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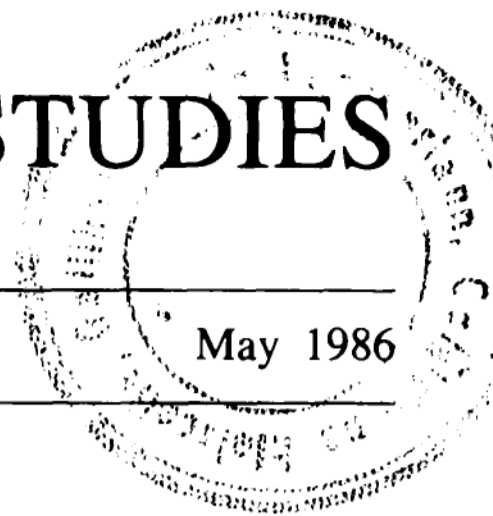
Nationalist historiography
and the English and Gaelic worlds
in the late middle ages

Much more so than in modern times, sharp cultural and social differences distinguished the various peoples inhabiting the British Isles in the later middle ages. Not surprisingly these differences and the interaction between medieval forms of culture and society have attracted considerable attention by historians. By comparison with other fields of research, we know much about the impact of the Westminster government on the various regions of the English polity, about the interaction between highland and lowland Scotland and about the similarities and differences between English and Gaelic Ireland. Yet the historical coverage of these questions has been uneven, and what at first glance might appear obvious and promising lines of inquiry have been largely neglected — for example the relationship between Gaelic Ireland and Gaelic Scotland, or between Wales, the north of England and the lordship of Ireland as borderlands of the English polity. No doubt the nature and extent of the surviving evidence is an important factor in explaining this unevenness, but in fact studies of interaction between different cultures seem to reflect not so much their intrinsic importance for our understanding of different late medieval societies as their perceived significance for the future development of movements culminating in the present. In sum the historiography of these societies is whig in emphasis: historians have been preoccupied not so much with what appeared important to contemporaries as with the emergence of modern political entities — England or Britain or Ireland — out of the medieval states and societies which preceded them.

It is of course a major function of historians to explain the relationship between the past and the present so as to clarify and extend our understanding of both, but there is a danger that by concentrating overmuch on this process historians may end up not explaining the present but rather oversimplifying the past. The pattern of recent research would suggest that this danger is acute for late medieval Ireland,[1] although many of the criticisms which can be levelled at Irish historiography apply in some measure to the treatment of other areas.[2] The aim of the present paper is twofold: to offer a critique of the pre-

[1]See in particular the works cited below, nn 5-8.

[2]Some modifications in the present Anglo-centric presentation of the late medieval English polity are suggested in S.G. Ellis, 'Crown, community and government in the English territories, 1450-1575' in *History,* lxxi (1986), pp 187-204.

sent nationalist historiography of late medieval Ireland and to make some suggestions towards the creation of an alternative framework for the writing of its history.

The influence of modern Irish politics on the historiography of late medieval Ireland has been unfortunate. It was understandable that in the aftermath of the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 the previous balance between what might be described as nationalist and unionist historiographical traditions should be upset. Where the unionist tradition had stressed Ireland's position within the British Isles, the little England across the Irish Sea, the backwardness and instability of Gaelic Ireland, and the benefits which the *pax Normanica* had brought to the island,[3] historians like Edmund Curtis concentrated on such topics as friction between the Westminster and Dublin governments, the Gaelic revival, the Great Earl uncrowned king of Ireland, the blended race, and the fifteenth-century home-rule movement.[4] In this way they were able to provide the fledgling Irish Free State with respectable medieval precedents. Yet history thrives on controversy, and it might have been expected that the political partition of the island, reflecting the persistence of both nationalist and unionist traditions, would have stimulated a more balanced study of its history. For the modern period this may be true, but sixty years on, though their unionist counterparts are long dead, many of the nationalist concepts and perspectives of late medieval Ireland are unfortunately still with us.

Some of the cruder claims have of course been modified: the home-rule movement has become a separatist movement, the blended race is now a 'middle nation', and the Great Earl — if we ignore this mistranslation as a Gaelic equivalent of 'Ethelred the Unready' — has been demoted to all-but-king.[5] Yet nationalist concepts and themes — the 'gaelicization of the Anglo-Irish', the 'synthesis of the Gaelic and colonial traditions', 'Hiberniores ipsis Hibernis', and the declaration of the 1460 parliament[6] — remain surprisingly resilient. There are even hints of more thorough-going historiographical developments along these lines. A purported analysis of 'Hiberno-Norman civilization' on

[3]See, e.g., G.T. Stokes, *Ireland and the Anglo-Norman church* (London, 1889); G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans, 1169-1333* (4 vols, Oxford, 1911-20); Philip Wilson, *The beginnings of modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1912); Robert Dunlop, *Ireland from the earliest times to the present day* (Oxford, 1922); F.E. Ball, *The judges in Ireland, 1221-1921* (2 vols, London, 1926).

[4]*A history of medieval Ireland* (London, 1923; 2nd ed., 1938). See also A.S. Green, *The making of Ireland and its undoing, 1200-1600* (London, 1908); Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish history* (Dublin, 1919).

[5]J.F. Lydon, *The lordship of Ireland in the middle ages* (Dublin, 1972), ch. 9; *Ireland in the later middle ages* (Dublin, 1972), ch. 5; 'The middle nation' in J.F. Lydon (ed.), *The English in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1984), pp 1-26.

[6]K.W. Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland and after' in *Peritia*, i (1982), p. 394, reviewing Art Cosgrove, *Late medieval Ireland, 1370-1541* (Dublin, 1981); Art Cosgrove, 'Hiberniores ipsis Hibernis' in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney (eds), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), pp 1-14; idem, 'Parliament and the Anglo-Irish community: the declaration of 1460' in Art Cosgrove and J.I. McGuire (eds), *Parliament and community: Historical Studies XIV* (Belfast, 1983), pp 25-41.

the eve of the Tudor conquest hardly proceeded beyond coining the name,[7] but leading Gaelic historians have recently gone so far as to propose the abandonment of 'the distinction between "Gaelic" and non-"Gaelic" Irish society' as 'a bit of inherited old rope which has nothing to contribute to Irish medieval studies, methodologically or otherwise'.[8]

It is not of course suggested here that modern historians have been content merely to develop approaches indicated by Curtis. In particular, there have been important advances in our knowledge of the lordship's administrative structures and government, of developments within the Gaelic polity, and some important studies of war and society in English and Gaelic Ireland.[9] There is even perhaps an increasing awareness that recent work on Ireland under the three Edwards cannot easily be squared with traditional perspectives on the expansion and decline of English lordship in medieval Ireland. Nevertheless, the dominant interpretative framework remains a national one: it inclines to treat the island as a political rather than a geographic entity, its history shaped by interaction between its inhabitants, and the impact of outside factors ignored or dismissed as deleterious.

This imbalance is at times artificially perpetuated by the development of terminology which is, to say the least, needlessly confusing to outsiders. Apparently their migration across the Irish Sea transformed regional councils into presidencies, scutage into royal service, and purveyance into cess; yet the English versions of these terms were also current in Ireland. The settlers are variously described as 'Anglo-Norman', 'Anglo-French', 'Anglo-Irish', 'Hiberno-Irish', 'Hiberno-English' and 'Old English', but seldom the 'English' which they called themselves;[10] even though for royal officials such contemporary subcategories as 'the English of Ireland' and 'the English of England' were usually unnecessary. By contrast, however, the term 'Irish' is loosely and ambiguously used to mean, at different times, both 'Gaelic' in a cultural sense and 'Irish' in a geographical sense, even though contemporary Gaelic society maintained a firm distinction between *Gaelach* and *Éireannach*.[11] In these circumstances,

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[7] R.Dudley Edwards, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors: the destruction of Hiberno-Norman civilization* (London, 1977).

[8] Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'Gaelic Ireland to 1603' in Joseph Lee (ed.), *Irish historiography, 1970-79* (Cork, 1981), p. 4; Nicholls, loc. cit.; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Bibliographica' in *Peritia*, i (1982), p. 411.

[9] See especially A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A history of medieval Ireland* (2nd ed., London, 1980); H.G. Richardson and G.O. Sayles, *The Irish parliament in the middle ages* (Philadelphia, 1952); Lydon, *Lordship of Ireland*; K.W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland in the middle ages* (Dublin, 1972); Robin Frame, *English lordship in Ireland, 1318-1361* (Oxford, 1982).

[10] As an ignorant foreigner, I have hitherto followed established conventions. Nevertheless, the term 'Anglo-Irish' has other meanings, and its use, even as a shorthand for 'the English of Ireland', misleadingly suggests the early emergence in England of a much more precise sense of English identity than the wide, primarily cultural sense of 'Englishness' which prevailed in the late middle ages. The terms 'Anglo-Norman', 'Anglo-French' and 'Hiberno-Norman' are in any case hardly appropriate to the later period. See also Michael Richter, 'The interpretation of medieval Irish history' in *I.H.S.*, xxiv, no. 95 (May 1985), pp 289-98.

[11] E.g. *A.C.*, pp 442, 642, 708.

it is understandable that Dr Penry Williams, whose specialist knowledge of Tudor Wales was employed to such good effect in his masterly study, *The Tudor regime*, should dismiss Ireland with the remark that it 'would have needed a book to itself, so different were Irish society and Irish government from English'.[12]

The themes chosen and the terminology employed thus go a long way towards predetermining the thrust of traditional arguments. Briefly, this is that English rule in Ireland was inherently unstable because the colonial community, isolated from its cultural homeland, became increasingly 'gaelicised', developing an Irish outlook and interests which conflicted with the crown's. This intractable problem could only be held in check by repeated royal interventions, but when after 1534 a serious attempt was made to incorporate Ireland more fully into the Tudor state, a complete breakdown between crown and community soon occurred. By 1570 English rule in Ireland was rapidly approaching its classic form — a despotism dependant on a standing army and English officials, with very little indigenous support, amid mounting opposition by Gaelic and Old English nobles who were increasingly united by common interests and the catholic religion.[13] Moreover, given this emphasis on themes which are utterly different from the commonplaces of English historiography, it is not surprising that English historians, glad to be discharged from responsibility for charting developments in yet another borderland, have readily accepted that Ireland was indeed an exception to the pattern of development in regions like Wales and the north. And for different reasons, the other group of historians who might have offered a corrective to this whig-nationalist interpretation have shown equally little interest in the medieval lordship. Ironically, the relationship between the modern and medieval partitions of the island is such that the present republic includes all the more densely colonised areas of the medieval lordship, while Northern Ireland was formerly one of the least anglicised areas. Thus, rather than developing pre-1922 unionist perspectives of the medieval lordship within the English state, historians of the unionist tradition have generally preferred to explore the politically more congenial problem of why, since 1603, parts of Ulster have developed differently from the rest of the island.[14]

In sum, the concern with the pre-history of Irish nationalism has been allowed to prejudge the issue of the island's separate development in the late middle ages. Irish history *looks* different because its historians incline to treat developments there in isolation, particularly from those in Britain. Take, for example, one of the most familiar developments of the period, the so-called 'Gaelic revival'. The movement is nowhere defined but supposedly 'explained' by coining the term 'gaelicisation' to refer to a mysterious process whereby the settlers became 'more Irish than the Irish themselves'. Culturally, there may be some merit in the term, but, after the introduction of the galloglass

[12](Oxford, 1979), p. vii.

[13]A recent restatement of this view is Edwards, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*.

[14]Perhaps one reason why nationalist interpretations of medieval Ireland have not in the circumstances achieved an outright monopoly is that among modern historians specialising in Ireland, 1169-1603, the handful whose background and training were not nationalist have included such prolific writers as A.J. Otway-Ruthven, H.G. Richardson and G.O. Sayles, David Quinn and Robin Frame.

in the later thirteenth century, there were apparently no significant politico-military developments within Gaelic Ireland which would justify its use. It is true that Gaelic nobles began to wear armour, build castles and adopt the military techniques of the invader, but such developments might equally well be called 'anglicisation' — a term which has been surprisingly neglected. Indeed a leading authority on the revival has recently conceded that it remains 'in many ways [a] baffling phenomenon'.[15] Nevertheless, most of its salient characteristics, as it affected English Ireland, were also evident in another English borderland, the Welsh marcher lordships. These included a 'crisis' and 'decay' of lordship, depopulation and falling land values, the reversion of arable land to pasture, increased population mobility, the flight of labourers and bond-tenants, and the penetration of Welshmen and Welsh customs into English districts.[16] Yet no historian would describe this as 'wallicanisation': manifestly, despite the truism, we are in fact dealing with an English decline, in that the root causes of the recovery of land by Gaelic chiefs and the cultural assimilation of outlying parts of the English lordship were changes within the English territories and mostly changes occurring outside Ireland altogether. At the least, we need to consider how far the fall in prices, rents and land values in the lordship, the crisis in the towns and the decline of manorial farming, all of which have been well documented for late medieval England, were part of a more general European phenomenon rather than something which can be exclusively attributed to a Gaelic revival.

Only by pursuing such comparisons much more consistently can the real differences in the Irish situation be identified. Much of what at present passes for comparison hardly proceeds beyond the comparatively settled society and administratively more favourable environment of England south of the Trent. Yet England was not culturally uniform, and many of the supposedly distinctive features of English society in Ireland find parallels elsewhere. On the Anglo-Scottish border, for example, historians have noted the emergence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of kinship units termed 'surnames' which were very similar to highland clans. Whether English or Scottish, these surnames accepted joint responsibility for injuries, collectively sought vengence for wrong-doing, and also developed their own theories of landholding and inheritance in opposition to feudal forms. These developments, however, are attributable to the increasing weakness of royal authority and social insecurity in the period, such as also occurred in the Irish lordship at this time, not borrowings from Gaelic Scotland.[17] Similarly, the unlawful taking of distresses about which there were so many complaints in Ireland was also a problem in the Welsh

[15]Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 392; idem, *Gaelic & gaelicised Ire.*
[16]See, most recently, R.R. Davies, *Lordship and society in the march of Wales, 1282-1400* (Oxford, 1978), ch. 15.
[17]T.I. Rae, *The administration of the Scottish frontier, 1513-1603* (Edinburgh, 1966), pp 5-11; J.A. Tuck, 'Northumbrian society in the fourteenth century' in *Northern History*, vi (1971), pp 22-39; Philip Dixon, 'Towerhouses, pelehouses and border society' in *Archaeological Journal*, cxxxvi (1979), pp 240-52. See also the seminal article by Robin Frame, 'Power and society in the lordship of Ireland, 1272-1377' in *Past & Present*, no. 76 (Aug. 1977), pp 3-33, which first suggested some of the arguments developed in this article.

marcher lordships. There, magnates such as the duke of Buckingham insisted for financial reasons on Welsh law and custom in dealing with their Welsh tenants, but the well-known observation that the earl of Kildare used both English and Gaelic law 'which[ever] he thought most beneficiall, as the case did require', is cited as evidence of 'gaelicisation'.[18] Moreover, the monetary compositions which in the Irish lordship frequently replaced the draconian penalties prescribed by English criminal law were probably in part an Irish manifestation of a general weakness in the common law system which was evident in other areas of weak government. It is notable that 'in its attitude to the land law the Englishry of Ireland was generally more conservative.'[19] But, in any case, partible inheritance was quite common in England, especially among upland communities.[20]

The point is not that there was no interaction between English and Gaelic culture in Ireland, but that 'departures in the lordship from southern-English norms are not necessarily the product of Gaelic influences.' Until we have for the lordship detailed studies of those problems which bulk large in histories of other European countries — such questions as the rule of law and the rise of absolutism, taxation and representation, warfare and the growth of state bureaucracy, and crown-community relations — we are not in a position to do justice to such themes as the Gaelic revival and 'Anglo-Irish separatism'.

In the circumstances, there is perhaps something to be said for setting aside considerations of how Ireland's Gaelic inhabitants and English settlers became Irishmen and looking more carefully at how they considered themselves. In 1552 the geographer Sebastian Munster noted in his *Cosmography* that 'formerly regions were bounded by mountains and rivers ..., but today languages and lordships mark the limits of one region from the next, and the limits of a region are the limits of its language'.[21] How relevant are these remarks to Ireland? Notwithstanding considerable research on the impact of Gaelic society on English rule in Ireland, little effort has been made to relate this question to the similar problem faced by the Scottish monarchy. For example, the well-known remarks in 1380 of John of Fordun, the Aberdeen chronicler, might almost have been made about Ireland:

The manners and customs of the Scots vary with the diversity of their speech. For two languages are spoken amongst them, the Scottish and the Teutonic; the latter of which is the language of those who occupy the seaboard and plains, while the race

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[18]Hore & Graves, *Southern & eastern counties*, p. 162; Nicholls, *Gaelic & gaelicised Ire.*, p. 48. Cf. T.B. Pugh, *The marcher lordships of South Wales, 1415-1536: select documents* (Cardiff, 1963); Davies, *Lordship & society*, pp 144-5, 162, 407-8, 449-50.

[19]Cf. R.A. Griffiths, 'Wales and the marches' in S.B. Chrimes, C.D. Ross and R.A. Griffiths (eds), *Fifteenth-century England, 1399-1509: studies in politics and society* (Manchester, 1972), pp 154, 155; S.G. Ellis, *Reform and revival: English government in Ireland, 1470-1534* (London, 1986), pp 121-3, 139.

[20]D.M. Palliser, *The age of Elizabeth: England under the later Tudors, 1547-1603* (London, 1983), pp 162-3, 175-6; Scott Harrison, *The Pilgrimage of Grace in the Lake counties, 1536-7* (London, 1981), p. 7; S.J. Watts, 'Tenant-right in early seventeenth-century Northumberland' in *Northern History*, vi (1971), esp. pp 69-71.

[21]Cited in Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch revolt* (London, 1979), p. 35.

of Scottish speech inhabits the highlands and outlying islands. The people of the coast are of domestic and civilized habits, trusty, patient and urbane, decent in their attire, affable and peaceful, devout in divine worship yet always prone to resist a wrong at the hand of their enemies. The highlanders and people of the islands, on the other hand, are a savage and untamed nation, rude and independent, given to rapine, easy-living, of a docile and warm disposition, comely in person but unsightly in dress, hostile to the English people and language and, owing to diversity of speech, even to their own nation, and exceedingly cruel.[22]

Chronicles in Ireland and Scotland usually referred to this savage people as Irish or Scots depending on their place of residence. But even English observers could occasionally do better than this, as when, with reference to the lordship of the Isles in 1545, it was reported that a new king had arisen in Scotland out of 'the Scottyshe Irysshe'.[23] As is well known, the two regions shared a common Gaelic language with standard literary forms and local dialects which for long remained mutually intelligible. Gaelic chiefs of later medieval Ireland continued to recruit mercenaries from Scotland, and there was from the later fourteenth century substantial colonisation by Gaelic Scots in north-east Ulster.[24] Indeed the lordship of a senior branch of the Clan Donald, Mac-Donald of Dunivaig and the Glens of Antrim, spanned the North Channel, and its head was sometimes *Rí Innse Gall* in this period.[25] Yet Gaelic specialists have so far shown little interest in investigating exactly how comparable were the clan system, landholding, law and other Gaelic customs common to both regions. Had Gaelic Scotland and Ireland achieved a political unity under an *ÁrdRí na nGael* in the sixteenth century, instead of being absorbed into separate kingdoms, would historians have had any difficulty in explaining this development on the basis of a common culture in the later middle ages?

There is of course an occasional admission that the Scottish Highlands were 'an integral part of the Gaelic Irish [*sic!*] world';[26] but the implications of this seem to have been missed. The traditional concepts of Ireland (apostrophised as *Inis Banba* or *Inis Fáil*) with a high kingship and a 'national history' about its occupation and defence were by the fifteenth century no more than propaganda, displayed in poetry. Rather, loyalties in the Gaelic world were primarily local and dynastic; and in so far as the Gaelic Irish possessed a collective sense of identity, this was based on race and culture, characteristics

[22]Cited in T.C. Smout, *A history of the Scottish people, 1560-1830* (2nd, paperback ed., London, 1972), p. 39.

[23]*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix (ii), no. 795.

[24]Edmund Curtis, *Richard II in Ireland, 1394-5* (Oxford, 1927), pp 58-9, 88; D.B. Quinn and K.W. Nicholls, 'Ireland in 1534' in *New hist. Ire.*, iii, 17; W.C. Dickenson, *Scotland from the earliest times to 1603* (2nd ed., London, 1965), p. 5. See also the remarks in Cosgrove, *Late medieval Ire.*, pp 83-5.

[25]John Bannerman, 'The lordship of the Isles' in J.M. Brown (ed.) *Scottish society in the fifteenth century* (London, 1977), pp 212-13, 222; Alexander Grant, *Independence and nationhood: Scotland, 1306-1469* (London, 1984), pp 212-13; Jean Munro, 'The lordship of the Isles' in Loraine MacLean of Dochgarroch (ed.), *The middle ages in the Highlands* (Inverness, 1981), pp 33, 35.

[26]Nicholls, *Gaelic & gaelicised Ire.*, p. 3. Cf. Brian Ó Cuív, 'The Irish language in the early modern period' in *New hist. Ire.*, iii, 527.

which were shared with Gaelic Scotland.[27] In publishing his Gaelic transla-
tion of the Book of Common Order in 1567, Bishop John Carswell claimed
that he wished to counteract the many 'vain hurtful lying worldly tales com-
posed about ... Fionn MacCumhaill with his warriors', and he clearly intended
his book to be read in Ireland as well as Scotland.[28] The Gaelic annals of
Ireland persisted in dividing the island's inhabitants into *Gaeil* and *Gaill* even
though, as has recently been observed,[29] the geographic term *Erennchaib* was
available and occasionally used. This was no doubt because the occasion and
opportunities for common action against outsiders were far outweighed by the
continuing relevance and importance of this ethnic division. Moreover, many
of the obits of Gaelic *literati* continued to describe them as 'cend scoile Erenn
ocus Alban', 'ollam Erenn ocus Alban re sinm' or 'oide fer nErenn ocus nAlban
re dán'; and even lesser lights freely migrated across the North Channel.[30]
Arguably, it was only in the late sixteenth century, when Gaelic Ireland came
under serious political pressure from the Elizabethans, that conditions developed
which were more conducive to the emergence of a distinctive Gaelic Irish iden-
tity, separate from Scots Gaelic, in opposition to the English. The annals
sometimes qualified *Gaeil* with *Erenn* or *Alpan,* but this may be no more signifi-
cant than contemporary English talk about northerners and southerners. They
frequently also distinguished between 'English hobs' and 'Irish dogs' as *Saxain*
and *Gaill,* but not consistently so.[31] To Gaelic speakers a worthwhile distinc-
tion could be made between *Gaill* (who generally understood their language
and customs) and *Saxain* (who did not); but occasional usages such as 'muinter
Righ Saxan' with reference to both *Gaill* and *Saxain* resident in Ireland suggest
that they were also aware of an essential unity between the two groups.[32]
Perhaps *Saxain* were seen as a sub-category of *Gaill,* but we really need to
know more about the precise meaning of *Gaill* in the medieval annals. Cer-
tainly, there are occasional hints that the *Gaeil* of late medieval Ireland (or
rather the learned classes who passed to and fro between Scotland and Ireland)
thought more in terms of a common Gaelic world surrounded by *Gaill* than
an Irish polity threatened by Englishmen. The Annals of Ulster in particular
form an important historical source about the western isles; and there is also
the revealing entry of 1540 in the Annals of Connaught, with its clumsy reference

[27]See esp., Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth
century* (Cambridge, 1979), pp 15-27, 179-80. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Nationality and
kingship in pre-Norman Ireland' in T.W. Moody (ed.), *Nationality and the pursuit of
national independence: Historical Studies XI* (Belfast, 1978), pp 1-35, argues for an
Irish sense of identity and 'otherness' in pre-Norman Ireland, but refers only incidental-
ly to Gaelic Scotland (p. 23, n. 89: grant by Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair to teach the students
of Ireland and Scotland, 1169).

[28]Cited in Bannerman, 'Lordship of the Isles', pp 235-6, 238.

[29]Cosgrove, *Late medieval Ire.,* p. 79.

[30]*A.L.C.,* ii, 176, 290, 364. Cf. ibid., ii, 416: an attack by the Clann-Duiphshith
of Scotland, with their Scottish and Irish kin, on O'Connor Don.

[31]See Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution,* p. 27; Cosgrove, *Late medieval Ire.,*
p. 74; but cf. *A.L.C.,* ii, 460 ('Eire uile ar na gabáil le Gallaibh in bliadhain sin [1584],
innus ccur cuirset oineach ocus uaisle fer nErenn ar gcul'). The English nicknames
are of course those proscribed by the statutes of Kilkenny.

[32]*A.C.,* p. 684.

to a Scottish race and Scottish politics more generally: 'Ri Alpan do chor ghar-ma ąr maithib an chinidh Alpanaigh et a techt chuigi aran cuan a roibhe se, et dul annsa loing a roibhe an Ri doibh et an Ri da ngabail itir Gall 7 Ghaoídel, 7 na Goill do lecin amac a cinn tamaill 'na diaigh sin'.[33]

Politically too there are good reasons for considering developments from a Gaelic, rather than Irish, perspective. One of Edmund Curtis's shrewder but less influential suggestions was that the earldom of Ulster constituted an 'Anglo-Norman wedge driven' into 'the old Gaelic world of Erin and Alba'.[34] In fourteenth-century Scotland, however, historians have noted a Gaelic resurgence, with the expansion in the power of the Clan Donald lords of the Isles to exercise a supremacy over the other chiefs of the west (and, we may add, north-east Ulster).[35] This resurgence followed the decline of the earldom of Ulster, the collapse of Norse power in the isles, and the resumption of strong connexions with Gaelic Ireland. In the late middle ages the western isles, annexed from Norway in 1266, were of course seen as part of Scotland, as indeed was Rathlin Island,[36] and the lord of the Isles usually acknowledged the king of Scots as his overlord. But as an absentee Lowlander intervening in a clan-based society, the king of Scots was no more able to make a reality of his claims than was the English lord of Ireland following similar acknowledgements by chiefs in Ireland.[37] Moreover, as the Elizabethans quickly discovered, part of the resilience of Gaelic Ireland under threat in the sixteenth century stemmed from its strong links with the western isles which could only be broken by a co-ordinated campaign of the Tudor and Scottish governments, a practical proposition only after the union of the crowns in 1603. Thus if the Gaelic revival in later medieval Ireland did not follow from any important politico-military developments in Ireland, it may be that it occurred because there was in reality one Gaelic world and because in both Scotland and Ireland for the first time since the ninth century Gaelic chiefs were able to make more efficient use of existing resources. Conversely, the revival of strong government in England under the Yorkists and early Tudors (1461-1547) and in Scotland under James III and James IV (1460-1513) put pressure on the Gaelic polity; it led in Ireland to a resurgence of English power during the Kildare ascendancy and in Scotland to the final forfeiture and suppression of the lordship of the Isles.[38] Arguably, the major significance of these events has been overlooked because they cut across traditional perspectives centring on change within Ireland.

Ultimately, however, politics in the Gaelic world were localised and dynastic: events in Munster rarely had much impact in Ulster, so that the effects of the distortion or omission of wider perspectives have not been too disastrous. The English lordship of Ireland, however, was part of a much wider group

[33]*A.U.*, passim; *A.C.*, p. 716. Cf. ibid., pp 398, 406, 410; *A.L.C.*, ii, 136, 324; Ó Cuív, 'Irish language', 519, 523, 527, 541.

[34]Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 211. Cf. Frame, *English lordship in Ireland*, pp 131, 151-2.

[35]Grant, *Independence & nationhood*, ch. 8; Smout, *History of the Scottish people*, p. 40; Dickenson, *Scotland*, pp 41-2.

[36]Cyril Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish wars* (London, 1950), p. 155.

[37]Bannerman, 'Lordship of the Isles', pp 211-19; Grant, *Independence & nationhood*, pp 212-20; Munro, 'Lordship of the Isles', pp 26-35.

[38]Dickenson, *Scotland*, pp 5, 37-41, 274-98; Ellis, *Reform & revival*, passim.

of territories, in which the English crown and court culture acted as a strong centralising force. Thus it is seriously misleading to discuss its internal history or interaction with Gaelic Ireland either without reference to developments elsewhere in the English territories or with the crown, court and political community treated as an external factor. This is not to deny the value of local or regional studies, which indeed are especially valuable in the context of the lordship's comparatively fragmented society: but the English context remains basic to an understanding of many aspects of politics and society in the lordship.

Perhaps this argument might best be supported and clarified by a brief comparative survey of another developing nation-state and a more extended consideration of the lordship's development in the century before 1534, the period for which nationalist interpretations are most firmly entrenched. The 'decentalized particularist structure'[39] of contemporary France is an historical commonplace, even though France was not untypical in this respect. Almost the only factor common to its different provinces was the monarchy: there was no common law, but each province had its own customs and privileges, and the king specifically confirmed those of newly-acquired territories. Justice was equally decentralised: outside the royal demesne, local seigneurs linked by feudal ties to the crown retained substantial judicial as well as political autonomy; and as new provinces were added, separate provincial *parlements* were established, distinct from the *parlement* of Paris, as sovereign royal courts. Likewise, the *pays d'états* each had their own provincial estates which controlled taxation and were therefore far more important than the cumbersome, underdeveloped estates-general. French was the language of the court, but it was not widely understood outside northern France. Indeed, according to Eugen Weber, as late as the nineteenth century one quarter of all Frenchmen understood no French at all; others had learned it as a foreign language but normally spoke Oc or Flemish or Breton or a local *patois*: they did not consider themselves French, for France was a distant country around Paris, and the south in particular considered itself bound to France as Ireland was to England.[40] Compared with this, the late medieval lordship was closely integrated into the English polity!

Nevertheless, at first sight, received ideas of neglect, decline, degeneracy and 'Anglo-Irish separatism' seem to have much to commend them. Successive kings apparently had little time for Ireland; events clearly showed that royal control over the Dublin administration was inadequate; the spread of Gaelic customs in border areas especially seemed to continue; and a separate parliament, coupled with the increasing local domination of the lordship's separate administrative institutions, provided a strong impetus towards the growth of a distinct Anglo-Irish sense of identity. Clearly, if conditions in England south of the Trent were the norm, the geography, cultural balances and localised power structures of the lordship presented royal government there with quite extraordinary problems.

Yet, even after the loss of English Gascony and Normandy, England south of the Trent constituted less than half of the English polity; and the other

[39]J.H. Shennan, *Government and society in France, 1461-1661* (London, 1969), p. 35; and passim for the following remarks.

[40]Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (London, 1977), chs 6-7.

borderlands provided many parallels to the purported peculiarities of English Ireland. Indeed, what was exceptional about the lordship was not exceptional conditions there but simply the particular *combination* of exceptions to southern English norms. Under the Lancastrians, the lordship's claims to a recognised place within the English polity must have seemed fairly secure. Alone of the territories outside England, it was subject to English common law and so to English legislation. English was the dominant spoken language, the king's subjects there regarded themselves as Englishmen, and its administrative institutions were more closely modelled on those in England than elsewhere. The lordship was of course part of a separate island and had a land frontier with Gaelic Ireland, but it was not unique in this: the kings of France and of Scots were accounted much more formidable adversaries threatening the continental territories and the north of England respectively. Even when English kings considered England's real position as an island power, instead of their own continental claims and aspirations, much of English foreign policy was directed to controlling the narrow seas against invasion by maintaining blocks of territory on both sides of the English Channel.[41] Control of the major Irish ports and the southern and eastern coastline there was a useful link in this chain of defences, but there was less reason strategically or commercially to extend this control to the comparatively remote and infertile Gaelic west or north.

Thus, since there was no major external threat to crown interests in Ireland, scarce resources could safely be diverted to address more pressing problems elsewhere. Nor is there much real evidence to support notions of an internal threat from a shrinking Pale and 'Anglo-Irish separatism'. The theory of a shrinking Pale mistakes the fifteenth-century definition of this entity for its decline and depends on a misreading of a statute of 1488.[42] 'Anglo-Irish separatism' is more complicated. As has recently been argued, the decline of a cross-channel nobility may well have altered the shape of politics in the fourteenth-century lordship, but this does not mean that the political community there was increasingly isolated from its cultural homeland, speaking some archaic dialect which was unintelligible on the mainland.[43] Just as the sea united Ulster with the western isles, it also linked the lordship's port-towns with those of western England.[44] In any case, mid fifteenth-century politics there were dominated by those great Irish magnates, Richard duke of York, John Talbot first earl of Shrewsbury, and James Butler fourth earl of Ormond, whose son was created earl of Wiltshire in 1449, and if this was somewhat exceptional, cross-channel landowning remained a significant factor in politics

[41]M.G.A. Vale, *English Gascony, 1399-1453* (Oxford, 1970), esp. p. 1.

[42]S.G. Ellis, 'Parliaments and great councils, 1483-99: addenda et corrigenda' in *Anal. Hib.*, no. 30 (1980), pp 104-5; idem, *Reform & revival*, pp 50-52.

[43]Frame, *English lordship in Ireland*, esp. ch. 2. Cf. Alan Bliss, 'Language and literature' in Lydon (ed.), *English in medieval Ireland*, pp 27-45, and my review of it in *Studia Hib.*, xxiv (1984), forthcoming.

[44]Although the fact has generally escaped attention, the towns of the Yorkist and early Tudor lordship were both prosperous and plentiful by comparison with those of other English borderlands. See S.G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: crown, community and the conflict of cultures, 1470-1603* (London, 1985), ch. 2; Palliser, *Age of Elizabeth*, ch. 7.

until the 1536 act of resumption.[45] In a short excursus on Ireland in his *Anglica historia*, Polydore Vergil wrongly but revealingly attributed the civility of the lordship's population to their frequent contact with England. They were gentle and cultured, lived an English manner of life, were obedient to the king and mostly understood the language, but he was much less charitable about the barbarous Cornishmen whom he described as the fourth people inhabiting Britain.[46] Anglo-Irish ties were also strengthened from the later fifteenth century with the increasing resort of gentlemen's sons to the universities, Inns of Court and to court itself. Indeed, this was one facet of the strengthening of royal control and governmental reform which was a feature of the reigns of Edward IV and Henry VII in the lordship as elsewhere.[47]

Similarly, manifestations of political dissent are readily explicable within this framework. The Irish parliament did of course provide the government's critics with a separate forum. (It is a moot point whether in this period peers like Lord Ormond represented Irish grievances in the English parliament, as did peers for other regions unrepresented in the commons there.)[48] Yet the preoccupation of historians with political crises such as the 1460 declaration and the 'rival' parliaments of 1478 obscures the essential harmony of crown-community relations, rather like Sir John Neale's interpretation of parliament in Elizabethan England.[49] The fifteenth-century Irish parliament was above all an administrative board, with only minor, and local, legislative functions before 1494. It was important and successful precisely because it was an instrument of royal government, and as such it helped to extend royal control rather than to promote separatist tendencies. Subsequently, Poynings' law determined which executive, Dublin or London, should control parliament and also the nature of its work, but talk about the law reducing 'the role of the Irish parliament to one of servility' is beside the point.[50]

The emergence of an Old English élite is a well-attested development in the politics of later Tudor Ireland, and clearly it built on the political vocabulary of an earlier age. But if ideological differences between Old and New English were only becoming important under the later Tudors, of what consisted this

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[45]Otway-Ruthven, *History of medieval Ireland*, ch. 11; S.G. Ellis, 'Parliament and community in Yorkist and Tudor Ireland' in Cosgrove & McGuire (eds), *Parliament & community*, pp 52-3; idem, *Tudor Ireland*, pp 131, 135.

[46]*Anglica historia*, ed. D. Hay (London, 1950), pp 78-80, 90-94, 108; Anthony Goodman, *A history of England from Edward II to James I* (London, 1977), p. 7, n. 4.

[47]Green, *Making of Ireland*, ch. 8; Helga Hammerstein, 'Aspects of the continental education of Irish students in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I' in T.D. Williams (ed.), *Historical Studies VIII* (Dublin, 1971), pp 137-53; N.P. Canny, *The formation of the Old English élite in Ireland* (Dublin, 1975), pp 26-31. For administrative reform, see Ellis, *Reform & revival*.

[48]Representation in the English commons was of course confined to England until Henry VIII's reign and was weighted in favour of the south, with Cheshire and Durham unrepresented. Thomas, 7th earl of Ormond, was summoned to the upper house as a baron.

[49]Cf. Art Cosgrove, 'A century of decline' in Brian Farrell (ed.), *The Irish parliamentary tradition* (Dublin, 1973), ch. 4; G.R. Elton, 'Parliament' in Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The reign of Elizabeth I* (London, 1984), esp. pp 79-84.

[50]Margaret MacCurtain, *Tudor and Stuart Ireland* (Dublin, 1972), p. 7. Cf. Ellis, 'Parliament & community'.

'Anglo-Irish identity' a century earlier? The use of the term 'Anglo-Irish' to describe the Englishry of Ireland is in many ways a hindrance rather than an aid to understanding because it introduces an artificial distinction in terms of crown-community relations between one regional élite and the rest. In practice the king's dependence for the lordship's good government on a magnate like the earl of Kildare, the methods by which he attempted to influence the earl, and the responses which this elicited, were no different from his relations with the Percy earl of Northumberland in the government of the north.[51] Moreover, political dissent in the late medieval lordship took three main forms, all of which were to be found elsewhere within the English polity.

Most commonly, there were the noble feuds, notably the Talbot-Ormond dispute and the Geraldine-Butler rivalry. As with Courteney *versus* Bonville in the south-west or Neville *versus* Percy in the north, the king intervened to prevent such disorders from becoming a serious threat to public order, and particularly heinous enormities or prolonged strife would earn a summons to court to allow personal arbitration by the king.[52] Conditions in Ireland exacerbated the seriousness of such feuds because in a marcher region of comparatively discrete lordships, the magnates and their connexions were particularly necessary for defence: a disgruntled earl of Kildare could incite Gaelic chiefs and semi-autonomous border lineages within his orbit of influence to attack his political rivals in the lordship. Yet Kildare's conduct hardly differed from that of Lord Dacre of the North, whose compact landholding and connexion in northern Cumberland made his co-operation essential for the defence and good government of the West March towards Scotland.[53] In 1525 Thomas, third Lord Dacre, was dismissed as warden-general, for allegedly associating with the notorious Charlton surname and encouraging them against the Northumberland gentry.[54] In April a campaign had been instigated by Cardinal Wolsey against the thieves of Tynedale, a lawless district of the Middle Marches which had been statutorily incorporated into the shire of Northumberland in 1495: Wolsey's servants reported that the thieves were now 'contented to obey the kinges highness' and to make amends, provided 'their pledges nowe in prison be deliuered at large'. Yet 'two great capeteynes emonges them' remained ob-

[51]See especially M.E. James, *A Tudor magnate and the Tudor state: Henry, fifth earl of Northumberland* (York, 1966). The evidence on which the following interpretation of the lordship's history is generally based is set out in Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, chs 3-5.

[52]See especially, M.C. Griffith, 'The Talbot-Ormond struggle for control of the Anglo-Irish government, 1414-47' in *I.H.S.*, ii, no. 8 (Sept. 1941), pp 376-97; Martin Cherry, 'The struggle for power in mid fifteenth-century Devonshire' in R.A. Griffiths (ed.), *Patronage, the crown and the provinces in later medieval England* (Gloucester, 1981), pp 123-44; R.A. Griffiths, 'Local rivalries and national politics: the Percies, the Nevilles and the duke of Exeter, 1452-1455' in *Speculum*, xliii (1968), pp 589-632; M.A. Hicks, 'Dynastic change and northern society: the career of the fourth earl of Northumberland, 1470-89' in *Northern History*, xiv (1978), pp 78-107.

[53]For the Dacre connexion, see M.E. James, *Change and continuity in the Tudor north: the rise of Thomas, first Lord Wharton* (York, 1965), app. i. For his estates, see also S.E. Cott, 'The wardenship of Thomas Lord Dacre, 1485-1525' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1971), pp 7-17.

[54]Cott, op. cit., p. 81; James, *Change & continuity*, pp 8-9.

durate, of whom one, Hector Charlton, claimed to be Dacre's servant 'and that he neuer wold submyte hym selffe to tyme he see the seid Lord Dacre'.

We haue nott maid eny roodes vpon theym or distroyed their countre as yett, for that all this tyme we haue by our messyngers motioned theym to obey the kinges highnes as trew subiectes ... Their chief relief and comforth at euery inuasions to be maid vpon theym is to fflee in to Scotland and then to be well and surely resaued; and at all their excourses vpon the kinges trewe subiectes thei bring with theym grete nombre of Scottis.[55]

Did the Harrolds and Lawlesses of the Dublin marches behave any differently?

Shortly after the attempt to rule the lordship through Piers Butler, eighth earl of Ormond, instead of Kildare (1522-4), a similar experiment saw Henry Clifford, first earl of Cumberland, replace Dacre as deputy-warden of the West March. The experiment failed for very similar reasons: Clifford had no lands in Cumberland and, without Dacre co-operation, could no more rule the marches from Skipton castle than could Ormond the Pale from Kilkenny castle.[56] He was replaced by William, fourth lord Dacre, in 1527, but the feud continued and soon involved Sir William Musgrave, who was appointed constable of the isolated crown outpost of Bewcastle over Dacre's head in 1531.[57] Deteriorating relations with Scotland forced Henry VIII to temporise, particularly during the Anglo-Scottish war of 1532-4: a *casus belli* was the old dispute about whether the town and priory of Cannonby, which claimed to be Scottish but which lay between the English march to the south and the 'debateable land' of the West March, was properly part of Scotland or of the 'debatable land' between the two realms.[58] Henry needed Dacre to support his claim, but, immediately the war ended, Dacre was arrested in May 1534 on a charge of treason. Allegedly, he had *inter alia* negotiated a private arrangement with Scots enemies of Liddesdale, notably the independent Armstrong clan which frequently encroached on the 'debateable land', whereby they were promised indemnity and freedom from reprisals for any raids made upon Musgrave's lands.[59] In fact the charges against Dacre were of a very similar nature to those levelled against the Fitzgeralds before the Kildare rebellion. Musgrave asserted that 'the cuntrey has been so overlayd with the lord Dacres they thowght there was non other kyng'; and although Dacre escaped the Fitzgeralds' fate, he was dismissed from office, disgraced and heavily fined.[60] In borderlands like the far north and the Pale marches, a magnate had to cultivate relations both with the king's enemies and the nominally English upland lineages in order to rule effectively: but the corollary was that the border magnates would sometimes use these contacts in less desirable ways.

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[55]B.L., Cotton MS, Caligula B.I., ff 46ᵛ-7 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 1289).

[56]*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), nos 10, 220, 405, 1223, 1429, 1779, 2176.

[57]James, *Change & continuity*, pp 9-10.

[58]W. MacKay MacKenzie, 'The Debateable Land' in *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, xxx (1951), pp 109-25.

[59]James, *Continuity & change*, pp 16-19. See also G.M. Jackson, 'The wardenship of William Lord Dacre, 1527-1534' (unpublished B.A. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1972).

[60]Ibid.; P.R.O., S.P. 1/84, p. 199, cited in James, *Change & continuity*, p. 17.

Closely linked to the magnate feuds as a source of disorder within the king's dominions were the strong regional loyalties which manifested themselves in many areas. In part these stemmed from the great noble connexions, but distance from London and the court in the south-east was important, and cultural differences were clearly also a factor in Cornwall, Ireland and Wales. For example, within England itself, Englishmen were categorised as northerners or southerners, while the Englishries of Ireland and Wales were seen as Irish or Welsh. Yet the sense of separate regional identities which these terms presupposed was by no means inconsistent with a developed sense of an English national identity and political nation. This sense of English nationality was of course centred on England, and southern England in particular, but it was not primarily geographical. Rather, it comprehended the king's freeborn English subjects throughout the realm of England and its dominions, who were officially described as Englishmen. Bondmen, Gaelic Irish resident in the Englishry, and the native Welsh enjoyed a lesser status, which also differed from that of aliens born outside the crown territories.[61] Lamenting England's divisions reflected in the Lincolnshire revolt of 1536, Richard Morison argued that 'it were wel in Englande if we were all called Englyshemen of this countrey or that ... and not these northern men, these southerne, these western'; while one of the orders issued to Henry VIII's army in 1513 was that no man reproach another 'because of the countree that he is of, that is to say, be he French, English, Northern, Walshe, or Irysh'.[62] Thus, while the king's subjects in Ireland might be described colloquially as Irish,[63] they remained officially English lieges who regarded themselves as Englishmen, spoke English and used English law and customs.

In this wider sense, an English identity was an important political phenomenon to which the crown appealed in its dealings with foreigners, whereas regional animosities were a significant, but latent, factor in internal administration of which the crown had to take account. Thus, although in theory the king's commission was all-sufficient, it was an unwritten law of English government that the rule of counties lay with their native élites. The intrusion of outsiders was regarded as exceptional and created friction; when Richard III went further and attempted systematically to place his northern adherents in control of unreliable and hostile southern shires, this was seen as tyranny.[64] In a crisis, regional sentiments might be starkly asserted, as frequently during the Wars of the Roses, and also during the Pilgrimage of Grace with its demand for a free parliament at York or Nottingham, with the north properly represented, and that for all *sub poenas* except treason appearance should be required only at York.[65] In the same way, the systematic intrusion into the Dublin administration of clerks and captains from England predictably created friction

[61]These points are developed in Ellis, 'Crown, community and government'.

[62]A.J. Kempe (ed.), *The Loseley manuscripts* (London, 1835), pp 114-15; [Richard Morison], *A remedy for sedition*, ed. E.M. Cox (London, 1933), p. 41. I am grateful to Keith Thomas for these references.

[63]For example, Harris, *Hibernica,* i, 30.

[64]A.J. Pollard, 'The tyranny of Richard III' in *Jn. Med. Hist.*, iii (1977), pp 147-66.

[65]Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1981), pp 224-6; Anthony Fletcher, *Tudor rebellions* (3rd ed., London, 1983), ch. 4 and docs 2-11.

between 'English' and 'Irish' in the lordship. In different ways, Richard of York in 1460 and Thomas Lord Offaly in 1534 were able to manipulate this sense of regional identity to their own ends. And when, as in the case of Lord Grey in 1478, an ill-equipped outsider was peremptorily inserted as lord deputy into an administration already troubled by rivalry between Geraldines and supporters of the English-born bishop of Meath, trouble of a different sort could ensue.[66] Before the emergence in the mid-Tudor period of new concepts of nationality based on the *patria,* and with it the denial to the Old English of Ireland of their English identity, the use of terms like 'the Anglo-Irish community' and an 'Anglo-Irish identity' have, at best, a dubious validity as a short-hand to denote the regional identity of the English of Ireland within the context of the English political nation. What was at stake was not 'English interference' in, or 'English domination' of, an 'Anglo-Irish community',[67] but the king's occasional failure to govern the Englishry of Ireland in accordance with accepted English norms.

The third form of political dissent in the late medieval lordship were the various political rebellions which punctuated the 1460-1534 period. Interestingly, the lordship seemingly produced no major movement of social and economic protest, perhaps because outside the more densely settled but geographically separate regions of the Pale, south Wexford and the Ormond district, the Englishry comprised an English aristocracy over a Gaelic peasantry which was politically no more active than in the Gaelic lordships. Yet, as in England, the traditional factions and feuds of the region's nobility spilled over into national politics through their alignment with opposing sides in the Wars of the Roses. In this contest the lordship was an important prize because of its strategic location, constitutional status, and reserves of manpower. This was most clearly shown in 1487: a Yorkist pretender was crowned king of England in Dublin, with Henry Tudor powerless to intervene, and attempted to repeat Richard of York's strategy of 1460 by invading England with an army of German and Gaelic mercenaries, supplemented by Pale levies. These levies must have constituted the only substantial contingent of conventional English bills and bows in the entire army: but despite the well-attested English xenophobia, the army seemed sufficiently authentic in aims and appearance to secure substantial support in England and came close to overthrowing Henry VII.[68] Indeed the Yorkist intrigues supported by the Fitzgerald earls in 1460, 1487, 1491 and possibly also in 1470, and the Lancastrian risings of 1462 in Meath and Kilkenny cannot be explained simply in terms of local politics. Feelings ran much deeper than this — as with William Butler, clerk, who was imprisoned in 1470 for calling Lord Treasurer Portlester a traitor and who in 1487 was attainted

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[66]Ellis, *Tudor Ireland,* pp 54-64. Cf. Memoranda roll, 18 Edward IV m. 26 (P.R.O.I., Ferguson coll., iii, f. 221v): the bishop of Meath's servant resisted Lord Treasurer FitzEustace when he distrained for rent, threatened 'quam cito hoc fecerit, tam cito decapitus erit' and asserted that the bishop was governor of Ireland.

[67]Bradshaw, *Irish constitutional revolution,* ch. 9; Ellis, 'Crown, community and government'. Cf. Lydon, *Ireland in the later middle ages,* pp 144-5; Bradshaw, op. cit., pp 29-30.

[68]M.T. Hayden, 'Lambert Simnel in Ireland' in *Studies,* iv (1915), pp 622-38; Goodman, *Wars of the Roses,* pp 99-107.

of treason by 'Edward VI's' parliament for adhering to Henry Tudor.[69] Such conspiracies were both possible and dangerous, not just because royal control in the lordship was comparatively weak, but because local politics were linked to national politics and disturbances there could and did spread to the mainland.

Nevertheless, because the lordship's political community was English, it responded to the same methods by which the Yorkists and early Tudors aimed to consolidate their control over other outlying parts of the English territories. Moreover, the fact that successive kings should attempt to govern by these methods is itself significant: as in England, administrative reform, bonds, acts of resumption and against retaining were all methods by which Henry VII attempted to re-establish peace and good government in Ireland.[70] Above all, however, good government depended on good relations with the nobles, a fact which is readily apparent from Henry VII's dealings with Gerald Fitzthomas, eighth earl of Kildare — if we set aside anachronistic ideas which credit Henry Tudor with wishing to establish 'direct rule' and the artificial distinction between 'Anglo-Irish' influence and English control.' The failure in the period 1485-95 of the first Tudor to establish a working relationship with Kildare led to feuds, conspiracies and political instability in the lordship which Gaelic chiefs were not slow to exploit: by contrast, Kildare's reappointment as governor following the Salisbury settlement of 1496 inaugurated a period of stability which was without parallel in the late medieval lordship and which saw the major demonstrations of the earl's power and influence which characterised the Kildare ascendancy.[71] Yet Kildare's restoration occurred not because the king was forced to fall back on an unreliable noble following the failure of a classic Tudor experiment in bureaucracy under Poynings (1494-5), but because the preferred option of rule through the local magnate was now presented in a reliable and trusty form. Likewise, the events of 1478-9, when interpreted in this context, can be seen as a similar crisis in Kildare's relations with Edward IV, and they were solved in a similar manner and with similar consequences for the lordship's political stability in the years 1479-83.[72]

In reality, the decline of royal subventions and of 'English interference' which characterised the lordship during the Kildare ascendancy reflects its relative stability, peace and prosperity, and the general satisfaction of successive kings with this state of affairs. It was not a dereliction of royal duty in the face of peculiar problems which the king and council scarcely understood.[73] Conversely, the fall of the Fitzgeralds in 1534 which, according to the received interpretation, provided Henry VIII with the long-awaited opportunity to introduce 'direct rule', was in fact a disaster for royal government, as the king

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[69]Memoranda roll, 10 Edward IV m. 8 (P.R.O.I., Ferguson coll., iii, f. 221); Parliament roll, 8 Henry VII c. 22 (P.R.O.I., RC 13/9).

[70]S.G. Ellis, 'Henry VII and Ireland' in J.F. Lydon (ed.), *England and Ireland in the later middle ages* (Dublin, 1981), pp 237-54. See also *Cal. anc. rec. Dublin*, i, 171 (bond of *nisi* by the city of Dublin in 1,000 marks, 1488); and (against retaining) *Cal. pat. rolls, 1485-94*, p. 316; Statute roll, 10 Henry VII, c. 12 (*Stat. Ire.*, i, 45-6).

[71]Ellis, *Tudor Ire.*, chs 2-4, 6, passim. For the Salisbury settlement, see Agnes Conway, *Henry VII's relations with Scotland and Ireland* (Cambridge, 1932), pp 226-9.

[72]Ellis, *Reform & revival*, pp 15, 18, 24-8, 37, 46, 69; idem, *Tudor Ire.*, pp 61-4.

[73]Cf. Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), pp 203-4.

quickly discovered.[74] The political eclipse of the lordship's leading family was a major factor in the 'mid-Tudor crisis' as it affected Ireland, and the crown was thereby encouraged to experiment with unorthodox methods of government which seriously exacerbated, if they did not actually create, an Irish problem. Thus the abandonment in Ireland of the traditional methods by which the Tudors were successfully assimilating outliers like Wales and the north, in favour of a strategy of military conquest, was chiefly a cause rather than a consequence of the island's separate development. But the real significance of such developments is obscured by attempts to present them as products of long-term processes which saw the gradual emergence of an Irish nation.

In sum, the adoption for late medieval Ireland of an anachronistic, Hibernocentric perspective, with associated nationalist themes, is a conceptual trap similar to that discerned by J.H. Hexter in A.F. Pollard's work.[75] Since the perspective and concepts chosen owe more to modern aspirations than contemporary preoccupations, nationalist interpretations necessarily reveal steady 'progress' towards an independent Ireland. But the validity of such concepts can only be tested by discussing developments in English and Gaelic Ireland in their respective contexts of the English and Gaelic worlds.[76]

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