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Historiographical debate: Representations of the past in Ireland: whose past and whose present?

In modern history there are few countries which present the historian with the kind of interpretative challenge offered by Ireland. The general outlines of the problem are well known—the impact on the island of successive waves of colonisation; the endemic unrest, religious strife, and political instability, exemplified in recent times by the partition of the island between two states; and the interaction and conflict since the middle ages of two cultures and two peoples, Gaelic and English. These salient features of Irish history raise the question of an appropriate historiographical framework within which the island's history might be interpreted—if we accept that Ireland's historical experience cannot be understood in isolation. In an article published in this journal three years ago, I outlined an alternative perspective on the history of late medieval Ireland which, it seemed to me, also held possibilities for other periods of Irish history.¹ In the course of the discussion, the article also urged the modification or replacement of particular terms and concepts which have traditionally been used by historians but which, I argued, are an obstacle to a more balanced, pluralistic understanding of Ireland's past. The article has since attracted a reply by Dr Brendan Bradshaw,² on which the journal's editors have kindly allowed me to comment.

Dr Bradshaw's reply raises basic questions about the work of the historical profession in Ireland. Most fundamentally, in regard to the historian's twin tasks of analysing how past societies operated and of explaining the relationship between the past and the present, he argues that Irish historians have concentrated too much on the former to the detriment of the latter. In this context, he considers my article at two levels: first, he disputes the evidence which I had assembled in support of my arguments in favour of alternative historical perspectives; second, he offers a lengthy critique of historical revisionism in Ireland in

¹'Nationalist historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds in the late middle ages' in *I.H.S.*, xxv, no. 97 (May 1986), pp 1-18. The implications of this perspective on Irish history are explored over a rather longer period in S. G. Ellis: 'The inveterate dominion: Ireland in the English state: a survey to 1700' in Hans-Heinrich Nolte (ed.), *Internal peripheries in Europe: the dark side of development* (Göttingen, forthcoming).

²'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland' in *I.H.S.*, xxvi, no. 104 (Nov. 1989), pp 329-51. Many of the points raised here were first outlined by Bradshaw in a recent book review (in *E.H.R.*, civ (1989), pp 472-4) of my *Reform and revival: English government in Ireland, 1470-1534* (London, 1986).

which he employs my work as a kind of case-study in the shortcomings of that genre of historical writing. In a response of this nature it is impossible to consider all aspects of Bradshaw's arguments about revisionism. Some preliminary remarks on interpretative models for Irish history, actual and potential, are intended to suggest that the nature of the problem is less simple than Bradshaw supposes. There then follows a reconsideration of the historical evidence concerning late medieval Ireland which lies at the centre of the dispute. And finally, on the basis of this reconsideration, the paper argues that Bradshaw's suggested solution to the problem is misplaced.

I

As I argued in my earlier article, to concentrate on relating the past to the present while neglecting the task of understanding the past in its own terms is to over-simplify and, in effect, to distort the past. Dr Bradshaw is right to point out that the reverse also holds. Yet for reasons which are discussed below, explaining the relationship between the past and the present in Ireland is much more complicated than Bradshaw implies. And in the face of the methodological difficulties involved, many historians (myself included) have preferred to avoid some of these problems by focusing more on understanding past societies in Ireland, their aspirations and values, in their own terms, without regard to what came after—to reconstruct the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen ist', in Leopold von Ranke's famous phrase. In a growing number of articles and books over the past hundred years, historians such as Robert Dunlop at the turn of the century and A. J. Otway-Ruthven fifty years later have expounded the results of systematic archival research to build up a picture of society in Ireland at particular periods of the past. Yet the truism 'All history is contemporary history' reminds us that modern value-judgements and the problems of contemporary society will inevitably influence the historian's understanding and assessment of the past. Quite apart from advances in historical methods and new lines of inquiry, historians need constantly to rewrite history because modern society is changing and with it the kinds of question we ask about the past. The recent phenomenon of revisionist history is, at bottom, a manifestation of the continuing need to reinterpret the past. In its Irish context it also reflects the emergence of a more tolerant attitude among historians, and among the vast majority of Irish people too, to the problems of the past—in contrast with the atmosphere of sixty years ago in the aftermath of partition and civil war. In part at least modern revisionist attacks on traditional nationalist or unionist interpretations of the relationship between the past and the present arise out of a more concerted attempt not simply to understand the facts of history but also to understand the other man's understanding of them.

Without some kind of interpretative framework, however, history becomes simply 'one damn thing after another'. Broadly, during the past sixty years historians have employed two kinds of interpretative framework in order to isolate and elucidate the more deep-seated problems of Irish history.³ The more

³See now T. C. Barnard, 'Crises of identity among Irish Protestants, 1641-1685' in *Past and Present*, no. 127 (May 1990), pp 39-45.

traditional of these seeks to adapt for Ireland conventional west European themes associated with the rise of a sovereign kingdom and nation-state. The model remains useful in many ways, but it also has serious, and well-known shortcomings.⁴ An obvious difficulty is that, although Ireland is now regarded as indubitably part of Europe, its geographical position is peripheral, and in many ways its historical experience has been one of extra-European colonial expansion, particularly in its British form. And in this context modern Ireland resembles in some respects the successor states of former British territories. Not surprisingly, therefore, the second interpretative framework explored by historians in recent years attempts to compare the Irish experience with that of contemporary British expansion elsewhere, particularly that to north America—the so-called ‘westward enterprise’.⁵

The comparison is a fruitful one which has a further dimension developed by medievalists. Although little attempt has been made to trace the relationship between the two phases, the conquest and colonisation of early modern Ireland constituted a new period of internal expansion in the British Isles after the earlier Anglo-Norman phase of colonisation. Moreover, many of the strategies and techniques devised by the English for colonising the lands of the ‘Celtic fringe’ and subduing their ‘primitive’ inhabitants were adapted, with varying degrees of success, for use in British North America against the American Indians.⁶ Yet in North America the colonists not only imposed their own culture and administrative structures on the continent—as they did in Ireland—but they eventually came to outnumber the native populations and to marginalise their position both politically and economically. The North American experience was indeed the major example of a particular pattern of British colonisation—Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies are others—in which the modern state is overwhelmingly a product of the colonial process and culture rather than an outgrowth of pre-colonial, indigenous society. An appropriate historiographical model in those circumstances portrays the process of colonisation as bringing ‘civilization, self-government and true religion’ to the colonised territory, and leading eventually to nationhood and independence from the motherland.⁷ Yet only in a limited and partial way might this model of a post-colonial state and society be adapted for Irish history. It offers some possibilities for the history of Northern Ireland, but in Ireland as a whole, as Bradshaw reminds us, the majority community identifies with a native rather than a colonial past.

⁴The best analysis of the problem is Karl Bottigheimer, ‘Kingdom and colony: Ireland in the westward enterprise, 1536-1660’ in K. R. Andrews, N. P. Canny and P. E. H. Hair (eds), *The westward enterprise: English activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480-1650* (Liverpool, 1978), ch. 3.

⁵Andrews, Canny & Hair, *Westward enterprise*. A recent synthesis of the literature is Nicholas Canny, *Kingdom and colony: Ireland in the Atlantic world, 1560-1800* (Baltimore, 1988). See also Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (eds), *Colonial identity in the Atlantic world, 1500-1800* (Princeton, N.J., 1987).

⁶Recent discussions of the general European dimensions of this problem are Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Before Columbus: exploration and colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492* (London, 1987); J. R. S. Phillips, *The medieval expansion of Europe* (Oxford, 1988).

⁷A good example of this genre is Clarence L. Ver Steeg, *The formative years, 1607-1763* (New York, 1964).

Within the British colonial experience, however, there exists an alternative pattern of national development. Reflecting a distinction between 'colonies of settlement' and 'colonies of exploitation',⁸ this second pattern was typical of many parts of Asia and Africa and seems, at first sight, to offer possibilities for the historian of Ireland. In countries like India or Zimbabwe the modern state reflects the adaptation by native society of British concepts of administration and state-building, but with a much more pronounced degree of historical continuity with the pre-colonial past in terms of language and culture. In this pattern of nation-building the balance between benefits and shortcomings in the historiographical treatment of the colonial era tends to be weighted in favour of the latter, partly of course because of the very different outcome to the process, but also no doubt because of the historian's notorious use of hindsight. The British presence helped to speed the transition from tribalism to the modern state, but in other respects the historiographical depiction of colonialism has been of a predominantly exploitative phenomenon.⁹ Again, the historical experience of the Republic of Ireland has many affinities with this pattern of national development. Yet in Africa and Asia the colonial era was typically quite short-lived—less than two centuries—and the colonists never formed more than a tiny minority of the population. In Ireland, by contrast, the colonists arrived in much larger numbers and their impact has been much more profound, lasting over several centuries. Even in the Republic the law and land settlement imposed by the colonists still survive and the native culture and language have been virtually obliterated, so that continuity with a Gaelic past is primarily an ideological one. Indeed the paradox of the Irish colonial experience is that whereas its ideological affinities are chiefly with the Afro-Asian pattern, in its long-term impact it has resembled more closely the colonial experience of a country like Canada.

In most of the former British territories the outlines of the transition from colony to independent state are now sufficiently clear for the historian to analyse the major stages of the process with some degree of certainty. Yet a fundamental difficulty which confronts any historian who attempts to portray modern Ireland as the product of a colonial experience is that the outcome remains to some degree uncertain. The fact that the island is divided between two states, each with its separate historical traditions and popular perceptions of the past, imposes on the historian the task of relating the unfolding of Ireland's history to more than one version of the present. Like modern states everywhere, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, through their respective officials and institutions of government, have attempted to invoke history in order to vindicate contemporary aspirations and values and to promote a unifying sense of national identity. Very crudely, the values to which the Republic has laid claim may be described as nationalist, Gaelic, Catholic and republican, in contrast with Northern Ireland's stress on its unionist, British, Protestant and

⁸See, e.g. the discussion in Carl Bridge, P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, 'Introduction: a "British" empire' in *International History Review*, xii (1990), pp 2-10.

⁹T. O. Lloyd, *The British empire, 1558-1983* (Oxford, 1984); P. J. Marshall, 'The whites of British India, 1780-1830: a failed colonial society?' in *International History Review*, xii (1990), pp 26-44. With regard to Zimbabwe, it is perhaps significant that the centenary of the founding of Rhodesia (1990) was largely ignored there in favour of celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the present state.

loyalist heritage. And while historians rightly insist that the practical differences between the two states are much less than the claims, they are obliged to consider these claims in explaining the making of modern Ireland—to uphold, to qualify, or to reject them as myths or propaganda. In other words, these competing claims inevitably influence the terminology and concepts which historians choose to use in order to explain the relationship between particular aspects of the past and of the present. Thus what makes the writing of Irish history so particularly difficult is that the persistence of civil unrest in the country and the polarisation of political opinion have ensured that there is comparatively little shared historical sense of community between the island's different traditions. The competing claims represent mutually irreconcilable understandings of what were the major events of Irish history.

Within the British colonial experience there is one other region where the issue remains similarly undecided at present and which perhaps offers some interesting parallels—and timely warnings!—for Irish historians. This is southern Africa. European colonisation of the region, beginning in 1652, was comparable in scale to that in Ireland and the political situation there was similarly complicated by the interaction between two groups of settlers, Dutch and English. The newly imposed political boundaries of the region likewise cut across existing units: for instance, the territory of the Batswana was partitioned between Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana), and British Bechuanaland which was subsequently incorporated into the Cape Colony and is now split between South Africa and Bophuthatswana. The Batswana were thus divided between three states in much the same way as the Gaedhil in Scotland and the two Irish states, and with similar political consequences in terms of territorial claims and a 'national question'.¹⁰

Historiographically, South Africa sits uneasily between the two patterns of post-colonial British states. Historians of the dominant white minority have traditionally portrayed the development of South Africa along the same lines as historians of North America.¹¹ Recently, however, the various portents of political change have prompted some historians to look at how South African history might be rewritten so as to portray in a more positive and balanced manner the contribution of the blacks.¹² And in turn some of the ideas for this re-evaluation inevitably derive from the alternative African pattern of post-colonial state, in which the focus of historical attention switches from the advent of 'civilisation' to the struggle for nationhood of the native tribe. The history of the Batswana, for instance, witnessed successive broken treaties with the British, the gradual

¹⁰C. F. J. Muller (ed.), *Five hundred years: a history of South Africa* (3rd ed., Pretoria, 1981), pp 190, 201, 252, 315-17, 323, 332, 379, 389, 453, 523-5, 529, 551, 555-6, 564. In terms of international law of course, the parallel between Northern Ireland and Bophuthatswana is not an exact one because Northern Ireland is not a sovereign state, whereas Bophuthatswana, although it now claims sovereignty, is not recognised as such by the world community.

¹¹The standard histories of South Africa include Muller, *Five hundred years*; T. R. H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (Johannesburg, 1978); Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (eds), *The shaping of South African society, 1652-1840* (2nd ed., Cape Town, 1989).

¹²See now Leonard Thompson, *A history of South Africa* (Yale, 1990); also the discussion in Drees Van Heerden, 'First there is history—then come the facts' in *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 8 July 1990, p. 18.

expropriation of their land by white settlers, and the establishment of new states on their territory as the settlers redrew tribal boundaries in a bid to validate their new land titles and to confine the natives to tribal reserves.¹³ Despite three centuries of colonial rule, however, the indigenous population of South Africa remains immediately distinguishable from the settlers in appearance and culture, whereas the descendants of 'the wild Irish' are now practically indistinguishable from the English. The reasons for this acculturation also demonstrate why, in the last analysis, colonial models for Irish history—whether of the 'Atlantic world' variety or Dr Bradshaw's new insights—raise as many problems as they solve. The geographical proximity of Ireland and Britain and their long-standing economic interdependence encourage continual migration between the two islands, and consequently strong cultural ties, which cannot be described as colonial. And unlike 'migrant labourers' in South Africa, 'natives' from Ireland have long enjoyed largely the same status in mainland Britain as the local population. Nevertheless, this comparison with South Africa—arguably the closest parallel to a post-colonial state and the least explored—does at least highlight some of the problems faced by Irish historians. As with Irish history, the problem faced by historians of southern Africa is to devise an interpretative framework which enables them to offer a balanced analysis of the contributions of both natives and settlers and to address the rival claims made on behalf of competing official and popular perceptions of the past.

II

Yet within these methodological limits, the writing of Irish history is not simply a cyclical process. The advances in our knowledge of events, in historical methods, and above all the recognition that there are many different ways of interpreting these events, has led to a constant refining of terminology and concepts to meet the demands of the various historical traditions, approaches and interpretations. As part of this process of revision, the aim of my earlier article on late medieval Ireland was, in part, to sidestep the problems—and in particular the invidious comparisons—associated with the employment of an explicitly colonial framework for the understanding of Irish history by utilising instead the concept of Ireland as a borderland. Although the organising concepts were allowed to emerge from a discussion of the evidence rather than explicitly stated, they in fact borrowed from recent work by continental European historians on internal peripheries and multiple monarchies, from Professor Michael Hechter's well-known study of internal colonialism in the British Isles, and from recent work on the problems of the United Kingdom as a multi-national state.¹⁴

¹³Above, n. 10; S. L. L. Rathebe (ed.), *A nation on the march* (Melville, S.A., 1987). This officially-inspired history of the Republic of Bophuthatswana is an interesting and instructive example of 'history in the making'.

¹⁴Michael Hechter, *Internal colonialism: the Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536-1966* (London, 1975); Nolte (ed.), *Internal peripheries*; R. R. Davies (ed.), *The British Isles, 1100-1500: comparisons, contrasts and connections* (Edinburgh, 1988); Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-century Britain: England, Scotland and Wales, the making of a nation* (Oxford, 1989). I am indebted also to many of the papers at the 1988 Anglo-American Conference of Historians on 'Multiple kingdoms and federal states', some of which have been published in recent issues of *Historical Research*.

Evidently Dr Bradshaw finds these perspectives on Irish history no more helpful than any other interpretative frameworks which have been developed over the past sixty years. Instead he concludes his lengthy critique of historical revisionism in Ireland with a plea for 'present-centred' history, to be achieved by the rehabilitation of an older tradition of history writing. Briefly, he claims that 'the aspiration towards the development of a value-free history has flawed the achievement of the professional school of Irish historians since its establishment in the early 1930s'.¹⁵ It has led, allegedly, to a series of distortions and omissions as a result of which central aspects of the Irish experience—'the catastrophic dimension of Irish history'—have been systematically edited out of the record or normalised. His remedy is to urge historians 'to resume contact with an emerging tradition of Irish historical scholarship which was thrust aside by the impatient young men of the 1930s, and to recover the vision of its two great luminaries, Eoin MacNeill and Edmund Curtis', the vision that is of the two leading exponents of the different forms of nationalist history at partition.

This is not the place to enter into yet another discussion of the 1930s 'revolution' in Irish history. Dr Bradshaw claims, rightly or wrongly, to detect a series of particular lapses and shortcomings in the work of individual historians. Yet the central question which is raised by his criticisms of the work of revisionist historians is whether their reconstructions of the past as it actually was have distorted, rather than amplified, our understanding of its relationship with the present. This seems inherently unlikely given the continuing output of scholarly one-volume histories of the making of modern Ireland.¹⁶ A careful analysis of the work of individual revisionists would also disprove his contention that founding fathers of the 1930s 'revolution' seriously considered themselves to be writing 'value-free history'. For instance, the magnum opus of Robert Dudley Edwards, *Church and state in Tudor Ireland* (Dublin, 1935), was subtitled *A history of the penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534–1603*. Throughout the text, the Henrician Reformation is persistently described as 'the Anglican schism'; the papacy is called 'the Holy See'; and the Church of Ireland is referred to as 'the Established Church' or 'the State Church'. There is also an appendix entitled 'A chronological list of the Irish martyrs, 1534–1603', which does not include all those known by Edwards to have been executed for religion but is confined to those on 'the list of the Irish martyrs, the process for whose canonization has commenced' (p. 308). Manifestly, this is not a detached and impartial work by someone attempting to write 'value-free history', but an

¹⁵'Nationalism', p. 350, for quotations in this paragraph.

¹⁶See most recently, R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972* (London, 1988); K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (London, 1989); J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–1985: politics and society* (Cambridge, 1989). And for longer chronological spans, R. F. Foster (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989); K. S. Bottigheimer, *Ireland and the Irish* (New York, 1982); J. O'Beirne Ranelagh, *A short history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1983); Liam de Paor, *The peoples of Ireland from prehistory to modern times* (London, 1986). The early appearance or reprinting of many of these works in paperback editions, and the wide interest which they have aroused on radio and television, also suggests that Bradshaw's claims about the emergence of a universally-acknowledged 'credibility gap . . . between the new professional history and the general public' ('Nationalism & historical scholarship', pp 341, 350) are very much exaggerated.

honest attempt by a professional historian writing in the Catholic and nationalist tradition who tried to understand and analyse a movement with which he fundamentally disagreed.¹⁷

In any case to categorise the work of revisionists as ‘the Irish school of value-free history’ is to ignore the very real differences in interests and perspectives even among the original leaders of the 1930s ‘revolution’.¹⁸ Dr Bradshaw’s insistence on a nationalist perspective, excluding the British dimension, perhaps also explains a curious reticence on his part in regard to the comparative aspects of my article, in particular the attempt to compare contemporary political ideas and aspirations in Ireland with those in the rest of the British Isles.¹⁹ In general he ignores the second half of my comparisons—for instance the contention that developments in Gaelic Ireland need to be viewed in the context of the whole Gaelic world²⁰—and in any case he offers no new evidence and cites no primary sources. Other perspectives, such as the comparison of regional sentiments among the English communities of Ireland and the north of England, are dismissed as ‘assuredly mistaken’, without further explanation;²¹ so that the reader is obliged to take on trust the research on northern society which informs the author’s rejection of their validity. Thus the major portion of Bradshaw’s reply relates to three points—late medieval Ireland as a substantive entity, ‘Anglo-Irish separatism’, and ‘gaelicisation’.

With regard to Ireland as a substantive entity in the late middle ages, the reply misrepresents my arguments as asserting that ‘Ireland had no meaningful historical existence in the late medieval period. It was merely a geographical expression.’²² In fact the article *did* advert to the uniqueness of Ireland’s constitutional position at this time,²³ but it also argued that the devolved

¹⁷Elsewhere, Edwards claimed that ‘the older, more moderate and even imperialist nationalism which distinguished the writings of fair-minded historians . . . continued after 1922 in the works of MacNeill and Curtis, in those of MacNeill’s disciples Hogan and Hayes-McCoy, and in those of Curtis’s pupils Bryan and Otway-Ruthven’: *Ireland in the age of the Tudors* (London, 1977), p. 193.

¹⁸Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism & historical scholarship’, pp 334-8 (quotations, pp 336, 338, n. 23). Professor Quinn, for instance, tells me that his own early writings were influenced by his socialist outlook. See in particular his contributions to *Chambers’s Encyclopedia* (London, 1950), v, 51-2, vii, 719-29.

¹⁹These comparisons are further developed in S. G. Ellis, *The Pale and the Far North: government and society in two early Tudor borderlands* (Galway, 1988); idem, ‘Crown, community and government in the English territories, 1450-1575’ in *History*, lxxi (1986), pp 187-204; idem, ‘“Not mere English”: the British perspective, 1400-1650’ in *History Today*, xxviii (1988), pp 41-8. Apropos of Bradshaw’s charge of inconsistency in my work in purveying an *argumentum ad nationem* against Irish historiography, while condoning similar tendencies among historians of England (*E.H.R.*, civ (1989), pp 473-4), it should be noted that these articles constitute a parallel critique of Anglocentric presentations of English and British history.

²⁰Ellis, ‘Nationalist historiography’, pp 6-10.

²¹Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism & historical scholarship’, p. 331; Ellis, loc. cit., pp 12-16.

²²Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism & historical scholarship’, p. 329. Unfortunately, this is not the only instance of misrepresentation in the reply: see below, p. 302, n. 45; cf. Bradshaw, pp 333-4 and n. 12 (where my article is also misquoted — providing ‘the Irish state with respectable historical precedents’, p. 334) and Ellis, p. 2.

²³Ellis, ‘Nationalist historiography’, p. 11.

government for the lordship of Ireland would bear more sustained comparison with the administrative structures established for the other English borderlands. What is basically at issue here, however, is the nature of that entity rather than its reality. In his reply, Bradshaw makes a general comment about Ireland as a case-study in the emergence of modern nations and states, and a particular assertion about Ireland's constitutional relationship with England which he sees as relevant to his discussion of 'Anglo-Irish separatism'. He also cites the case of medievalists in Spain, Italy and Germany 'in choosing to study the history of territories that had yet to attain political coherence in their period'.²⁴

In the late middle ages the English nation included political communities outside the geographical territory of England, such as the Englishry of Ireland. England was in fact an administrative unit, albeit the dominant one, in a wider English polity; and this distinction became even more pronounced with the political unification of the British Isles in 1603. And just as England's relations with the other parts of this emerging British state require more thorough investigation, so too does Ireland's position within this state.²⁵ The British dimension has always been a central feature of Irish history. The political unification of Ireland was first achieved in 1603, by the Tudors; and unlike Spain, Italy and Germany, Ireland as a whole has never operated as a unitary sovereign state. As will appear, Bradshaw's arguments in fact offer further evidence in support of a contention in my original article—that Ireland's majority nationalist tradition has at times and unwittingly been projected historiographically on to the whole island, as if there were an Irish nation-state gradually emerging since early modern times which also included the unionist peoples of Northern Ireland with their separate history and traditions. The basic problem, as Professor Hugh Kearney has recently reminded us,²⁶ is that the nation-based approach to history which Leopold von Ranke promoted along with his more critical methods has not been very appropriate to the experience of state-building in the British Isles in more modern times.

Concerning arguments about Ireland's constitutional position in the late middle ages, we are on firmer ground. Bradshaw's assertion that Ireland was 'a lordship appended to the English crown but not to the English realm'²⁷ simply repeats the argument in his controversial book on the subject, where he offered just one new document in support of his case, the Irish act of faculties of 1536,

²⁴Ibid., pp 330-32 (quotation, p. 331).

²⁵R. A. Griffiths, 'The English realm and dominions and the king's subjects in the later middle ages' in John Rowe (ed.), *Aspects of government and society in later medieval England: essays in honour of J. R. Lander* (Toronto, 1986); above, n.19. With regard to the fourteenth century, a similar plea that the English of Ireland be studied as part of English history has recently been made in Robin Frame's illuminating survey, 'England and Ireland, 1171-1399' in Michael Jones and Malcolm Vale (eds), *England and her neighbours, 1066-1453: essays in honour of Pierre Chaplais* (London, 1989), pp 151-5.

²⁶Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: a history of four nations* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1.

²⁷Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 332 (cf. *ibid.*, p. 330). Bradshaw cites Art Cosgrove, 'The Yorkist cause, 1447-60' in *idem* (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, ii: *Medieval Ireland, 1169-1534* (Oxford, 1987), pp 557-68 in support of his arguments, but Cosgrove's discussion at this point does not bear out Bradshaw's interpretation.

ignoring all the evidence to the contrary. This statute, he believes, asserts that 'the king's land of Ireland is his proper dominion, and a member appending and rightfully belonging to the imperial crown of the said realm of England, and united to the same'. The quotation is glossed as expressing the 'notion of a personal union, in the imperial crown, of two distinct constitutional and jurisdictional entities—the kingdom of England and the lordship of Ireland', thus implying that 'the same' refers simply to 'the imperial crown' and not to 'the realm of England'. He then claims that this 'is precisely what was expressed by the Anglo-Irish separatist tradition of the fifteenth century'.²⁸

In response, we may note, first, that this interpretation of the statute runs contrary to the well-established vocabulary of dominion in the English territories. Its real meaning might for instance have been inferred from Edward I's 'statute' of Rhuddlan of 1284: 'divine providence hath now wholly and entirely transferred under our proper dominion the land of Wales with its inhabitants, heretofore subject unto us in feudal right . . . and hath annexed and united the same unto our crown of the realm as a member of the same body'.²⁹ In fact the true meaning of the quotation, which is here taken out of context, may be established from the preceding section of the statute's preamble. The Irish act of faculties extended to Ireland the provisions of the English act. It first quotes its English counterpart in full and then justifies its extension to Ireland in the following terms:

For as much as it is mentioned in the said act that the effects thereof should not onely extend into the realm of England and to the commoditie thereof and of the subjects of the same, but also to all other the king's dominions and his subjects, and that this the king's land of Ireland is his proper dominion and a member appending and rightfully belonging to the imperiall crown of the said realm of England and united to the same.³⁰

In other words, 'united to the same' refers also to the realm of England. And the statute's significance in this context is admirably expressed by Bradshaw's own comment on it: 'the statutes enacting the royal ecclesiastical supremacy in Ireland expressed the constitutional position of the Irish lordship in a way that could be endorsed by the local parliament'.³¹

An illustration of the practical consequences of Ireland's constitutional relationship with England at this time puts the issue beyond all doubt. Because Ireland was a dependent territory, it was not strictly necessary to secure the assent of the Irish parliament to the Reformation legislation—although for political reasons the more important measures *were* re-enacted in Ireland—since, as the Irish act of faculties noted, the English parliament could legislate for Ireland. A particular example of this occurred in the same year, when the English parliament passed an act of attainder against Sir James and Richard Fitzgerald which the government did not consider worth re-enacting in Ireland,

²⁸*The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 161. In a footnote Bradshaw allows that James I's attorney-general, Sir John Davies, had in 1613 interpreted this and similar statutes as implying a union of two kingdoms.

²⁹Quoted in S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972), p. 247. For a discussion of the constitutional position of the English dominions in the later middle ages, see Griffiths, 'English realm and dominions', esp. pp 85-7.

³⁰*Stat. Ire.*, i, 156.

³¹*Irish constitutional revolution*, p. 161.

even though the Irish parliament was then in session. The under-treasurer and master of the rolls in Ireland therefore both wrote to remind the king of the normal procedure in such circumstances, pointing out that the act could not be promulgated until it had been formally certified into Ireland.³² Thus, properly interpreted, the legislation of the Irish parliament in 1536 is entirely consistent with a parliamentary address to Edward IV in 1474 when the Irish parliament asserted that 'of very ryght the realme of England is bound to the defense of his land of Irland by resoun that it ys oon of the membres of his moost noble corone and eldest membre therof'.³³ Ireland was the 'eldest membre', because the imperial crown of the realm was indivisible: or as the Tudors would have expressed it, there was one body-politic, of which the king was head and Ireland a member. A body-politic with one head and two bodies would, like its human counterpart, have been a monster!

Thus Ireland's constitutional status offers no support for Dr Bradshaw's claims about 'Anglo-Irish separatism'. None the less, one should not mistake shadow for substance. The legal, constitutional position was one thing, but in the realm of political ideas a community isolated by distance and neglect will undoubtedly put its own self-seeking interpretation on events. In this context, the basic objection to concepts like 'Anglo-Irish separatism' and 'gaelicisation' is that the terms themselves or the ways in which they have been employed by historians are misleading, not that the Englishry was unaffected by the ideas which the terms purport to describe. 'Anglo-Irish separatism' is doubly objectionable. Apropos of 'Anglo-Irish', the use of this cumbersome term to describe the English of medieval Ireland erroneously suggests a connexion with the 'Anglo-Irish' of the eighteenth-century Protestant Ascendancy, and this is confusing to non-specialists. More importantly, the term which the Englishry normally used to describe themselves and which best reflects the political ideas of the community is 'English'.³⁴

In considering this point, a second aspect of Bradshaw's reply is relevant to the discussion, his assertion that revisionist historians 'seek to extrude national consciousness as a dimension of the Irish historical experience from all but the modern period'.³⁵ The charge might more fairly be levelled at historians like Dr Bradshaw, for it is precisely in order to understand this phenomenon of national consciousness that we must insist on 'English' as a description of the lordship's political community. A striking assertion of this sense of national identity is the

³²P.R.O., C 65/146, c. 18 (*The statutes of the realm*, 28 Hen. VIII, c. 18), SP 60/3, ff 201-4 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, no. 521); *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 369. Cf. *S.P. Hen. VIII*, i, 439. See also S. G. Ellis, 'Henry VIII, rebellion and the rule of law' in *Hist. Jn.*, xxiv (1981), pp 513-31. In passing we may note that Bradshaw's deployment (*Irish constitutional revolution*, pp 160-61) of the Reformation legislation to develop a contrast between the establishment of *state* sovereignty in both England and Ireland and the establishment of *national* sovereignty in England only rests on a similar anachronism. Since the political community of the lordship was English, not 'Anglo-Irish', it follows that the Reformation marked the establishment of national sovereignty in Ireland too.

³³The address is printed in Donough Bryan, *The great earl of Kildare* (Dublin, 1933), pp 18-22 (quotation at p. 22).

³⁴A helpful recent discussion of the problem is Frame, 'England and Ireland', pp 151-5.

³⁵Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 344.

account in the Book of Howth of the battle of Knockdoe, a battle in which, in the modern sense, few if any Englishmen could have participated. None the less, the battle was portrayed as an English victory over the Irish, achieved by superior weapons and tactics, despite the large number of Gaelic troops who fought under Lord Deputy Kildare but who scarcely figure in the account. On the eve of the battle, allegedly, an air of quiet determination pervaded the English camp, whereas the Irish sat up all night 'watching, drinking and playing at cards, who should have this prisoner and that'. In the morning Kildare wished to place the galloglass in the vanguard, 'for it is less force of their losses than it is of our young men'; but Lord Howth counselled against this: 'we will not hazard our English goods upon Irish blood'. Afterwards Kildare is urged to complete the victory by eliminating the Irish who are with him. And the king subsequently rewarded him with election to the order of the Garter.³⁶

Strengthening the military dimensions of this nationalism was a relatively recent development, the Brotherhood of Arms. It was established by act of parliament at the very time when 'Anglo-Irish separatism' was allegedly at its height, in 1474. In an address to the king parliament asked for approval of the act, and it dedicated the brotherhood not to the British saint, Patrick—whose popularity in the lordship might have made him an obvious choice—but to the patron saint of England, George. God was of course an Englishman and 'St George' was the rallying cry of English armies in Ireland. The Brothers assembled annually on St George's day to elect a captain of the brotherhood's military retinue for the following year.³⁷ Predictably, the centre for the cult of St George in Ireland was Dublin, where St George's Chapel was located in St Patrick's Cathedral. By a municipal act of 1448 the master and wardens of the fraternity of the Guild of St George were entitled to choose one good cow out of every prey of cows taken by the city. The guild organised and paid for the annual pageant which, together with 'St George's chappell well hanged and apparelled to every purpose with cushins', attracted many pious pilgrims to the city for St George's day. St George rode in the procession accompanied by an emperor and empress, king and queen, all with their attendants, and four horsemen bearing his standard, pole-axe, and the swords of St George and the emperor, and a maid leading the dragon. For some obscure reason, St George's dragon was also given an outing in the city's other main annual pageant, on Corpus Christi day. The feast of St Patrick was seemingly less well celebrated in Dublin, although for all three feasts the city was open.³⁸ As in life, so also in death apparently, national consciousness was a major influence on man. St George's intercessions were highly regarded: the principal religious bequest in

³⁶*Cal. Carew MSS, Book of Howth*, pp 181-4. Cf. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, ch. 4, which discusses this and other aspects of English nationality.

³⁷Parliament rolls, 14 Edward IV, c. 3 (*Stat. Ire., Edw. IV*, ii, 188-94), 10 Henry VII, c. 38 (*Stat. Ire.*, i, 55); B.L., Lansdowne MS 159, ff 5-18 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv, no. 2405); Bryan, *Kildare*, p. 20; N. B. White (ed.), *The 'Dignitas Decani' of St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin, 1957), p. 175. Cf. *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (i), no. 872(2), reporting that the citizens of Waterford had set up the colours of St George on a castle they had captured in Baltimore haven. See also J. W. McKenna, 'How God became an Englishman' in D. J. Guth and J. W. McKenna (eds), *Tudor rule and revolution* (Cambridge, 1982), pp 25-43.

³⁸*Cal. anc. recs Dublin*, i, 239-42, 272, 324 (quotation at p. 242).

the will of John FitzRobert of Rathmore in 1471 was 10s. for celebrating the trental of St George.³⁹ And in the will of John Alen, dean of St Patrick's, in 1505, in which he established a poorhouse and appointed Christ's poor his heirs, he stipulated that the poor to be received into the house were not any poor whatsoever, but faithful Catholics of good repute, honest life and English nation.⁴⁰ True religion and English civility evidently went hand in hand; but whether St George would have interceded so effectively for the English of Ireland had they been 'Anglo-Irish' lies beyond the scope of historical inquiry.

Having rejected the description 'English', however, Bradshaw then appears to go some way towards conceding the point. Arguing that the political consciousness of the English of Ireland was quite different from that of 'a regional variant within a pan-English social group comprehending the crown's entire medieval patrimony', he suggests that 'a clear distinction was made between the colonists and any such regional sub-group' by applying 'to the former the qualifying epithet 'by blood', thus setting them apart from the normal English 'by birth'.⁴¹ Yet this qualifying epithet was not normally applied, except when it was important to distinguish between 'Englishmen born in England or Ireland' among the king's subjects; and before 1534 these circumstances arose much less frequently than nationalist accounts have suggested.⁴²

Separatism is the modern term used to describe what Edmund Curtis called 'the fifteenth-century home-rule movement', no doubt perceiving an analogy with nineteenth-century home rule. Presumably not even nationalist historians found the analogy helpful. Yet Curtis's phrase did at least hint vaguely at a commonplace of late medieval English government and political ideas which tends to be overlooked in the Irish context—that government should normally be self-government at the king's command. 'Anglo-Irish separatism' sounds more like treason. Moreover, Bradshaw's latest exposition of the term is a good deal more circumspect than his earlier pronouncements. He now thinks it is 'intended to describe an aspect of the colonial mentality which found expression in periods of crisis in Anglo-colonial relations', whereas ten years ago he wrote that 'in the course of the fifteenth century there was a growing tendency

³⁹H. F. Berry (ed.), *Register of wills and inventories of the diocese of Dublin in the time of Archbishops Tregury and Walton, 1457-1483* (Dublin, 1898), p. 23.

⁴⁰*Alen's reg.*, pp 258-9.

⁴¹Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', pp 331-2.

⁴²Quoted in Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 235, from Queen Mary's instructions to Lord Deputy Sussex for the plantation of Leix and Offaly. As Professor Ralph Griffiths has demonstrated ('English realm & dominions', pp 83-105), nationality in the English dominions was determined by birth and allegiance. Necessarily, therefore, some such qualifying epithet as 'English by blood' would be a normal part of the political vocabulary of English communities outside England. On the Englishry of Wales, see R. R. Davies, *Lordship and society in the march of Wales, 1282-1400* (Oxford, 1978), esp. pp 306-8; and for Englishmen born in Calais, see P. T. J. Morgan, 'The government of Calais, 1485-1558' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1966), pp 50-55, 126-7. University College, Galway, undergraduates taking courses through the medium of Irish happily use the parallel Gaelic terminology dividing the population into *Gaedhil* and *Gaill*: despite the ambiguities of these terms, students seem perfectly capable of distinguishing between those born in Ireland and those in Britain according to context, without the need to resort to words like 'Angla-Éireannaigh'.

towards separation—not from the crown, but from English domination'.⁴³ Since this era saw only sporadic and limited interventions by the king, in marked contrast with the periods of sustained activity until 1399 and from 1534, ideas of 'English domination' strain credulity. By and large the lordship's political leaders at this time pleaded for more royal interventions, not less, because the English dimension was central to their status as 'the king's English lieges'.⁴⁴ Yet if by 'periods of crisis', Bradshaw now simply means great events like 1460, 1487 and 1534, then it is hard to see any essential difference between these expressions of regional dissent and rebel manifestos in mainland England during the Wars of the Roses or the Pilgrimage of Grace.

With regard to the concept of 'gaelicisation', the precise point of Bradshaw's criticisms is unclear. He seems to regard 'gaelicisation' and the Gaelic resurgence or revival as the same thing, and uses the two interchangeably.⁴⁵ The two terms are of course closely linked, but the Resurgence usually denotes the whole process whereby the Gaelic peoples first checked Anglo-Norman expansion and then recovered lost territory, revitalising their culture in the process. 'Gaelicisation', on the other hand, normally describes the impact of the Gaelic revival on the Englishry, in terms of its partial acceptance of Gaelic culture and values. The chief difficulty with the use of the term 'gaelicisation' is its vagueness. It is a colligative term, like Reformation, which has traditionally been used to refer to a number of different but related processes whereby the Englishry degenerated from English civility and adopted the customs of the wild Irish. As such it cannot at the same time be employed as an *explanation* of this degeneracy. The *causes* have to be outlined individually, and in this there has been no consistency among historians. I have myself attempted to isolate the specifically Gaelic features of this process by a comparative study of the impact of the border on English society in two early Tudor borderlands.⁴⁶ Yet here again Dr Bradshaw appears to have shifted his ground, for he now believes that 'gaelicisation' refers specifically to those aspects of 'English degeneracy' which had been brought about 'through the adoption of the specifically Gaelic features of the border culture—language, manner of dress, social conventions'.⁴⁷ In other words, he now differentiates between those aspects of 'degeneracy' from English civility which were common to English border society, whether in Ireland, Wales or northern England, and those which were specifically the product of

⁴³Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 330; idem, *Irish constitutional revolution*, p. 29.

⁴⁴See now also, Frame, 'England & Ireland', pp 151-2.

⁴⁵Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship' misrepresents me as insisting that the Gaelic resurgence 'had no historical reality in this period' (p. 330); and responds with a discussion about 'gaelicisation'. Similarly, in a recent book review, he suggests that in my *Reform and revival* 'the notion of a Gaelic resurgence is dismissed as a kind of optical illusion cherished by nationalist historians' (*E.H.R.*, p. 473), and this elicits a similar response from him. In fact, 'Nationalist historiography' suggested that the Gaelic revival needed to be considered in the context of the movement in Scotland (pp 4-10), and *Reform and revival* argued that Yorkist and early Tudor kings succeeded in halting and reversing the movement in Ireland.

⁴⁶*The Pale & the Far North*.

⁴⁷Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 331. Cf. idem, *Irish constitutional revolution*, pp 23-6, 40-42.

Gaelic culture. Finally, claims Bradshaw, the 'process here described is, in fact, the familiar phenomenon of anthropological studies, acculturation, i.e. the cultural assimilation of a *minority* social group when directly exposed to a flourishing *majority* culture'.⁴⁸

Acculturation or cultural assimilation is indeed an apt term for the processes of interaction which were characteristic of many border societies during most periods of history.⁴⁹ Yet Bradshaw's remarks about acculturation are distinctly one-sided, and also need to be qualified by the cultural setting in which 'majority' is understood. Hibernocentrically speaking, the majority culture in the Anglo-Gaelic equation was Gaelic. Yet in particular parts of Ireland, and also in the wider context of the English territories, the majority culture was English. In any case, acculturation was rarely simply a one-way process, the influence of the majority on the minority: the impact of dominant minorities from the Normans to the Scots must surely rank as one of the central characteristics of Irish history. Thus a balanced assessment of acculturation has also to consider the question of 'anglicisation'.⁵⁰ The continuing importance of 'anglicisation' in late medieval Ireland is attested not just by such phenomena as the large numbers of denizenized Irishmen choosing to live in the English lordship and the evidence for common-law influences on Gaelic law,⁵¹ but also by the very openness of Gaelic society to new intellectual currents sweeping continental Europe. In so far as these developments did not first reach Gaelic Ireland in their English forms, they were still frequently mediated through the English port-towns of Ireland, since the towns were a principal direct link with continental Europe.⁵² And, in view of the long-term decline of the Gaelic language and culture in Ireland, and the parallel advance of English, Bradshaw's discussion of the phenomenon of acculturation seems strangely inconsistent with his plea for 'present-centred' history. Finally, while all these terms may have some usefulness in a purely Irish context, they make English policy towards Ireland unintelligible. It makes no sense to portray successive English

⁴⁸'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 331 (my italics).

⁴⁹Recent works which deal with this problem for the English territories in the later middle ages include Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds), *Medieval frontier societies* (Oxford, 1989); Anthony Goodman, 'The Anglo-Scottish marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?' in R. A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1286-1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp 18-33.

⁵⁰For the early modern period a recent comparative discussion of dominant minorities and acculturation is Canny, *Kingdom & colony*, ch. 2. I should perhaps add that I am perfectly willing to use the term 'gaelicisation' in this restricted sense, as part of the wider phenomenon of acculturation, if this definition can command general assent. Yet there seemed no point hitherto in evading the issue by engaging in a kind of Humpty-Dumpty speak.

⁵¹See Ellis, *Reform & revival*, pp 6-7, 55-6, 129-31, 139, 193; Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'The interaction of laws' in J. F. Lydon (ed.), *The English in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1984), pp 105-17.

⁵²Dr Bradshaw has himself assembled some of the evidence for this from an unexpected quarter and for other purposes in his 'Manus "the Magnificent": O'Donnell as Renaissance prince' in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney (eds), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), pp 15-36. See also Mícheál Mac Craith 'Gaelic Ireland and the Renaissance' in Glanmor Williams and R. O. Jones (eds), *The Celts and the Renaissance: tradition and innovation* (Cardiff, 1990), pp 57-89.

kings as being forced to appoint as governors 'Anglo-Irish' nobles whose 'gaelicised' background then leads them into 'separatist' policies against 'English domination'. The fact is that in governing the other borderlands, English kings faced problems which were much the same as those in Ireland—as their analysis by the historians of these regions amply demonstrates.⁵³ Unfortunately, by choosing to develop a different range of tools to analyse what is a similar range of problems, Irish historians have fixed on the one form of setting, passing up fruitful opportunities to explore problems in a comparative context. And by excluding this comparative dimension, they misleadingly convey the impression that particular regional differences were much greater and more significant than was in fact the case, so necessitating a special vocabulary to describe them.

Turning to Bradshaw's list of 'sins of omission and commission', the charges levelled against my own work comprise 'tacit evasion' in failing to highlight the 'phase of unprecedented ruthlessness in the crown's reaction to dissent'⁵⁴ which characterised the Tudor conquest of Ireland, or of attempting to normalise the reaction, in particular to the Kildare rebellion. Yet, for those interested in the wider dimensions of Irish history, the problem is a good deal less tractable than Bradshaw implies. The Tudor conquest of Ireland was part of a long-term process of 'English' expansion. This process can be traced back at least as far as Norman times and forward to the second British empire, and was characterised, moreover, by a considerable degree of continuity of methods, particularly in the treatment of native populations.⁵⁵ Thus it is not a case of normalising the Irish experience. The historical agenda for the consideration of English or British expansion is not set by Irish historians, particularly since it is widely accepted that Ireland's experience of an early modern colony planted on a medieval colony was altogether untypical. Despite these difficulties, however, the discussion of the process of expansion in early-modern Ireland has been a good deal more sensitive and balanced than, for instance, that of British North America. Dr Bradshaw's strictures notwithstanding, the Irish phase of expansion has, significantly, not been characterised as the establishment of civilisation, self-government and true religion in a savage land, and Sir Walter Raleigh's role in Ireland has not given him the same heroic stature as his activities in the New World.⁵⁶ Yet the native population of Ireland fared a good deal better at the hands of the colonists than the American Indians.

⁵³On Wales, the work of R. R. Davies, Glanmor Williams, Ralph Griffiths, and T. B. Pugh springs to mind, on northern England the work of Anthony Tuck, Anthony Goodman and Mervyn James.

⁵⁴Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 338.

⁵⁵The Irish dimensions of this process are explored in Ellis, 'Inveterate dominion'; idem, *The Pale and the Far North*, pp 4, 20-30.

⁵⁶Cf. the references in notes 7 and 11 above. For a pioneering study of the impact of British expansion on native Americans, see R. H. Pearce, *Savagism and civilisation: a study of the Indian and the American mind* (rev. ed., Berkeley, 1988). The tensions between the different historiographical treatments of Raleigh's career emerge in a recent collection of essays, H. G. Jones (ed.), *Raleigh and Quinn: the explorer and his Boswell* (Chapel Hill, 1987).

As it happens, my *Tudor Ireland* includes some discussion, despite limitations of space, of five of the six atrocities which Bradshaw wishes to see highlighted.⁵⁷ They are discussed, not because the Tudor conquest represented the triumph of evil over good, as Bradshaw implies, but because of their relevance to context. A central argument of the book is that the increasing resort to coercion and military rule after 1547 was counterproductive and the major reason for the Tudor failure identified in the conclusion. Yet Bradshaw's characterisation of the Henrician phase of the conquest as one of 'unprecedented ruthlessness' is both wrong and one-sided. The medieval phase of English colonisation witnessed massacres and atrocities which were the equal of anything which occurred in early or mid-Tudor Ireland.⁵⁸ It is true that relations between native and settler became more harmonious in the century before 1534, but the 'pardon of Maynooth' was not quite the new development that Bradshaw implies. It was preceded by the murder of Archbishop Alen, which shocked contemporaries,⁵⁹ by the slaughter of many of those of English birth living in Ireland,⁶⁰ and by the killing of English troops involved in the unsuccessful landing north of Dublin.⁶¹ In the circumstances, therefore, it was surprising that Henry VIII's revenge was so limited. The comparisons which I made between the government's response to the Kildare rebellion and to the Pilgrimage of Grace are, moreover, quite apposite, not an example of 'the interpretative strategy of "normalisation"': 132 Pilgrims found Henry VIII's 'free pardon' no more efficacious than the 'pardon of Maynooth', and the overall figures of executions—178 as against 75—speak for themselves!⁶²

Yet the key to a balanced understanding of the escalating level of violence in Tudor Ireland is not to revive the old atrocity charges, but to investigate the differing perceptions of the rules of war which governed the actions of the protagonists. The subject is not one which has received much attention in Ireland,⁶³ but a brief examination of one or two incidents at this time will illustrate the possibilities of the approach. In May 1538 the constable of

⁵⁷Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, esp. pp 4, 8, 9, 128-9, 267-8, 273, 281-2, 283, 290. The sixth is Carrickogunnell, which Bradshaw misdates to 1535 and for which in any case the evidence (P.R.O., SP 3/6, f. 109 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, Add., no. 1096); *S. P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 350-51, 361-3) does not support his characterisation of the episode as an 'indiscriminate massacre of civilians and garrison alike' (p. 338).

⁵⁸See, e.g., Robin Frame (ed.), 'The justiciar and the murder of the MacMurroughs in 1282' in *I.H.S.*, xviii no. 70 (Sept. 1972), pp 223-30; A. T. Lucas, 'The plundering and burning of churches in Ireland, 7th to 16th century' in Etienne Rynne (ed.), *North Munster studies* (Limerick, 1967), pp 172-229; J. F. Lydon, 'The Braganstown massacre, 1329' in *Louth Arch. Soc. Jn.*, xix (1977-80), pp 5-16; Art Cosgrove, 'The execution of the earl of Desmond, 1468' in *Kerry Arch. Soc. Jn.*, viii (1975), pp 11-27.

⁵⁹*S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 201, 217-19; P.R.O., SP 60/2, f. 62 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1404).

⁶⁰P.R.O., SP 3/14, f. 41 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1064); P.R.O. 31/18/3/1, ff 127 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1095), 139 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1257).

⁶¹P.R.O., SP 1/86, f. 160 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, vii, no. 1366), SP 60/2, ff 100-01 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, viii, no. 449).

⁶²S. G. Ellis, 'Henry VIII, rebellion and the rule of law' in *Hist. Jn.*, xxiv (1981), pp 513-31; idem, *Tudor Ireland*, pp 4, 129.

⁶³Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565-1576* (Hassocks, 1976), chs 6-7, is a notable exception.

Rathmore, an inexperienced captain from England named John Kelway, hanged two of O'Toole's servants whom he found extorting meat in the Kildare marches. The incident led to a parley between the O'Tooles and the English marchers led by Kelway, which proved inconclusive; but after the O'Tooles had departed, Kelway pursued them into the mountains where his company was ambushed by the O'Toole kerne. Kelway and the local Kildare gentry escaped on horseback to a pele nearby called Three Castles, but the kerne 'cruelly sleue' sixty of the Kildare peasantry who were on foot, and later they forced Kelway's company to surrender by setting fire to the top of the pele. And 'aftir thei had them as prisoners, [they] cruelly murdered Kelway' and 'suche of the souldeours as was with hym', and held the gentlemen to ransom.⁶⁴ Clearly, the O'Tooles killed Kelway and his men because they held them responsible for breaking a safe-conduct to a parley. Yet the king's councillors reporting the massacre evidently thought that Kelway should have been ransomed like the rest and that the kerne should have spared the poor peasantry. In 1544, following a suggestion by Lord Deputy St Leger, the king raised 1,000 kerne for service in France and Scotland, and their conduct abroad soon led to similar charges of cruelty. The six hundred kerne who served at the siege of Boulogne soon drew French protests that they beheaded prisoners.⁶⁵ And it was much the same story on the Anglo-Scottish borders where the kerne were reported to be much dreaded by the Scots. They played a leading role in Henry VIII's 'Rough Wooing' of Scotland, ravaging the borders, taking no prisoners, and slaughtering women and children indiscriminately.⁶⁶ As misunderstandings continued about what constituted legitimate conduct in wartime, it was inevitable that charges of cruelty and treachery should be made by both sides, thus contributing further to the escalating levels of violence.

III

Finally, Dr Bradshaw's remedy for the alleged shortcomings of Irish historiography needs to be considered. Much of this is a conventional plea for an imaginative and empathetic appreciation of what he calls 'the catastrophic dimension of Irish history'.⁶⁷ Yet linked with it is a controversial demand for a version of 'the island's history' which serves 'to link the national community of modern times with the "native race" of earlier epochs', or 'a perception of Irish history as the "nation's past"'.⁶⁸ Conceptually, the remedy involves reviving perceptions of Irish history as the growth of a nation-state, while substituting an African model of British post-colonial state for an alleged North American model. Thus the Republic of Ireland appears as the sole legitimate heir of the Gaelic race

⁶⁴*S.P. Hen. VIII*, iii, 18, 27-8.

⁶⁵D. G. White, 'Henry VIII's Irish kerne in France and Scotland, 1544-1545' in *Ir. Sword*, iii (1957-8), pp 213-25; C. S. L. Davies, 'Provisions for armies, 1509-50: a study in the effectiveness of early Tudor government' in *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xvii (1964-5), pp 234-48.

⁶⁶B.L., Caligula B. V, ff 2-36 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xxi (i), no. 1279), Add. MS 32,655, ff 26-8 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xix, no. 684); P.R.O., SP 49/8, ff 183-6 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xx (ii), no. 400).

⁶⁷Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', pp 341, 350.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp 346, 348.

and Northern Ireland is ignored as a kind of British equivalent of the Republic of Bophuthatswana. The argument is supported by a lengthy reconsideration of the circumstances which prompted Herbert Butterfield's subsequent, qualified acceptance of the value of Whig history in *The Englishman and his history*,⁶⁹ after his earlier demolition of *The Whig interpretation of history*⁷⁰—a lesson which Bradshaw wishes to see applied to Ireland as 'The Irishman and his history'. Allegedly, nationalist history constitutes 'a beneficent legacy—its wrongness notwithstanding'.⁷¹ It has taught succeeding generations of Irishmen to sing of liberty, while the nationalist myth of the native race permits men like Hyde, Griffith and Pearse 'to mould a notion of Irishness which would establish continuity between themselves—*arrivistes* to a man, as their names indicate—and the Gaelic past'.⁷²

Before assessing the disturbing implications of these arguments, two preliminary observations should be made. First, the validity of nationalist interpretations of Irish history does not depend on considerations of public utility of the kind developed by Bradshaw; neither is their essential legitimacy impugned by any of the varieties of revisionist history to which he takes exception. Second, the development of a comparison between English and Irish nations by invoking Butterfield's view of history overlooks the substantial differences between the historical development of the two countries and is likewise quite incidental to the main argument.⁷³ The basic difficulty with Bradshaw's arguments is that his version of nationalist history is not 'present-centred', as he claims, but the nationalist vision of one nation in an independent and united Ireland. In speaking of 'the Irish nation' and 'the national community', Bradshaw actually means all the people of Ireland, both north and south.⁷⁴ His identification of an Irish nation-state with the whole of Ireland as its national territory thus overlooks partition and the state of Northern Ireland, and the historical persistence of two traditions and two peoples which prompted these developments.

In his final paragraph Bradshaw devotes four sentences to a plea for an imaginative and empathetic elucidation of 'the history of the northern community', remarking that the northern tradition 'too is marked by the experience of catastrophe and heroic endurance'.⁷⁵ Indeed it is, but this is not a shared experience by the one people. However hurriedly Northern Ireland was conceived and

⁶⁹(Cambridge, 1944).

⁷⁰(London, 1931).

⁷¹Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 348. ⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁷³Notwithstanding the revolutionary changes of the seventeenth century and the recent influx of immigrants from the erstwhile British Empire, the English nation was relatively homogeneous, with a pronounced degree of continuity in its culture and administrative institutions going back to medieval times. By contrast, the Irish experience was of pronounced institutional discontinuity. Moreover, Butterfield's alleged conversion to Whig history took place at a time when the United Kingdom was threatened by the particularly odious Nazi tyranny which already controlled most of Europe. Surely the threat to Irish liberty implied by Bradshaw is of a very different order.

⁷⁴Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', pp 346, 348, 349. Is it mere coincidence in this context that Bradshaw's version of nationalist history matches the parody which he constructed of my arguments about the dangers of this perspective on the past — 'that in Ireland *national* historiography operates as a function of nationalist ideology, that the enterprise of recovering *the nation's* historical past is conducted in the interest of underwriting and perpetuating a current mythology' (*E.H.R.*, p. 473 (my italics))?

⁷⁵Bradshaw, 'Nationalism & historical scholarship', p. 351.

constructed, it represents nonetheless a unionist tradition. It reflects the loyalists' sense of their separate nationality with its British dimension, and Ireland's cultural and administrative links with a past which was not Gaelic but Scottish or English. And for this reason, if for no other, the proper development of Irish historical studies on a professional basis surely demands the development of a terminology which accurately reflects both the values and aspirations of past societies as well as all aspects of the relationship between past and present. Dr Bradshaw's nationalist history does neither. By excluding the British dimension and insisting that the medieval Englishry was 'Anglo-Irish', not English, that their political ideology was separatist, not loyalist, and that Anglo-Gaelic interaction produced no anglicisation, and therefore no English revival, but only the increasing gaelicisation of a colony propped up by English domination, it amounts to a denial of the past. Moreover to manipulate facts and concepts in the interests of 'present-centred' history and 'purposeful unhistoricity' can be a two-edged sword. It leaves it open to those who do not share this nationalist vision to construct an alternative 'present-centred' version of history—to invoke the Anglo-Norman and loyalist traditions of the medieval lordship, for instance, so as to portray Northern Ireland as the true heir of that 'Hiberno-Norman civilization' which the South abandoned in 1922 when it seceded from the Union to pursue the chimera of a Gaelic and Catholic republic. Surely Dr Bradshaw has no wish to preside over the degeneration of Irish history into propaganda of this sort.⁷⁶

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APPENDIX

Art Cosgrove, 'The writing of Irish medieval history' in *I.H.S.*, xxvii, no. 106 (Nov. 1990), pp 97-111, includes a further response to my original article. Yet his exploration of the differences between the Englishries of England and Ireland misses the point of my argument, which is not that the 'English of Ireland' were indistinguishable, lacking any distinctive sense of identity or territorial attachment, but that their distinguishing features were *of the same kind* as those which distinguished the different regional communities within mainland England (cf., for instance, perceptions of 'northerners' as distinguished by accent and dialect, intermarriage, relations with Scots). His recapitulation of the familiar evidence about differences of identity between 'New' and 'Old' English c. 1570-1641 ignores the fact that the early-modern political situation was quite different, and that concepts of nationality in England had altered considerably in the mid-Tudor period. Finally, my claim that the 'English of Ireland' were 'English' can only be validated or disproved by comparing the respective views of the Englishries of Ireland *and* England about the essential features of Englishness, including the compatibility of national and regional identities. Cosgrove draws only on the Irish documentation, offering in effect half a comparison.

⁷⁶In connexion with this paper, I am deeply grateful to Professor David Quinn and Alison Quinn for their recollections about Irish historians and their writings in the 1930s. Earlier drafts were read by a number of friends. I should particularly like to thank Ciaran Brady, Robin Frame and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh for their comments and suggestions.