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978-0-521-89864-5 - The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541-1641

Brendan Kane

Excerpt

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Introduction: honour in Britain and Ireland

By the time Henry VIII ascended to the English throne, Ireland had already been a thorn in the monarchical paw for centuries. In spite of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion and the subsequent establishment of Ireland as a lordship controlled by England's monarchs, the island and its peoples continued to cause headaches for their titular overlords. It was a perennial money sink, a drain on Crown coffers as frequent subventions were required to prop up the coastal and urban strongholds of the Anglo-Normans' descendants, or 'Englishry', against the creeping resurgence of Gaelic lords and culture. Periodically it served as a staging ground for challenges to the Crown, spectacularly so at the beginning of the Tudor period when Dublin championed the two Yorkist pretenders Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simnel. With Henry's break from Rome, Ireland became the potential site for foreign invasion in defence of the old faith – or at least of anti-Crown agitation that could profitably claim religious intent. That terrifying possibility became manifest in 1538, with the conspiracy of the Geraldine League. Here, the two great Gaelic lords of Ulster – the chief of the O'Neills and the chief of the O'Donnells – put their traditional enmities aside and combined forces with the 'English-Irish' Fitzgeralds in an effort to slough off Henry's authority. Not only did this conspiracy transcend traditional intra-Gaelic and Gaelic-English rivalries, it also sought support from continental, Catholic sympathizers, chiefly Henry's great rival Charles V. During Henry's reign, Ireland was a greater threat to the English peace than ever before.

As early as 1520, Henry had attempted to address his Irish problem with force. In that year he charged the Earl of Surrey with reforming the lordship, by arms if necessary. Surrey took up his post as governor accompanied by a military force of several hundred.¹ But this amounted to little, in large part because it required too much money to be effective. Consequently, Henry

¹ S. J. Connolly, *Contested island: Ireland 1460–1630* (Oxford, 2007), p. 78.

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and his council fell back on the traditional means by which the lordship (the English-controlled part of the island) was governed: the delegation of local executive authority to an aristocrat of Anglo-Norman descent, in this case the Earl of Kildare. The Earls of Kildare had enjoyed near continuous control of the island's governorship since the 1450s, but maintaining favour with the King was as difficult in Ireland as it was in England. In 1533, Henry summoned Kildare to court to answer charges that he was working against Crown interests. To demonstrate how necessary the Earl's presence was to Irish law and order, his son 'Silken' Thomas led a 'loyal' rebellion protesting his father's imprisonment. It was crushed, and with it the delegated authority enjoyed by the Kildares. In a new departure, the Crown placed an English-born, Crown-picked lord deputy in Dublin. At the appointment of Leonard Grey in 1536 came a return to the politics of force. He used a heavy hand to pacify Kildare's remaining supporters.² Still, Henry's Irish problem persisted. Indeed, it was the suppression of the Kildares and the introduction of an English chief governor that helped spark the anti-Henrician Geraldine League. Three decades into Henry's relationship with Ireland, force had proven ineffectual in rendering island and people (be they Gaelic or 'English-Irish') quiescent and loyal.

Flying in the face of his predecessors' policies, Deputy Anthony St Leger advanced the opinion in 1540 that perhaps honey would work in Ireland where vinegar had failed. Rather than repeat Surrey and Grey's failed efforts at strong-arming the Irish into obedience, St Leger suggested an effort to win their hearts and minds.³ The means to effect this were ingeniously simple: change Ireland's constitutional relationship to England by recasting it from a lordship to a kingdom in its own right with the English monarch assuming the Irish crown. In one stroke the former 'Irish enemies' of the Crown would become subjects, subsumed under the laws and protection of the English king.⁴ As St Leger and the Irish council put it to Henry, the Irish 'wolde more gladder obey Your Highnes by name of King of this your

² Ciaran Brady calls attention to overlooked conciliatory elements in Grey's governance. See Brady, *The chief governors: the rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 29. This point has been challenged, however, in Gerald Power, 'The viceroy and his critics: Leonard Grey's journey through the west of Ireland, June-July 1538', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 60 (2008), pp. 78-87. I wish to thank Dr Power for providing me with a copy of this article, and for helpful discussion of this chapter's arguments.

³ On the points of contact between St Leger's and Grey's policies, see Brady, *Chief governors*, chapter 1. For a recent opposing view see Gerald Power, *ibid.*

⁴ On this change by which the Gaelic Irish could no longer be termed enemies of the Crown see Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 266.

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lande, then by the name of Lorde therof.⁵ And once 'bothe Englishe and Yrish' recognized him as king, peace, self-sufficiency and even profit would follow.⁶ Lordship of the island was simply too amorphous; the rights and responsibilities linking the Crown and the Irish under it were too ambiguous, too inexact. Making the Irish subjects would clarify those relations for all parties and so promote stability.

Surely Henry VIII – that most imperial-minded of early modern English kings and self-fashioned Henry V figure – would leap at the chance to place another crown on his head, especially if doing so required no manoeuvres in the field. But he did not. Undoubtedly this approach would appeal to Henry's sense of himself as a reformer, a prince who could effect socio-political change through humanist-influenced statecraft rather than crude reliance on muscle. But it did not. Instead, Henry agonized over the new title, and grilled his councillors about 'whither it be either honor or wisdom for Us to [take] uppon Us that title of a King, and not to have revenues there, suffycient to maynteyn the state of the same'. He further cautioned that it must also be 'wayed, what dishonor it maye be to Us' were he to give land of 'our oune inheritance to those which have unjustly intruded and usurped the same'.⁷ Clever as St Leger's idea was, it ran up against the honour imperatives inherent in monarchical rule. Its success promised much, namely the end to the financial drag and cauldron of rebellion that was Ireland as a lordship; but its failure threatened more: the international shaming of a very prideful Henry VIII. Faced with the seeming intractability of his Irish problem, and the possibility of its exacerbation through intervention by his continental Catholic enemies, Henry accepted his deputy's proposal the following year: Ireland in 1541 was made a kingdom and he its king. From that moment forward, Henry's concerns about honour became political realities in Anglo-Irish relations. He was now, as Brendan Bradshaw has written, 'in honour bound to exercise the functions of king of Ireland'.⁸

The engagement of monarchical honour would transform Anglo-Irish relations. It lent a personal character to cross-border politics not seen before in the two polities' long relationship. With that came great possibilities for social stability, as St Leger envisioned, but equally great chances for instability. For, as Henry cautioned, with every engagement of honour came the opportunity for dishonour. A century after St Leger's 'revolution', Charles I's deputy in Ireland, Thomas Wentworth, would give eloquent expression to the fact that the pursuit of honour imperatives in the governance of

⁵ SP Hen. VIII, III, p. 278. ⁶ Ibid., p. 341. ⁷ Ibid., p. 331.

⁸ Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution*, p. 235.

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Ireland remained both a monarchical priority and a potential source of instability. Faced with an insubordinate Irish Lord Chancellor (the English-born Adam Loftus, Viscount Ely), Wentworth wrote to his King that 'I do very much fear if the Honour and Justice of this State be not ... vigorously borne forth against ... Untruths and Incivilities, the Regal Authority will perchance be shortly as much invaded, as roughly dealt with in this Kingdom as in other Places'.⁹ Written against the backdrop of the Bishops' Wars, Wentworth's allusions to invasion and rough dealing demonstrated the seriousness with which Crown and Castle, not to mention Irish officials and elites, took matters of honour a century after St Leger's experiment.

This book explores the culture and politics of honour in Britain and Ireland from 1541 to 1641, the years linking St Leger's initiation of an Anglo-Irish honour politics to the end of Wentworth's struggle with Lord Chancellor Loftus on the eve of the War of the Three Kingdoms. It is a study born out of the fact that while the connection between honour and politics in early modern Anglo-Irish relations was obvious to Henry VIII, Charles I, and the Lords Deputy St Leger and Wentworth, it has not been so readily apparent to later historians. This is surprising because over the last twenty years or so, scholars have been very attentive to the role of honour in society. Its study has greatly enriched the writing of early modern European history, primarily by offering a unit of analysis that falls in the interstices between individuals' feelings of worth and collective notions of propriety and status. This literature has greatly expanded our understanding of the dialectical relationship between cultural norms and expectations, on the one hand, and politics, power and authority on the other. Within this growing body of work, however, there has as yet been no systematic discussion of what honour looked like in Ireland in this period, nor any sustained study of how honour politics may have affected Anglo-Irish relations and the process of British state building.

There are four principal reasons that this has been the case, each related to limitations within the various sub-fields such a study would have to traverse. The most fundamental of these is the fact that scholars are still at odds over what honour in England itself looked like. With that domestic question open, there has been no effort to look at how English honour may have worked across borders. The importance of honour to early modern English politics received its first systematic exploration in Mervyn James' seminal article,

⁹ *Strafforde letters* II, p. 387.

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'English politics and the concept of honour, 1485-1642'.¹⁰ James set out to explain why personal violence was endemic among the nobility in late medieval England, and why its frequency decreased so dramatically by the early seventeenth century. The answer, he found, lay in differences between the honour codes of late medieval and early modern noble culture. These were loosely defined complexes of behaviours and social expectations, yet each contained certain unique defining features. For the early period, this amounted to 'might makes right'. It was incumbent upon the man of noble honour to be aggressive in defence of his name or patrimony, and in pursuit of fame and power. James noted, however, that the make-up of the code shifted dramatically over the course of the sixteenth century. The forces of humanism, education, the Reformation and state centralization all combined to tame the nobility: the late fifteenth-century warrior nobility had become the Elizabethan service nobility. James' tale was one of modernization. Honourable though they may have been, his medieval lords were nonetheless archetypal pre-moderns: uneducated, hot-headed, violent, overmighty, only nominally Christian, and obsessed with fate. By contrast, his Elizabethan nobles had turned the civilizing corner. They had sublimated their personal ambitions to the interests of the state, pursued their disagreements in the courts, abandoned their great retinues, read the classics, and given themselves over to proper worship of a state-sanctioned faith. In the words of James, the honour affinity and the nation had become co-terminous. In a classic modernizing transition, violence had become the monopoly of the state.

James' study remains the starting point for anyone interested in the topic, but his thesis has come under increasing challenge. A number of scholars have contended that James greatly underplayed the role of royal service and virtue to notions of noble honour pre-1500, and that he had equally underplayed the importance of military glory and lineage post-1600. In a word, his tale was too schematic.¹¹ Nor was James' thesis helped by developments

¹⁰ Mervyn James, 'English politics and the concept of honour, 1485-1642', in James (ed.), *Society, politics and culture: studies in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 308-415.

¹¹ Richard Cust, 'Honour and politics in early Stuart England: the case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *P&P* 149 (1995), pp. 57-94; William Palmer, 'Scenes from provincial life: history, honor and meaning in the Tudor north', *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000), pp. 425-48; Steven Ellis, *Tudor frontiers and noble power: the making of the British state* (Oxford, 1995); G. W. Bernard, 'The Tudor nobility in perspective', in Bernard (ed.), *The Tudor nobility* (New York, 1992), pp. 1-48. This criticism was in many ways reminiscent of J. P. Cooper's criticisms of earlier work on changing notions of nobility and aristocracy. Cooper believed scholars were too selective in their choice of evidence and that the cost of looking for change over time was an overly schematic argument. Cooper, 'Ideals of gentility in early modern England', in Cooper (ed.), *Land, men and beliefs: studies in early modern history* (London, 1983), pp. 43-77.

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in the historiography of late medieval England. Important to his model was a notion of the Wars of the Roses as the highpoint of aristocratic anarchy and as a sign that medieval order was, if not non-existent, then at least inherently unstable. But as those 'Wars' come to look less like the natural phenomena of a society lacking order and more like the products of a breakdown in order, the harder it becomes to think of the 'medieval' exhausting itself in a final orgy of honour violence only to be supplanted by a restrained Christian, humanist 'modern'.¹² Moreover, recent work on English Catholics in the early modern period calls James' trajectory into question. Underlying his argument was an implicit understanding that England had become an ideologically and demographically Protestant polity by the mid-sixteenth century. The work of such diverse scholars as Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh, Richard Cust, Peter Lake, Michael Questier and Ethan Shagan has demonstrated that Catholics remained numerous and their religious style influential well past Henry VIII's break with Rome and that they held to their own peculiar strains of honour principles.¹³ Linda Pollock has even been so bold as to take the very bedrock of violence out from under early modern English honour culture altogether, arguing instead that honour codes promoted stability. She poses a question of fundamental importance: how do we reconcile our understandings of the landed elite as both a group 'striving to create social harmony, and a violent, touchy warrior class'?¹⁴ Her answer, in short, is to explore the workings of honour in everyday situations, not just moments of violent outburst, and show how it typically concerned peacekeeping and social harmony. As the history of honour in early modern England continues to be written, James' search for monolithic codes of honour seems quixotic; honour in England

¹² K. B. MacFarlane, *The nobility of later medieval England* (Oxford, 1973); J. R. Lander, 'The crown and the aristocracy in England, 1450–1509', *Albion* 8 (1976), pp. 203–18; Michael Hicks, *English political culture in the fifteenth century* (New York, 2002); John Watts, *Henry VI and the politics of kingship* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹³ For example, see Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English reformations: religion, politics, and society under the Tudors* (New York, 1993); Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds.), *Conformity and orthodoxy in the English church, c. 1560–1660* (Rochester, NY, 2000); Michael Questier, *Catholicism and community in early modern England: politics, aristocratic patronage and religion, c. 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006); Ethan Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant nation': religious politics and identity in early modern England* (Manchester, 2005); Cust, 'Honour and politics in early Stuart England'; and 'Catholicism, antiquarianism and gentry honour: the writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History* 23 (1998), pp. 40–70.

¹⁴ Linda Pollock, 'Honor, gender, and reconciliation in elite culture, 1570–1700', *JBS* 46 (2007), pp. 3–29, quote p. 4. See also Palmer, 'Scenes from provincial life', in which the author downplays northern magnates' resort to violence, and then goes farther to claim that those elites did not hold to codes of honour at all.

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was multi-valent, not something onto which one could map the rise of modernity. As such, the study of honour in early modern England remains a rich field for research, one result of which being that there has been little effort to extend explorations of English honour culture beyond its national borders, or to see how a larger 'British' honour culture may have affected the home variety.

To broaden the pursuit of honour culture across the Irish Sea would immediately present an analogous problem: we have only a restricted sense of what honour looked like in Ireland. There is important scholarly treatment of the subject for the early modern period, but most of it is incidental to other inquiries.¹⁵ Katherine Simms has written on the 'might makes right' aggressiveness of Irish aristocratic honour, noting that 'the qualities most admired in private patrons or kings were a lively sense of honour or "face" which felt any injury inflicted on a protégé to be a personal affront, a blush-making insult, and sufficient courage and martial ability to vindicate this honour by avenging all breaches of their protection'.¹⁶ Joep Leerssen sees Gaelic honour as based primarily upon military valour, lineage and, increasingly over the course of the sixteenth century, an adherence to Gaelic culture and resistance to anglicization.¹⁷ Marc Caball, too, stresses the place of cultural exclusivity, even a sense of national consciousness, in bardic definitions of honour and nobility by the 1590s.¹⁸ The central place of hospitality to Irish elite honour has been highlighted by Catherine O'Sullivan.¹⁹ What comes most clearly out of these studies is the court poets' central role in determining honour and dishonour. Later commentators typically refer to these men as bards, which can give the incorrect impression of them as simple rhymers or entertainers. Quite the contrary, they were powerful members of Ireland's aristocratic courts and vital players in its political life. That their poetic encomia brought honour, and satire

¹⁵ This is not the case for the medieval period, however. See Philip O'Leary, 'Fír fer: an internalized ethical concept in early Irish literature?', *Éigse* 22 (1987), pp. 1-14; 'Magnanimous conduct in Irish heroic literature', *Éigse* 25 (1991), pp. 28-44; 'Verbal deceit in the Ulster Cycle', *Éigse* 21 (1986), pp. 16-26.

¹⁶ Katherine Simms, *From kings to warlords: the changing political structure of Gaelic Ireland in the later middle ages* (Dublin, 1987), p. 107.

¹⁷ Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 1990). David Edwards also stresses the importance of raiding and plundering to Gaelic notions of nobility. Edwards, 'The escalation of violence in sixteenth-century Ireland', in David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (eds.), *Age of atrocity: violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 34-78; see p. 41.

¹⁸ Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: reaction and continuity in Irish poetry, 1558-1625* (Notre Dame, 1998), pp. 40-82.

¹⁹ Catherine Marie O'Sullivan, *Hospitality in medieval Ireland, 900-1500* (Dublin, 2004); see particularly chapter 4.

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dishonour, has long been acknowledged – Edmund Campion’s ‘Two bokes of the histories of Ireland’ (1580) included the description of how ‘Greddie of praise theie [the Irish] be, and fearfull of dishonour’.²⁰ But what the poets deemed honourable and dishonourable remains understudied. There is, for example, no sustained lexical study of Irish words connoting honour.²¹ Consequently, we know much less about honour in Ireland than in England.

Even were one to produce workable descriptions of English and Irish honour cultures, there would be no models to follow in trying to link them together in a single study. Works on honour in early modern Europe cleave closely to national boundaries (even when those nations did not yet exist). While English historians write of English honour, Irish of Irish, they are not alone in studying honour cultures as nationally specific. The growing body of excellent work on French honour culture is consistently constrained by political boundaries.²² Even the classic studies of the Italian ‘point of honour’ subsume inter-state differences under the blanket descriptor, ‘Italian’.²³ In these national settings, honour exists as a set of uniquely defining cultural assumptions and behaviours that helps to create identity, structure social interactions, and feed politics in ways that mark off individual European polities from one another. Whereas scholars have crossed lines of class and gender in the study of honour, they have not transcended ‘cultural’ borders that are implicitly seen as coterminous with national ones.²⁴ Even the seeming exceptions prove this rule. Anna Bryson and Markku Peltonen have brilliantly explored the importation of Italianate notions of honour and courtesy into England in the seventeenth century.²⁵

²⁰ A. F. Vossen (ed.), *Edmund Campion’s two bokes of the histories of Ireland* (Assen, 1963), p. 19. For an enlightening study of the power of satire, see Roisin McLaughlin, ‘A threat of satire by Tadhg (Mac Dáire) Mac Bruaidealha’, *Ériu* 55 (2005), pp. 37–57.

²¹ This has been brilliantly done for early modern English. See Charles Barber, *The theme of honour’s tongue: a study of social attitudes in the English drama from Shakespeare to Dryden* (Göteborg, 1985); and Barber, *The idea of honour in the English drama, 1591–1700* (Göteborg, 1957).

²² Ellery Schalk, *From valor to pedigree: ideas of nobility in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Princeton, 1986); William M. Reddy, *The invisible code: honor and sentiment in postrevolutionary France, 1814–1848* (Berkeley, 1997); Kristen Neuschel, *Word of honor: interpreting noble culture in sixteenth-century France* (Ithaca, 1989).

²³ Frederick R. Bryson, *The point of honor in sixteenth-century Italy: an aspect of the life of the gentleman* (New York, 1935); and Bryson, *The sixteenth-century Italian duel: a study in Renaissance social history* (Chicago, 1938).

²⁴ The literature on women’s honour and on gendered concepts of honour continues to grow. An excellent example, made all the better for its rich bibliography of studies covering Britain and continental Europe, is Pollock, ‘Honor, gender, and reconciliation’.

²⁵ Markku Peltonen, *The duel in early modern England: civility, politeness and honour* (Cambridge, 2003); Anna Bryson, *From courtesy to civility: changing codes of conduct in early modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

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Both chart a one-way street of cultural influence: Italy does not seem to have been troubled with an influx of English nobles bearing strange honour codes, nor inundated with a printed literature describing competing English aristocratic norms. Nor do Bryson and Peltonen describe droves of Italian aristocrats crowding English elite society and forcing it to reckon with the cultural differences made manifest in their more aggressive, duel-obsessed notions of honour. Instead, they tell of English travellers and the print trade bringing foreign honour principles to England. As such, their studies detail the internal consumption and domestication of imported products: the raw materials may be Italianate, but the process of socio-cultural production is entirely English, and England the sole marketplace for its products. Just such a unilateral approach is demonstrated in studies of Irish honour; no scholar has considered whether there were English notions of honour operative in Ireland at the time and how they may have affected the development of Irish ones. The English presence may have spurred changes to what the bards deemed honourable, a point stressed by Leerssen and Caball, but what role alternative models of honour played in those changes remains unexplored.²⁶ Conversely, the few attempts to track the role of English ideas of honour in Anglo-Irish politics have been similarly unidirectional in focus: neither Nicholas Canny's attribution of 'English' honour to Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork, nor Hiram Morgan's consideration of Elizabeth I's concern to protect monarchical honour in the prosecution of Tyrone's Rebellion, addresses potentially competing Irish notions of honour.²⁷ While it seems agreed that honour was important in European societies, it also seems agreed that it did not travel well, and that when it did so, it did not alter according to local conditions.

The one attempt to look at honour and politics in Anglo-Irish affairs – William Palmer's pioneering article, 'That "Insolent Liberty": honor, rites of power, and persuasion in sixteenth-century Ireland' – demonstrates the fourth and final problem facing the study of honour in Britain and Ireland: even if honour principles could in theory interact and operate across borders, was the cultural gap between England and Ireland too great for them in fact to do so?²⁸ If the study of honour and politics is one way to

²⁶ Leerssen, *Mere Irish*; Caball, *Poets and politics*.

²⁷ Nicholas Canny, *The upstart earl: a study of the social and mental world of Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork, 1566–1643* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 132; Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Dublin, 1993), p. 220; Morgan, 'Tom Lee: the posing peacemaker', in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.), *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534–1660* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 132–65.

²⁸ William Palmer, 'That "Insolent Liberty": honor, rites of power, and persuasion in sixteenth-century Ireland', *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993), pp. 308–27.

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connect culture to matters of state, is there conceivably a situation in which cultural difference was simply too great for honour politics to work? Palmer's study suggests that colonial Ireland was just such a place. Although he acknowledges the importance of honour to both Irish and English, and establishes its function as a potential mediator between culture and politics in Tudor Ireland, the study ends up arguing that the respective honour codes were so different as to render them merely one more insuperable point of difference separating native and newcomer: the Irish were warlike and pagan and so honour to them equated to 'might makes right'; the English by contrast were lovers of virtue, central government and the law and so their sense of honour was based on service to the commonweal, the holding of civil office, and loyalty to a state-sanctioned religion. Honour was not merely useless in bridging a perceived civil-savage divide, it widened it.

As the above discussion aims to show, there was no more consensus among contemporaries as to what defined honour as there has been among historians. Honour, then, should not be seen as a static thing tied inseparably to 'national' cultures, but rather as comprising various discourses deployable before different audiences. Such inexactness might suggest its weakness as a tool for comprehending early modern society. This would be a mistake, for notions of honour played a vital social and political function in this period. In attempting to 'map the main contours of English cultural landscape in the period around 1600', Malcolm Smuts has identified four 'frames of reference within which contemporaries conceived of the operation of power': honour, the common law, religious providence, and humanist political language.²⁹ He goes on to claim that 'at the heart [of the early modern English] cultural system lay a concept of honour that structured both patterns of behaviour and a distinctive vision of society'.³⁰ Indeed, honour provided the social glue for early modern English and Irish societies, as it did for all of Europe. In a world with no police force, no standing army, and limited access to law courts, the willingness on the part of individuals to internalize standards of honour, and on the part of communities to enforce them, was often the best guarantee of keeping the peace. Honour's pull could be felt either horizontally, as the bonds that held social peers together as part of a particular honour group, or vertically, as ties of deference and responsibility inherent in a hierarchical social structure. To understand how such a fundamentally contested concept could carry such social and political weight, it may help to keep in mind the religious and

²⁹ Malcolm Smuts, *Culture and power in England, 1585-1685* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 7. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.