Navan was Thomas Wafre, and on the 19th of July, 1539, the commissioners of Henry the Eighth summoned the monks in the name of the king, to surrender all the possessions of the monastery in Meath, Louth, Dublin, Kildare, and Carlow, and elsewhere in Ireland. The abbot assembled his community in the chapter house, and, the peremptory ukase of the tyrant leaving no alternative, the unfortunate monks were coerced to go through the legal farce of a “voluntary surrender” – to sign their own expulsion from house and home, and to pretend that this wholesale robbery and sacrilege had their full sanction and approval. The abbey of Navan was now plundered as if a wave of Goths or Vandals had passed over it. The image of the Blessed Virgin, so long held in veneration here was torn from her altar and indignantly destroyed. The gold and silver ornaments of the church – chalices, ciboriums, crucifixes, images, vestments, altar plate and altar linen – all were carried off to fill the coffers of Henry the Eighth, and to enrich the worshippers of lay-supremacy. All being now accomplished, and everything of value carried off, the doors were shut forever, and the abbey of Navan ceased to exist.

4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1947), 54; Cogan (1862), 225-226; Hardiman (1843), 50-51.
JCA-AD-006: Kilmore Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** Kilmore, Co. Roscommon
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1538
3. **Comments:** Both the Annals of the Four Masters and the Annals of Ulster record that in the year 1381, the image of the Madonna at Kilmore more miraculously spoke.
4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 55; O’Donovan, IV (1856), 681; MacCarthy (1895), 9.

JCA-AD-007: Raphoe Crucifix

1. **Last Known Location:** Raphoe, Co. Donegal
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1538
3. **Comments:** According to the Annals of the Four masters, Hugh Mac Mahon regained his sight by fasting in front of this image, and Our Lady of Trim, in 1397.
4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1947), 55; O’Donovan, IV (1856), 751.

JCA-AD-008: St. Catherine

1. **Last Known Location:** Downpatrick, Co. Down
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** 1538
3. **Comments:** The *Annals of Ulster* state that in 1538,
A hosting by the Saxon Justiciary to Leth-Cathail and the monastery of Down was burned by them and the relics of Patrick and Colum-cille and Brigit and the image of Catherine were carried off by them. And the Saxon captain took the image with him to the green of the castle of Dun-a-droma and he himself went into the castle and there was a hole in the castle and that man fell into it through the miracles of God and Catherine, with out tidings of him from that to this.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1945), 196; MacCarthy (1895), 625.

---

**JCA-AD-009: Athenry Crucifix**

1. **Last Known Location:** Dominican Monastery, Athenry, Co. Galway

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown

3. **Comments:** According to the monastic register from Athenry, one of the few that survive in Ireland, a donation of 30 marks was given in the fifteenth century for a crucifix and figures of St. John the Evangelist and a Madonna, by Catylyne Brayneoc. The material used for these figures is not specified.

4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1945), 198; Coleman (1912), 210.
JCA-AD-010: Athenry St. John the Evangelist

1. Last Known Location: Dominican Monastery, Athenry, Co. Galway
2. Approximate Date of Loss: Unknown
4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1945), 198; Coleman (1912), 210.

JCA-AD-011: Athenry Madonna

1. Last Known Location: Dominican Monastery, Athenry, Co. Galway
2. Approximate Date of Loss: Unknown
4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1945), 198; Coleman (1912), 210.

JCA-AD-012: St. Dominic

1. Last Known Location: Dominican Monastery, Athenry, Co. Galway.
2. Approximate Date of Loss: Unknown
3. Comments: Record of donation in the fifteenth century by William Lynch, who paid 100s for the making of a figure of St. Dominic and a crucifix. The material of these figures is not specified.
4. Bibliography: MacLeod (1945), 198; Coleman (1912), 210.
JCA-AD-013: Saint Martin

1. **Last Known Location:** St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown
3. **Comments:** According to Robinson, St. Werburgh’s Church in Dublin had two chapels standing on the north and south sides of the chancel. These were dedicated to St. Martin and the Madonna, and each contained an image of their patron. The Church Warden’s accounts record that the figure of St. Martin was made in 1520.
4. **Bibliography:** MacLeod (1946), 168; Robinson (1914), 135-136.

JCA-AD-014: St. Werburgh’s Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin
2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown
3. **Comments:** According to Robinson, St. Werburgh’s Church in Dublin had two chapels standing on the north and south sides of the chancel. These were dedicated to St. Martin and the Madonna, and each contained an image of their patron. The Church Warden’s accounts record that the figure of St. Martin was made in 1520. The portion published by Robinson does not record evidence of the commissioning of the Madonna that he mentions.
4. **Bibliography:** Robinson, (1914), 135-136.
JCA-AD-015: St. Werburgh’s Crucifix, Madonna and St. John

1. **Last Known Location:** St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown

3. **Comments:** According to Robinson, St. Werburgh’s Church in Dublin had a high choir with a rood screen, surmounted about by a crucifix and carved figures of the Madonna and St. John the Evangelist. In 1520, the Church Warden’s account that money was paid for the painting of the figures of the Madonna and St. John.

4. **Bibliography:** Robinson (1914), 136.

---

JCA-AD-016: Christ Church St. Catherine

1. **Last Known Location:** Christ Church Cathedral (then the Church of the Holy Trinity), Dublin.

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown

3. **Comments:** It is not known from what material this image was made. Archdall states that the figure was partially damaged in 1310 when a clerk hid himself in the church at night, stole alms and books, and also partially despoiled “the image of St. Catherine of part of her ornaments.”

4. **Bibliography:** Archdall (1786), 163.
JCA-AD-017: Dublin St. John the Baptist

1. **Last Known Location:** Infirmary of the Priory of St. John the Baptist, Dublin

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** After 1542

3. **Comments:** It is not known from what material this image was made although Archdall’s description infers that it was a freestanding sculpture. He states,
   
   The different orders for whom they wrought did visit this house on Saint John’s day, when they presented their offerings before the image of the Saint, which stood in the great hall; and on the Saints eve the mayor and commons were also wont to visit them, on which a great bonfire was made before the hospital, and many others throughout the city.

4. **Bibliography:** Archdall (1786), 205.

---

JCA-AD-018: Muckross Madonna

1. **Last Known Location:** Franciscan friary of the Holy Trinity, (Muckross Abbey) Co. Kerry.

2. **Approximate Date of Loss:** Unknown

3. **Comments:** Archdall states that a miracle-working image of the Madonna was said to have been preserved there. It is not clear if this image (of indeterminate material) was still extant in his day.

4. **Bibliography:** Archdall (1786), 303.
JCA-AD-019: Clonmel St. Francis

1. **Last Known Location**: Franciscan Friary, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

2. **Approximate Date of Loss**: Unknown

3. **Comments**: According to Archdall, “The church of friary was truly magnificent, and esteemed one of the finest in Ireland, in this church was a miraculous image of St. Francis.”

4. **Bibliography**: Archdall (1786), 653.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

A collection of all the statutes now in use in the kingdom of Ireland, with notes in the margin [1310-1666]: and a continuation of the statutes made in the reign of the late King Charles the First of ever blessed memory; and likewise the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, with the rest of the acts made in the reign of His Majestie that now is, Charles the Second by the grace of God of England, Scotland, France and Ireland king, to the dissolution of the Parliament, the seventh of August, 1666; as also a necessary table or kalendar to the whole work, expressing in titles the principal matter therein contained, for the ease and advantage of the reader (Dublin: Benjamin Tooke, 1672).


A True Relation of the manner of our Colonell Sir Frederick Hammiltions Return from London-Derry in Ireland, Being near 60 miles from his Caſtle and Garrifon, where he was at the beginning and breaking out of this Rebellion; with the particular Services performed by the Horſe and Foot Companies which he Commands, Garrifon’d at Manor-Hammilton, in the County of Leitrim, in the Province of Connaught. Together with feveral other Letters, Petitions, and Paffages, concerning the faid Sir Frederick Hamilton, Knight and Colonell (Pamphlet by anonymous author, 1645, no printer stated).


Bowes, Bernard to Dr. Mahr, 5 June 1930. National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

Breen, Fr. to John Raftery. 22 June, 1944, C.C., Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, NMI file IA.539.47.


Costello, M. A. *De Annatis Hiberniae: A Calendar of the first Fruits’ Fees Levied on Papal Appointments to Benefices in Ireland A.D. 1400 to 1535 Extracted from the Vatican and other Roman Archives with Copious Topographical Notes together with Summaries of Papal Rescripts Relating to Benefices in Ireland and Biographical Notes of the Bishops of Irish Sees During the Same Period*, I. Dundalk: 1909.


de Burgo, F. Thomas. *Hibernia Dominicana* (Cologne: 1762).


Douglas, Sir Robert. *The Peerage of Scotland; containing an historical and genealogical account of the nobility of that kingdom, From the Origin to the present Generation: Collected from the public records and ancient chartularies of this nation, the charters and other writings of the nobility, and the works of our best historians*, Edinburgh: James Donaldson, 1768.


Gilbert, John T., ed. Historic and Municipal Documents of Ireland from the Archives of the City of Dublin ... 1172-1320, Rolls Series no. 53, London: HMSO, 1870.


The Metrical Dindshenchas (pt. IV), 11, Todd Lecture Series (1913).


Kerry County Museum file records.


*List of Objects in the Art Division South Kensington Museum acquired during the Year 1895. Arranged according to the dates of acquisition, with appendix and indices*. London: HMSO, 1897.


Lopez, Domingo. *Noticias historicas de las tres florentissimas provincias del celeste orden de la santissima Trinidad, redempcion de cautivos, en Ingleterra, Ecocia, y Hibernia* Madrid: Josep Rodriguez y Efcobar, 1714.


Martin, F.X. to Catriona MacLeod, 2 Sep 1980. National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 52, Collin’s Barrack’s, Dublin.

715


“New Convent at Adare,” The Limerick Chronicle, April 22, 1854.


_______. Ordnance Survey Letters, Co. Wexford, MSS.14G (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1840).


Robinson, John L. “Churchwardens’ Accounts, 1484-1600, St. Werburgh’s Church, Dublin,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 44 (1914) 132-142.


Shea, T. to Mr. Mahr, 12 September 1929. National Museum of Ireland, Art and Industry Archives, Box 51, Collín’s Barrack’s, Dublin.


Wilde, W.R. Ecclesiastical Antiquities Register for the Royal Irish Academy in the National Museum of Ireland, Kildare Street Archives (unpublished; written about 1857).


Wyndham-Quin, Caroline Countess of Dunraven. Unpublished papers, the Dunraven Collection, University of Limerick.
Secondary Sources


*A brief Account of Our Lady of Limerick, Celebrated Ancient Statue in the Dominican Church, Limerick* (Locally produced pamphlet, unknown date).


Archdall, Mervyn. *Monasticon Hibernicum, or an history of the abbeys, priories and other religious houses in Ireland; interspersed with memoirs of their several founders and benefactors, and ... superiors ...; likewise an account of the manner in which the possessions belonging to those foundations were disposed of, and the present state of their ruins; collected from historians, records, and manuscripts*, London: G.G.J and J. Robinson, 1786.


Buckley, J.J. *Some Irish altar plate: a descriptive list of chalices and patens, dating from the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, now preserved in the National Museum and in certain churches*, Dublin: Falconer, 1943.


Cochran, Jennifer K. “Medieval Irish Wooden Figure Sculpture.” Master Thesis., Trinity College, University of Dublin, 2004.

Cogan, A. The Diocese of Meath, Ancient and Modern I, Dublin: John F. Fowler, 1862.


Collingwood, W. G. Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age, London: Faber & Gwyer, 1927.


Fletcher, Alan J. Drama and the Performing arts in Pre-Cromwellian Ireland, a repertory of sources and documents from the earliest times until c. 1642, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001.


Hall, Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Ireland: Its Scenery, Character &c I, (London: How and Parsons, 1841).


______. *High Crosses of Ireland*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1992.


Harris, Dorothy C. “Saint Gobnet, Abbess of Ballyourney,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 68 (1938), 272-277.

Healy, William. *History and Antiquities of Kilkenny (County and City) I*, Kilkenny: P.M. Egan, 1893.


Hogan, John. *Kilkenny: The Ancient City of Ossory, the Seat of its Kings, the See of its Bishops, and the Site of its Cathedral*, Kilkenny: P.M. Egan, 1884.


*Holy Trinity Abbey Church, Adare* (Locally produced booklet).

Hore, Philip Herbert. *History of the Town and County of Wexford from the earliest period to the rebellion of 1798, comprised principally from ancient records and the state papers in the Public record offices of London and Dublin, the mss. in the


Kelly, M.T. “St. Gobnata and Her Hive of Bees,” in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 3, Series II (1897) 100 -106.


MacLeod, Catriona. “Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland until the 17th century.” Master’s thesis. University College Dublin, 1944.

______. “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Medieval Madonnas in the West,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 105 (1945) 167 – 182.

______. “Medieval Wood Figure Sculptures in Ireland: The Kilcorban St. Catherine and Calvary Figures,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 105 (1945) 195 –203.

______. “Medieval Wooden Figure Sculpture in Ireland: Statues in the Holy Ghost Hospital, Waterford,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 106 (1946) 89 – 100.

______. “Some Medieval Wooden Figure Sculptures in Ireland: Statues of Irish Saints,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 106 (1946) 155 –170.


______. “Medieval Statues from the 17th Century,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 77 (1947) 121-133.


Mason, William Shaw. A statistical account, or parochial survey of Ireland, drawn up from the communications of the clergy II, Dublin: Hibernia-Press Office, 1816.


McCaffrey, P. R. The White Friars, an outline of Carmelite history with special reference to the English speaking provinces (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1926).


________. “Celtic Antecedents to the Treatment of the Human Figure in Early Irish Art,” in From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and Its European Context, ed. Colum Hourihane, Princeton: Index
of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, in association with the Princeton University Press, 2001, 161-182.


Murphy, Denis. *Cromwell in Ireland: A History of Cromwell’s Irish Campaign*, Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1897.


O’Sullivan-Beare, Philip. *Historiae Catholicae Iberiae Compendium*, Dublin: John O’Daly, 1850.


Peel, Henry. “A Brief History of Our Lady of Waterford”, Our Lady of Waterford, Marian Dear Shrine, Locally produced pamphlet, unknown date.


______, The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland, Anterior to the Anglo-Norman Invasion, comprising an essay on the origin and uses of the round towers of Ireland, trans. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin: M.H. McGill, 1845.


Raftery, John to Fr. Breen, C.C., 20 June, 1944, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, NMI file IA.539.47.

Redmond, Gabriel O’C. *An Historical Memoir of the Family of Poher, Poer, or Power, with an account of the barony of le Power and Coroghmore, County Waterford*, Dublin: Office of the Irish Builder, 1891.


Ryan, D.J. “Miscellanea: Mediaeval Wooden Figure Sculptures” *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 187 (1947), 159-160.


Uí Dháiligh, Eilís. Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney. Locally published pamphlet, no date or publisher given.


______. The Vikings in Ireland, Setlement, trade and urbanization, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008.


_____., *Catalogue. Specimens in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy* 2
(Dublin: Science and Art Museum, 1894).

_____., “Inis Muiredaich, Now Inishmurray, and its Antiquities,” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 17 (1886).


Ware, Sir James. *The Antiquities and History of Ireland*, Dublin: A. Crook, 1705.


Weninger, Francis Xavier. *Lives of the Saints, compiled from authentic sources; with a practical instruction of the life of each saint for every day in the year* II. New York: P. O’Shea, Publisher, 1876.


______, “A Study in the Legends of the Connacht Coast, Ireland,” Folklore 28 (1917).


Williams, B.B. “A Wooden Figure Found at Lettershendony, County Londonderry,” Ulster Journal of Archaeology 56 (1993), 148-151.

Williamson, Clause C. H. “Pilgrimages,” Irish Ecclesiastical Record (1923), 54-80.


WOODEN DEVOTIONAL SCULPTURE IN IRELAND, 1100 - 1800

Volume II of II

A Dissertation in
Art History
by
Jennifer Cochran Anderson

© 2012 Jennifer Cochran Anderson

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2012
FIGURES
Fig. 37: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 38: Our Lady of Limerick, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 39: Detail of damage suffered by *Our Lady of Limerick*, February 2011 (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).

Fig. 40: *St. Gobnait*, St. Gobnait’s Church, Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (Photo: author).
Fig. 41: *Joachim and Anna at the Gate*, Hunt Museum, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).

Fig. 42: *Flight into Egypt*, Hunt Museum, Limerick, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 43: *Deposition*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).

Fig. 44: *Fethard Christ*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 45: *Our Lady of Youghal*, Dominican Church, Youghal, Co. Cork (Photo: Fergal McEoinín)
Fig. 46: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 47: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 48: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 49: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 50: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 51: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 52: Altar Frontal from Santa Maria de Taüll, National Museum of Art of Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain (Photo: NMAC).

Fig. 53: Tomb figure from Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 54: Tomb figure of a bishop, Corcomroe Abbey, Co. Clare (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 55: Effigy of William of Cork, Jerpoint Abbey, near Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 56: Madonna and Child from Mosan Region, Belgium, Curtius Museum, Liège, Belgium.
Fig. 57: Madonna in the tympanum from the centre doorway of the north transept of Chartres Cathedral

Fig. 58: Enthroned Virgin from the south portal tympanum from Donnemarie-en-Montois.
Fig. 59: Madonna from Ennebakk, Norway
Fig. 60: Madonna from Hove, Norway

Fig. 61: Madonna from Grong, Norway
Fig. 62: Comparison of *Kilcorban Child* and *Athlone Child* (Photos: author).

Fig. 63: *Kilcorban Madonna and Child*, during restoration (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 64: *Kilcorban Child*, during process of restoration (Photo: NMI).

Fig. 65: *Holy Ghost Madonna and Child*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 66: *Holy Ghost Madonna and Child*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 67: *Holy Ghost Madonna and Child*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 68: *Holy Ghost Madonna and Child*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 69: *Holy Ghost Child*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 70: Stone effigy of a woman, Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 71: *Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem*, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author)
Fig. 72: *Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem*, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author)

Fig. 73: *Athlone Madonna / Our Lady of Bethlehem*, Poor Clare’s Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author)
Fig. 74: *Athlone Madonna*, before restoration (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).

Fig. 75: *Athone Child*, detail of fluted hairstyle (Photo: author).
Fig. 76: *Athlone Madonna*, detail of draperies (Photo: author).

Fig. 77: *Athlone Madonna*, detail of draperies (Photo: author).
Fig. 78: Incised grave-slab figure, Inistioge, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 79: Incised grave-slab figure, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 80: Madonna and Child, French ivory, the Louvre Museum, Paris, France.
Fig. 81: *St. Molaise*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 82: *St. Molaise*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 83: *St. Molaise*, detail of face (Photo: author).
Fig. 84: *St. Molaise*, detail of drapery (Photo: author).
Fig. 85: *St. Molaise*, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).
Fig. 86: Sketch of figure of *St. Brendan*, Caesar Otway.

Fig. 87: No-longer extant *St. Brendan*, (Photo: Dunraven).
Fig. 88: Sketch of St. Molaise in situ, Wakeman.

Fig. 89: St. Dionysius, Rheims Cathedral, France.
Fig. 90: Two bishops from the west façade of Wells Cathedral, Somerset, U.K.

Fig. 91: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K.
Fig. 92: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K.

Fig. 93: Wooden figure of an ecclesiastic from Herefordshire, U.K.
Fig. 94: Effigy of a bishop from Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 95: *St. Procopius*, St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague, Czech Republic (Photo: Grace A. Cochran)
Fig. 96: *St. Procopius*, St. Agnes of Bohemia Convent in Prague, Czech Republic (Photo: Grace A. Cochran).

Fig. 97: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 98: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 99: *Clonfert Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Catholic Church, Co. Galway (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).
Fig. 100: Virgin and Child from Saint-Corneille in Compiégne, France.
Fig. 101: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author).
Fig. 102: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author).

Fig. 103: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author).
Fig. 104: *St. Gobnait*, Ballyvourney Parish Church, Co. Cork (Photo: author).

Fig. 105: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 106: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary
(Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 107: Female effigy from the St. John the Baptist churchyard in Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 108: Map of the area of the *Turas Ghobnatan* (Map: Eilís Uí Dháiligh).

Fig. 109: Entrance to the area of the *Turas Ghobnatan*, inscribed with crosses by visitors (Photo: author).
Fig. 110: View of the area where the *Turas Ghobnatan* takes place. Gobnait’s grave is in the foreground (Photo: author).

Fig. 111: View of “St. Gobnait’s house,” (Photo: author).
Fig. 112: St. Gobnait’s well, (Photo: author).
Fig. 113: *St. Molua*, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 114: *St. Molua*, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author).

Fig. 115: *St. Molua*, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 116: St. Molua, Killaloe Church, Killaloe, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 117: *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 118: *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 119: Waterford Nursing Madonna, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 120: *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 121: *Waterford Nursing Madonna*, photo of figure before removal of emulsion layer (Photo: Waterford Museum of Treasures, file record).
Fig. 122: Nursing Madonna and Child between St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Benedict. Prado, Madrid, Spain.
Fig. 123: Large alabaster Madonna and Child, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain.

Fig. 124 Madonna from Ruskinovce, Spiš county, in East Slovakia, Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia
Fig. 125: *Madonna Lactans*, Museu Frederic Marès, Barcelona, Spain.

Fig. 126: Marginal drawing in the *Great Parchment Book of Waterford*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford.
Fig. 127: *Holy Ghost Angel*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)
Fig. 128: *Holy Ghost Angel*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 129: *Holy Ghost Angel*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: Catriona MacLeod)
Fig. 130: *Holy Ghost Angel*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author)

Fig. 131: Nino Pisano, Madonna and Child from Santa Maria Novella in Florence.
Fig. 132: Nino Pisano, Angel Gabriel from the Annunciation group in Santa Caterina in Pisa.

Fig. 133: Wooden angel thought to be from the workshop of Nino Pisano, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 134: Detail of wooden angel thought to be from the workshop of Nino Pisano, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 135: *Kilconnell Female Head*, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author).
Fig. 136: *Kilconnell Female Head*, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author).

Fig. 137: *Kilconnell Female Head*, Aughrim Interpretive Centre, Aughrim, Co. Roscommon (Photo: author).
Fig. 138: Fethard St. John the Baptist, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 139: *Fethard St. John the Baptist*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 140: *Fethard St. John the Baptist*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: NMI).

Fig. 141: *Fethard St. John the Baptist*, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 142: Carving of St. John the Baptist from a French oak chest, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 143: Figure of Honoratus, left jamb of the left doorway in the west portal, Amiens Cathedral.

Fig. 144: Incised slab of an ecclesiastic, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt)
Fig. 145: *Askeaton Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 146: *Askeaton Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 147: *Askeaton Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 148: Jean Fouquet, *Virgin and Child of Melun*, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, Netherlands.
Fig. 149: *Museum Standing Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 150: *Museum Standing Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 151: *Museum Standing Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 152: *Museum Standing Madonna*, detail of Child (Photo: author).

Fig. 153: Madonna and Child, Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 154: Unknown female saint, depicted on a tomb-chest in the sexton’s house of St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 155: Kilcorban St. Catherine, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 156: Kilcorban St. Catherine, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 157: Kilcorban St. Catherine, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 158: Figure of St. Catherine from Howth, Co. Dublin (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 159: Figure of St. Catherine from Duleek, Co. Meath (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 160: Figure of St. Catherine from Cashel, Co. Tipperary (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 161: Figure of St. Catherine from Lismore, Co. Waterford (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 162: Figure of St. Catherine from the Priory of St. Mary, Clontuskert, Co. Galway (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 163: Christ showing the wounds, Gowran, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 164: Christ showing the wounds, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: John Hunt).

Fig. 165: Kilcorban St. Catherine, pre-restoration (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).
Fig. 166: Kilcorban St. Catherine, photo taken during restoration (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 167: Holy Ghost St. Stephen, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 168: *Holy Ghost St. Stephen*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).

Fig. 169: St. James Major, Kilconnell, Co. Galway (Photo: John Hunt).
Fig. 170: Alabaster St. Stephen, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 171: Alabaster St. Stephen, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 172: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 173: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 174: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, detail of upper body (Photo: author).

Fig. 175: *Holy Ghost Risen Christ*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 176: Risen Christ from Athboy, Co. Meath.

Fig. 177: Risen Christ from Ennis, Co. Clare.
Fig. 178: *Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 179: *Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 180: Museum Pietà, detail of dead Christ (Photo: author).

Fig. 181: Museum Pietà, detail of statue bottom (Photo: author).
Fig. 182: Pietà, Strade, Co. Meath.

Fig. 183: *Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 184: *Holy Ghost St. John the Baptist*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).

Fig. 185: Alabaster St. John the Baptist, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 186: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 187: Our Lady of Dublin, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 188: Our Lady of Dublin, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 189: *Our Lady of Dublin*, Carmelite Church, Dublin, Co. Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 190: *Our Lady of Dublin*, detail showing Madonna without crown (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).
Fig. 191: *Our Lady of Dublin*, detail showing Madonna without crown (Photo: Catriona MacLeod).

Fig. 192: 1833 wood-cut of *Our Lady of Dublin* in the Dublin Penny Journal.
Fig. 193: Pre-1914 photo of Our Lady of Dublin before the layers of emulsion were removed.
Fig. 194: Riemenschneider St. Barbara
Fig. 195: Tilman Riemenschneider, *Virgin and Child*, Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Fig. 196: Gregor Erhart, *Virgin of Mercy*, destroyed during the bombings of Berlin in 1945.
Fig. 197: Hans Sixt von Staufen, *Virgin of Mercy*
Fig. 198: *St. Edmund*, Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Cathedral.

Fig. 199: *Mary Salome and St. Margaret*, Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Cathedral.
Fig. 200: Madonna and Child seated figure from Tournai.
Fig. 201: Limestone Madonna and Child group from Brussels.

Fig. 202: Madonna and Child from Church of Notre-Dame-Finistère, Brussels, Belgium.
Fig. 203: *Killoran Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 204: *Killoran Madonna and Child*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author)
Fig. 205: *Killoran St. Joseph*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 206: *Killoran St. Joseph*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 207: *Notre-Dame de Langueur*, Pagny-sur-Meuse, France.

Fig. 208: *Unidentified Glendalaough Saint*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 209: Unidentified Glendalaough Saint, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 210: Unidentified Glendalaough Saint, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 211: Sts. Peter and Paul, from Strade, Co. Meath.

Fig. 212: Apostles from St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny. Co. Kilkenny.
Fig. 213: Sts. Catherine and Peter from Howth, Co. Dublin.
Fig. 214: St. Peter from the tomb of James Shortals and Katherine Whyte, St. Canice’s Cathedral, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 215: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 216: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 217: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 218: Print showing Christ on the Cold Stone from the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Etampes, Paris.

Fig. 219: Prayer-nut showing Christ on the Cold stone from the southern Netherlands.
Fig. 220: *Job with his wife and the devil*, capital from Notre Dame des Doms, Avignon, France.

Fig. 221: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, pre-restoration photograph (Photo: NMI).
Fig. 222: *Fethard Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of feet (Photo: author).

Fig. 223: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Church of St.-Nizier in Troyes, France.
Fig. 224: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Sommery, France.

Fig. 225: *Christ on the Cold Stone*, Burgos, Spain.
Fig. 226: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Science Museum, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (Photo: author).
Fig. 227: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, National Science Museum, Maynooth, Co. Kildare (Photo: author).
Fig. 228: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of face (Photo: author).

Fig. 229: *Maynooth Christ on the Cold Stone*, detail of lower body (Photo: author).
Fig. 230: *Christ on the Cold Stone* from the southern Netherlands.
Fig. 231: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author).
Fig. 232: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author).
Fig. 233: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author).

Fig. 234: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author).
Fig. 235: *Kilcormac Pietà*, Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly (Photo: author).

Fig. 236: Michelangelo, *Pietà*
Fig. 237: Pietà, Sint-Laurentiuskerk, Bocholt, Belgium.

Fig. 238: Pietà, Eglise Saint-Etienne in Bütgenbach, Belgium.
Fig. 239: Pietà, Hôpital Notre-Dame à la Rose in Lessines, Belgium.
Fig. 240: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)
Fig. 241: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)
Fig. 242: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, Dominican priory, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny (Photo: author)

Fig. 243: *Madonna as Star of the Sea*, detail of angel (Photo: author)
Fig. 244: *Madonna and Child*, St. Peter’s cathedral in Worms, Germany.
Fig. 245: *Madonna and Child*, Ravensburg, Germany.
Fig. 246: Madonna and Child, St. Aldegundis Church in Emmerich, Germany.

Fig. 247: Madonna and Child, Zussdorf, Germany.
Fig. 248: Madonna and Child, St. Egidien’s Church in Glauchau, Germany

Fig. 249: Madonna and Child, Colmar, France.
Fig. 250: Madonna and Child from Lorraine, France, now the Musée National de Moyen Âge, Paris.
Fig. 251: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 252: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).

Fig. 253: *Our Lady of Waterford*, St. Saviour’s Dominican Church, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 254: *Our Lady of Waterford*, detail of Child (Photo: author).

Fig. 255: Germán López, *Virgen del Socorro*, Church of the Jesuit Fathers, Toledo, Spain.
Fig. 256: Germán López, *St. Anne*, Malagón, Spain.

Fig. 257: Alonsa Cano and Pablo Legot, *Virgen de Oliva*, Santa María de Oliva, Lebrija, Spain.
Fig. 258: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author).

Fig. 259: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author).
Fig. 260: *Harbison Infant Christ*, Clare Museum, Ennis, Co. Clare (Photo: author).
Fig. 261: Jerónimo Hernández de Estrada, *Madonna and Child*, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain.
Fig. 262: Juan Martínez Montanéz, *Standing Infant Christ*, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain.
Fig. 263: *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 264: *Holy Ghost St. Patrick / St. Bonaventure*, Waterford Museum of Treasures, Waterford, Co. Waterford (Photo: author).
Fig. 265: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 266: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 267: *Fethard Holy Trinity*, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 268: Seventeenth century stone panels remounted in the modern Galway Cathedral (Photo: author).
Fig. 269: a panel, currently set into a wall in the modern Franciscan Friary in Galway

Fig. 270: Trinity, Limerick crosier
Fig. 271: Rice tomb trinity (Photo: author).

Fig. 272: Tomb panel from Ballynabracky, Co. Meath
Fig. 273: St. Werburgh’s church in Dublin

Fig. 274: satin banner from the Rothe House in Kilkenny
Fig. 275: Our Lady of Limerick, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominian Church, Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 276: *Our Lady of Limerick*, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominian Church, Limerick (Photo: author).

Fig. 277: *Our Lady of Limerick*, prior to 2011 damage, St. Saviour’s Dominian Church, Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 278: Sarsfield Chalice, St. Saviour's Dominican Church, Limerick (Photo: Fr. Jordan O’Brien, O.P.).
Fig. 279: Our Lady of Limerick, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).
Fig. 280: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).

Fig. 281: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).
Fig. 282: *Our Lady of Limerick*, 2011 damage (Photo: Randel Hodkinson).
Fig. 283: Our Lady of Limerick, after re-installation following repairs, October 2011.
Fig. 284: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 285: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 286: *St. Patrick / Berchán*, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 287: Photo believed to show a reproduction figure made by Fr. Breen, circa 1929, of the figure of St. Patrick / St. Berchán figure.
Fig. 288: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author).

Fig. 289: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 290: *St. Dominic*, Priory of the Black Abbey, Kilkenny (Photo: author).
Fig. 291: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 292: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 293: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 294: *Multyfarnham St. Francis / St. Anthony*, National Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 295: *St. Francis / Anthony* shown brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard Walsh, as illustrated in Conlan’s book.
Fig. 296: *St. Clare* shown brought from Louvain to Wexford friary in 1826 by Father Richard Walsh, as illustrated in Conlan’s book.

Fig. 297: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 298: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 299: *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 300: St. Louis of Toulouse, Adam and Eve Franciscan Friary, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 301: Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 302: Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 303: Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, detail of base (Photo: author).
Fig. 304: *Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway* (Photo: author).

Fig. 305: *Madonna of the Rosary, Taylor’s Hill, Galway* (Photo: author).
Fig. 306: Seventeenth century chasuble, Dominican Nuns, Taylor’s Hill, Galway.

Fig. 307: Altar frontal by Sr. Margaret Joyce, dated May 1726, Taylor’s Hill, Galway.
Fig. 308: *Madonna of the Rosary*, Santa Caterina a Formiello, Naples, Italy.
Fig. 309: Guido Reni, *Immaculate Conception.*
Fig. 310: Nicola Grassi, *Rosary Mother of God with St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi*
Fig. 311: *Our Lady of Galway*, St. Mary’s on the Claddagh, Dominican Church, Galway
(Photo: author).
Fig. 312: Our Lady of Galway, St. Mary’s on the Claddagh, Dominican Church, Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 313: *Our Lady of Galway*, detail of base (Photo: author).

Fig. 314: Silver crown presented in 1683 by Galway Mayor John Kirwan and his wife, Mary.
Fig. 315: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 316: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 317: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Carmelite Monastery, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 318: *St. Anne Teaching the Virgin*, Colegio de las Hermanas de la Cruz, in Valverde del Camino, in Huelva, Spain
Fig. 319: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).

Fig. 320: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 321: *Marino Nursing Madonna*, national Museum of Ireland – Museum of Decorative Arts, Dublin (Photo: author).
Fig. 322: St. Andrew on the pediment above the main altar in the church of St. Andrea al Quirnale
Fig. 323: Raphael, *Madonna di Foligno*
Fig. 324: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Madonna and Child appearing before St. Philip Neri*
Fig. 325: Peeter Scheemaeker, *Virgin and Child in a bank of clouds*

Fig. 326: Angelica Kauffmann, *Cornelia presenting her children as her treasures*
Fig. 327: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author).
Fig. 328: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author).

Fig. 329: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author).
Fig. 330: Edward Smyth, *Navan Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Navan, Co. Meath (Photo: author).

Fig. 331: Edward Smyth, *C. Lucas, M.D.*, City Hall, Dublin (Photo: Patrick Lenehan).
Fig. 332: Edward Smyth, *Allegorical heads representing the rivers of Ireland*, Custom House, Dublin (Photo: Patrick Lenehan).
Fig. 333: *Small Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Storage (Photo: author).
Fig. 334: *Small Museum Pietà*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts, Storage (Photo: author).
Fig. 335: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 336: *Hodkinson St. James*, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 337: Hodkinson St. James, private ownership, Randel Hodkinson, Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 338: St. James Major, Sint-Pauluskerk in Antwerp, Belgium
Fig. 339: *St. James*, St. Virgil parish church in Rattenberg, Tyrol, Austria.
Fig. 340: Adare Deposition, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author).
Fig. 341: *Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill*, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 342: Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 343: Madonna and Child, Taylor’s Hill, Galway, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 344: *Adare Madonna and Child and Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 345: *Adare Madonna and Child*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick
(Photo: author).
Fig. 346: *Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)

Fig. 347: *Adare St. Joseph*, Adare Heritage Centre, Adare, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 348: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Figures*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 349: Kilcorban Crucifix, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 350: Crucified Christ from St. George’s Cathedral in Cologne, currently in the collection of the Schnütgen Museum, Cologne, Germany.
Fig. 351: *Mullagh Crucifix*, now lost, formerly in Mullagh, Co. Galway (Photo: Catriona MacLeod)
Fig. 352: *O’Donnell Crucifix*, St. Mary’s Church on Station Island, Lough Derg, Co. Donegal.
Fig. 353: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 354: *Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 355: Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 356: Kilcorban Crucifixion Madonna, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 357: *Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 358: Kilcorban St. John the Evangelist, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).

Fig. 359: Tynagh Crucifix, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 360: *Tynagh Crucifix*, Clonfert Diocesan Museum, Loughrea, Co. Galway (Photo: author).
Fig. 361: *Ballyhaunis Crucifix*, (Photo: Peter Harbison)
Fig. 362: *Tralee Crucifix*, Kerry County Museum, Tralee, Co. Kerry (Photo: Griffen Murray)
Fig. 363: *Fethard Madonna and Child*, National Museum of Ireland Storage

Fig. 364: *Fethard Madonna and Child*, National Museum of Ireland Storage
Fig. 365: Madonna and Child, Waterford Franciscan Friary (Photo: Catriona MacLeod)

Fig. 366: Madonna and Child, Waterford Franciscan Friary
Fig. 367: *St. Clare*, Temporary Loan to the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)

Fig. 368: *St. Clare*, Temporary Loan to the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 369: *Louvain St. Francis*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts
(Photo: author)

Fig. 370: *Louvain St. Francis*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts
(Photo: author)
Fig. 371: *Zurich Madonna*, Private ownership by Tim O’Neill, Sandymount, Dublin (Photo: Tim O’Neill)

Fig. 372: *Christ After the Scourge*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 373: *Small Madonna and Child*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)

Fig. 374: *Small Madonna and Child*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 375: *St. Anne, the Virgin and Child*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Fig. 376: St. Christopher, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 377: *St. Christopher*, Master of Elsloo, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Fig. 378: *French Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland (Photo: author)

Fig. 379: *French Madonna*, detail of Child’s foot pressing through fabric (Photo: author)
Fig. 380: *Mourning Figure*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)

Fig. 381: *Mourning Figure*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 382: *St. Catherine*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)

Fig. 383: *St. Catherine*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 384: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author).

Fig. 385: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author).
Fig. 386: *Spanish Madonna*, National Museum of Ireland (Photo: author)
Fig. 387: *Four Evangelists*, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)

Fig. 388: *Unidentified Bishop*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 389: *St. Barbara*, Storage, National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Decorative Arts (Photo: author)
Fig. 390: *Hunt Madonna*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 391: *Madonna and Child*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 392: *Madonna and Child*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)

Fig. 393: *Crucified Christ*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 394: *Bust of a Female Saint*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)

Fig. 395: *Balthazar*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 396: *Balthazar*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 397: Balthazar (incorrectly identified in online files as Caspar), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the collection of John Hunt.
Fig. 398: *Caspar* (incorrectly identified as Balthazar in online files), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the collection of John Hunt.
Fig. 399: *Melchior*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchased from the collection of John Hunt.
Fig. 400: *St. Anne, the Virgin and Christ*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 401: *St. John the Evangelist*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)

Fig. 402: *Christ emerging from a Chalice*, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: Hunt Museum)
Fig. 403: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)

Fig. 404: *Immaculate Conception*, Storage, Hunt Museum, Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 405: *St. George and the Dragon*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 406: *St. Martin of Tours*, Bunratty castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 407: *St. Anne, the Virgin and Child*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: Bunratty Castle)
Fig. 408: *St. Catherine*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: Bunratty Castle)

Fig. 409: *Crucified Christ*, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 410: **Priest**, Bunratty Castle, Co. Limerick (Photo: author)
Fig. 411: *Lettershendony Madonna*, discovered at Lettershendony, Co. Londonderry, now lost.
Fig. 412: *St. Maulríán*, lost figure, formerly at Crossabeg, Co. Wexford
Fig. 413: St. Mo Cheallóg / St. Martin, lost figure, formerly located at St. Kieran’s College, Kilkenny
Fig. 414: *Mullagh Crucifix*, lost figure, formerly at Mullagh, Co. Galway
Fig. 415: *Thomastown Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at a convent in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny
Fig. 416: *Loughrea Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at Loughrea, Co. Galway
Fig. 417: *St. Clare*, lost figure, formerly at Poor Clares Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway.
Fig. 418: *Infant Christ*, lost figure, formerly at Poor Clares Convent, Nun’s Island, Galway.
Fig. 419: *Hone Christ / St. John*, lost figure, formerly in the private possession of artist Evie Hone, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.
Fig. 420: *Maynooth Penal Madonna*, lost figure, formerly at the National Science Museum at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
Fig. 421: *Bruff Madonna*, lost figure, formerly in private possession, Bruff, Co. Limerick
Fig. 422: Lost figure of St. Patrick, formerly located in St. Patrick’s Church, Kilkenny
Fig. 423: *St. Brendan*, lost figure, formerly located at Inis Glora, Aran Islands
I was awarded a B.A. in Art History with a minor in studio arts in December 2001, and went on to study for a Master of Letters in art history at Trinity College, University of Dublin. There, I received both the *Trinity College Postgraduate Award* and the *Trinity College Postgraduate Studentship Award*. I served on the editorial committee for *The College Green*, and was also an active member of the Philosophical Society. I received an MLitt in January 2005 following the acceptance of my master’s thesis, “Late Medieval Irish Wooden Figure Sculpture.”

While studying for a PhD in art history at Penn State, I pursued concentrations in Medieval, Northern Renaissance, and West African Traditional arts. I received the *Graham Fellowship*, was twice awarded the *Department of Art History Dissertation Fellowship*, several travel-grants, the *College of Arts and Architecture Creative Achievement Award*, and was nominated for the *Harold F. Martin Graduate Assistant Outstanding Teaching Award*. In 2008, I received a postgraduate scholarship from the U.S. National Committee for the History of Art to attend the 32\textsuperscript{nd} congress of the *Comité International d’Histoire de l’Art* in Melbourne, Australia. I have been fortunate to have several opportunities to work as an independent instructor for both the art history department and the Department of Continuing Education at Penn State. I served as the summer undergraduate academic advisor for the art history department in 2006 and 2008, and as the art history graduate officer from 2005-2007. I have presented my work at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York and at the Cleveland Symposium. I have recently completed an essay entitled: “Widening the canons of Irish figure sculpture, devotional sculpture and its historiographical context,” which will appear during the summer of 2013 in a centenary retrospective of Arthur Gardner and Edward Prior’s influence on the historiography of English figure sculpture, edited by Phillip Lindley and published by Shaun Tyas.