

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL IDEAS IN EARLY MODERN IRELAND

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It is an exciting time to be studying the history of ideas in early modern Ireland because of the burgeoning list of publications in the field. Indeed I would contend that all students of the Renaissance and Reformation ought to take an interest in this field because early modern Ireland is, more than other places, a microcosm of the whole age. As well as its general promotional purpose, this introductory essay has three objectives. First I want to examine the historiography of the subject, secondly to see how ideas circulated and thirdly to explore the range of ideas under discussion in relation to Ireland and see how they were worked in practice during the century between Ireland's establishment as a kingdom in 1541 and the 1641 rebellion.

Historiography

The development of this subject reads like a potted history of modern Irish historiography.¹ Its origins lie in the period itself with the country's foremost humanist, Richard Stanihurst, listing 'the learned men and authors of Ireland' in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (London, 1577).² In 1639 Sir James Ware, taking his cue from Stanihurst, put together the first competent bibliography on Ireland divided into native and foreign writers under the title *Duo libri de scriptoribus Hiberniae*.³ This scholarly government official had already brought out a printed edition of the unpublished works of Campion, Spenser, Hanmer and Marleborough under the title *Histories of Ireland* (Dublin, 1633). He dedicated these works to the incoming Lord Deputy Sir Thomas Wentworth for what they afforded in 'matter of history and policy'.⁴ This mixed interest of antiquarian and current affairs seems to have set the standard. In the eighteenth century the building of Anglo-Irish identity and the concerns of the Irish parliament show through. This is well illustrated by the activities of Walter Harris. He married Ware's grand-daughter and, by expanding and republishing Ware's most important antiquarian works in English, established a seminal corpus of Anglo-Irish texts. Furthermore partly financed by the Irish parliament, he published a collection of early modern political tracts from old manuscripts under the title *Hibernica* (2 Vols, Dublin, 1747, 1750). Harris's initiative was followed by Charles Vallancey's *Collectanea de rebus Hibernicis* (6 Vols, Dublin, 1770-1804) and John Lodge's *Desiderata Curiosa Hibernica* (2 Vols, Dublin, 1772). The intention of Lodge's select collection of state papers, as stated on its title-page was 'illustrating and opening the political systems of the chief governors and governments of Ireland, during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, James the first and Charles the first'. 1764 saw the re-publication of Patrick Darcy's

¹ See R.W. Dudley Edwards and Mary O'Dowd, *Sources for early modern Irish history, 1534-1641*, (Cambridge, 1985), ch.8.

² Raphael Holinshed, *2nd edition, 1587, ii, 39-44*.

³ Ware, *Duo libri de scriptoribus Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1639).

⁴ *Ibid*, *Histories*, dedication.

Argument originally made on behalf of the Irish parliament in June 1641.⁵ In spite of the rehabilitation of this Catholic Confederate, the legal and parliamentary activities of Sir John Davies were foundational. His *Discovery of the True Causes* (London, 1612, 1613) was republished (Dublin, 1664, 1666. 1704, London, 1747 & Dublin 1761) and his law reports were made available in English in 1762.⁶ His flattering speech at the opening of the 1613 parliament was redubbed in Thomas Leland's *History of Ireland* (3 vols, Dublin, 1773) as 'A dissertation on the progress and constitution of the legislature of Ireland'.⁷ George Chalmers, who edited an edition of Davies' letters and speeches, 'presumed to think that he could not do more acceptable service to the public, at a time when the acknowledged independence of Ireland prompted the inquiries of many gentlemen with regard to its previous history and constitution, then by publishing the historical tracts of Sir John Davies...'⁸

At the start of the nineteenth century Ware's compilation of chronicles were republished by the Hibernia Press Company under a public subscription as *Ancient Irish Histories* (Dublin, 1809). More importantly the opening of public and private archives meant that a whole spate of manuscript treatises in English found their way into print. The publications of the Irish Archaeological society (1840-53) and the Celtic Society (1847-53) (jointly 1853-80), the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland archaeological society (1849-) (later the Royal Society of Antiquaries), the Ulster Archaeological Society (1853-) and many other institutions and individuals enabled tracts of political importance to see the light of day. State Papers (Henry VIII, Ireland and Carew) and Historical Manuscripts Commission reports drew attention to many more in calendar format. Even more importantly manuscript works in Irish were printed for the first time accompanied by parallel translations. The major triumph was of course John O'Donovan's edition of *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* which had been compiled by the so-called Four Masters under the direction of the Irish Franciscan College at Louvain two centuries earlier. The scholarly activity and publishing projects of the Counter-Reformation to develop Ireland's Catholic heritage now reappeared to fructify late nineteenth-century confessional nationalism.⁹ Ecclesiastical scholars such as Fr Matthew Kelly, Archbishop P.F. Moran, Fr Edmund Hogan republished or printed for the first time many of these late sixteenth/early seventeenth century Latin tracts, some of them in translation. On the Protestant side the complete works of Ussher, many of them also in Latin, were edited by C.R. Elrington and J.H. Todd (Dublin, 1847-64). Another highlight was the facsimile reproduction in 1883 of John Derrick's *Image of Ireland* (1581) made from a book held by the National Library of Scotland, the only copy with all its twelve plates intact. The importance of this visual record had been recognised by Sir Walter Scott in 1809 and his notes were now subsumed into the new edition by John Small.¹⁰ The Catholic nationalist and antiquary J.T. Gilbert completed his

⁵ *An argument delivered by Patrick Darcy, Esquire by the express order of the House of Commons in Parliament of Ireland, 9 Iunii, 1641* (Waterford, 1643), 2nd edition George Faulkner (Dublin, 1764), modern edition with introduction C.E.J. Caldicott in *Camden Miscellany*, xxxi (London, 1992).

⁶ Sir John Davies, *A report of cases and matters in law resolved and abridged in the king's courts in Ireland* (Dublin 1762).

⁷ ii, pp.489-516.

⁸ Sir John Davies, *Historical Tracts*, ed. George Chalmers (London, 1786, Dublin, 1787), 2nd ed. advertisement, p. xxxviii.

⁹ See Bernadette Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607-1650' in Ciaran Brady ed. *Ideology and the Historians* (Historical Studies XVII, (Dublin 1991) pp 11-30.

¹⁰ John Derrick, *Image of Irelande with a discoverie of woodkarne* (London, 1581) edited by Walter Scott in *Lord Somer's tracts* (I, London, 1809), by John Small (facsimile, Edinburgh 1883) and by D.B. Quinn (Belfast, 1985).

four volume *Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland* (1874-84) with documents representative of the ideological conflicts in late medieval and early modern Ireland.

One historical idea that developed during the nineteenth century and perhaps was at its height with *fin de siècle* feeling was that sixteenth-century Ireland had seen a clash of civilisations with the English Renaissance state inevitably triumphing over a Celtic tribal system and modern Ireland being ushered in under James I.¹¹ Writing in 1902 Yeats presents Spenser as a carefree pastoral poet who has sold out to the age of iron. ‘When Spenser wrote of Ireland he wrote as an official and out of thoughts and emotions which had been organised by the state. He was the first of many Englishmen to see nothing but what he was desired to see.’¹² The Tudor/Stuart period was plainly regarded a formative period in Irish history - a watershed attended by considerable intellectual ferment. This is well summarised by C. L. Falkiner, the unionist antiquarian who followed Gilbert as the Historical Manuscripts’ Inspector in Ireland, in the preface to *Illustrations of Irish history and topography* (London, 1904). ‘All the problems that Ireland presents, social and economic, religious and political, date from that period. And the problems present themselves in much the same aspects. In the reign of Elizabeth the great battle for supremacy between English and Irish ideas had been fought to a finish, which for at least three centuries was accepted as decisive. The tenure of land upon the basis of the feudal law of England, the supremacy of the reformed faith in the relations of the state to religion, the model of a dependent parliament drawn in the main from the English elements in Irish society - all these are features which were to characterise Ireland for centuries, and which had not characterised her in anything like the same degree before the accession of James I.’¹³ Along the same lines, Philip Wilson entitled his book of early Tudor Ireland, *The Foundations of Modern Ireland* (London, 1912) and James Hogan quoting Yeats on Spenser in the preface began a projected series entitled *Ireland in the European System* (London, 1920) with a volume about Irish involvement in Renaissance diplomacy.¹⁴ The late nineteenth century/early twentieth century was also a period when scholarship shifted away from antiquarians and *belle-lettristes* to university-based professionals divided into the distinctive disciplines of literary and historical studies. Anthologies and books of selected readings by two such professionals are still in use by students today. Henry Morley, professor of English language and literature at University College London and one of the pioneers of English Literature as a discipline, produced *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First* (London 1890). Fully aware of the cruelties visited by the English on the Irish of this period, he featured the canonical writings of Spenser, Davies and Moryson. Constantia Maxwell, subsequently Lecky Professor of Irish History at Trinity College, Dublin, brought out *Irish history from Contemporary Sources* (London, 1923) derived from mainly documentary sources. Although the preface of the latter complained that there was still too much reliance on English sources for this key period of Irish history and indicated just how much archival work was still required, there was plainly enough data now available in print to enable the subject to develop analytically.

In 1930 the Irish Manuscripts Commission, established after Independence under the headship of Professor James Hogan, began the systematic publication of many neglected manuscript books and documents, many of them relevant to the early modern period. Pauline Henley, an acolyte of Hogan’s in the history department at University College, Cork brought out *Spenser*

¹¹ This idea is well-expressed in Standish O’Grady’s *Red Hugh’s captivity* (London, 1889) pp.1-30

¹² W.B. Yeats, ‘Edmund Spenser’ (October, 1902) in *Essays* (London, 1924), p. 462.

¹³ *Illustrations*, p.xiv.

¹⁴ *Ireland in the European system*, pp.xxiii-xxiv

in Ireland (Cork, 1928). She complained that the poet's admirers were embarrassed to admit the harsh side of his personality, asserting that 'Spenser was not always the unpractical weaver of magic fancies, but could become on occasion the ruthless apostle of coercive government, the grimly precise exponent of the statecraft of Elizabethan England'. In her penultimate chapter entitled 'Spenser and Political Thought', Henley, drawing alternately from Yeats' essay on Spenser and the *Cambridge Modern History*, claimed that the poet was a Machiavellian.¹⁵ Also on the historical side, we owe an enormous amount to the work of D.B. Quinn. In 1945 he introduced a new figure into the ideological landscape with a seminal article entitled 'Sir Thomas Smith (1513-77) and the beginnings of English colonial theory' but this approach was unfortunately not followed up when he produced *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1966)¹⁶ Although marshalling a vast array of primary sources, the results were mostly descriptive and disappointingly conservative.

The interest shown by scholars of English literature was desultory, tending to occur only so far as Ireland impinged on the English Renaissance. The American Alexander Judson wrote *Spenser in Southern Ireland* (Bloomington, Ia, 1933), a sort of travelogue of what he called 'Spenser Country', looking for the features of the landscape which had inspired the poet. His *Life of Edmund Spenser* (Baltimore, 1945) is informed by similar aesthetic values. A history written in a somewhat dated fashion, the subject's official career is made incidental to his creative genius and one chapter is significantly entitled 'Exile Self-imposed'.¹⁷ In 1934 W.L. Renwick (eventually regius professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh) went beyond Ware to produce a new edition of Spenser's *View of the present state of Ireland* using an original manuscript in the Bodleian. His accompanying commentary, intended to serve both scholars of history and literature, is a real period-piece mixture with echoes of the official mind and the last days of the British raj. Another American scholar, Edward Hinton, extended the canon producing a selection of tracts entitled *Ireland through Tudor eyes* (Philadelphia, 1935) as well as doing some original work on Barnaby Riche in Ireland.¹⁸ In 1954 the dramatic arts made their appearance with J.O. Bartley's *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney* (Cork, 1954) which compiled chronologically and thematically references to Irish as well as Scottish and Welsh characters on the English stage.

As regards Anglo-Irish literature, St John Seymour produced in 1929 a still useful survey of the surviving fragments of poetry, prose and drama in French and English written by the medieval colonists and their early modern descendants.¹⁹ There was more sustained scholarship on literature in Irish. Whereas St John Seymour had available various items published in the Rolls Series and by the Early English Texts Society, Constantia Maxwell complained in the preface to her *Documents* that the proper study of Irish Nationalism was

¹⁵ Pauline Henley, *Spenser in Ireland*, (Cork, 1928) pp. 7-8, 168-191. Professor Hogan and Alfred O'Rahilly, the college president, were also responsible for Cork University Press publishing posthumously M.J. Byrne's *The Irish war of Defence, 1598-1600: extracts from the De Hibernia Insula Commentarius of Peter Lombard, archbishop of Armagh* (Cork, 1930).

¹⁶ D.B. Quinn, 'Sir Thomas Smith' in *American Philosophy Society Proceedings*, lxxxix no.4 (1945), pp.253-63 Elizabethans published by Folger.

¹⁷ Volume 11 of the Variorum edition. For some remarks on early Spenser scholarship see Richard Rambuss, 'Spenser's lives, Spenser's careers' in Judith Anderson, Donald Cheney & David Richardson ed. *Spenser's Life and the subject of biography* (Amherst, Mass. 1996) , pp.1-17 and Patricia Coughlan, 'The local context of Mutabilitie's Plea', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 26, no. 1, 1996, pp.320-341.

¹⁸ E.M. Hinton, 'Rych's Anothomy of Ireland, with an account of the author', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol 55 (1940), pp.73-101.

¹⁹ St John D. Seymour, *Anglo-Irish Literature (1200-1582)*, (Cambridge, 1929).

very difficult without Gaelic sources such as bardic poetry. This was the last great gap in the ideological record and it was remedied in the middle of this century. Many early modern Irish texts first saw the light of day in the publications of the *Irish Texts Society* founded in London at the end of the century. One of its early publications was a scholarly edition and translation of Geoffrey Keating's history of Ireland - *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*.²⁰ However, the real breakthrough came with De Valera's establishment of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies with its school of Celtic. Scholars such as Osborn Bergin, David Greene, James Carney, Sean Mac Airt, Lambert McKenna, Paul Walsh and Eleanor Knott between them published the main duanaire (or poem books) of the Gaelic lordly families or the collected works of the principal poets. These works were provided with critical introductions which owed more to historical and philological studies than aesthetics. Besides this literary archaeology there were also more populist surveys and anthologies beginning with Douglas Hyde stretching through Aodh De Blacam and Brian O Cuiv to Sean O Tuama. Major pieces of contextualisation included Paul Walsh's *Irish men of Learning* and Brendan Jennings' *Micheal O Cleirigh and his Associates*.

Finally in the 1970s ideology took centre stage with the monographs of Nicholas Canny (*Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, (Hassocks, 1976) and Brendan Bradshaw (*Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century*, Cambridge, 1979) and there followed an, at times, furious debate between the two about when and why English policy became committed to conquest and colonisation. Since then Colm Lennon and Hans Pawlisch have written respectively the first modern studies of Richard Stanihurst and Sir John Davies and Hiram Morgan has looked at Faith and Fatherland nationalism.²¹ Both Bradshaw and Canny have since been pulverised by Ciaran Brady in *Chief Governors* (Cambridge, 1994) for giving ideology priority in the political process.²² Nevertheless it was Bradshaw and Canny, who in the course of their titanic struggle, sowed the seeds of current controversy and who initiated quite unwittingly a convergence between the literary and historical sides.

In a *festschrift* for Quinn, Bradshaw published a study of the nationalist content of poetry written for the O'Byrnes in the late sixteenth century entitled 'Native reaction in the westward enterprise'.²³ This sparked a heated debate about whether or not bardic poetry was political. Bradshaw was answered in no uncertain terms by Tom Dunne and then by Michelle O Riordan who took a sort of structuralist approach in her monograph arguing that the poetry was anachronistic.²⁴ More recently Mark Caball and the heavy-weight Brendan O Buachalla have entered the lists on the *politique* side.²⁵ O Buachalla has brought a lifetime's work to bear on the subject. It is telling that an article by him on Jacobite poetry should have included in the

²⁰ Geoffrey Keating, *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: the history of Ireland* ed. D. Comyn and P.S. Dineen (4 Vols, London, 1902-14).

²¹ Colm Lennon, *Richard Stanihurst, the Dubliner, 1547-1618* (Dublin, 1981); Hans Pawlisch, *Sir John Davies and the conquest of Ireland: a study in legal imperialism* (Cambridge, 1985); Hiram Morgan, 'Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland', *Historical Journal*, xxxvi (1993); idem, 'Faith and Fatherland or queen and country' *Dúiche Néill: Journal of the O'Neill country historical society*, ix 1994; idem 'Faith and fatherland in sixteenth-century Ireland', *History Ireland*, ii (1995).

²² Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland* (Cambridge, 1994).

²³ B. Bradshaw, 'Native reaction to the westward enterprise: a case study in Gaelic ideology' in *The Westward Enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480-1650* ed. K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny & P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool, 1978).

²⁴ T.J. Dunne, 'The Gaelic response to conquest and colonisation: the evidence of the poetry', *Studia Hibernica*, xx, 1980 & Michelle O Riordan, *The Gaelic mind and the collapse of the Gaelic world* (Cork, 1990).

1993 volume *Political Thought in Ireland since the seventeenth century*.²⁶ Meanwhile there has been a subsidiary debate between Bradshaw and Bernadette Cunningham along the same lines over the significance of the work of Geoffrey Keating.²⁷

An even greater impact was made by Nicholas Canny with his article on Edmund Spenser in *the Yearbook of English Studies* (1983).²⁸ This engendered a wide-ranging debate about the importance of Spenser's Irish experience. Nicholas Canny and Ciaran Brady exchanged verbal blows in the pages of *Past and Present*.²⁹ The argument boils down to the question: 'Was Spenser a bastard or were they all (the New English colonists that is) bastards?' This sudden interest in Spenser from historians coincided with the rise of new historicism in literary studies with its emphasis on the centrality of politics. English Renaissance scholars suddenly became interested in Ireland in a way they never had been before. Much of the Canny-Brady set-to found its way into a notable collection by Patricia Coughlan (1989) which also contained work by literary scholars.³⁰ Since then the subject has grown like Topsy. In 1993 Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and William Maley brought out *Representing Ireland* which again attempted to work across disciplines and also to move the debate onto writers and texts other than Spenser. In the last couple of years there has been an amazing output - splendid monographs by Hadfield and Maley; *A Spenser chronology*, new editions of Spenser's *View* and the contemporary *Solon his follie* by another colonial administrator, Richard Beacon; and Chris Highley's book *Shakespeare, Spenser and the crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997) which brings the 'Bard' himself into the picture.³¹ There has even been a novel and a play.³²

Finally, standing outside these two traditions we have the monumental and thought-provoking work of Joep Leerssen whose 1986 *Mere Irish and Fìor-Ghael* derived from continental theories of comparative literature.³³

There has definitely been a convergence of interest between literary scholars and historians on this subject. They are learning to appreciate each other's work - historians have found out

²⁵ Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: reaction and continuity in Irish poetry, 1558-1625* (Cork, 1998) & Brendan O Buachalla, 'Poetry and politics in early modern Ireland', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, vii (1992); idem, *Aisling gheár na Stiobhartaigh agus an t-aos leinn, 1603-1788* (Dublin, 1996).

²⁶ O Buachualla, 'James our true king: the ideology of Irish royalism in the seventeenth century' in *Political Thought in Ireland since the seventeenth century* edited D. George Boyce, Robert Ecceshall & Vincent Geoghegan (Dublin, 1993).

²⁷ Bernadette Cunningham, 'Seventeenth-century interpretation of the past: the case of Geoffrey Keating', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxv (1986) & Brendan Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland' in *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534-1660*, ed. B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield and W. Maley (Cambridge, 1993).

²⁸ N.P. Canny, 'Edmund Spenser and the development of an Anglo-Irish identity', *Yearbook of English Studies*, xiii (1983).

²⁹ C. Brady, 'Spenser's Irish crisis: humanism and experience in the 1590s', *Past and Present*, cxi (1986); N.P. Canny, 'Spenser's Irish crisis: a comment', *P&P*, cxx (1988); C. Brady, 'Spenser's Irish crisis: reply to Canny', *P & P*, cxx (1988).

³⁰ Patricia Coughlan, *Spenser and Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective* (Cork, 1989).

³¹ Andrew Hadfield, *Spenser's Irish experience: wilde fruit and salvage soyl* (Oxford, 1997); W. Maley, *A Spenser chronology* (London, 1994) & *Salvaging Spenser: colonialism, culture and identity* (London, 1997); Edmund Spenser, *A view of the present state of Ireland, from the first printed edition (1633)* ed. A. Hadfield and W. Maley (Oxford, 1997) & Richard Beacon, *Solon his Follie (1594)* ed. Clare Carroll and Vincent Carey, (Binghamton, NY, 1996).

³² Robert Welsh, *The Kilcolman notebook* (Dingle, 1994) & Frank McGuinness

³³ Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fìor Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the Nineteenth century* (Amsterdam, 1986) (pk. Cork, 1996).

about inter-textuality, imitation/mimesis, discourse theories, rhetorical and narrative techniques and literary scholars have discovered more about the political background. However, differences still exist and will continue to exist in methodology, theory and overall objective. Historians are interested in what major literary works can contribute to their general understanding of the period; literary people are looking for the social, intellectual and political origins of these great works. History scholars are interested in what happened; literary ones in the representation of these events. If all writing is to be construed as representation, this obviously raises the status of government documents. In relation to early modern Ireland this makes the category/genre known as the 'treatise' a particular bone of contention. Are they to be considered position papers or works of literature? Historians are interested in the immediate context and often forget that texts afterwards take on a life of their own. Meanwhile literary experts in search of timeless universals like 'the other' seem to treat texts without reference to chronology.

Whatever the extent of these differences, the danger is that we are now being overwhelmed by the Spenser industry. A recent bibliography composed by Willy Maley counted 120 items published in relation to Spenser and Ireland between 1986 and 1996.³⁴ It seems to me that we must seek to change the focus of debate. We must look at other writers besides Spenser. Even *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* ed Seamus Deane. (3 Vols, Derry, 1991) much criticised for its nationalist slant whilst moving towards pluralism still gives pride of place to English planter writers.³⁵ We should seek to know what Irish people thought about their own country besides what others thought about them. We should look at other substantive issues besides colonialism. Furthermore, we must look not only at texts in English and in Irish but also those in Latin which have so far been almost completely ignored. Latin a language understood by most of the elite participants in developments.

Circulation of ideas

The transmission of political ideas in Ireland was not only multi-lingual it was also multi-media. In the first instance ideas were transmitted orally. The most powerful tool in this regard was probably preaching. The friars had a monopoly of popular preaching in the late middle ages and were implacably opposed to the reformation when it arrived in Ireland. They were reportedly preaching in 1539 that 'every man ought, for the salvation of his soul, fight and make war against our sovereign lord the king's majesty, and his true subjects, and if any of them, which so shall against his majesty or his subjects, die in the quarrel, his soul that so shall be dead shall go to heaven'.³⁶ One objective of the Protestant state church was a preaching clergy who could thunder out the usual Tudor sermons on obedience in time of rebellion but the fact that they had few Gaelic Irish in their ranks and trained even fewer of the incoming English and Welsh vicars in the native tongue obviously diminished the intended impact. By the time of Desmond and especially the Nine Years War the itinerant friars had been bolstered by seminary priests and Jesuits. The message was becoming more Faith and Fatherland but the Catholic clergy did not all sing from the same sheet. The Jesuits of the Pale remained quiescent and the Old English secular clergy broke their neutral stance when the Spaniards landed at Kinsale to preach against the invader.³⁷ At TCD Ussher was appointed to preach against Catholic doctrine and eventually became professor of Theological Controversies. Catholics

³⁴ W. Maley, 'Spenser and Ireland: an annotated bibliography, 1986-1996', *Irish University Review*, xxvi (1996).

³⁵ See Vol. 1 pp.171-286.

³⁶ Quoted in B. Bradshaw, *Dissolution of the religious orders in Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1974), 210-6.

were involved in some high-level disputations with the likes of Ussher but under Rothe in the early seventeenth century Catholic preaching retreated from the high politics of the militant Counter-Reformation to a civilising social agenda aimed at eliminating noble feud and peasant superstition.³⁸ Nevertheless the friars were still available to stoke native passions on the eve of the 1641 rebellion. Besides preaching as a means of transmission there was also proclamation. At the market cross government decisions, parliamentary statutes and civic regulations would be publically declaimed, if necessary in Irish in such matters as the outlawing of rebels.³⁹ Opponents of the crown themselves had proclamations made. James Fitzmaurice declared a holy war against Elizabeth when he returned to Ireland in 1579 with a printed proclamation he brought from Rome.⁴⁰ Hand-written proclamations survive from the Nine Years War. One of these which O'Neill had read out at churches in Ulster after Sunday Mass relates to mercenary service and wages and the other is his famous proclamation distributed in the Pale in 1599. A further powerful element in the oral transmission of political ideas in Gaelic and marcher lordships of Ireland was the public recital of poems, genealogies and stories. John Derrick mistakenly believed that the bards - whom he blamed like many other English commentators together with the friars for inciting the Irish to revolt - declaimed the poems themselves whereas it was in fact the task of professional reciters.⁴¹

Display and performance were at the forefront of transmission of ideas. Political ideas were also communicated by ceremonial and ritual which was both verbal and visual. The state in Ireland understood and utilised these principles but so did its opponents who could seek to subvert it subtly or overtly by various stratagems. There was a spectrum here from the brightly-dressed state pursuivant carrying the Queen's writ to the grisly spectacle of traitors' heads impaled on gates to towns, castles and army camps. The display of state power is most obvious to us in John Derrick's woodcuts of Lord Deputy Sidney. The beating of the Irish rebels is here ritualised. Sidney is seen leading his army out of Dublin Castle, receiving an Irish messenger, marching his army through the countryside, defeating an Irish chief and being welcomed back in triumph by the aldermen of Dublin. It may indeed be the case that Sidney elaborated such ceremonial. The final woodcut shows Turlough Luineach O'Neill, couched and coiffured English style, submitting to Sidney who sits on his throne, raised on a dais with the sword of state to his right hand and the cloth of state draped over his head. If what the woodcut purports to show is accurate, then the transport of this state paraphernalia into the interior and its display was surely intended to be a powerful statement of the majesty of the Queen and the reach of her government.⁴² The Queen's authority was also displayed through the ritualised power of her law courts. Besides the Four Courts at Dublin, the assizes on their circuits and presidential courts in Munster and Connacht were both symbol and practice of the extension of English rule and law across the country. In this way freeholders as jurors, local notables as sheriffs and local magnates as members of presidential councils learned the practices of English law as did the rest of the population who were affected by the courts'

³⁷ See Morgan, 'Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland, *Historical Journal* (1993), pp.29 & 32

³⁸ See P.J. Corish, *Irish Catholic Community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981), pp.18-27, 36-42.

³⁹ This neglected subject requires urgent investigation.

⁴⁰ R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, II, pp.13-9

⁴¹ Derrick, *Image*, ed. Quinn, pp.55-6 'The Bard by his Rimes hath as great force emongst Woodkarne to perswade, as the elloquent oration of a learned Oratour emongst the civill people. The pollicie of the Barde to encense the Rebelles to doe mischiefe, by repeating their forfathers actes. O craftie Appostle as holie as a Devill'

⁴² *Ibid*, plates 6-10 & 12

decisions. However, the process was often subverted when local juries refused to convict; in turn if the army was used to coerce the jury, the English justice system was exposed as a sham.⁴³ The infamous case and a major turning point was the 1612 condemnation of the Catholic clergymen O'Devaney and O'Loughlin by a packed jury and then their public execution in Dublin. By this Lord Deputy Chichester had intended to cow Dublin's Catholics but instead he created Catholic martyrs and an unprecedented public display of religious zeal from the city patriciate.⁴⁴

Parliament was also a major ceremonial occasion capable of demonstrating ethnic, sectional and class harmony amongst subjects, their loyalty towards the state and the state's reliance on their elite participation. The highpoint was St Leger's parliament (1541-3) which declared Ireland a kingdom and witnessed the attendance of Gaelic magnates though they were not as yet formally represented. Things began to go wrong when Sidney's (1569-70) parliament saw the appearance of Old English dissent. Thereafter parliaments were called less frequently. Turlough Luineach carried the sword of state before Lord Deputy for the state opening of Perrot's parliament (1585-6) but opposition from the Pale gradually made it unworkable. Chichester's parliament (1613-15), the constituencies for which had been gerrymandered in favour of Protestant settlers, was utterly divided despite Sir John Davies' attempts to represent the contrary.⁴⁵ The rituals and ideology of the state church were also accepted at first by the Old English especially because the local parish clergy stayed in place and the 1560 settlement allowed them to read the church service in Latin. By the 1580s when churches were being increasingly staffed by a colonial clergy, when local men began returning from the continent seminaries provided a Catholic alternative and when there was growing antagonism with the state's policies, the majority of the Old English voted with their feet and deserted the state religion. Such recusancy was the most obvious subversion of the state's ideology.⁴⁶ In the early seventeenth century ritualised disputations between Protestants and Catholics, beginning with Mountjoy's confrontation to the Jesuit Dr White in 1603 on the subject of loyalty to the state, served only to highlight the public differences and conferred a sort of equality, if not legitimacy, on the opposing point of view.⁴⁷

Until defeated in the Nine Years War, Gaelic Ireland operated separately with its own political rituals reflective of an indigenous legal system and local claims to sovereignty. The Gaelic Irish held hill-top meetings where political issues were debated and brehons handed down their judgements. However, the most Gaelic of rituals was the inauguration of their lords. The most famous example was the inauguration of the O'Neill in a stone chair at Tullaghoge in Tyrone. It conferred local legitimacy, a panoply of local rights and in an era of conquest became a symbol of native resistance. Conn O'Neill renounced the title when he was made earl of Tyrone; Shane O'Neill assumed the title in his pursuit of power in Ulster; his posthumous attainder by Act of Parliament declared it illegal even though Turlough Luineach had already succeeded. When Turlough died in 1595, Hugh O'Neill was inaugurated. The bishop of Limerick reported 'Tyrone was rebel, O'Neill none'. At the height of his power, he signed a proclamation to the Palesmen with O'Neill at the top of the document as if he were a Prince.

⁴³ A flavour, albeit parti-pris, of how the justice system was being perverted can be found in Philip O'Sullivan, *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae Compendium* (Lisbon, 1621), Tome IV.

⁴⁴ Colm Lennon, *The lords of Dublin in the age of the Reformation*, (Dublin, 1989), pp.197-8.

⁴⁵ Davies, *Historical Tracts*, 289-313

⁴⁶ This is my own take; but for a good introduction see Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: Incomplete Conquest* (Dublin, 1994), ch.11

⁴⁷ Moryson, *Itinerary*, Pt. II, pp.292-3.

In 1602 Mountjoy symbolically broke up the inaugural stone and the following year O'Neill renounced his title at Mellifont. The court in England was the most powerful purveyor of political ideas. As English power grew, Irishmen found themselves increasingly frequenting the Court in pursuit of royal favours. Henry VIII's court made a show of Conn O'Neill for the benefit of foreign ambassadors when he was made an earl in London in 1542. However the tables were turned in 1562 with Shane O'Neill's wonderfully theatrical coming to the court of Elizabeth in 1562.⁴⁸ A great example of Irish courtliness is the vellum-bound Irish language primer which Lord Delvin presented to the Queen about this time. Indeed Irishmen found they were able to stave off threats at home by engaging in court politics themselves; the most subversive were those best able to charm the queen, namely Black Tom, Miler Magrath and Hugh O'Neill. The Irish engagement in court politics is of course famously satirized in Ben Jonson's *Irish Masque* of the following reign.

Gaelic subversion of the new political order reached its height during the Nine Years War (1594-1603). When questioned by Lord Deputy Russell and the Dublin Council in August 1594, O'Neill would lapse into Irish.⁴⁹ When he was let go, the Queen rounded on her council for their political cowardice. In the war which followed, the more the state negotiated with O'Neill, the more it suffered humiliation and the greater O'Neill's influence grew.⁵⁰ Sir John Harrington, the soldier/scholar who met O'Neill on the fringes of the 1599 negotiations represents him as an antithetical figure presiding over an open-air oriental-style court.⁵¹ There were other famously transgressive acts. When Turlough Luineach came to meet the Lord Deputy at Newry, according to Sidney 'he brought above £400 sterling to the town and spent it all in three days; he celebrated Bacchus' feast most notably and as he thought much to his glory'.⁵² Whilst this display did not much please the deputy, it certainly confirmed the Ulsterman's macho reputation amongst the Irish. Even more famously there are the instances of the symbolic discarding of English attire, which the authorities were trying to enforce, and the donning of Irish clothes. For instance the sons of the earl of Clanrickard put on Irish dress when they escaped and went into revolt.⁵³ In this dynastic society marriages were hugely important. The most famous celebration which took place on Rathlin Island in 1568/9 was the double marriage for mercenaries in which Turlough Luineach O'Neill married Agnes Campbell, the Lady of Kintyre, and Hugh O'Donnell married her daughter, Finola MacDonnell. The most subversive was of course Hugh O'Neill's elopement with Mabel Bagenal, the so-called 'Helen of the Elizabethan wars'.⁵⁴ Then there was that most Irish of social occasions - the funeral. According to *the Annals of Loch Cé*, Brian Caech O Coinnegain, an eminent Connacht cleric, had himself interred in a pagan burial mound rather than allow himself to be placed in one of the recently Protestantized churches in the vicinity.⁵⁵ The mourners in the cortege at Sir Nicholas Bagenal's funeral in 1591 are a good example of

⁴⁸ James Hogan. 'Shane O'Neill comes to the court of Elizabeth'. In S. Pender (ed.), *Féilscribhinn Torna ... Essays and studies presented to Professor Tadhg Ua Donnchadha (Torna)* (Cork, 1947), 154-70; Ciarán Brady, *Shane O'Neill* (Dundalk, 1996)

⁴⁹ P.R.O. SP.63/175, no.71.

⁵⁰ Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion*, chs 8 & 9; idem, 'Faith and fatherland or Queen and Country', *Dúiche Néill* (1994), introduction & 'The 1597 ceasefire documents', *DN* (1997) introduction.

⁵¹ 'Report of a journey into the North of Ireland written to Justice Carey by Harrington', 1599, (Thomas Park (ed.), *Nugae Antiquae* (London, 1804), I, 247-52.

⁵² 'Sidney's memoir', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, (1860), 186-7.

⁵³ Bagwell, II, p.321

⁵⁴ Ibid, III, pp.223-5.

⁵⁵ W.M. Hennessy, *The annals of Loch Cé: a chronicle of Irish affairs, 1014-1590*, (2 Vols. London, 1871), ii. 437.

the network of support which he had built up and an indicator of the support his son Henry could expect.⁵⁶ From the colonial period elaborate funeral monuments remain to this day as symbols of the social success of the settlers. Most notably there is Boyle's monument in St Patrick's Cathedral which Wentworth forced him to move to a side-altar and his famously kitsch family tomb in St Mary's church in Youghal.⁵⁷

A more active, conscious narrated type of public display was of course drama. This is where we can look into the politics of Anglo-Irish towns. They staged mystery plays reflective of their guild structure, civic pride and continuing Catholicism. Dublin corporation staged *the Nine Worthies* with its array of biblical, classical and Christian heroes at high-points in Sussex's deputyship. The medieval theatrical tradition persisted in Irish towns longer than their English counterparts. It is not clear when the plays were last performed in Dublin but in Kilkenny they were being staged as late as 1637. It was in Kilkenny in the early 1550s that John Bale, appointed bishop of Ossory by Edward VI, attempted to promote Protestantism by getting the local youth to stage his plays at the market cross. He was of course run out of town.⁵⁸ The modern theatre tradition was developing in England. At least four court masques, one dating from Edward's reign, one from Mary's reign, one from the middle of Elizabeth's and another in James deal directly with Ireland.⁵⁹ Ben Jonson's *Irish Masque* was performed twice in front of the king in 1613 and 1614. It involved Irish servants throwing off their mantles to reveal themselves as nobles, rude big-pipe music giving way to the more melodious harp and King James being represented in a neo-platonic fashion as a prince of the Milesian race bringing harmony and unity to the turbulent politics of Ireland.⁶⁰ Meanwhile the commercial theatre was establishing itself in London and this provided a space where independent comment could be made about the fraught course of Anglo-Irish relations. Chris Highley has shown how late Elizabethan theatre, especially Shakespeare's Henry plays, was able to reflect on contemporary Irish events by displacing the action onto other personages, periods and peripheries.⁶¹ Prior to the restoration there was no commercial theatre in Ireland. Travelling players entertained Sidney and Mountjoy until John Ogilby set up the first playhouse in Werburgh St in Dublin. James Shirley, the English Catholic playwright, put on a few truly awful plays there. One looks in vain for anything political in his *St Patrick for Ireland*, unless of course Wentworth himself was being equated with St Patrick!⁶² Far more political is *Cola's Furie*, the Confederate Catholic play in Kilkenny that Pat Coughlan has unearthed.

Visual representations also carried political ideas. All the surviving paintings of sixteenth-century Irish figures - Garret Og, earl of Kildare, Elizabeth, the Fair Geraldine, Black Tom of Ormond - portray the subjects in English dress. The first authenticated painting of an Irishman in Irish dress is a century later - the 1680 portrait of Sir Neill O'Neill - and it is a deliberate exercise in Jacobite nostalgia. The only sixteenth-century example is that of Tom Lee, the English army captain, painted in 1594 by Marcus Gheeraedts, who wished to have himself

⁵⁶ Philip Bagenal, *Vicissitudes of an Anglo-Irish family* (London, 1925) p.36

⁵⁷ Canny, *The upstart earl : a study of the social and mental world of Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork, 1566-1643* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁵⁸ St John Seymour, *Anglo-Irish literature*, ch.8

⁵⁹ In 1552, 1557, 1577; Hiram Morgan, 'Festive Irishmen: An 'Irish' procession in Stuttgart, 1617', *History Ireland*, Autumn, 1997, pp.15-16.

⁶⁰ Jonson, *Works*, 1616.

⁶¹ Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the crisis in Ireland*, Cambridge, 1997, chs 2-4 & 6.

⁶² James Shirley, *St Patrick for Ireland* (London, 1640).

chosen as intermediary to negotiate peace with Hugh O'Neill.⁶³ In the seventeenth century Wentworth had himself painted twice by Van Dyke - as successful commander of the army with a fawning greyhound supposed to represent Ireland at his feet and as active administrator a tent in the interior dictating letters to his secretary. Less accomplished artistically but nevertheless interesting are the four drawings made for Gaelicised Bourkes of Mayo in their *Historia et Genealogia Familiae de Burgo* c.1580. These indicate an aristocratic family who valued their Christian piety, Norman origins and military prowess.⁶⁴ Also in the sixteenth century generic images of the Irish began to appear in costume-books which featured different nationalities and their distinctive dress. These books were at first in manuscript - the most famous examples of Irishmen are the watercolours by Albrecht Durer (1521) and Lucas De Heere (early 1570s). Neither artist drew from life but De Heere had civil as well as wild Irishmen. These manuscript costume-books were never known to the same extent as the printed ones for which they were prototypes. The printed costume-books became popular 'coffee table' books from the 1560s on. According to Roy Strong, the model for Tom Lee's portrayal as an Irish kerne was 'Hybernus Miles' in a Cologne publication of 1578.⁶⁵ Other images of the Irish found their way into print. Andrew Boorde's *Introduction of knowledge* (1550) had a populist account of the customs and languages of different nationalities with a satirical image of each prefacing his various chapters. The Irish chapter was fronted by a couple delousing each other and the English one has a near naked man (subsequently copied by De Heere) who is so vain he cannot decide what to wear.⁶⁶ More importantly the frontispiece of John Bale's *Vocacyon* (Basle, 1553) with a meek English Christian menaced by a devil-faced Irish Papist, both of them identified by caption rather than national dress, created lasting stereotypes.⁶⁷ The idea of equating the Irish with both savagery and papistry eventually came together in John Derrick's *Image of Ireland* (1581) This book which represents the Irish as a reprobate nation was produced in John Day's workshop in London which interestingly also produced Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the tract establishing the English as an elect nation. The Irish kerne, on whom Derrick concentrates, are brutish in being both uncouth and violent by nature but also encouraged in their belligerence by the Rome-running friars. For Protestants like Derrick Irishness was a synecdoche for papistry - it was as if their national characteristics had already singled them out for reprobation. The greatest impact of Derrick comes across when the images are examined along with the corresponding text - however the fact that only one of the surviving four copies has all its plates intact suggests that the images were used contemporaneously as posters. The other lasting impression of Derrick's *Image* was the projection of Lord Deputy Sidney as a military leader.⁶⁸ Subsequently Lord Deputies namely Essex, Mountjoy and Cromwell had handbills produced portraying themselves as conquering generals. Prints of Queen Elizabeth herself may also have been distributed to political leaders in Ireland in the same way as portraits of the Great White Mother (Queen Victoria) were given to Indian chiefs in Canada. For instance it was claimed - almost certainly by way of misrepresentation - at O'Rourke's treason trial in 1590 that he had put up an image of the Queen and had his gallowglasses chop it up. Certainly the Spanish agents Martin de la Cerda and Mateo de Oviedo distributed portraits of their king - Philip III - along with gold chains

⁶³ Brian de Breffney, 'An Elizabethan Political painting', *Irish Arts Review* (1984), 39-41. Oil on Canvas 903/4 x 595/16. Tate Gallery, T 03028.

⁶⁴ TCD MS 1440

⁶⁵ Sir Roy Strong, *The English Icon* (London, 1969), pp.350-1: Hadrianus Dammen, *Imperii ac sacerdotis ornatus* (Cologne, 1578), Z4.

⁶⁶ Andrew Boorde, *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (London, 1550).

⁶⁷ *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the bishoprick of Ossorie in Irelande his persecucions in the same and finall delyueraunce* (Basle, 1553)

⁶⁸ Quinn, ed. *John Derrick* op.cit.

when they met O'Neill, O'Donnell and sixty other Irish noblemen at the Monastery of Donegal in 1600.⁶⁹

To study ideology in Ireland we first have to know how information, knowledge and ideas circulated there. The answer is, with difficulty. Indeed one sometimes feels that it was possible for officials in London or scholars in the continent to know as much about Ireland itself, however defective, useless or selective their information might be, than many of the country's own inhabitants. It was in the first instance an oral culture where memory was important. News was transferred by rumour or carried by word of mouth not only by messengers themselves but also by travelling players, prostitutes and peddlers. Beyond this literacy rates were not high. Many Irish lords as late as 1600 only sign with a mark. If we take the Gaelic learned classes, the clergy and, say, ten per cent of the inhabitants of the towns, then we are talking about a literate population of 10,000 in the 1530s, 15,000 in 1600 and 50,000 by 1640. Even if we were to double or treble these figures based on a conservative estimate of Ireland's population at ½ million in the sixteenth century to 1 million, the literate sector is still very small in number. Paper was imported into Ireland for purposes of correspondence and record keeping and also to sustain Ireland's long-standing manuscript tradition. This manuscript tradition was strong amongst the Gaelic Irish and remained so into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - witness the many copies of Keating's *Foras Feasa* which were executed. However at the end of the Middle Ages manuscripts were still rare and hence valuable. After the battle of Pilltown in 1461 Edmund MacRichard Butler ransomed himself by giving the earl of Desmond the books of Pottlerath and Carrick in part payment.

We have the catalogues of the Franciscan Library in Youghal in 1491 and the earl of Kildare in 1526. Neither is very extensive by European standards. The greatest noble in the land and the king of England's preference as governor had 110 books in Latin, English, French and Irish. The Irish books were all manuscripts. This library would have provided a reasonable introduction to western culture and to Ireland but not much more. Many manuscripts remained hard to come by. When Campion wrote a *History of Ireland* in 1570, his host Sir James Stanihurst, the recorder of Dublin and speaker of the Irish parliament, owned a copy of Cambrensis' *Topographia* but had to hunt around Dublin before he found a copy of the same author's *Expugnatio*. When Michael O Cleirigh compiled *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* in 1630, he had to scour the whole country to find the necessary manuscript materials from which to make the compilation.

What difference did printing make? D. B. Quinn once again did much of the pioneering work in this area. The books in the Youghal and Kildare inventories (and indeed the imported manuscripts before them) brought outside knowledge to the attention of the Irish intelligentsia. However our first record of books being purchased relates to John Dartas, a Dublin stationer buying books in half dozens and dozens in London in 1545. These are mostly ABCs, primers in English and Latin grammars, religious service books, books of poetry and ballads and one book of a political nature, Edward Walshe's *Office and duty of serving one's country*. In 1566 the crown sent 865 service and communion books to Ireland for William Leach and Humphrey Powell to sell. Note to sell not distribute gratis. A staple of the book trade is of course school text books and these could also prove political as Bishop Lyons of Cork discovered in 1596 when he found that the Queen's style and title had been torn out of all the grammar books in

⁶⁹ *Cal .S.P. Spain, 1589-1603*, pp.655-6.

his diocese. He had two of the teachers jailed wondering aloud: 'what good shall be looked for in this commonwealth, where the youth are taught by such schoolmasters?'⁷⁰ Later in 1599 when Sir John Harrington met O'Neill, he presented him with a copy of his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. He had been able to purchase this in Dublin. A proper study of the port records for the sixteenth century might show the extent of book imports from English ports to Ireland (though the evidence would only indicate their weight and not their titles). Books were also presumably being imported from continental ports, including many Catholic titles which the English state would have preferred not to have been read in Ireland.

Of course it can be argued that the Tudor conquest of Ireland is intimately bound up with printing. 'Gunner' Skeffington in 1534 arrived to stamp out the Kildare rebellion with *Ordnances for the government of Ireland* the first printed tract relating to Ireland. Government loans set up Humphrey Powell as a printer in Dublin in 1550. Apart from the book of Common Prayer and an Irish Catechism and later New Testament, the main products of this press were the proclamations of the Lord Deputies. Big efforts were made to print the *Irish Statutes* in London in 1572. However, printing may also have been counterproductive. Skeffington was not anxious to distribute the ordinances which he brought fearing doubtless that they would stiffen resistance. In 1573 Thomas Smith and his son put out a promotional tract in London advertising their proposed colony in Ulster. As a result news of their venture, if not the actual pamphlet, had reached the Clandeboye O'Neills before the colonists themselves had arrived. In the late 1580s there seems to have been an attempt to spread the 'black legend' of Spanish atrocities in the Americas using a translation of Las Casas, but these did not prevent the Gaelic Irish making common cause with the Spaniards in late 1590s. Ware's publication in his *Histories of Spenser's View* in 1633 provides an example. It frightened and perhaps forewarned the Irish to the designs of Wentworth's government. Michael Kearney in the preface of his manuscript translation of Keating into English in 1635 affirms this.

Circa 1600 the book knowledge as distinct from social knowledge situation in Ireland was better than it had been. A papermill had operated from the early 1590s and Luke Chaloner followed by James Ussher built up the first university library in the country in Trinity College, Dublin. However government printing press was not as active as it could have been. Had it printed more in Irish (and indeed more of what people wanted) literacy rates may have been higher and demand greater. Furthermore, the most important books about Ireland were being published outside Ireland either in London or on the continent. The Franciscans in Louvain set up a press using an Irish font in 1609; the Confederate Catholics eventually set up their own printing presses in Ireland in the 1640s. Unfortunately we have no idea of the print runs of books relating to Ireland. Anyhow, the key thing about the printing press was that it encouraged debate. Very rarely do poets or the writers of manuscripts react or refer to the works of other contemporary poets or manuscript writers. Printed items were disseminated much more widely and more cheaply. Hence Keating when he wrote *Foras Feasa* was reacting to a long list of writers in English whose works had been circulated in print.

Types of writing

We now turn to the political content in contemporary writing in Ireland. In a poor society like Ireland with limited resources, writing is far less likely to be for divertissement or pure

⁷⁰ *Cal. S.P. Ireland, 1596-97*, p.17

entertainment. Richard Bellings wrote and published concluding cantos to Sidney's *Arcadia* in the 1620s but he did so at the Inns of Court in London not in Ireland. Most writing was undertaken for practical purposes for instance in the cases of financial accounts or legal contracts. As regards correspondence, it falls into three categories: personal, commercial and political. Even in the first two cases, many of the news items mentioned by correspondents were of political importance. On the political side we have very few letters that the Irish lords wrote to each other. Most surviving correspondence deals with normal run of the mill politics - taxes, the law, military matters, marriage alliances etc. Of more ideological significance were circular letters, hand-written proclamations, treaties and records of political negotiations. These items were usually either intercepted or handed over to Dublin Castle and then relayed to Whitehall. There is other correspondence which reached London directly - not only the letters of Irish lords but also those of government officials and English settlers in Ireland. Much of this was ordinary correspondence - requests for jobs, posts and favours and details of administrative and political developments in Ireland.

However there is another category - the so-called 'treatise' on Ireland. These came under a number of titles: 'tracts', 'treatises', 'books', 'plans', 'descriptions', 'plots', 'projects', 'discoveries', 'discourses', 'views', 'surveys' etc. and were of varying degrees of sophistication. Some were bare lists of headings and costings aimed at military conquest or administrative reform, others were far more detailed with in-depth analysis and elaborate plans for political change or military strategy or colonisation. These proposals were being sent in by minor officials, Irish lords, colonial projectors and were intended to circulate and influence those in high government circles in London. The object was to influence government policy either for one's own private gain or to benefit of one's class or group. For government it was consultancy on the cheap. Such self-appointed advisers were the stock-in-trade of early modern government. In mid-Tudor England there were the Commonwealth men who wrote proposals to solve the country's ills, similarly in seventeenth-century Spain, there were the *arbitristas* who wrote about the country's perceived decline and proposed remedies. Letters of advice were sent to governments on all manner of topics and the practice continued into the nineteenth century. The most famous of these was in fact Machiavelli's *Prince* whereby he hoped his advice to Lorenzo d'Medici would win him favour from a regime he had actively conspired against. Why were there so many treatises written to the state in London about Irish affairs? When Thomas Wilson, keeper of the Records of Whitehall, examined the papers relating to Ireland in the State Papers in 1619 he proclaimed that 'there was more ado with Ireland than all the world beside'. Well, there were three basic reasons. Affairs in Ireland were in a continual state of turbulence; government in London was physically removed from Ireland and therefore many reports and requests which otherwise would have been *viva voce* were written down; and third, there were fortunes to be made in Ireland and thus many people were literally putting in their tenders.

These treatises weren't meant for publication. For instance, Barnaby Riche writes a lot about Ireland. His treatises and printed works share the same subject matter but the first is direct and *ad hominem*, the second is far more generalised. Here he is seeking to influence the different audiences: (1) policy-makers and (2) embryonic public opinion. Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* was a treatise for government circles. When his allegorical *Faerie Queene* had failed to galvanise the Protestant nation, he made a direct appeal to the state couched in a format that it was very familiar with and therewith produced the most sophisticated of all the

contemporary treatises. It circulated as a manuscript (at least 20 copies survive) in the upper echelons of the state apparatus. One of the earliest copies is in a commonplace book of the earl of Essex bound up with other reform treatises of a similar ilk by the likes of Thomas Lee and Barnaby Riche. Since these are all by anti-Cecil men demanding speedy, military reform of the corrupt, temporising regime in Ireland, the treatises are probably a good guide to Essex's own views and objectives. This was an internal government memorandum; it was not intended for publication any more than for Machiavelli's *Prince* and it caused similar consternation when it appeared in print. It would be the equivalent of leaking a cabinet paper today. When Ware published it in 1633, it was quite different from the other three chronicles in the same book and it was still highly sensitive thirty-seven years after its composition even though Ware had tried his best to desensitise it. It was quickly taken, as we have seen, as a pointer to the new government's policy. Another example of a treatise which found its way into print is *De Regno Hiberniae Commentarius*.⁷¹ This was written by Peter Lombard when visiting Rome in 1600 as a request to the Pope to support Hugh O'Neill in his war against England. Even though Lombard changed his position on Ireland to a more conciliatory stance in James's reign, it was this most nationalist of his works which the friars published in Louvain seven years after the author's death. Furthermore they added in a whole section to refute the recent Scottish Catholic attempt to appropriate Irish ancient saints. The book was promptly banned by the English Privy Council and it would be interesting to find out if there is any connection with Ware's publishing of Spenser.

Republication and Adaptation

There are other writings and works of literature where the political content is more allusive or allegorical than these treatises. For instance a number of Irish medical tracts are extant; these have obviously a practical importance but even some of these have important marginalia including the medical scribe O Chadla who makes notes on the massacre at Mullaghmast. This is the period of the Reformation, most religious literature is simply politics by other methods and some is obviously political. Likewise the writing up of ancient Gaelic law and mythology was also a self-conscious political statement. Sometimes it is even a reflection of contemporary politics with new redactions being adapted to current events. In this way Nerys Patterson has made claims about certain law tracts which were being rewritten to take account of the encroachment of English law and Caoimhín Breathnach has shown how the tale of Mac Datho's pig *Scela Mucce Meic Da thó* was redone to meet the needs of the late sixteenth MacDonnells. Plainly also Michael O Cleirigh made a new redaction of *the Book of Invasions* because a new period of conquest was underway and it was by means of analogy with the earliest settlers a way of including the Old English in the modern Irish nation. Indeed such adaptation was not uncommon in contemporary manuscripts in English.

Bardic poetry was also plainly political. The poets were after all in the pay of the lords. The Elizabethan state obviously feared them and went to great lengths to persecute them and wipe them out while by turns on occasion paying them to produce poems praising Queen Elizabeth. The main aspect of their work praising Gaelic lordship was not anachronistic. Lordship, though under severe pressure, was still a going concern in the 1590s. Many of the poems sensitively reflect contemporary events. When the Gaelic system was broken, the poets and the poetry metamorphosed accordingly. Neither the poetry or the law tracts or the mythology were about recording a doomed civilisation for posterity. It would never have been written

⁷¹ Peter Lombard, *De regno Hiberniae, sanctorum insula, commentarius*, ed. P.F. Moran (Dublin, 1868).

down at all if that had been deemed so useless, because this society was too impoverished to commit limited resources to doing so. Furthermore, the use of the traditional forms - and this goes for elsewhere in early modern Europe - were a way of legitimising change and giving it authority and the patina of antiquity. Hence O Cleirigh in compiling *the Annals of the kingdoms of Ireland* used the traditional format thereby disguising a radically different purpose from the localised annals of the Gaelic lordship which had gone before.

More generally contemporary historians of Ireland, despite high-sounding commitments to use original sources, are all either political in content or political in purpose. Two good examples are on the one hand James Ussher who discovers the Ireland of saints and scholars in the *Ancient religion of the British and Irish* to be a pure Protestant church and on the other Keating with his adherence to native sources who shows pre-Norman Ireland to be a precursor of the Counter-Reformation polity. Besides these obviously politically motivated histories, we have a number of descriptions and travelogues. These reflect religious and national prejudices as well as preconceived views distilled from the writings of earlier travellers. The best known for these accounts is of course that of Fynes Moryson, the much-travelled secretary of Lord Deputy Mountjoy. There is also work of mapmakers – mostly English but sometimes continental. Their maps were mostly executed for practical purposes but they do reflect visually, either symbolically, allegorically or sometimes even realistically, the political situation in Ireland. These important representations of the English conquest and colonisation of Ireland are not only ideologically important – they also bring together the issues of text and image and the need to critique both. For instance one of the reasons lying behind Thomas Lee's famous portrait was his dissatisfaction at the representation of his role in the battle of Beleek in a contemporary map made by John Thomas.

Ideology

Most of these surviving items made in Ireland or about Ireland can and should be judged political in some way or other. It was a time when writing was a far more purposeful activity than now and when publication took far greater efforts than today. It is from these new materials that we can seek to build a study of ideology in early modern Ireland. We can hone in on certain political ideas - the development of a commonwealth ideology; the promotion of civility and colonisation, the growth of government and its tendency towards absolutism; the debate about corruption; the indigenous reaction to these developments; the formation of new identities and the impact of Reformation and Counter-reformation.

New Commonwealth

The fundamental political change came in 1541 with the establishment of the kingdom of Ireland. There was relatively little prior consideration of what this development entailed. What had previously discussed was the revival of the medieval English colony by local humanists encouraged by Wolsey and Cromwell in England. As Brendan Bradshaw has shown this led to the writing of reform treatises like the 1515 'State of Ireland' tract, Patrick Finglas' 'Breviate' etc. 'New Englishmen' who came to Ireland in the 1530s wrote more tracts. However the challenge was now on to create a new commonwealth and as a result a whole host of new reform treatises were composed and circulated. Nicholas Canny has excavated one of the most impressive Rowland White's 'Discors touching Ireland', circa 1569.⁷² His plans, to be

⁷² Canny, 'Rowland White's "Discors touching Ireland", c.1569'. *Irish Historical Studies*, (1978), 439-63

undertaken by parliamentary statute, involved colonisation, religious reform, mercantilist measures, educational developments, etc. It was an example of mid-Tudor commonwealth thinking at its most extensive. We need a discussion of the language of all these tracts which are either that of decay, revival and reform (and I have yet to see this word 'reform' properly explained in its contemporary context) or that of the body politic - diagnosis, remedy, illness. etc. Basically, we need, amongst other things, a debate about the language of Tudor conquest.

Civility

The principal problem in creating the new polity was the integration of Gaelic Irish lordships. The mechanism devised to do this was Surrender and Regrant. Unlike the act of kingship itself, some thought had been given to this idea in the previous decades, but the process begun with such a fanfare in the early 1540 quickly petered out. Tudor administrators had little knowledge of the decentralised, segmentary society which faced them in the greater part of Ireland and had very little idea of how to create a civil society out of its components. Furthermore, their zeal for anglicisation compounded the incomprehension and their increasing commitment to force merely highlighted the worst aspects of native society.

Nicholas Canny has long since observed the application of various primitive anthropological models to the Gaelic Ireland. My take, twenty years on, is that the labelling becomes more pessimistic over time. In the early stages of conquest there is the optimistic belief amongst the likes of Thomas Smith, William Gerrard etc. that the Irish resemble the Britons before the Romans and the Welsh before the English conquered them. By the height of the conquest we have Spenser saying that the Irish are not capable of civility and must be kept under the iron fist because they are descended from the Scythians, the most barbarous people of ancient world. After the conquest one of the most interesting views is that of Sir James Perrot in the introduction to his unfinished history of Ireland. He believed that ethnic character, probably following Bodin, was set by climate. Subjection had improved the manners of the Irish somewhat but their innate characteristics were now showing through in their addiction to popery and hence they were more dangerous than ever. These various views on the alleged 'barbarity' of the Irish were of course part of a larger early modern discourse on civility. Ironically, though surely not accidentally, one of the most interesting English discourses on how to fashion a gentleman is set in Ireland in the 1580s. This is Ludowick Bryskett's *Discourse of the Civil Life*, a Protestant adaptation of an earlier Italian text, which has as its disputants a teddy bears' picnic of New Englishmen at a cottage in the hills overlooking Dublin.

Colonisation

To promote civility in Ireland plantation was increasingly the preferred solution as the momentum of conquest built up. It would be an example of civilised life to the Irish, a check on their designs and those of their foreign allies and an impetus in economic development. In terms of colonisation theory, the English approach to Ireland had some traditional features, some unique features and some innovative ones. There was the Anglo-Norman precedent in Ireland itself which none of the contemporary commentators and projectors could afford to ignore. There was the Roman example of soldier-colonists and nucleated colonies, which

attracted classical scholars such as Edmund Walshe and the Smiths, father and son. Quinn emphasises the classical aspect of the Smith colonial venture in Ulster. Indeed Smith junior went so far as to propose that his colonists intermarry with the MacDonnell Scots (*à la* Livy) and combine against the Irish. By contrast, there was little attempt to exploit contemporary Iberian models. What was aimed at by these methods was the replication of English society of market towns and arable-farming landed estates in Ireland. What was achieved was the grafting of these foreign features onto the older native society. An unusual feature of this colonial discourse was that the English conqueror would enable the Irish serfs to be liberated from their tyrannical masters, the Macs and Oes.

However the unique feature was the emphasis in all writings on the fear of degeneration - of going native. This was because the medieval colony in Ireland, or a good part of it, had become Gaelicised. As Richard Stanihurst put it, far from the conqueror giving his laws, language and customs to the conquered the reverse had happened. This anxiety, which threw into the question the idea of natural English superiority, was particularly pronounced in the late sixteenth century when the first Englishmen were arriving, often unmarried soldiers, in a country where social mores were more relaxed than at home. This was exactly the illegal measure that Thomas Smith junior was proposing to undertake wholesale. More obviously, the argument about the medieval degeneration was readily accepted and promoted by the New English so as to tar the old English Catholic colonists with an Irish brush, to deem them untrustworthy and thereby to displace them as the governing elite in Ireland and even subject them to colonisation.

The innovative aspect of colonialism in Ireland was the use of promotional literature. First by the Smiths in 1572 for their private colony and then by others to back up the government-sponsored schemes in Munster in the 1580s and Ulster in the 1610s. It is interesting to contrast the Smiths' printed propaganda to the gentry - about profit - in the 1570s with Sir Francis Bacon's private manuscript advice to James I - about honour - in 1608. What evolved in colonising Ireland was a unique mixture of private and state organisation which held good for the rest of the British imperial experience. Another issue is whether or not English administrators ceased to advocate colonisation in the 1620s and after, as contended by Raymond Gillespie, in favour of merely transferring land ownership to rent-reaping incomers. Certainly the promotional literature tails off, but by this stage new migration patterns been established which brought settlers to Ireland 'naturally'. Ironically one Roman feature which does carry through stronger and stronger in the seventeenth century and which peaks in the 1650s is the idea of transplanting troublesome natives to remote parts or even abroad.

Government

The principal agents of the colonisation programme, and reform generally in Ireland, were the lord deputies and lord lieutenants who governed the country in the absence of a resident monarch. The policies of these governors have been much written about but far less attention has been paid to the contemporary representation of these men and their office. This representation was part and parcel not only of policy but also the evolving role of the office. After 1534 the lord deputies were English officials backed by a standing army. St Leger in 1541 by pushing through the act of kingship also inflated the status of his own office and by determining to rule the whole of Ireland vastly extended the patronage possibilities. His successor Sussex put in place the policy of conquest and colonisation. But it was Sir Henry

Sidney who beginning 1565 seized on the office and its vice-regal status as a means of propaganda.

From Ireland Sidney wrote long letters to court about his progresses round the country. He brought Campion over to write his less-than-successful experiment in parliamentary consultation with the political nation. In the preamble in the attainder of O'Neill in the *Irish Statutes*, which he urged to be printed in 1572, he was portrayed as the new Strongbow come to complete the conquest. In 1577 the Irish section of Holinshed's *Chronicles* was dedicated to Sidney but he left the government of Ireland under a cloud shortly afterwards. But the propaganda continued. In 1581 John Derrick brought out his *Image of Ireland*. This work was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney and in a set of amazing woodcuts portrayed Sir Henry Sidney commanding the army in Ireland and sitting under the cloth of state taking submission. It must have been planned long since because Derrick had drawn Sidney *in situ* and furthermore it must have cost a small fortune to produce being set and cut in John Day's printshop by Dutch experts. In 1583 Sir Henry sent his long bombastic memoir of government to Secretary Walsingham. The sources were his earlier long letters to court in the same way as Machiavelli's 'Legations' had been. Both the *Image* and the 'Memoir' were job applications - one public, the other private - from Sidney or his son to return to Ireland. In both the overwhelming representation of the governorship is a martial one wielding the sword of justice. The Sidney propaganda does not end there. In 1586 in the second edition of Holinshed, John Hooker, an old Sidney associate, had the job of continuing the history of Ireland from 1545 to 1585. He gave St Leger, Croft and Bellingham two pages, Sussex (governor 1556-64) one paragraph, Sidney forty-two pages and the Desmond revolt thirty pages. His write-up of Sidney, using his papers, the *Image* and the 'Memoir' is quite extraordinary. Sidney is described for instance as sitting under cloth of estate in 'princely robes' at parliament and being received with great pomp in Irish cities. The section on Sidney concludes with four pages of praise based on a note by his old servant, Edmund Molineux. Fortunately for the Tudor state this was an obituary; it must have been glad to have seen the back of the Sidneys, Sir Henry dying in 1585 and Sir Philip being killed in 1586. As Molineux himself noted neither had a commoner ever held the office of both Ireland and Wales together, as Sir Henry had done, nor been the object of so much envy.

Another of the earl of Leicester's faction, Sir John Perrot, governor 1584-88, modelled his policies on Sidney and acted the part of viceroy sending an agent directly to the Scottish king and making an independent request to the English parliament. It was not an easy or sensible time to be acting in a semi-monarchical capacity with a touchy Queen on the throne and it may be the case that Elizabeth allowed the trumped-up charges of treason by Perrot's factional enemies to proceed to teach the governors of Ireland a lesson in humility. Ireland could even pose a threat when there was a build-up of troops there. The Irish governor was the only major officer of state with a permanent military force at his back. Essex, who overstepped himself by making too many knights and negotiating with rebels, asked his successor Mountjoy to bring the Irish army to England to cower the Cecilians and coerce the Queen. Camden, writing in *Britaine* 1610 described the Lord Deputy's authority as 'very large, ample and royal'. 'And verily there is not (look throughout all Christendom againe) any other vice-roy that commeth nearer with the majestie of a king, whether you respect his jurisdiction and authority or his traine, furniture and provision'. When another bout of reform government was deemed necessary in the 1620s, two books rehabilitating Perrot were published. A new viceroy was eventually found in Wentworth who was already the Lord President of the North. He got himself painted twice by Van Dyke, once as administrator, once as general and began

building a palace at Jigginstown. His military build-up in Ireland against the Scottish Covenanters was perceived as a threat by the English parliament. Finally it was Cromwell, the only commoner ever to hold the lord lieutenancy of Ireland, whose successful expedition to Ireland and return at the head of the army, set himself on the way to dictatorship.

Absolutism

The object of reform policy in Ireland was the promotion and establishment of the English common law. What was emerging instead was the arbitrary and absolutist exercise of state power in Ireland. In theoretical terms it was the obvious place for either the establishment of a Roman-style dictator with emergency power because of the existence of continual crisis or for the Machiavellian manoeuvres of a prince who acquires a new state. Sidney and his secretary, Tremayne, devised a method to establish a permanent tax or composition to pay for the upkeep of the army. They planned an unusually large garrison to be funded by traditional *ad hoc* methods which was hoped would prove so burdensome to the community that it would agree to pay a regular tax to keep a smaller force. The political nation refused to be coerced. Dr Brady has explored this controversy but ultimately pulls his punches about what it amounted to in theoretical terms. Though ironically when Sidney wrote a letter of advice to his immediate successor Lord Grey it was generally about consulting the political nation and following established practice. The three great reform tracts of the 1590s - Croft, Beacon and Spenser - all call for a governor with extraordinary powers. Beacon uses the Roman expression 'dictator' and Spenser holds up the bloodthirsty Grey as an example of best practice. Moreover, he asserts that the common law cannot operate properly in the exceptional circumstances of Ireland. He calls for the return of martial law, which had originally been introduced by Sussex in 1556 but which had been phased out in the late 1580s. My colleague, David Edwards, has been writing on martial law in Tudor Ireland. He may have discovered the missing link between absolutism and colonialism. The governors gave out martial law commissions to captains who terrorised the local population. When they revolted, their lands were confiscated and made subject to plantation.

When the country was eventually subdued, other arbitrary methods, such as prerogative courts, most notably the Castle Chamber established by Sidney, and acts of state issued by the Lord Deputy and Council as proclamations could have free reign. These methods all need to be investigated not just empirically but also for their intellectual, legal and constitutional justifications. One area that has been studied is the matter of extra-judicial resolutions by Hans Pawlisch in his work on Sir John Davies. Pawlisch highlights two points - first Davies' claim that because Ireland was a conquered country its inhabitants had no inherent rights and secondly that the English judges could meet specifically to pronounce on fundamental law thereby overriding Gaelic customs and Anglo-Irish liberties. Statements like the following from Davies' *Law Reports* sets alarm bells ringing: 'the common law doth excell all other laws in upholding a free monarchie, which is the most excellent form of government, exalting the prerogative royall and being very tender and watchful to preserve it, and yet maintaining without the ingenious liberty of the subject'. The work done on Davies should now be extended to the publications and judgement of Chief Justice Bolton and a look taken at the Case of Tenures (1637) where the law officers and Wentworth's government simply voided all previous land grants in the province of Connacht. Basically a proper legal history of early modern Ireland is long overdue. Indeed one which considers the judicial processes of the colonial regime both empirically and theoretically in contrast in the perceived common law norms of England.

Corruption

In 1612 Sir John Davies in *The Discovery of the True Causes* claimed that the common law had at last been established in 'his Majesties happie reign'. In fact Davies was cynically pulling the wool over the eyes of the king and the government in London; indeed recent work suggests that Davies would have written almost anything to secure his personal advancement - in this case his longing for a top job in the English judiciary. A better guide is Barnaby Riche. For one of the many telling passages of his 'Anothomy' (1612), he shows the assize judges moving round the country. 'Agayne in thos shyre townes wher they syt, where they might dispatch all that they have to do for the king, in two or three days at the most, they continue the place sometyme x dayes, sometymes xii, and sometimes more in receyvynge of cyvill billes, (as they all them) matters that do nothing concerne the king, but do fyll them own purses & ther clarkes that be about them'. One can only assume that for the other days, they sat as arbitrators, as state Brehons, and had a cut for so doing. In fact Riche portrays a system where the New English, far from civilising the inhabitants in manners and religion and instituting royal justice and authority, were under the guise of reform fleecing both the natives and the crown. Essentially the conquest and colonisation of Ireland involved, out of sight of the crown, massive corruption and fraud. The best example of worst practice is of course Richard Boyle who became earl of Cork and one of the richest men in the three kingdoms. The corruption seems to have been worse during the governments of second-rank deputies and the interim lords justice. Since they were given little money to spend on forward policies, they spent their time getting rich rather than winning honour. There is a good amount of writing on this subject from contemporaries. There are statements by Catholic writers in published works but there is much more in treatises written to inform London about what was happening. This includes the writings of Thomas Legge, Thomas Lee, Richard Beacon, Edmund Spenser, John Harrington, Barnaby Riche in a number of tracts and Richard Hadsor with his 'Advertisements'. The result was the attempt of English crown by means of 1622 commission and the 'thorough' government of Wentworth to sort out the systematic defrauding of the state and to reboot the whole reform project. Corrupt practices have been touched on in books by Brady, Morgan, Treadwell and Kearney. However, looked at as a whole, there is enough material here in Ireland alone for a monograph on early modern attitudes to corruption. Because Ireland was an unsupervised subordinate kingdom/colony, it happened on a massive scale. And because criticisms had to be written back to the metropolis, we have it recorded and revealed us to a much greater extent than otherwise. The flipside of the Tudor discourse about civility in Ireland is the Stuart discourse on corruption there.

Native opposition and reaction

There was continuous opposition to the English conquest and colonisation of Ireland but the native opposition had considerable difficulty legitimising its activities, whether peaceful or warlike. The dilemma is well set out in the speech by Chief Justice Walsh, the speaker of the Irish parliament in 1585. He applauded the English mixed polity of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy as the best system of government. 'It is to be confessed that as the sunne giveth lyf to every growing thing, so doth it work his effect the more or the less, according to his neerenes or far distance from the same. And although her majestie be (as touching her authoritie) as present here as in any other wheare, yet do the subjects of this land often want

the comfort of that person, which hath in her hands the distribucion of reward and punishment, [which] can avayle much in the increasing of vertue and minishing of vice'. He urged the Lord Deputy therefore to relate the country's problems to Queen so 'that this land be not henceforward (as it was termed of old) an instrument without a sounding board'. The major problem was that in the race for reward the winners were those who tripped up their fellow runners! The most basic method of dealing with this situation was going over the head of the Deputy and appealing directly to the crown. It succeeded against Sussex, Sidney and Perrot but became increasingly less effective under the Stuarts.

The solution which the constitutionalists came up with was some sort of contract between the political nation and the state. In 1584 Delvin proposed that the Lord Deputy, appointed only for a year like a Roman proconsul, swear an oath on entering office to observe the laws and statutes of the realm and to a list of other articles. And that the nobility and members of the Irish Council would also swear an oath. In 1599 Hugh O'Neill offered to extract by main force in negotiating with the crown twenty-two articles which would have left the country under the government of the great magnates and the Palemen. The loyal Palesmen refused to go along with his strategy. The great opportunity to negotiate a contract came in the late 1620s when England was again at war with Spain and also with France. As a result in 1628, 51 graces were conceded by the English Privy Council in talks with representatives of the various interest groups in Ireland. This was potentially Ireland's Magna Carta but it was denied legislative authority by Wentworth's parliament. The two Ormond peace treaties of the 1640s can likewise be seen as attempts to negotiate a contract with the English crown. They required a free parliament to be implemented, the problem being throughout was that the constitutional opponents of conquest had never possessed such a mechanism. In which light it is hardly surprising that the first question posed by Patrick Darcy's famous *Argument* of 1641 was 'Whether the subjects of this kingdom be a free people, and to be governed only by the common laws of England and the Statutes of force in this kingdom'.

The other solution, proposed by militant elements, may be summarised as *translatio imperium*. The problem here again was legitimacy. The proponents were usually small dissident groups of nobles, not the political nation assembled in parliament. The second thing was that for these Catholic opponents of conquest, the transfer of sovereignty required papal support and affirmation, since they considered the island to be a papal fief. Transferring sovereignty to a native lord was never seriously considered. Although certain Gaelic lords exercised local and provincial sovereignty, to have revived the high-kingship would have alienated the Old English and caused acrimony in their own ranks. Witness the adverse reaction to Conor O'Mahony's *Apologia* in the late 1640s. Far better to find a foreign monarch. The Geraldine League in 1539/40 made overtures to James V of Scotland. Fitzmaurice's allies in 1569 wrote to Philip of Spain asking for a Habsburg prince to be made king of Ireland. Prospects seemed to improve the following year when Elizabeth was excommunicated by Pope Sixtus and her subjects absolved of their ties of obedience. In 1578/9 the Pope openly supported Fitzmaurice's return to Ireland with men and money. In the 1590s Irish militants again applied for a Habsburg prince. O'Neill and O'Donnell told Philip II that 'since, to our great and unspeakable detriment, we have experienced acts of injustice and wrongdoing on the part of officials whom the ruler of England used to send to us, we pray and beseech Your Majesty to designate as king over this island someone who is close to you, a man who is completely honourable and gifted, for Your Majesty's own benefit and that of the commonwealth of Ireland, a man who will not in the least disdain to rule over us but also be among us and to rule and advise our people with kindness and wisdom'. (These sentiments as you can see are

not a million miles away from those expressed by Speaker Walshe). The Spanish king made no such move and the pro-French Pope Clement VII refused to excommunicate inhabitants of Ireland who stayed loyal to Elizabeth. An alternative was canvassed in 1627 when the Irish regiments proposed to Philip IV of Spain that O'Neill and O'Donnell be made captains-general - sort of stadholders - of a republic of Ireland. At the end of the Confederate wars with Cromwell on the rampage, the idea of getting a foreign protector was revived with overtures being made to the Duke of Lorraine. None of these proposals ever got off the drawing board but they do indicate, in the light of resemblances to other dependent kingdoms such as the Netherlands and Bohemia similarly at odds with their monarchs, that Ireland's constitutional problems were not entirely unique

Identity formation

The convulsions of conquest and colonisations were of course also the cause of a major ideological shift with the recasting of identities in early modern Ireland. New identities were forged in Ireland against the background of English Faith and Fatherland which in its defensive reflexes and forward impetus was partly responsible for an increasing number of Englishmen coming to Ireland in sixteenth century. English nationalism formed in the late medieval wars against France was given a sectarian dimension because of Henry VIII's break with Rome. Good examples of this ideology are Richard Morison's *An exhortation to Englishmen* (1539) and Edward Walshe *Office and Duty* (1545). This consciousness heightened by the work done abroad by the Marian exiles engendered by Elizabeth's reign what one scholar has called 'the elect nation'. Despite the writings of Edward Walshe, a Waterford man, the English in Ireland were unable to include themselves in this concept. The actions of the Protestant Englishmen coming to Ireland pushed them in another direction and in the 1570s they began sending their sons to Catholic colleges on the continent where a faith and fatherland Irishness was being forged. Such ideas were repatriated by Fitzmaurice in 1579 whose expedition failed but the ideas were disseminated into the Gaelic camp. Hugh O'Neill at the height of the Nine Years War appealed to the Palesmen to join his struggle as fellow Irish Catholics but they were unmoved by his call. In 1641 the Palesmen at famous parley of Knockcroftly hill threw in their lot with the Gaelic Irish and the following year together they formed the Catholic Confederation of Ireland. This had happened not only because English Protestant pressure on the Palesmen had increased inordinately in early seventeenth century but also because writings such as Rothe in his *Analecta Sacra* and Keating in his *History* had prepared them intellectually for their inclusion and full participation in the Irish nation. The Gaelic Irish had also completed a journey by this time during which their poetry and history writing had become less local and increasing national. The Irish Protestants, Archbishop James Ussher and Sir James Ware, had also begun by this stage their studies of the Irish past. 1641 threw them back into reliance on England; nevertheless they had led the foundations of Anglo-Irish identity which was developed in the quieter conditions of the eighteenth century.

What is absolutely lacking in this period, despite the Union of crowns in 1603, is any sense of Britishness. The English and Lowlands Scots who came to Ulster, although referred to in official documents as British, remained separate communities until the middle of the nineteenth century. Wentworth and later Cromwell would have been happier if the increasingly Presbyterian Lowland Scots had never come to Ulster at all. The top English intellectual of day, Sir Francis Bacon, at the start of 'Certain Considerations touching the Plantations in Ireland' distinguishes between citizenship of Ireland and that of Great Britain. Ambrose Ussher, the Archbishop's brother, writes a long tract about the union of crowns. Although he

states that James has become king of England and Ireland, he never discusses the developments' significance for Ireland, either constitutional or otherwise. The subtext of this is of course that for Irish Protestants Ireland's constitutional connection was solely with England and the English state. Irish poets and historians of course celebrated the ascent of a Stuart king to the English throne. This did not lead to Britishness but merely to Jacobitism. This entailed pride that one of the Milesian race, who had thereby some justifiable right to the kingship of the ancient realm of Ireland, had claimed the more puissant but Johnney-come-lately kingship of England. However, this did not mean cosyng up to Scots rather than the English. In fact in this period Irish scholars found ample grounds to dislike Scots, even Catholic ones, after Thomas Dempster attempted to hijack Ireland's heritage of saints and scholars for Scotland. This issue spilled more ink than any other in the seventeenth century. All the major Irish Catholic writers piled into the fray and James Ussher backed them up. The Dempster debate, which incidentally awaits its scholar, shows not only that Britishness should be kicked into touch but also pan-Gaeldom. We were not willing to share our heritage with our blood brothers. Jacobitism, as construed by the poets and historians, was an Irish imperialism, one that persisted, quite illogically, even after our own Winter king came and went.

Reformation

Hand in hand with the pros and cons of conquest and colonisation went controversies over the establishment of the Reformation in Ireland. What we got at the end of the day was two reformations, each with conflicting policies of christianisation and confessionalisation. State Protestantism pursued essentially a coercive, anglicising approach to evangelisation which benefited Catholic missionaries who tended to be more community-based and more Gaelic speaking. By 1630 two churches with their different practices, ideas and structures were in operation serving two discrete communities. Both sides believed in providentialism, in martyrs and competed, as we have seen, to establish exclusive rights to early Irish church history. They debated church doctrine locally - sometimes openly but mainly by pamphlet - the most notable instances being between Ryder and Holywood in the first decade of the seventeenth century and between Ussher and Malone in the third. As well as local debates, they also contributed to wider international debates. James Ussher strengthened the Protestant interpretation of church history, attacked Bellarmine and much else besides; meanwhile the Irish Franciscans, especially Hugh MacCaghwell and Luke Wadding, reinvigorated scholasticism with work on Duns Scotus.

More particularly both groups appealed when necessary as persecuted Christians for outside help. At times of native unrest or state appeasement, Protestants in Ireland feared abandonment by the English crown. An amazing example of this is 'The Supplication of the Blood of the English most lamentably murdered in Ireland, cryeng out of the Yearth for revenge' written after the overthrow of the Munster plantation in 1598. Catholic appeals were more continuous, an outstanding example being David Rothe's *Analecta Sacra*, published at Frankfort between 1616 and 1619. This brings us to the whole question of the status of a Catholic majority in a Protestant-run country. The problem of dual allegiance to monarch and pope was never resolved. In the 1590s Hugh O'Neill made liberty of conscience a slogan whilst the English government, advised by Francis Bacon amongst others, conceded *de facto* toleration backed up with traditional rhetoric about obedience to one's natural prince. Once the war was won, the persecution of Catholic non-conformity began in earnest under Lord Deputy Chichester. If we were to take our cue from Rothe the Catholic response was a

mixture of heroic martyrdom and stoic nicodemism. Conditions improved in the 1620s but the issue of Catholic status and allegiance plagued any hopes of balanced political development even during the 1640s when the Stuart monarchy was most in need of Irish Catholic support.

Conclusion

To sum up, when viewed from these diverse vantage points, early modern Ireland looks very much like a laboratory of Renaissance political ideas. The English state embarked on a major experiment of social, political and religious change aimed at creating a new commonwealth in Ireland. The experiment failed or at the very least the results turned out very differently to originally envisaged. What we see in Ireland is nothing less than a microcosm of early modern developments where governmental modernisation, colonial expansion and religious reformation were all in process simultaneously. The recent emphasis on Edmund Spenser has made this subject popular. His Irish works touch on many of its aspects but there are many other sources from a plurality of angles worthy of evaluation. Whilst it is sensible to make Spenser the Alpha of early modern Irish studies, we should beware making him the Omega as well. Spenser is an excellent starting point but not the be-all and end-all of this subject

Posted by *HIRAM MORGAN IRCHSS SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, February 2009*