

## *The Wooded Isle: Trees, Inheritance, and Estates in Irish Writing*

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*The Wooded Isle* investigates the ways in which Irish writers shaped and engaged with the memory of one of the island's particular environmental transformations, namely the country's deforestation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Focusing on cultural perceptions, trees and woods can be seen to offer a rich narrative potential for competing views on colonial exploitation and environmental stewardship, with interlacing concerns of nature, land, history, and memory. By drawing on new archival sources, this book brings into dialogue literary texts (poems, novels, travel writing, journalism, memoir) with natural histories, historiography, agricultural and improvement treaties, as well as governmental documents and cartographic sources, in order to understand the complexity of the Irish ecological imagination.

A fusion of literary and environmental history, this book traces how trees and woodland served as a nexus for debates about inheritances, dispossession, and ownership. It does so by taking account of the complex questions and issues these literary representations raised: within the context of colonialism (via narratives of colonial extraction versus conservative environmental stewardship); the competing conceptualization of arboreal landscapes that ensued (nationality, aesthetics, economics, class identity, conservationism); and the consequent politicization of sylvan culture and horticultural pursuits across genres. Mapping the fluid ways in which narratives of environmental decline and progress (and decline again) chimed with colonialism, and the rise and fall of the landed class, *The Wooded Isle* offers new insights on canonical authors such as Edmund Spenser, Jonathan Swift, Maria Edgeworth, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Elizabeth Bowen, and W.B. Yeats as well as bringing to the fore lesser known writers and texts.

The recovery of a literary preoccupation with Irish woods and trees is of literary, historical, and cultural relevance and also opens out to an understanding of the genealogy of our contemporary ecological concerns. *The Wooded Isle* unlocks a new area of scholarship not simply by examining a previously under-researched dimension of Irish literature of any period but by contributing to recent developments in the environmental humanities. As my book is concerned with cultural responses to the transhistorical transformations of an Irish arboreal environment within the context of colonialism, the interdisciplinary research environment at the Rachel Carson Center, with its focus on "Transformations in Environment and Society," makes LMU Munich the optimal home for completion of this project.