

1 Elizabeth I and Ireland: an introduction

Brendan Kane and Valerie McGowan-Doyle

In 1562 Christopher St Lawrence, 7th baron Howth, was dispatched from Dublin to attend Elizabeth I at court. He was charged with an important task: to defend Lord Lieutenant Sussex's campaigns against the rebellious Shane O'Neill and the tax, or cess, he imposed on Irish residents to fund them. At stake in this visit were the greatest questions of governance across the realms, namely the completed conquest, defence, and financial upkeep of the Tudor monarchy's second kingdom. Howth must have seemed a natural choice for this vital mission. He was no mere administrative lackey but a noble descendant of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman conquerors of Ireland, one of the self-identifying 'English-Irish' elites who held swathes of the island in the crown's interest. A local lord of ancient lineage and hereditary loyalty, Howth was also privy to the most intimate discussions of Sussex's administration. Yet in spite of the lieutenant's careful selection of this 'native' English noble to defend his administration and its policies, the initial meeting of emissary and monarch demonstrated that things which seemed clear in Dublin were not equally so in London: when presented with Howth, Elizabeth enquired whether Sussex's representative 'could speak the English tongue'.¹

Howth's fraught first encounter with his prince highlights a number of issues key to an understanding of English-Irish relations in this crucial period of complementary centralisation and imperial expansion by the Tudor state. First, the sending of Howth to court raises the question of Elizabeth's role in determining Irish policy. The vital issues of defence and innovative taxation were argued not simply through means of letters to Secretary Burghley but through direct engagement with the queen. How active a prince was she in her Irish realm? Second, to what extent was Elizabeth aware of the cultural distinctions dividing her subjects in Ireland? Clearly she knew that Gaelic was spoken there. But did she think that being from Ireland equalled being Gaelic (or effectively 'Gaelicised')?

¹ *Cal. Carew*, V, p. 201.

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-04087-8 - Elizabeth I and Ireland
 Edited by Brendan Kane and Valerie McGowan-Doyle
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Given Howth's self-identification as an Englishman (albeit one living in Ireland), and the queen's own closeness to the Old English magnate, the earl of Ormond, Elizabeth's question seems an odd one: was it a sign of ignorance of, or of sensitivity to, cultural distinction? Finally, then, this episode forces upon us the question of how prince and Irish subject – Gaelic, Old English, or New English – viewed their shared relationship. That Elizabeth suspected Howth might be a monoglot Irish speaker dismayed him, and helped spur his future, herculean literary/antiquarian efforts in defence of Old English identity.² But it also suggests that she would not have been surprised to see one of her Gaelic subjects attend court. In fact, earlier that year the great Ulster lord Shane O'Neill himself had spent several months at court, his entourage in tow.³ Was there a place for the Gaelic Irish at the political table and in the Tudor political nation? Given that the queen did ask for and receive an Irish primer with matching phrases in English, Latin, and Irish, did attention to cultural distinctiveness affect her political style? The present collection addresses these, and many other, crucial yet under-studied questions related to English–Irish relations in the tumultuous years of Elizabeth I's reign over both kingdoms.

This project grows out of a desire to connect ground-breaking scholarly work, published over roughly the past two decades, on Elizabeth I, on Ireland, and on the colonial aspects of the literary productions that typically served to link the two. Taking the first of these subjects first, gone are the days when the queen could be written off the political stage as merely the flighty charge of practical-minded, male councillors, Burghley chief among them. The real debate among scholars seems, instead, to centre on the extent to which the queen's political agency and engagement were directed towards far-sighted matters of policy and statecraft or towards short-term advantage of a largely personal interest. Regarding the former, there has always existed a thread in the historiography that portrayed Elizabeth as an active figure in the development of church, state, and empire. The synthetic biographies of Elizabeth by

² Valerie McGowan-Doyle, *The Book of Howth: Elizabethan conquest and the Old English* (Cork, 2011).

³ James Hogan, 'Shane O'Neill comes to the court of Elizabeth', in Séamus Pender (ed.), *Féilscribhinn Torna: essays and studies presented to Professor Tadhg Ua Donnchadha* (Cork, 1947), pp. 154–70; Ciaran Brady, 'Shane O'Neill departs from the court of Elizabeth: Irish, English, Scottish perspectives and the paralysis of policy, July 1559 to April 1562', in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms united? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500: integration and diversity* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 13–28; Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill* (Dundalk, 1996). For a selection of documents on O'Neill's visit to court, see SP 63/4/76 and SP 63/5/1, 42, 45.

Wallace MacCaffrey and David Loades, published ten years apart brought this general assessment to a wide audience: having surveyed the dauntingly expansive literature on the subject, they each concluded that time-worn notions of Elizabeth as merely weaker-vessel-in-chief were misguided.⁴

Innovative studies of gender and power produced complementary findings: Elizabeth was able to turn her gender to advantage in manoeuvring through the male-dominated world of high politics.⁵ Natalie Mears's more recent work on Elizabeth and queenship has tacked differently in pursuit of monarchical authority. Largely eschewing a "feminist" approach, she highlighted instead the social networks and connections through which decisions were made. It was in private 'probouleutic groups', she argued, that major decisions in the regime were reached, with council meetings existing largely as *ex post facto* fora in which previously determined positions were formalised.⁶ Not all scholars have been so convinced of the queen's agency, however – or at least not convinced that it was something directed towards effective governance. Christopher Haigh and Patrick Collinson, to take two prominent examples, have argued instead that Elizabeth was, in Natalie Mears's words, more 'vain and manipulative' than she was a clear-headed architect of state-building.⁷ In short, she was more politically engaged than politically capable. That is not to say that she was weak and distant as a ruler, just that her definition of the political perhaps did not satisfy the standards of later commentators interested in *longue durée* state-formation.

A curious aspect of this vigorous debate on Elizabeth I and politics is the absence of Ireland from the discussion. Given that she was prince of two realms, the lack of attention paid to the western kingdom is a

⁴ Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London, 1993); David Loades, *Elizabeth I* (London, 2003).

⁵ Prominent examples include Carole Levin, *The heart and stomach of a king: Elizabeth I and the politics of sex and power* (Philadelphia, 1994); Anne McLaren, *Political culture in the reign of Elizabeth I: queen and commonwealth, 1558–1585* (Cambridge, 1999); Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney, and Debra Barrett-Graves (eds.), *Elizabeth I: always her own free woman* (Aldershot, 2003); Susan Doran, *Queen Elizabeth I* (New York, 2003); Charles Beem and Dennis Moore (eds.), *The name of a queen: William Fleetwood's Itinerarium ad Windsor* (Basingstoke, 2013); and Ilona Bell, *Elizabeth I: the voice of a monarch* (Basingstoke, 2010). Important studies that demonstrate the powerful constraints upon, and challenges to, her exercise of power are Susan Doran, *Monarchy and matrimony: the courtships of Elizabeth I* (London, 1996); Julia Walker (ed.), *Dissing Elizabeth: negative representations of Gloriana* (Durham, NC, 1998); and Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (eds.), *The myth of Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2003).

⁶ Natalie Mears, *Queenship and political discourse in the Elizabethan realms* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04087-8 - Elizabeth I and Ireland

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significant oversight. Particularly puzzling in this regard is the fact that there exist excellent studies of Elizabeth and foreign policy,⁸ which is to say that scholars focus either on the queen and domestic English governance or on her relations with other sovereign powers and skip over Ireland, which was a theatre of politics that uniquely displayed both domestic and international aspects. Indeed, recent work on Elizabeth and ‘Elizabethan’ political culture largely fails to consider Ireland. Outside the provocative and suggestive discussions in Mears’s monograph, the standard work on Elizabeth and her western kingdom remains the Irish-focused chapters in Wallace MacCaffrey’s study of war and politics in the latter part of the reign.⁹ This oversight also affects recent, major editions of Elizabeth’s works. As Leah Marcus points out in the present collection (pp. 40–59), she and her coeditors chose precious few letters related to Ireland when selecting items for their volume of Elizabeth’s writings and speeches. More recently, Susan Felch and Donald Stump dedicated a section to Ireland in their coedited Norton Critical Edition of the queen’s work. However, it addresses only the final years of the reign and the Nine Years’ War (1594–1603). Moreover, the section’s real concern is not with Ireland or the Irish but rather with the collapse of the relationship between the queen and her last great favourite, Robert Devereux, 2nd earl of Essex, who just happened to have been named to suppress the rebellion, which fatefully and famously he failed to do.¹⁰

This absence is all the more curious given developments within the Irish historiography favouring the power and agency of those in the western realm. It has long been accepted that Elizabeth’s reign marked a turning point in Anglo-Irish relations – a point after which they hardened along confessional and ethnic lines.¹¹ Increasingly, however, scholars are keen to add that the ‘losers’ in that historical drama – to quote the title of a chronologically broader essay collection on the subject edited by Ciaran Brady¹² – were neither entirely powerless nor unified in matters of politics, culture, or faith. Sophisticated studies of ‘faith and fatherland’ ideology, of identity-formation, of intellectually and constitutionally

⁸ Charles Beem (ed.), *The foreign relations of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 2011). See, too, Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and foreign policy* (New York, 2000), an introduction for A-level and first-year college students.

⁹ Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: war and politics, 1588–1603* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 329–448. Encouraging, however, is the sophisticated treatment of queen and Irish affairs in Susan Brigden’s textbook survey of the age, *New worlds, lost worlds: the rule of the Tudors, 1485–1603* (New York, 2000).

¹⁰ Susan Felch and Donald Stump (eds.), *Elizabeth I and her age* (New York, 2009).

¹¹ The key text here remains Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565–1576* (Hassocks, 1976).

¹² Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Worsted in the game: losers in Irish history* (Dublin, 1989).

based forms of resistance, of political and social ‘negotiation’, of Irish–continental connections and interchange, and of the Old English and Gaelic nobility have transformed understandings of Ireland in this period of tremendous conflict and upheaval.¹³ Recent work on Gaelic language and culture has been crucial to this increasingly nuanced knowledge of late sixteenth-century Ireland. It has been argued that the Gaelic literati (the so-called bards) were so conservative and insular in their worldview that they failed to register the severity of the cultural destruction posed by Tudor/Stuart centralisation until it was too late and that world collapsed around them.¹⁴ A steadily growing body of interdisciplinary work is, however, now sketching out the place of the language, and the Gaelic Irish more generally, in the political, social, and confessional main events of the day.¹⁵ In doing so, it is also placing Irish-language sources into closer comparison with English and Latin ones, thus bringing more of

¹³ A small sampling of relevant works includes Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone’s rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Dublin, 1999); Nicholas Canny, *The formation of the Old English elite in Ireland* (Dublin, 1975); McGowan-Doyle, *The Book of Howth*; Jon Crawford, *Anglicizing the government of Ireland: the Irish privy council and the expansion of Tudor rule, 1556–1578* (Dublin, 1993); Michael Braddick and John Walter (eds.), *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2011); Brendan Kane, *The politics and culture of honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541–1641* (Cambridge, 2010); Colm Lennon, *Richard Stanihurst, the Dubliner, 1547–1618* (Dublin, 1981); Vincent Carey, *Surviving the Tudors: the ‘wizard’ earl of Kildare and English rule in Ireland, 1537–1586* (Dublin, 2002); David Edwards, *The Ormond lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642: the rise and fall of Butler feudal power* (Dublin, 2003).

¹⁴ The key text here is Michelle O Riordan, *The Gaelic mind and the collapse of the Gaelic world* (Cork, 1987). While heavily criticised, it is a learned and provocative study that remains of great value. See, too, T. J. Dunne, ‘The Gaelic response to conquest and colonisation: the evidence of the poetry’, *Studia Hibernica* 20 (1980), 7–30; and Nicholas Canny, ‘The formation of the Irish mind: religion, politics and Gaelic Irish literature 1580–1750’, *Past & Present* 95 (1982), 91–116.

¹⁵ See for instance Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: reaction and continuity in Irish poetry, 1558–1625* (Notre Dame and Cork, 1998); Brendan Bradshaw, ‘Native reactions to the westward enterprise: a case-study in Gaelic ideology’, 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* (Detroit, 1979), pp. 65–80; Breandán Ó Buachalla, ‘James our true king: the ideology of Irish royalism in the seventeenth century’, in D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (eds.), *Political thought in Ireland since the seventeenth century* (London, 1993), pp. 7–35; Mícheál Mac Craith, ‘From the Elizabethan settlement to the Battle of the Boyne: literature in Irish 1560–1690’, in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O’Leary (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Irish literature*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2006), vol. I, pp. 191–231; Patricia Palmer, *Language and conquest in early modern Ireland: English Renaissance literature and Elizabethan imperial expansion* (Cambridge, 2001); Sarah McKibben, *Endangered masculinities in Irish poetry: 1540–1780* (Dublin, 2011); Pádraig Breatnach, *Téamaí taighde Nua-Ghaeilge* (Dublin, 1997); Brendan Kane, ‘Languages of legitimacy? *An Ghaeilge*, the earl of Thomond and British politics in the Renaissance Pale, 1600–1624’, in Michael Potterton and Thomas Herron (eds.), *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance, c. 1540–1660* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 267–79;

the multi-lingual character of early modern Anglo-Irish relations into scholarly view.¹⁶

In that burgeoning corpus, however, there is almost no discussion of Gaelic views of the monarch herself. Partly this is a product of the archive: the local literati left little comment on the queen. Survival rates of Irish sources are not excellent, however, and perhaps we might expect more direct discussion of the monarch if we had further examples to draw upon. Nevertheless, judging from what we do have, it seems safe to conclude that Gaelic intellectuals did not expend great effort writing to, or explicitly about, their putative monarch. Given the strict customs of patronage and performance in Irish literary production, it seems hardly surprising that, say, praise poems to local lords lacked quatrains dedicated to Elizabeth I.¹⁷ This does not mean that the queen and, crucially, her court were of no concern to the authors of these works; it simply means that one must read with attention to form, genre, and patronage and pull out the threads related to that concern. Bards, we must remember, were no mere rhymers, but rather powerful political players in their own right; their stock-in-trade was commentary on nobility and courtly life. On the one hand, they often served as representatives of local lords in their dealings with the crown; on the other, their immense local authority caused great anxiety among state officials and spurred intense effort to disempower them.¹⁸ What remains to be explored – and, indeed, what is in part investigated here – are the (typically) oblique commentaries and criticisms of queen and court that emerge from close reading of Irish-language texts. The bards and Elizabeth were well aware of each other's existence and, as the chapters that follow demonstrate, they were keenly attuned to the competing claims for authority that existed, tensely, between them.

The 'new' histories of Elizabeth, and of Ireland and the Irish, have now undoubtedly developed to the point where conversation between them is long overdue. From the English side of this historiographical divide, there are excellent studies of Elizabethan views of Ireland and the

James Kelly and Ciarán Mac Murchaigh (eds.), *Irish and English: essays on the Irish linguistic and cultural frontier, 1600–1900* (Dublin, 2012).

¹⁶ Particularly relevant here are Jason Harris and Keith Sidwell (eds.), *Making Ireland Roman: Irish neo-Latin writers and the republic of letters* (Cork, 2009); David Edwards and Keith Sidwell (eds.), *The Tipperary hero: Dermot O'Meara's Ormonius* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2012); and John Barry and Hiram Morgan (eds.), *Great deeds in Ireland: Richard Stanihurst's De rebus in Hibernia gestis* (Cork, 2013).

¹⁷ Generally on bardic culture and practice, see Pádraig Breatnach, 'The chief's poet', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 83 C (1983), 37–79.

¹⁸ Patricia Palmer, *Language and conquest*.

Irish.¹⁹ Yet there exists no sustained consideration of the views of Elizabeth *herself* towards Ireland and the Irish. If indeed she was a politically active monarch, and the matter of Ireland crucial to English political calculations, then this is a vital subject of study. Conversely, while historians of Ireland have always been the more historiographically bilingual,²⁰ they too have largely ignored the queen's direct role in governing the realm. (Recent work by Hiram Morgan and Vincent Carey, which sets much of the agenda for the present volume, provides notable exceptions.)²¹ Generally speaking, then, the term 'Elizabethan' is a frequently used and convenient label – for historians of England and Ireland alike – that gives historical contextualisation to developments in English–Irish relations over the last half of the sixteenth century. Yet missing in the scholarship is analysis of how the term applies to Elizabeth herself, and the role that she played in the conquest of Ireland. Moreover, if Gaelic Irish and Old English alike were more engaged with the state, be it through practical politics or written commentary and critique, then there needs to be greater consideration of their views of the person who claimed sovereignty over them. While there has been much recent attention paid to Irish views of the English living in their midst, there is almost no work that explores their views of the monarch to whom they were (at least nominally) subject.

Making sense of these connections requires analysis of literary productions in both vernaculars, Irish and English. Elizabeth never visited Ireland; few of her Irish subjects ever travelled to court. Necessarily, then, elucidating the reciprocal relationship between prince and subject is heavily reliant on the study of texts. As noted earlier, modern collections of Elizabeth's own writings have devoted limited attention to her commentaries on Ireland. But there are a great number and variety of

¹⁹ For the classic expression, see D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (New York, 1966); for a more recent one with a post-colonial influence, see John Montano, *The roots of English colonialism* (Cambridge, 2011).

²⁰ This point is made succinctly by Nicholas Canny in the course of discussing the so-called New British History, an archipelagic approach that since the 1980s has done much to bring the provincial realms to the attention of historians of England: 'The impact of New British History has proven less dramatic for writing on the histories of Scotland and Ireland because, at a professional level, historians of those countries had already been keeping abreast of, and relating their findings to, historical writing on England.' Canny is addressing a later period, of course; attention to Ireland in work on the Elizabethan period has been even rarer. See Nicholas Canny, 'Writing early modern history: Ireland, Britain, and the wider world', *Historical Journal* 46 (3) (2003), 737.

²¹ Hiram Morgan, "'Never any realm worse governed": Queen Elizabeth and Ireland', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 14 (2004), 295–308; Vincent Carey, 'Elizabeth I and state terror in sixteenth-century Ireland', in Donald Stump, Linda Shenk, and Carole Levin (eds.), *Elizabeth I and the 'sovereign arts': essays in literature, history, and culture* (Tempe, AZ, 2011), pp. 201–16.

documents from which such a study might be constructed. As for the literary productions of her subjects, undoubtedly they possess a wealth of insight into this relationship. The masterpieces of luminaries such as Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare are now considered in the context of their authors' political entanglements and aspirations – not the least of which were imperial and colonial expansion into Ireland and beyond.²² How might these and less well-known politically engaged works, many of which were dedicated to Elizabeth, elucidate this relationship? What do Irish-language sources, especially the highly politicised court poetry of the bards, have to say about queen and court? Our interest here is in literary analysis of the reciprocal representations of monarch and Irish subject and, more broadly, a desire to bring scholars of English and Irish literature together in pursuit of a common topic. As with historians of Ireland and England, contact between literary scholars of Irish and English might be strengthened, and done to the benefit of practitioners in both fields.

Indeed, the collection is intended not only as a study of Elizabeth I and Ireland, but also as an extended effort at cross-disciplinary and multi-lingual scholarly interaction. Some of the finest work on early modern Ireland and England is to be found in interdisciplinary collections;²³ given the size of the literature in all of these subfields, it is too great a task to expect one person to grasp and synthesise them all.²⁴ Certainly, the idea is to offer not consensus, but rather perspective and interpretation that might spark further discussion and research across discipline and subdiscipline. Having offered the above, very brief, survey of the four fields represented in the collection, we turn to the individual chapters. They draw out more fully the contexts of their particular approach, but in organising them we have chosen to order them not by discipline but in

²² A small sampling of works in what is now a rich and expansive literature includes Richard McCabe, *The pillars of eternity: time and providence in The Faerie Queene* (Dublin, 1989); Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997); Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2001); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser and the matter of Britain* (New York, 2004); Thomas Herron, *Spenser's Irish work: poetry, plantation and colonial reformation* (Ashgate, 2007); Willy Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: colonialism, culture and identity* (Basingstoke, 1997).

²³ See, among others, Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley (eds.), *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534–1660* (Cambridge, 1993); Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *British interventions in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005); Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds.), *Taking sides? Colonial and confessional mentalities in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003); Patricia Coughlan (ed.), *Spenser and Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective* (Cork, 1989); David Edwards (ed.), *Regions and rulers in Ireland, 1100–1650* (Dublin, 2004).

²⁴ Canny's *Making Ireland British* is arguably the exception to this claim, ranging as it does across history and literature in English and Irish. It also offers relatively substantial attention to the queen and her role in Irish policy.

a loose thematic structure – following particular themes as represented in the contributions as a way to think beyond discipline and about the collection's subject and, in doing so, hoping to spur readers to consider ways forward in all four fields, individually and collectively.

This book begins with consideration of the politics of monarchical representation in Ireland. Whereas representation of Elizabeth was essential in England, it became fundamentally problematic in Ireland. Richard McCabe draws upon New English, Old English, and Gaelic sources – English- and Irish-language – to demonstrate that the fracturing of the royal image in Ireland was a function of the irreconcilability of the two sovereignties over which Elizabeth ruled. He focuses on two of the principal arenas in which her image was fractured: religion, in which Elizabeth was supreme governor of the reformed church yet considered a heretic by Catholics; and the political realm in which, as McCabe argues, New English writers pressed Elizabeth to function as absolute monarch in Ireland in a way which she did not (indeed, could not) in England. Leah Marcus considers three other arenas central to representations of Elizabeth in England: gender, honour, and notions of divine election. As in McCabe's consideration of the realms of religion and political authority, all three of Marcus's chosen frameworks proved to be just as fundamentally problematic when applied in Ireland, where local contexts precluded the successful application of images used to great effect in England. Elizabeth's image as nurse-mother to her subjects, for instance, ran counter to New English denigration of the Old English for their use of Irish wet-nurses, a practice identified as both cause and reflection of their degeneration. Were this image to be pressed in Ireland, Elizabeth would represent the very mingling of English and Irish the regime sought to eradicate.

The essays by Peter McQuillan and Brandie Siegfried narrow focus to consider representations of Elizabeth and her court in two specific compositions from Irish-language authors. An understanding of Gaelic images of Elizabeth is as important to have as it is difficult to reconstruct. As noted earlier, attention to Irish-language sources has transformed the study of early modern Ireland. Yet among the numerous extant sources – primarily court poetry and annals – there is precious little direct mention of Elizabeth. This does not mean that the Gaelic intelligentsia was ignorant of, or silent on, their putative sovereign and her court. It does mean, however, that we must read very carefully for signs of its members' opinions of queen and administration. Siegfried assesses theories of sovereignty and the recognition of legitimate rule in Gaelic Counter-Reformation thought relative to this concept's expression in English law and English colonial thought. While the discourse

of lineage figured prominently in both, each was underpinned by a very different perception of time, Aristotelian in the case of English thought and Augustinian in Gaelic. This difference is at the core of *Seanchas Búrcaich* (also entitled *Historia et genealogia familiae de Burgo*) – a historical/genealogical production of the Anglo-Norman-descended, though deeply ‘Gaelicised’, Burkes of Galway – where it is employed in rejection of Elizabeth’s legitimacy as sovereign. This work’s rendering of Elizabeth as irreducibly foreign, ‘that saxon queen’, thus nullified her claim to lineage as the source of her legitimacy. McQuillan’s essay meticulously parses and deconstructs Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa’s poem, ‘Ionmholta malairt bhisigh’ (‘A change for the better is laudable’), composed in the immediate aftermath of Elizabeth’s death and the Nine Years’ War. Ó hEodhasa was trained in the classic style of the *ollamh* to be a promoter of dynasties and arbiter of secular, political legitimacy. His stock-in-trade was the eulogistic poem, a highly politicised and engaged genre which Nicholas Canny has famously described as being the closest Gaelic Ireland comes to ‘state papers’.²⁵ McQuillan sees in Ó hEodhasa’s poem a deep awareness, and withering appraisal, of the queen and her court. While not contesting the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s sovereignty, Ó hEodhasa nonetheless anticipates a more favourable climate under the newly installed James VI/I. The sophistication of that critique is deftly revealed in McQuillan’s demonstration of Baldessare Castiglione’s influence on Ó hEodhasa. Given the focus of English literary scholars on the discourse of civility versus savagery found in English-language texts, McQuillan’s explication of Ó hEodhasa’s intentions offers a salutary reminder that that discourse moved in both directions: Gaelic-language authors could think themselves as the ones in line with continental standards of civility and those in London degenerate.

A study of Elizabeth I and Ireland must pay particular attention to matters of religious change and resistance. The causes of reformed religion’s inability to secure legitimacy in the minds of Irish subjects have been, and remain, an issue of particular concern to historians of Ireland.²⁶ Here, Ciaran Brady and Mark Hutchinson make substantial contributions to this debate in arguing that Elizabeth’s intervention in Ireland actually impeded the progress of the Reformation at key stages. Standing out for both is the critical period of Sir Henry Sidney’s governorship during the

²⁵ Canny, ‘Formation of the Irish mind’, 111.

²⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, ‘Sword, word and strategy in the Reformation in Ireland’, *Historical Journal* 21 (1978), 475–502; Nicholas Canny, ‘Why the Reformation failed in Ireland: *une question mal posée*’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979), 423–50; Karl Bottigheimer, ‘The failure of the Reformation in Ireland: *une question bien posée*’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), 196–207.