



'Carrying it on her shoulder, like an Irish-woman': early modern English traveller perceptions of women in Ireland, America, and Africa, 1555–1745

Sergio Lussana

To cite this article: Sergio Lussana (12 Aug 2024): 'Carrying it on her shoulder, like an Irish-woman': early modern English traveller perceptions of women in Ireland, America, and Africa, 1555–1745, *Women's History Review*, DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2024.2390714](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2024.2390714)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2024.2390714>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 12 Aug 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

'Carrying it on her shoulder, like an Irish-woman': early modern English traveller perceptions of women in Ireland, America, and Africa, 1555–1745

Sergio Lussana 

Department of Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, UK

ABSTRACT

This article compares how early modern English travel accounts to Ireland, America, and Africa portrayed native women. It examines gendered tropes that reoccurred in all these writings, such as ease of childbirth, breast size, and breastfeeding over the shoulder. It argues that many of these tropes that helped shape the racialised thinking of indigenous people in America and Africa first appeared in English-written travel accounts to Ireland. In some examples, English travel writers in America and Africa made direct comparisons to Irish women. Accordingly, the article demonstrates that Ireland is significant for the study of early modern English imperialism. Perceptions of gender were central in formulating English racial perceptions of the Other in the New World, but there was nothing unique about these tropes. In other words, there was nothing particularly 'African' about English perceptions of African women. English imperialists perceived Native American, African, and Irish women through the same lens. The article shows that early modern notions of racial difference were constructed less on overt characteristics particular to a geographical zone of contact—for example, the skin colour of Africans—and more on certain transferable gendered tropes that framed perceptions of native women across all three continents.

KEYWORDS

Early modern history; gender; race; travel; women; Africa; America; Ireland

Article

In 1665, an anonymous English travel account to West Africa was published in London, entitled *The Golden Coast, or a Description of Guinney*. The account described several journeys from England to West Africa, as well as reporting on the climate, geography, commodities, and people encountered. In chapter nine, headed 'how they live together in Guinney', the author commented that the women carried their children on their shoulders, 'like an Irish-woman'.¹ The anonymous author was not the only English observer of African women who made comparisons to the Irish. Richard Jobson, in his travel account to the River Gambia, published in 1623, compared the Fulbe

CONTACT Sergio Lussana  sergio.lussana@ntu.ac.uk

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

women to Irish women, commenting that they had a 'cleanliness your Irish women hath no acquaintance'.² By comparing African women to Irish women, these travellers' perceptions of Africa were informed by prior contact with the Irish. Furthermore, male travellers to Africa fixated on indigenous female bodies to construct notions of difference between the English and the people they encountered. Perceptions of people, then, did not develop in cultural isolation and were framed by gender.

Historians have emphasised, to varying degrees over the years, how English encounters with the Irish informed the ideology of the colonisation of America, framing perceptions of Native Americans. Eighty years ago, Howard Mumford Jones argued that the 'English experience with one wild race conditioned their expectation of experience with another'.³ James Muldoon subsequently wrote that by the time the English settled North America, they used the Irish as a 'stereotype of primitive and barbarous society'.⁴ David Beers Quinn and Nicholas Canny have received much credit for developing this historiography. Canny, for example, examined English ideology during the conquest of Ireland and emphasised how frequently writers compared Irish Gaelic ways with Native Americans. He claimed that events in Ireland in 1565–76 informed subsequent English colonial enterprises, and that for those involved in the colonisation of Ireland and who later travelled to the Americas, 'their years in Ireland were years of apprenticeship'.⁵

Since Canny's work first appeared in the 1970s, historians have continued to conceptualise Ireland as a 'testing-ground of empire'.⁶ Indeed, the phrases employed by historians to describe how the Irish experience informed subsequent colonisation in the British Empire have been remarkably similar. For example, William O'Reilly has argued that strategies of colonialism and engaging with indigenous people were 'tried and tested in Ireland' and later applied to the Americas.⁷ Joyce Chaplin has argued that a 'pattern' for military conquest was first set in Ireland.⁸ Gerard Farrell has described Ireland as a 'convenient point of reference' in America.⁹ Others have argued that Ireland provided a 'template' or 'training' for future colonial expansion in America.¹⁰ It was a 'laboratory' or an 'introduction' to the ideologies and strategies of British imperialists for centuries.¹¹

Some historians have downplayed connections between the English colonisation of Ireland and America. Hiram Morgan, for example, attacked the idea of Ireland being seen as 'an English stepping-stone to North America', emphasising that Ireland was a kingdom with a single monarch who lived in the dominant realm ruling over a range of provinces. He argued that the Irish were treated as full subjects during the early modern period, and that initially the Tudors sought to reform Ireland, not to conquer it.¹² Audrey Horning argued that Ireland and North America were different places and different colonial enterprises, each the creation of unique economic, social, political, and religious circumstances. For example, language and religion were less of an obstacle in Ireland than in America.¹³

However, as Andrew Hadfield has stated, the different circumstances of colonisation did not mean that Native Americans and the Irish were therefore envisaged differently. As the English encountered unfamiliar people, they inevitably made comparisons.¹⁴ Expansion in Ireland and America constituted part of a westward enterprise, whereby the English regarded the native people they encountered as people in need of colonisation and civilisation.¹⁵ There were important differences, but there 'obviously was a

relationship between the two'.¹⁶ Indeed, in 2023, Jane Ohlmeyer maintained that Ireland is still significant for the wider study of British imperialism because distinct 'ethnocentric ideas' that developed in Ireland subsequently characterised the development of British colonial encounters in other colonies, 'in spite of very real differences in contexts, cultures, and circumstances'.¹⁷

Ohlmeyer also extended her geographical analysis to consider the effects of the English colonisation of Ireland on colonies other than America, such as India. This was noteworthy because if historians have acknowledged how English cultural encounters with the Irish helped inform perceptions of indigenous people in America, they have been less willing to consider other travel writing: for example, accounts from Africa. This is unfortunate because some English travellers to Africa, like Richard Jobson, compared the women, music, burial practices, weapons, and courting rituals of Africans with the Irish.¹⁸ It is likely that Jobson lived in Ireland, and his experience there informed his perceptions of the native people he encountered in Africa.¹⁹

Historians have not yet undertaken a comparative study of English traveller accounts to Ireland, America, and Africa to assess how the English constructed perceptions of the Other in the early modern period. Some have identified the potential of such a comparative study, but they have not followed through with a sustained investigation.²⁰ Perceptions of people do not develop in cultural isolation. Often, observations are informed by individual and collective preconceptions that draw on a society's 'prior contact with similar beings or prior assumptions about people of other cultural groups'.²¹ This can take place over time so that older tropes can re-emerge later in response to different people and locations. This article, then, examines the links between English perceptions of the Irish, Native Americans, and Africans to improve our understanding of the origins of racial thinking in an imperial context. It does so through the lens of gender.

Perceptions of gender characterised early modern European observations of indigenous people around the world. Postcolonial scholars have long emphasised the centrality of gender and sexuality in shaping European imperialism, colonisation, and constructions of race.²² Jennifer Morgan, for example, has examined how white European male traveller perceptions of African women helped inform constructions of racialised difference in the early modern period. European male travellers remarked on the physique of African women: on their nakedness, the shape and size of their breasts, and their beauty and ugliness. They also commented on their sexuality, childbearing, and childrearing practices. In this way, European writers identified African women as culturally inferior and created markers of racial difference.²³

However, these perceptions of indigenous women were not exclusive to early modern travel accounts of America and Africa: they were articulated during and even before the colonisation of America, most notably in late sixteenth and seventeenth-century travel accounts to Ireland. Interestingly, one of the most distinguishing tropes that Morgan discusses—the image of an African woman suckling a child over her shoulder—which she argued 'creat[ed] an image that could symbolize the continent [of Africa]', can be found in English accounts of Ireland.²⁴ To examine how gender and race worked together to construct the Other in the early modern Atlantic world, it is crucial to consider the transferability of such tropes among three continents: Europe, America, and Africa. To explore the origins of English racial thinking, one must start in Ireland.

This article compares how early modern English travel accounts to Ireland, America, and Africa portrayed native women. It examines gendered tropes that reoccurred in all these writings, such as ease of childbirth, breast size, and breastfeeding over the shoulder. It argues that many of these tropes that helped shape the racialised thinking of indigenous people in America and Africa first appeared in English-written travel accounts to Ireland. In some examples, English travel writers in America and Africa made direct comparisons to Irish women. Accordingly, the article demonstrates that Ireland is significant for the study of early modern English imperialism. Perceptions of gender were central in formulating English racial perceptions of the Other in the New World, but there was nothing unique about these tropes. In other words, there was nothing particularly ‘African’ about English perceptions of African women. English imperialists perceived Native American, African, and Irish women through the same lens. The article shows that early modern notions of racial difference were constructed less on overt characteristics particular to a geographical zone of contact—for example, the skin colour of Africans—and more on certain transferable gendered tropes that framed perceptions of native women across all three continents. The article identifies, examines, and compares a variety of these gendered tropes, arguing that perceptions of indigenous women helped rationalise imperialism and fashion early constructions of race across time and place in the early modern period—a time when there was no clear and unified racial ideology.

This article draws upon a range of early modern English travel accounts to Ireland, America, and Ireland. These accounts originated in different contexts and were written by settlers, travellers, and soldiers from disparate viewpoints to record and inform, entertain, as well as to secure funding for further expeditions overseas. They do not, therefore, provide a clear-cut authoritative statement of early modern English thought. However, they are valuable because they chart early modern English conversations about human difference as they expanded overseas and encountered Irish, Native Americans and Africans for the first time. Most of these travel accounts are from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This period is examined because it was a pivotal time for English imperialism. Efforts to colonise Ireland preceded and overlapped the colonisation of America and the English exploration of West Africa. Ireland had been ruled as a lordship by the English monarchy after the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in the late twelfth century. English control over Ireland, however, was weak and mostly limited to the Irish Pale—the area around Dublin. In 1541, Henry VIII assumed the title King of Ireland, signalling the renewal of English efforts to consolidate power over the Gaelic Irish, and for the rest of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the English confiscated Irish lands and encouraged British settlements. English efforts to colonise North America began in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1585, the first English settlement in North America, the Roanoke colony, was set up in present day North Carolina but soon abandoned. In 1607, the first permanent settlement was established in Jamestown, Virginia, and from 1620–1640 significant numbers of Puritans migrated to New England. Until 1598, most English contact with Africa was with Guinea, and until the 1640s, apart from the Hawkins voyages (1562–9), the English did not generally participate in the transatlantic slave trade. However, after the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, England became increasingly involved in the slave trade, establishing the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa in 1660, which was succeeded by the Royal African Company in 1672.

Labour

English travellers frequently commented on the gendered division of labour of indigenous people in America, Africa, and Ireland. In Ireland, travellers had been commenting on labour arrangements to ascribe racial difference since the medieval period. They viewed labour arrangements such as transhumance as an indicator of barbarism, considering it unmasculine as it demonstrated lack of dominance and ownership over the land.²⁵ As early as 1188, Gerald of Wales commented that the Irish had not 'not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life', the men leading 'the same life as their fathers did in the woods and open pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits or learn anything new'.²⁶ Four hundred years later, English poet Edmund Spenser, who had settled in Ireland in 1580, noted that the Irish were still living with their cattle in 'boolies' while they pastured in the mountains, afterwards moving to fresh land, thereby growing more 'barbarous' than those who lived in towns.²⁷ The labour performed by Irish women also attracted attention of English travellers. Commentators emphasised the nakedness of women as they laboured, simultaneously eroticising and animalising their subjects. While in Cork, Fynes Moryson, who published his *An Itinerary* in 1617, claimed to have seen 'young maids, stark naked, grinding of corn with certain stones to make cakes thereof, and striking off into the tub of meal such reliques thereof as stuck on their belly, thighs, and more unseemly parts'.²⁸ In northern Ireland, Barnabe Rich reported in 1610 seeing a woman sitting with a mustard quern between her bare thighs grinding oatmeal.²⁹ Thomas Gainsford also reported in 1618 that Irish 'calliots and drudges' made oats while 'very naked, and beastly sitting on the ground, with the mill like our mustard quernes between their legs'.³⁰

In similar ways, English travellers to America detailed the gendered division of labour of Native Americans to highlight the cultural differences between them. The English criticised the men for living easy lives compared to the women, who did the bulk of the agricultural work and other chores. In Virginia, George Percy remarked that the native women performed all the 'drugerie', while the men hunted and waged war.³¹ Later, both John Smith and William Strachey commented that the native men of Virginia hunted, fished and waged war and refused to undertake any 'effeminate labour', which was 'the cause that the women be very painfull and the men often idle'.³² In New England, too, writers observed that the men only fished and hunted and, for the most part, 'live idly' while the women lived a 'most slavish life' doing all the agricultural work while performing childcare duties.³³ The burdens of native women were 'incredible', exclaimed Roger Williams, remarking that they 'take as much paines as any people in the world'.³⁴ William Wood addressed his female readers directly, hoping that that the arduous life of indigenous women would enable English women to 'see their owne happinesse'. Native women were reportedly 'miserable' after witnessing the better English treatment of women, some venturing to English settlements to complain about their ordeals to English women.³⁵ These perceptions of the gendered division of native labour helped Englishmen inscribe racial differences and justify colonisation on the basis that the English held more enlightened views on women than the natives. The English regarded the exploitation of native women as an indicator of barbarism and, in turn, helped reaffirm existing gendered hierarchies in English society.³⁶

English travellers to Africa also noted the work performed by women, making similar observations to travellers in North America and Ireland. Richard Jobson described how women milled and washed all the grains, such as rice, which was 'very painfull' work. Women then had to cook and serve the food to the men, among whom they were not invited to sit with. Such scenes caused Jobson to remark, 'There is no woman can be under more servitude'. Jobson compared the African women he observed to Irish women, commenting that 'Irish calios' [old women] 'had great resemblance' to the Guineans in the herding of their cattle.³⁷ Jobson's account echoed the observations of travellers in New England who noted the arduous labour of native women. Later English accounts from the eighteenth century also commented on the lazy disposition of African men, who 'make their Wives do all Manner of Work for them'.³⁸ English travellers across all three continents fixated on the gendered division of labour of native people to indicate barbarism and ascribe notions of human difference.

Nakedness

The nakedness of indigenous women was another recurring trope in English travel narratives. Depictions of nakedness were not unique to North American or African accounts. In a tradition dating back to the medieval period, English travellers described the Gaelic Irish as being scantily clad and naked. Gerald of Wales, for example, remarked that the Irish went into battle naked and unarmed.³⁹ By the early modern period, Edmund Spenser commented that Irish rebels were 'commonly' naked.⁴⁰ Fynes Moryson remarked how the Irish 'wander slovenly and naked'. In the remoter parts of Ireland, men and women roamed naked 'onely having their privy parts covered with a ragge of linnen, and their bodies with a loose mantel, so as it would turne a man's stomacke to see an old woman in the morning before breakfast'. Here, Moryson employs the image of the grotesque female body to emphasise the savageness of the Irish. Moryson also relayed a story told to him by a baron who visited a lord of the house of Ocane. The baron was met at the door by 'sixteene women, all naked, excepting their loose mantles; whereof eight or ten were very faire, and two seemed very Nimphs'. Moryson described how the baron was led to a fire by the women, who then sat crossed-legged 'as could not but offend chast eyes'.⁴¹ Another writer argued that Irish men and women lived like Adam and Eve before the fall, 'not a Rag to cover them, but themselves: Which may be one reason why they so multiply'.⁴²

Similar accounts of nakedness later appear in North American travel accounts. Roger Williams referred to the natives of New England as sons and daughters of Eve, owing to their nakedness.⁴³ Sometimes, direct comparisons were made with the Irish. For example, Gabriel Archer commented that native people came aboard his ship 'all naked' except for some loose deer skins around their shoulders and seal skins tied to their waists like 'Irish Dimmie Trousers'.⁴⁴ One of the first men to set foot in New England in 1602, John Breerton, commented that the natives were 'all naked' except for a hide, much like a blacksmith's apron, that covered their genitals.⁴⁵ John Smith remarked that the natives of Virginia 'have scarce to cover their nakednesse, but with grasse, the leaves of trees, or such like'. The women, though, 'are alwayes covered about their middles with a skin, and very shamefast to be scene bare'.⁴⁶

Nearly every English travel account to Africa described the nakedness of Africans. In some regions, Africans went about 'all naked'.⁴⁷ James Welsh commented that men and women went naked until they were married, and then they covered themselves from the middle down to the knees.⁴⁸ Others, too, reported that Africans went around partially naked, with some covering their bodies from their waist down with cloth, and others wearing a small covering over their genitalia.⁴⁹ In early modern Ireland, Africa, and America, then, English travellers similarly fixated upon nakedness as an indicator of cultural difference.

Clothing

If English travellers emphasised the nakedness of the native people to denote boundaries of race, they also commented on clothing, which was considered an essential difference between native savagery and English civility. Travellers in America commented on the clothing worn by Native Americans and likened them to Irish clothing. The clothing of West African women, however, was different to Irish or Native American clothing. English travellers to Africa reported that because of the heat, women wore few clothes. Richard Jobson described how the women wore loose cotton skirts of blue and white but remained bare from the waist upward. The women had another cloth that they were able to throw upon their shoulders, and most of them, according to Jobson, were very reluctant to expose their private parts. Jobson looked down on the non-Mandinka from the Tinda region as 'a more savage kinde of people', who wore animal skins instead of cotton.⁵⁰ Jobson, therefore, associated cotton with refinement.

A key preoccupation of some Englishmen in Ireland was the Irish mantle. Edmund Spenser loathed the Irish mantle, arguing for its ban, condemning it for being a 'fit house for an out-law, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloke for a theife'. The mantle also disguised men who could be readily armed. Spenser concluded that the Irish mantle was thus 'for a bad man', but he also emphasised that it was for a 'bad huswife'. He equated the mantle with prostitution, arguing that it enabled vagrant Irishwomen in the Summer to wear only a 'smock and mantle to be more ready for her light services'. During Winter, the mantle served as 'a coverlet for her lewde exercise', enabling these women to conceal illegitimate pregnancies as well as serving as swaddling clothes.⁵¹ For Spenser, Irishwomen who wore the mantle transgressed accepted gender roles and challenged the social order. John Speed included illustrations of the Irish wearing mantles on his map of Ireland from *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (1611) [Figure 1](#). 'Wilde Irish man' and 'Wilde Irish Woman' represent the uncivilised, racial Other. Scholars have remarked that Speed's illustrations of the Gaelic Irish bore more resemblance to Native Americans than their English overlords, the images highlighting the similarities among uncivilised people regardless of their skin colour.⁵²

Indeed, many English in America made explicit comparisons between Native American and Irish clothing. Some natives, they reported, wore breeches and stockings made of deer and seal skin that resembled Irish trousers.⁵³ Furthermore, observers such as Captain John Smith, William Wood, William Strachey, and Martin Pring commented on how the deer and bear skin cloaks worn by Native Americans resembled Irish mantles.⁵⁴ They also drew attention to the women who wore these mantles. However, unlike the Irish women of Spenser's account, Native American women and their



Figure 1. 'Wilde Irish', from John Speed, *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain* (London: John Sudbury & George Humble, 1611), between 137 and 138.

mantles were regarded more positively, modestly, and as less of a risk to the social order. This was most likely because the Irish, as northern Europeans, resembled the English, unlike Native Americans, and so there was more urgency to differentiate the Irish from the English based on their clothing.⁵⁵ Strachey, for example, remarked that the mantles of native Virginian women were 'very handsome'.⁵⁶ Other observers commented that the mantles of indigenous women covered them up sufficiently and secured their modesty.⁵⁷ Clothing, therefore, regardless of the geographical location, was regarded as a key marker of human difference by English travellers. In North America, Ireland served as a common cultural reference point.

Beauty

English travellers commented on the beauty and ugliness of the native people they encountered, often focusing attention on the women. In assessing and judging the beauty of native women, they constructed markers of difference that simultaneously eroticised and vilified the Other. Travellers to America and Africa commented on the same aesthetic features identified previously by travellers to Ireland. Early English traveller accounts to Ireland were quite positive. Luke Gernon stated that Irish women were 'very comely creatures, tall, slender and upright. Of complexion very fayre & cleare-skinnd (but freckled)'.⁵⁸ Edmund Campion noted that the Irish women were 'well favoured, cleare coloured, faire handed, bigge and large, suffered from their infancie to grow at will, nothing curious of their feature and proportion of body'.⁵⁹ Women were also portrayed as beautiful, sexualised figures. John Derricke, in *The Image of Ireland* (1581), called Irish women 'wood nymphs'. Imagining Irish women bathing, he stated the scene would 'revive a mann half dedde'.⁶⁰

An anonymous account from 1692 was more negative, declaring that Irish women were 'very little beholding to Nature for their Beauty'. According to the account, Irish women used no make-up and had dirty faces and dark complexions because of constant indoor smoke and the lack of a hat. As a result, men 'need not fear much temptation'; such faces were 'a refrigerator 'gainst the flames of Lust'.⁶¹ Such a shift in perception was probably the result of the changing circumstances of the English colonisation of Ireland. After the Irish rebellions in the mid-seventeenth century, attitudes towards the Irish grew increasingly negative. Hopes that the Irish could be civilised by the English gave way to the view that they were unreformable and inherently barbaric.⁶² This most likely resulted in more derogatory depictions of Irish women, associating them with ugliness.

Like the travel accounts to Ireland, early English travel accounts to America commented on the beauty of the natives, describing them as 'generally tall and straight, of a comely proportion'.⁶³ English writers praised their 'shape of bodie and lovely favour', their 'perfect constitution of body'.⁶⁴ William Wood marvelled at the strength and health of the New England natives, remarking that they acquired wrinkles and grey hair only after their fiftieth birthday.⁶⁵ William Strachey compared the natives of Virginia to blacks, stating that none of their facial features were 'so unsightly as the Moores', and that they were tall, straight, and of 'comely proportion'. He also praised the women, who had 'handsome lymbes, sclender armes, and pretty hands'.⁶⁶ Others described Native American women as 'very well favored in proportion of countenance'.⁶⁷ Younger

women were described as ‘very comely, having good features, their faces plump and round, and generally plump of their Bodies’.⁶⁸

English perceptions of African beauty were often complex and contradictory before the rapid development and English domination of the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. English perceptions of Africans until 1650 were not consistently negative, as the English saw Africans as trading partners rather than slaves.⁶⁹ English accounts of Africans, like those of the Irish and Native Americans, commented on their strong bodies. Richard Jobson stated that the Fulbe women were ‘streight, upright, and excellently well bodied, having very good features, with a long blacke haire, much more loose then the black women have’. He declared that they were cleaner than Irish women.⁷⁰ John Ogilby, commenting on all Africans, said ‘The Natives are very black but with the Features of their Faces, and their excellent Teeth, being white as Ivory, make up together a handsom Ayre, and taking comeliness of a new Beauty’.⁷¹ Richard Ligon left England in 1647 to begin a new life as an owner of a sugar plantation in Barbados. A decade after his voyage, he recalled the women he met in the Cape Verde Islands, before travelling to Barbados. One of them, he remarked, was ‘A Negro of the greatest beautie and majestie together that ever I saw in one woman’. Her stature was ‘large’, and she was ‘excellently shap’t, well favour’d, full, eye’d, & admirably grac’t’. Ligon also praised the beauty of other African women, commenting that there were two women among a pretty group of virgins whose shapes would have puzzled Albert Durer, the German Renaissance painter, and Titian, the Italian painter, for they were aesthetically stunning.⁷²

Breasts and breastfeeding

Later, as a plantation owner, and having observed enslaved African bodies in Barbados, Ligon was less complimentary, remarking that African women were less symmetrical than men according to the rules of Albert Durer and were therefore ‘faulty’. Ligon further commented on the enslaved women of Barbados, describing their size and shape of their breasts. Younger women had ‘very large breasts, which stand strutting out so hard and firm, as no leaping, jumping, or stirring, will cause them to shake’.⁷³ The breasts of older women, though, ‘hang down below their navells, so that when they stoop at their common work of weeding, they hang almost down to the ground, that at a distance, you would think they had six legs’. As historian Stephanie Camp has stated, Ligon’s monstrous perception of enslaved African women in Barbados must have been influenced by the debasement of Africans he witnessed. Indeed, as England became further involved with the slave trade and slavery from the mid-seventeenth century, perceptions of Africans grew consistently negative.⁷⁴

Like Ligon, other English travellers to Africa commented on the size and shape of women’s breasts. William Towerson employed an animalistic simile, stating that the breasts of African women were ‘foule and long, hanging downe low like the udder of a goat’. Some women, remarked Towerson, had such long breasts that they lay them on the ground and lay down by them.⁷⁵ Writers like Ligon and Towerson drew on a tradition of depicting other races as monstrous—the medieval text *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* is a notable example—focussing on parts of the body to emphasise racial difference. Writers at this time used women’s breast shape and size to denote racial difference. In the mid-seventeenth century, John Bulwer discussed the different

size and shape of breasts of women from around the world, arguing that the monstrous shapes and modification of breasts from around the world contrasted markedly to the natural order and English civility.⁷⁶

Travellers to North America and Ireland commented on the breasts of native women. Captain John Smith and William Wood remarked that the native women of Virginia and New England had their breasts, as well as other parts of their bodies, tattooed with images of vegetation and animals.⁷⁷ Additionally, English writers in Ireland remarked that Irish women had big breasts. An account published towards the end of the seventeenth century claimed that the breasts of Irish women were the same size as their buttocks.⁷⁸ Fynes Moryson remarked that all Irish people had large bodies because they grew up in loose clothing. Women, owing to their lack of corsets, had 'very great duggs'.⁷⁹

According to Moryson, some Irish women had such large breasts that they could breast-feed their children over their shoulders.⁸⁰ William Lithgow, in his travel account from Ireland, recalled that he saw women carrying infants around their necks 'and laying the dugges over their shoulders, would give sucke to the Babes behind their backs, without taking them in their armes'. Lithgow also associated the breasts of Irish women with the image of profit and slavery, suggesting that they, being half a yard long and like tough leather, could 'be made money bags for East or West-Indian Merchants'.⁸¹ Bulwer referenced Lithgow's narrative in his *A View of the People of the Whole World* and also provided an illustration of this scene of Irish breastfeeding [Figure 2](#).⁸²



Figure 2. 'Irish Woman Breastfeeding Child over her Shoulder', from John Bulwer, *A View of the People of the Whole World* (London: William Hunt, 1654), 312.

Lithgow visited Ireland from 1619–1620, before the English established sugar colonies in Barbados. His observations are important. It is the first English-written account of monstrous breasts and unorthodox breastfeeding associated with forced reproductive labour, published in 1632, before England grew increasingly involved in African slavery in the Americas. Moreover, his testimony and the evidence from Moryson's 1617 account demonstrate that this trope was first framed in English-written travel accounts to Ireland. Ireland helped frame and shape English racialised perceptions of indigenous women in the Americas and Africa. The image of the woman breastfeeding her child over her shoulder, typically as she laboured in the field, first appeared in English in early modern travel accounts to Ireland and was then recycled by subsequent English colonists, like Ligon in Barbados, to promote slavery and the colonisation of the Americas by the mid-seventeenth century.

Indeed, later English travel accounts to Africa reported that African women had such big breasts, 'that they can fling them over their Shoulders, and give their Children Suck that hang at their backs'.⁸³ John Atkins reported that the breasts of African women were 'always pendulous' and stretched to 'so unseemly a Length and Bigness' that some 'could suckle over their Shoulders'.⁸⁴ Bulwer also commented on how Africans and Native Americans breastfed their children over their shoulder; the practice a clear violation of the 'intention of Nature', distinguishing uncivilised races from the English.⁸⁵ Some English travellers to Africa made direct references to the Irish, such as the anonymous account from Guinea, remarking that women who gave birth, after a day or two, carried the child on their shoulders 'like an Irish-woman' [Figure 3](#).⁸⁶

Childbearing

English travellers to Ireland, America, and Africa remarked on the ease with which native women gave birth. Joyce Chaplin has noted that English observers ascribed easy childbirth to many different races. She argued that this was because most English travellers, as men of high status, would have been unfamiliar with native midwifery and unlikely to witness the birth of children among common native people. By not seeing the suffering of these women, they presumed it did not exist. This helped to create an image of female endurance that crossed cultural lines.⁸⁷ Historians have also argued that in the early modern period, giving birth was so characterised by pain and suffering, that the absence of pain indicated witchcraft.⁸⁸ They have noted how in early modern travel accounts pain-free labour became a distinguishing feature of Africans, indicating their suitability for slavery and helping to demarcate racial boundaries.⁸⁹

However, writers observed easy childbirth in Ireland prior to the colonisation of the Americas and exploration of West Africa. Indeed, the patterns of painless childbirth seen in travel accounts to America and Africa first appeared in medieval travel writing to Ireland. Gerald of Wales, writing in the twelfth century, noted that Irish midwives used few aids to assist birth, instead relying on 'nature alone' so that a woman 'gave birth just as she pleases'.⁹⁰ By the seventeenth century, the theme was quite common in English travel accounts to Ireland. Many observations were recorded in accounts to Ireland that predate similar observations in America. Fynes Moryson's 1617 account stated that Irish women had easy and painless delivery of children with no need of a lying-in period. He relayed the story of the wife of a soldier who gave birth in an

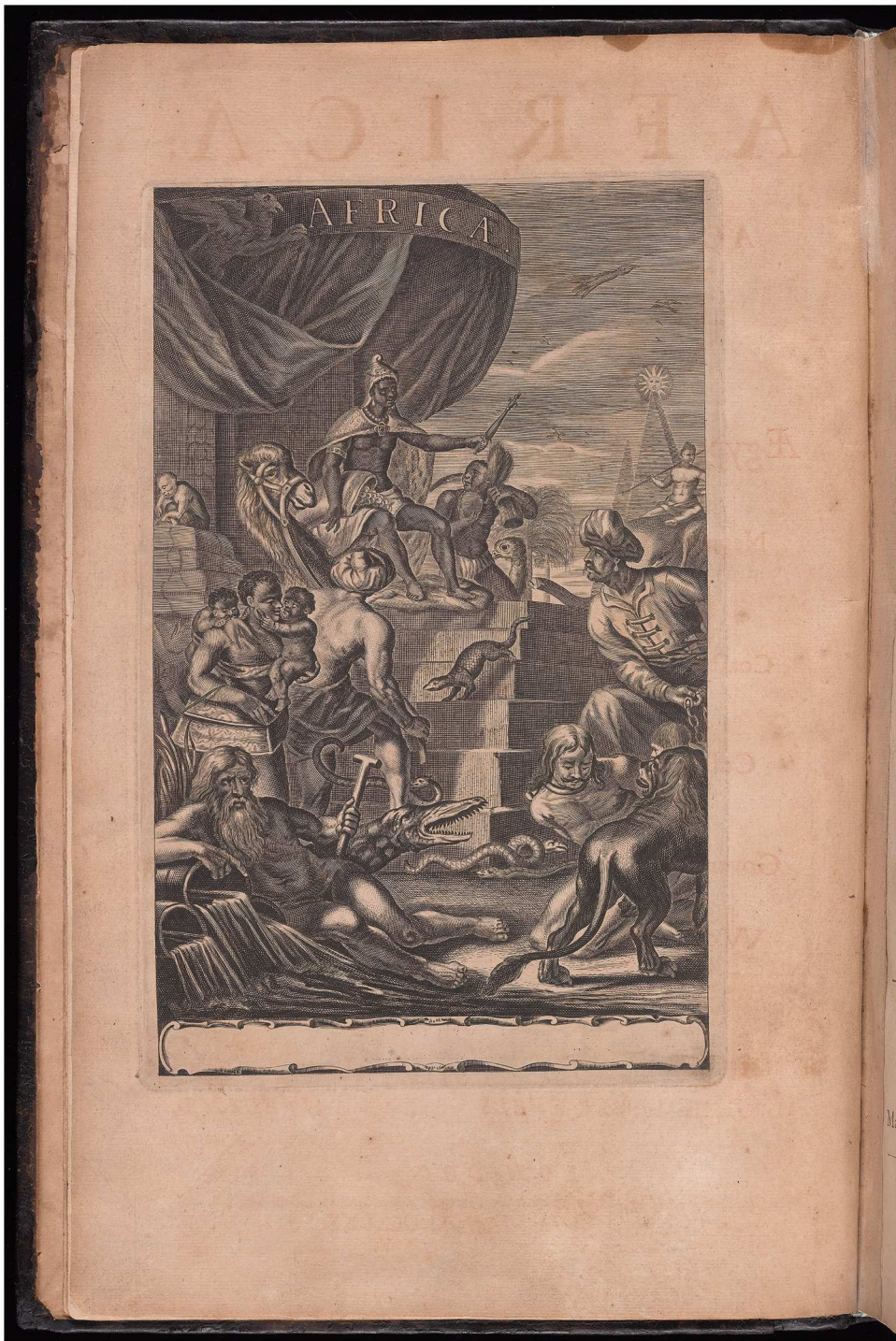


Figure 3. Frontispiece of John Ogilby, *Africa: Being an Accurate Description of the Regions of Egypt, Barbary, Lybia, and Billedulgerid, the Land of Negroes, Guinee, Ethiopia and the Abyssines* (London: Author, 1670).

army camp and within a few hours after her delivery, marched six miles on foot with the army to the next camping place.⁹¹ A similar story appeared in physician James Wolveridge's book on midwifery, *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum, or, the Irish Midwives Handmaid* (1670). Wolveridge commented that a woman in an army camp gave birth to twins by herself next to a thicket of shrubs and immediately washed the babies and herself in a nearby river and then carried the children on her back twelve miles to the next camp 'without the least prejudice to her health, or to the lives of her children'.⁹²

Some people, noted Moryson, claimed that Irish women experienced easy child-bearing with little to no pain because they deliberately broke a bone of female babies soon after their birth.⁹³ John Bulwer identified this as the 'Os pubis, or share-bone'. Bulwer assured his readers that the existence of this practice was reported to him by a 'Gentlewoman' who was present at a birth in Ireland. He stated: 'It is well known that ... Irish women have very quick and easie deliverance in Child-birth.'⁹⁴ Many observers also commented on the fertility of Irish women. Fynes Moryson, for example, claimed that there were many examples of Irish women bearing multiple children at once, for the women were 'fruitful in generation'.⁹⁵

Similarly, English commentators in Virginia reported that the native women gave birth easily.⁹⁶ In New England, writers observed that women had speedy and easy deliveries, recovering very quickly. As William Wood remarked, giving birth 'hinders no business', with women carrying their newly born children on their backs strapped to a board after only three or four days in a beaver skin strapped onto a board.⁹⁷ For John Josselyn, the native women of New England had 'the easiest labours of any women in the world'.⁹⁸ Roger Williams attributed this to the strong constitutions of native women and their hard labour working in the fields. Williams commented that women did not cry during delivery, many considering it shameful to complain.⁹⁹ Native American women, too, were depicted as particularly fertile.¹⁰⁰

Childbearing was easy for African women, too, argued English observers. George Sandys commented that Egyptian Moors had a quick and easy labour, often bearing two or three children at a time.¹⁰¹ English accounts from West Africa resemble Dutch accounts. The De Marees account that appeared in Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus* reported that women gave birth easily and did not require nurses or a lying-in period. After giving birth, they simply washed in the water and returned to their normal routine the following day.¹⁰² William Smith's *A New Voyage to Guinea* (1745) reported that African women did not cry giving birth or need to lie-in afterwards. Giving birth was so easy that one woman delivered a child in less than a quarter of an hour. Smith remarked that Charles Wheeler, an English trader living in Guinea in the early eighteenth century, told him that Africans enjoyed easy childbirth, with no need for midwives, doctors, or nurses. African women were also 'very fruitful'.¹⁰³

Such images emphasised the reproductive qualities of African women and therefore helped to promote the enslavement of Africans in the New World. Indeed, Richard Ligon recognised the reproductive utility of African labour when he described the story of an enslaved African woman in Barbados who delivered her child and returned to work in the field two weeks later. Ligon observed that women weeded in the field, stooping down in a painful position while they carried their children on their backs. According to Ligon, although the work was painful, the children and mothers were happy.¹⁰⁴ These images of easy childbirth helped denigrate and racialise African

women in the Americas. The trope became closely associated with African women in the Americas, demarcating European and African identities. In English travel writing, though, the pattern seems to have originated in Ireland, prior to similar observations made in America and Africa.

Sexuality

English travellers portrayed African women as sexual deviants, accusing them of promiscuity, adultery, and polygamy. Such observations were particularly common after England became involved in the transatlantic slave trade. The idea of promiscuous African women, like images of easy childbirth, helped promote the reproductive potential and suitability of African enslavement in the New World. It also helped create markers of racial difference, distinguishing the uncontrolled sexual appetite of foreign women with restrained English femininity. William Smith remarked that African women, despite punishments for adultery, were hypersexual, 'continually contriving Stratagems how to gain a Lover'. Smith reported that women threw themselves upon men they desired and tried to strip them of their clothes, threatening to inform their husbands that the men attempted to violate them.¹⁰⁵ Thomas Phillips reported that the women of St Jago Island, in Cape Verde, talked to his crew using 'many smutty English words, making lascivious undecent gestures with their bodies, which were all naked, excepting a little clout about their waist, hanging down to the middle of the thigh, which they would often take up to shew us their merchandize'.¹⁰⁶ John Ogilby remarked that because Africans were in general 'very libidinous' and 'much addicted to Venus', venereal diseases were common. The women, 'continually troubled with a Furor Uterinus', chewed herbs and tree bark as an aphrodisiac to facilitate their 'hourly Congresses'.¹⁰⁷

In North America, Native American women were also portrayed as sexually attractive and promiscuous. William Strachey reported that the natives of Virginia were 'most voluptuous'. If they gained their husbands' permission, women could conduct extramarital affairs. Women then acted like 'Virgill's *scrantiae*' and would 'embrace the acquaintance of any stranger for nothing'.¹⁰⁸ Men were allowed as many wives as they could look after them. Powhatan, for example, apparently had more than one hundred wives.¹⁰⁹ Despite this, accounts stated that native women remained faithful to their husbands.¹¹⁰ Edward Winslow remarked that there were native women in New England who were so modest that they would not talk to one another in the company of men; yet, there were also women who were 'lascivious and wanton'.¹¹¹

Early modern English travel accounts to Ireland similarly comment on the libidinous nature of Irish women. Most of these accounts predate observations made by writers in North America and Africa, and so it is plausible that they helped fashion ideas and expectations of indigenous American and African female sexuality. In 1617, Barnabe Rich remarked that he could not recall ever having seen 'so few modest women' presently in Ireland; the women lacked honesty and virtue and were characterised by 'impudent and immodest boldnesse'.¹¹² Edmund Campion reported in 1571 that both sexes were 'amorous', with the 'lewder sort ... sensuall and loose to leachery'. The more virtuous, however, were 'mirrours of holinesse and austeritie'. The prostitutes were 'too vile and abominable to write of'.¹¹³ One writer remarked that Irish women were so 'amorous' that they frequently delivered twins.¹¹⁴ Closely linked to promiscuity were the marital

arrangements of the Irish. Writers remarked that marriage was less binding than in England. Edmund Campion noted that ‘the Honourable state of Marriage they much abused’ in a variety of ways, such as ‘retayning either Concubines or Harlots for Wiues’. He noted that marriages were easily dissolved after a year of ‘probation’.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Fynes Moryson commented on the ‘frequent divorces’ in Ireland.¹¹⁶ William Camden wondered whether the marriage contract between husband and wife was valid as they separated easily, upon ‘the least difference’, with each party taking up new husbands and wives. Camden attributed social breakdown—wars, murders, feuds over successions and inheritances—to such arrangements. He also demonised women, associating them with witchcraft, claiming that the ‘cast-off-wives’ employed witchcraft to afflict the former husband and new wife.¹¹⁷

Funeral wailing

Lastly, English writers compared the funeral wailing performed by Native American and African women to Irish practices. In New England, William Wood remarked that when the body of the deceased was committed to the ground, people emitted ‘a briny teare, deepe groane, and Irish-like howlings’.¹¹⁸ John Joselyn remarked that ‘the howlings of the Irish’ took place in the wigwam where the person died.¹¹⁹ In Virginia, Captain John Smith emphasised that the women, with black painted faces, would yell and howl for twenty-four hours in their houses.¹²⁰ In Africa, Richard Jobson commented that during the burial, in ‘the same manner, as the Irish doe’, people would cry, especially the women, who ran about with their arms spread in a ‘lunaticke fashion’.¹²¹ Other African accounts also made a comparison to the Irish. John Ogilby reported that when a man died, the wife would howl with a strange cry or ‘Ou-la-loo’, ‘after the Irish manner’.¹²² The cultural practices of Irish women, therefore, clearly served as important reference points for English travellers as they encountered indigenous women in Africa and America and constructed markers of human difference.

Indeed, Irish funeral wailing fascinated English writers. They described it as a ‘brutish kinde of lamentation’ that mimicked the cry of animals.¹²³ Writers associated the wailing with women, who cried upon the death, and during the procession and burial. Barnabe Rich called the female wailers ‘Hags or Hellish Fiendes’.¹²⁴ Fynes Moryson remarked that when a person died, the women made a ‘monstrous cry, with shrieking, howling, and clamping of hands’, performing similarly during the funeral procession, whereby the ‘the nurse, the daughters, and the concubines’ were the most vocal.¹²⁵ English observers in Ireland like Edmund Spenser were clear when they commented on the significance of such wailing, declaring ‘it is the manner of all Pagans and Infidels to be intemperate in their waylings of their dead, for that they had no faith nor hope of salvation’.¹²⁶ Spenser’s thoughts were echoed by others, who labelled the practice unchristian and performed by ‘People without Hope’.¹²⁷ Barnabe Rich remarked that the howling and crying would make a person believe that ‘they were Devils of Hell, than Christian people’.¹²⁸

Conclusion

Notions of human difference rarely developed in cultural isolation. When English observers encountered indigenous people in America and Africa for the first time, they made

direct comparisons to the Irish. Encounters in Ireland helped frame perceptions of other people in different continents.

Gender was paramount in these encounters. English male traveller perceptions of native women helped fashion constructions of human difference. In Ireland, America, and Africa, travellers commented on the nakedness, clothing, gendered division of labour, bodies, beauty, sexuality, fertility, childbearing practices, and funeral wailing of the women they encountered. Remarkably, many of these observations were similar. For example, English travellers regarded Irish, Native American, and African women as fertile, able to give birth easily, and having peculiar breast shapes. Some differences emerged—for example, because of the heat, African women did not wear the mantle in the same way as the Irish and Native Americans. However, the gendered tropes themselves were universal: they were all employed in similar ways to determine constructions of racial difference in the early stages of English imperialism during the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, it appears that Ireland served as a persistent cultural reference point in America and Africa, with many of these gendered tropes appearing first in English travel accounts to Ireland.

The similarities of these tropes suggest that constructions of race in the early modern English imperial context were less a consequence of perceived local differences, and more a result of the extent indigenous women conformed to a set of transnational pre-conceived gendered tropes. These observations were important because race during this period was not the fixed physical concept of the period that succeeded it. Skin colour was certainly regarded as an element of human difference in the early modern period, but it was not the sole determining marker of race. Instead, the evidence here suggests that racial difference was conceptualised in terms of how far indigenous women conformed or deviated from a set of constructed gendered roles. These perceptions, appearing first in English travel accounts to Ireland, rationalised English imperialism and helped shape early modern constructions of race.

Notes

1. Anon, *The Golden Coast, or a Description of Guinney* (London: S. Speed, 1665), 77. Note that original spellings are used throughout.
2. Richard Jobson, *The Golden Trade; Or, A Discovery of the River Gambia, and the Golden Trade of the Aethiopians* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1623), 37.
3. Howard Mumford Jones, 'The Origins of the Colonial Idea in England', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 85, no. 5 (September, 1942): 453.
4. James Muldoon, 'The Indian as Irishman', *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 111 (1975): 268–9.
5. David Beers Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); Nicholas P. Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (October, 1973): 595. See also Nicholas Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Recently, the *William and Mary Quarterly* dedicated an edition of its journal to reassessing Nicholas Canny's article. See Alison Games, 'Introduction: "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America" Fifty Years Later', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (July 2023): 435–42 and ensuing articles by Rory Rapple, Hiram Morgan, Peter C. Mancall, Audrey Horning, and Nicholas Canny's response.

6. J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World : Britain and Spain in America 1492–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 23.
7. William O'Reilly, 'Movements of People in the Atlantic World, 1450–1850', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World c.1450–c.1850*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 316.
8. Joyce Chaplin, 'The British Atlantic', in *Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, eds. Canny and Morgan, 223.
9. Gerard Farrell, *The 'Mere' Irish and the Colonisation of Ulster, 1570–1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 52.
10. Éamonn Ó Ciardha and Micheál Ó Siochrú, eds., *The Plantation of Ulster: Ideology and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 1; Brown, *Good Wives*, 32.
11. Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Empire: Ireland, Imperialism, and the Early Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 141; John Patrick Montano, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.
12. Hiram Morgan, 'Mid-Atlantic Blues', *Irish Review* 11 (1991): 50, 53.
13. Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, 351, 175.
14. Andrew Hadfield, 'Rocking the Boat: A Response to Hiram Morgan', *The Irish Review* 14 (Autumn, 1993): 17.
15. Andrew Hadfield, 'Irish Colonies and the Americas', in *Envisioning an English Empire: Jamestown and the Making of the North Atlantic World*, eds. Robert Appelbaum and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 174.
16. Andrew Hadfield, 'British Colonial Expansion Westwards: Ireland and America', in *A Companion to the Literatures of Colonial America*, eds. Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 217.
17. Ohlmeyer, *Making Empire*, 143.
18. Jobson, *Golden Trade*, 37, 105, 71, 45, 56.
19. For more on Jobson's background, see Richard Jobson, *The Discovery of River Gambia (1623)*, eds. David P. Gamble and P. E. H. Hair (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999), 38–9.
20. See, for example, William Palmer, 'Gender, Violence, and Rebellion in Tudor and Early Stuart Ireland', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 711–2, fn. 86.
21. Alden T. Vaughan, 'Early English Paradigms for New World Natives', in *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 34.
22. See esp. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and Kathleen M. Brown, 'Gender Frontiers and Early Encounters', in *The Oxford Handbook of American Women's and Gender History*, eds. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor and Lisa G. Materson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19–41.
23. Jennifer L. Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder": Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500–1770', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January, 1997): 171.
24. *Ibid.*, 184.
25. Brown, *Good Wives*, 34; Nicholas P. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565–1576* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), 126–7.
26. Gerald of Wales (1188) in Andrew Hadfield and John McVeagh, eds., *Strangers to that Land: British Perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994), 26–7.
27. Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, eds. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 55.
28. Fynes Moryson, 'The Description of Ireland', excerpted from Moryson's *An Itinerary* (1617), in C. Litton Falkiner, ed., *Illustrations of Irish History and Topography, Mainly of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1904), 226.
29. Barnabe Rich, *A New Description of Ireland* (London: Thomas Adams, 1610), 24–5.

30. Thomas Gainsford, *The Glory of England, or a True Description of Many Excellent Prerogatives and Remarkable Blessings whereby She Triumpheth over All the Nations of the World* (London: Edward Griffin, 1618), 148. 'Calliots', or 'Calios' derives from the Irish *cailleacha*, meaning 'old women'. See Gamble and Hair, Jobson, *The Discovery of River Gambia*, 103, fn. 1.
31. George Percy, 'Observations gathered out of A Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606', in Captain John Smith, *Works, 1608–1631*, ed. Edward Arber (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1895), lxix.
32. Karen Kupperman, ed., *Captain John Smith: A Select Edition of His Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 142; William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile Into Virginia Britannia* (1612; London: Hakluyt Society, 1849), 74–5.
33. Francis Higginson, *New England's Plantation* (London: Printed by T.C. and R.C. for Michael Sparke, 1630), p. C4; Edward Winslow, *Good Newes from New-England* (London: Printed by I.D. for William Bladen and John Bell, 1624), 58.
34. Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* (London: Gregory Dexter, 1643), 38, 37.
35. William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (1634; Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1865), 105–10. See also William Morrell, *New England* (London: Imprinted by I.D, 1625), 17, 21.
36. Karen Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 150–1; Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 3–4.
37. Jobson, *Golden Trade*, 54, 37.
38. William Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea* (London: John Nourse, 1745), 263; John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies* (London: Caesar Ward, 1735), 50.
39. Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 39.
40. Spenser, *A View*, 58.
41. Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary: Containing His Ten Yeeres Travell ...* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1908), vol. 4., 236–8.
42. Anon, *A Brief Character of Ireland* (London: Printed for W.C., 1692), 13.
43. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 113.
44. 'The Relation of Captain Gosnold's Voyage to the North Part of Virginia ... delivered by Gabriel Archer' (1602), in Purchas, *His Pilgrimes*, vol. 18, 304.
45. John Brereton, 'A Briefe and True Relation of the Discoveries ot the North Part of Virginia, 1602', in *The English New England Voyages, 1602–1608*, eds. David B. Quinn and Alison Quinn (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1983), 149.
46. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 141.
47. John Ogilby, *Africa: Being an Accurate Description of the Regions of Egypt, Barbary, Lybia, and Billedulgerid, the land of Negroes, Guinee, Ethiopia and the Abyssines* (London: Author, 1670), 366.
48. James Welsh, 'A Voyage to Benin beyond the Countrey of Guinea', in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, vol. 6, ed. Richard Hakluyt (1598–1600; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 457. See also Thomas Phillips, *A Journal of a Voyage: Made in the Hannibal of London, Ann. 1693, 1694* (London: H. Lintot, 1746), 222.
49. Ogilby, *Africa*, 348, 359, 360, 373, 483.
50. Jobson, *Golden Trade*, 55, 94.
51. Spenser, *A View*, 57–8.
52. Patrick Tuite, "'In Manners they be Rude, and monst'rous eke in Fashion": Images of Otherness in Early Modern Drama', in *World-Building and The Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Alison B. Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 210, 212.
53. 'Gabriel Archer's Account of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold's Voyage to "North Virginia" in 1602', in *The English New England Voyages*, 117; Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 66;

- Morton, *New English Canaan*, 29–30; Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 73; Winslow, *Good Newes from New-England*, 60.
54. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 141, 163; Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 73; Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 65.
 55. John R. Ziegler, 'Irish Mantles, English Nationalism: Apparel and National Identity in Early Modern English and Irish Texts', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (Winter, 2013): 76–7.
 56. Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 65; Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 141.
 57. 'Father White's Briefe Relation (1634)', in Clayton Colman Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1910), 43; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 30–1.
 58. Luke Gernon, 'A Discourse of Ireland' (1620) in Falkiner, ed., *Illustrations of Irish History*, 357.
 59. Edmund Campion, *The Historie of Ireland* (1571; Dublin: Societie of Stationers, 1633), 17.
 60. Margaret Mc Peake, 'Strumpets, Wood Nymphs, and Contaminants: Representing Irish Women in New English Discourse, 1571–1601', in *Anglo-Irish Identities, 1571–1845*, eds. David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), 48–9.
 61. Anon, *Brief Character of Ireland*, 14.
 62. Muldoon, 'The Indian as Irishman', 285–9.
 63. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 140; 'Father White's Brief Relation', 42; Higginson, *New England's Plantation*, C4; Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 64
 64. Brereton, 'A Briefe and True Relation', 157, 159.
 65. Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 71.
 66. Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 64.
 67. James Rosier, 'A True Relation, 1605', in *The English New England Voyages*, 268, 276; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 32.
 68. John Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England* (London: Printed for Giles Widdows, 1674), 124.
 69. Stephanie M. H. Camp, 'Early European Views of African Bodies', in *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, eds. Daina Berry and Leslie Harris (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 9–32; P. E. H. Hair, 'Attitudes to Africans in English Primary Sources on Guinea up to 1650', *History in Africa*, 26 (1999): 43–68.
 70. Jobson, *Golden Trade*, 33, 37.
 71. Ogilby, *Africa*, 348.
 72. Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1657), 12–13, 15.
 73. *Ibid.*, 51.
 74. Camp, 'Early European Views of African Bodies', 15.
 75. 'William Towerson's First Voyage to Guinea. 1555–6', in John William Blake, ed., *Europeans in West Africa, 1450–1560*, vol. 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), 367, 369.
 76. John Bulwer, *A View of the People of the Whole World ...* (London: William Hunt, 1654), 310–26.
 77. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 140; Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 66; Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 74.
 78. Anon, *Brief Character of Ireland*, 15.
 79. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 315. The word 'dug' or 'dugge' first appeared in the sixteenth century to refer to the breasts of mammals.
 80. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 315.
 81. William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse ...* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1632), 433.
 82. Bulwer, *View of the People*, 312.
 83. Ogilby, *Africa*, 451.
 84. Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea*, 50.
 85. Bulwer, *View of the People*, 315.

86. Anon, *The Golden Coast*, 77.
87. Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500–1676* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 262.
88. Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 47.
89. Morgan, 'Some Could Suckle', 171; Morgan, *Laboring Women*, 40, 47.
90. Gerald of Wales (1188) in *Strangers to that Land*, 26.
91. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 318. See also Gainsford, *The Glory of England*, 150.
92. James Wolveridge, *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum, or, the Irish Midwives Handmaid* (London: E. Okes, 1670), 'The Author to the Reader', A5.
93. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 318.
94. Bulwer, *View of the People*, 396–7.
95. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 315; Wolveridge, *Speculum Matricis Hybernicum*, 'The Author to the Reader', A4; Gernon, 'A Discourse of Ireland', 357; Anon, *Brief Character of Ireland*, 13.
96. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 142; Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 110.
97. Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 108; Morton, *New English Canaan*, 31–2.
98. Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England*, 127.
99. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 37, 50, 141–2. See also John Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London*, vol. 1 (1705; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 131–2.
100. Williams, *Key into the Language*, 140.
101. George Sandys, 'A Relation of a Journey Begun' in *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, eds. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 192.
102. Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, vol. 6, 259.
103. Andrew Battell, 'The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell', in Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus*, vol. 6, 385.
104. Ligon, *A True and Exact History*, 48.
105. Smith, *A New Voyage to Guinea*, 221.
106. Phillips, *A Journal of a Voyage*, 185.
107. Ogilby, *Africa*, 390, 318. See also Anon, *The Golden Coast*, 9.
108. Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 110. 'Scrantiae' was apparently an ancient Roman word for a 'despicable woman'.
109. *Ibid.*, 53; Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 91; Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 155.
110. 'A Relation of Maryland (1635)', in Hall (ed.), *Narratives of Early Maryland*, 86.
111. Winslow, *Good Newes from New-England*, 59.
112. Barnabe Rich, *The Irish Hubbub, or The English Hue and Crie* (London: John Marriot, 1617), 6, 12.
113. Campion, *The Historie of Ireland*, 13, 19.
114. Anon, *Brief Character of Ireland*, 15.
115. Campion, *The Historie of Ireland*, 16.
116. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 284.
117. William Camden, *Britannia: Or A Chorographical Description Of Great Britain And Ireland, Together with the Adjacent Islands*, vol. 2 (London: Mary Matthews, for Awnsam Church-ill, 1722), 1420. See also Anon, *A Geographicall Description*, 25–6.
118. Wood, *New England's Prospect*, 104.
119. Josselyn, *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England*, 132.
120. Kupperman, *Captain John Smith*, 151; Strachey, *Historie of Travaile*, 90.
121. Jobson, *Golden Trade*, 71.
122. Ogilby, *Africa*, 29.
123. Rich, *The Irish Hubbub*, 4.
124. Rich, *New Description of Ireland*, 12.
125. Moryson, 'Description of Ireland', 320.
126. Spenser, *A View*, 61.

127. Anon, *Brief Character of Ireland*, 43–4.

128. Rich, *New Description of Ireland*, 12.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Dr Sergio Lussana is a senior lecturer in history at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of *My Brother Slaves: Friendship, Masculinity, and Resistance in the Antebellum South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016) and author of peer-reviewed articles published in the *Journal of Southern History*, the *Journal of Social History*, *Slavery & Abolition*, and *Gender and History*.

ORCID

Sergio Lussana  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0186-9942>