THE POLITICS AND CULTURE OF HONOUR IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1541–1641

Through an exploration of overlapping concepts of noble honour amongst English and Irish elites, this book provides a cultural analysis of 'British' high politics in the early modern period. Analysing English- and Irish-language sources, Brendan Kane argues that between the establishment of the Irish kingdom under the English crown in 1541 and the Irish rebellion of 1641, honour played a powerful role in determining the character of Anglo-Irish society, politics and cultural contact. In this age, before the rise of a more bureaucratic and participatory state, political power was intensely personal and largely the concern of elites. And those elites were preoccupied with honour. By exploring contemporary 'honour politics', this book brings a cultural perspective to our understanding of the character of English imperialism in Ireland and of the Irish responses to it. In so doing it highlights understudied aspects of the origins of the 'British' state.

BRENDAN KANE is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Connecticut, Storrs.

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BRENDAN KANE
University of Connecticut

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Contents

Abbreviations

AFM:	*The annals of the four masters*, vols I–VI, ed. and trans. John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1856)
Cal. Carew:	*Calendar of the Carew manuscripts preserved in the archiepiscopal library at Lambeth*, 6 vols (London, 1867–73)
CSPI:	*Calendar of state papers relating to Ireland*, 24 vols (London, 1860–1911)
IHS:	*Irish Historical Studies*
JBS:	*Journal of British Studies*
P&P:	*Past & Present*
SP:	National Archives State papers
SP Hen. VIII:	State papers published under the authority of his Majesty's commission Henry VIII, 11 vols (London, 1830–52)
Strafforde letters:	*The letters and dispatches of the Earl of Strafforde*, 2 vols, ed. W. Knowler (London, 1739)
WP:	*Wentworth papers 1597–1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper (London, 1973)

List of illustrations

A note on names and the citation of Irish words

What to call the various interest groups in late-medieval and early modern Ireland has sparked tremendous debate over the years. For this study, I have chosen to refer to the descendants in Ireland of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasion as 'English-Irish' when discussing the period before roughly 1550, and as 'Old English' for later periods. Periodically, I use 'Gael' and 'Gall'.[1] These are traditional terms in Irish, the former meaning 'native', the latter 'foreigner'.

In referencing names of Gaelic actors, I follow the convention of the chosen source. At times this means I left them in their Gaelic original, and did not 'anglicize' them. This I deemed worthwhile for readers who may wish to consult the source in question, but who may not be prepared to move from English forms of names back to their Irish originals.

In referencing Irish-language words, I use the present-day dictionary form in the body of the text. Spelling and case variations in the original sources are then given in parentheses, quotations, or in a footnote. When citing the originals, I give them as they appear in the source rather than in their dictionary forms. Thus in the lexical section (Chapter 2) there are numerous instances in which the word in quotations looks different than the one purported to be under investigation. Nevertheless, I believed this would make tracking back to the original easier. Furthermore, quotations from contemporary sources have typically been left in the original. On occasion, however, I have silently expanded out abbreviations for the sake of readability.

[1] Here I follow suggestions found in Nicholas Canny, 'Revising the revisionist', *IHS* 118 (1996), pp. 242–54.

Acknowledgements

This study has been long in the making, and there are many people to thank. First among them is Peter Lake, who oversaw the dissertation out of which this book grew. I could not have asked for a better advisor and mentor. His encouragement, willingness to let me work on an Anglo–Irish subject, and general expertise in early modern English and European history were necessary for the project's completion. But more than any particular knowledge of the material, what he brought in his supervision of this project was a certain mode of thinking that is incredibly subtle, at times subversive, and which is never happy to settle for the sorts of simplistic dichotomies that are often served up in discussions of the early modern period. I can only hope that some of the power of his thinking has rubbed off on me and is detectable in the following study. For that, and for his great humanity and fellowship, I will always be grateful.

This subject itself is the direct result of a lecture given by Richard Cust as part of the British Studies series that Peter ran at Princeton. Richard's subject that day – honour and politics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England – was entirely new to me, and I found it to be fascinating. As the presentation unfolded, I found myself matching the material Richard drew upon – treatises, literary works, pedigrees, funerary monuments, and so on – to Irish equivalents. In particular, my mind drifted towards Irish Gaelic works, which, although they have been heavily mined for information on national consciousness and confessionalization, seemed, by my memory, to have plenty to say on the question of honour. Sitting there in Dickinson 211, I thought that if these sorts of sources and questions were meaningful in the English historiography, then they must have something worthwhile to say about the Irish situation as well. Moreover, I thought that if ideas of honour were in fact so important to early modern politics, then they probably held some clue to understanding the political interactions between the people of these two kingdoms in the period of the Tudor reconquest and subsequent colonization of Ireland. The following pages represent my attempts to work out that initial idea.

As this book developed out of my dissertation, I wish to thank the rest of the members of my examining committee. In addition to generously offering his time and encouragement (and the occasional library introduction letter), Anthony Grafton's peerless knowledge of early modern European intellectual history and its classical antecedents has made me think far more deeply about the abstract notions of honour and nobility about which I was at times talking in pure historical ignorance. Nigel Smith's presence has proven indispensable as I tried my hand at literary critique. Imagining myself to be a budding social historian when I came to graduate school, it was with serious trepidation that I waded into literary texts as historical sources. His expertise and encouragement have vastly improved the project and given me more confidence to approach these sources. Far more terrifying than English-language literary sources to me were Irish-language sources. For bravely agreeing to oversee my first attempts at using these sources, I wish to thank Mícheál Mac Craith of the National University of Ireland, Galway. His fine-toothed comb spared me from some rather shame-inducing gaffs.

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Chapter 4 of this study appeared originally as an article and I thank the editors of *Renaissance Quarterly*, where it originally appeared, as well as the Syndics of Cambridge University Press, for permission to republish that material. Article and chapter have both benefited greatly from Erika Suffern's tremendous editorial skills.

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In keeping with the terms explored in this project, the honour of any successes achieved by this book should redound upon all those named above. The shame of its faults, however, must lie with me alone.

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