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THE PURSUIT OF THE

Heiress

ARISTOCRATIC MARRIAGE
IN IRELAND
1740–1840

by

A.P.W. MALCOMSON

at 6–7.30 p.m. on Thursday, 18 January 2007

in The Deanery of St Patrick's, St Patrick's Close, Dublin 8

(by kind permission of the Dean)



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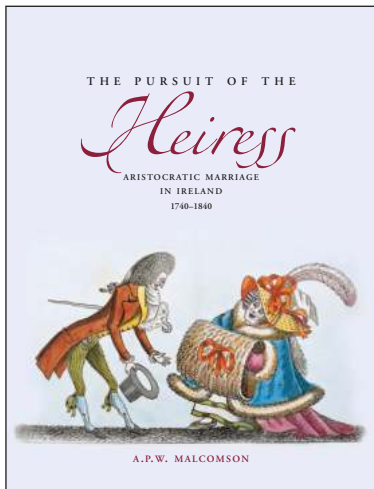
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The Pursuit of the Heiress is a new, greatly enlarged and more widely focused version of what the late Lawrence Stone described as ‘a brilliant long essay or short book on the subject of the role of heiresses among the Irish aristocracy’, which was published by the Ulster Historical Foundation under the same title in 1982 and has long been out of print. The new book comes to the same broad conclusions about heiresses – namely that their importance as a means of enlarging the estates or retrieving the fortunes of their husbands has been much exaggerated. This was because known heiresses were well protected by a variety of legal devices and, in common with many aristocratic women of the day, also had minds and strong preferences of their own – which meant that they were not generally an object of deliberate or profitable pursuit. The new book also

ranges more widely than its central theme of heiresses and addresses other aspects of aristocratic marriage such as abductions, elopements, *mésalliances*, the supposed ‘rise of the affective family’, and the disadvantaged situation of even the richest and most privileged women in an age when both adultery and divorce were largely the prerogative of men. In short, it places the evidence of between fifty and a hundred Irish ‘big house’ archives at the centre of the international debate about love, marriage and inheritance in the halcyon era of the British aristocracy. As Lawrence Stone said of the original and now superseded version: ‘It is based on deep research, makes very amusing reading and postulates an entirely new theory about heiresses which has a strong ring of truth’.

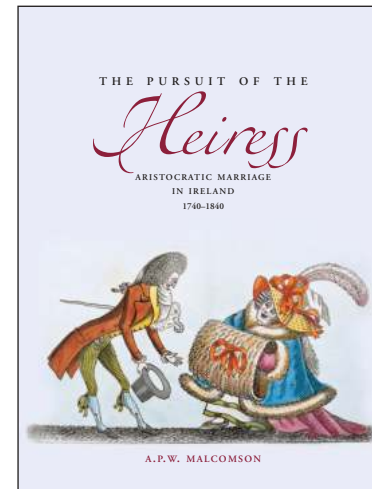
312 PP; 80 illustrations; hard back ISBN 13: 978-1-903688-36-6 ISBN 10: 1-903688-36-1

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