

WHEN BEETLES KEPT THUDDING: GEOFFREY KEATING'S TREATMENT
OF THE FOREIGN AUTHORS OF HIS PREFACE TO *FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN*

A Master's Thesis

by
CİHAN DEMİR

Department of History
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
September 2014

To a man of the cloth, who preaches Irish history.

WHEN BEETLES KEPT THUDDING: GEOFFREY KEATING’S TREATMENT
OF THE FOREIGN AUTHORS OF HIS PREFACE TO *FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN*

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

CİHAN DEMİR

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

September 2014

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Assoc. Prof. Cadoc Leighton
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Asst. Prof. Paul Latimer
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

Asst. Prof. Ayşe Çelikkol
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Erdal Erel
Director

ABSTRACT

WHEN BEETLES KEPT THUDDING: GEOFFREY KEATING'S TREATMENT
OF THE FOREIGN AUTHORS OF HIS PREFACE TO *FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN*

Demir, Cihan

M. A., Department of History

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Cadoc Leighton

September 2014

Recent scholarship has convincingly revolutionised the interpretation of Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* by introducing hitherto unregarded concepts of Renaissance humanism and of Counter-Reformation thought to the study of the Tipperary scholar-priest and his outstanding historical compilation. However, hardly any serious work has been carried out with regard to Keating's polemical preface, written under the influence of these intellectual movements. The purpose of the present dissertation is to examine Keating's disputes with a group of Tudor authors, from Stanihurst to Davies, whom he cites and challenges in this polemical preface to *Foras Feasa*. Keating strove to merge Irishness with Catholicism and provided the Irish Catholic nobility, denominated as the *Éireannaigh*, with a renewed origin myth to enhance their illustrious character. The exclusion of the aforementioned Tudor authors and the political and religious groups which they represented from the imaginary community of the *Éireannaigh* has tempted Irish historians to attempt to place Keating's polemical preface in early Stuart political history. Nevertheless, in comparison to his political ideology, Keating's

methodological concerns enjoy a more prominent place in the refutation of the authors to whom Gaelic Ireland was foreign. By virtue of these methodological concerns, Keating is also comparable to contemporary antiquarians/historians, who produced similar national histories in the vernacular in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. A further area of comparison, overlapping with this, is found in the historiography of the Catholic Reformation.

Key Words: Geoffrey Keating, Catholic Reformation, Irish Catholic Historiography, Renaissance Historiography, Tudor Ireland, Stuart Ireland.

ÖZET

BÖCEKLER VIZILDARKEN: GEOFFREY KEATING’İN *İRLANDA ÜZERİNE*
REHBER BİLGİLER DERLEMESİ KİTABININ ÖNSÖZÜNDE SÖZÜNÜ ETTİĞİ
YABANCI YAZARLARA GETİRDİĞİ ELEŞTİRİ

Demir, Cihan

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Assoc. Prof. Cadoc Leighton

Eylül 2014

Kuşkusuz ki, son dönemde, İrlandalı tarihçiler Geoffrey Keating’in *İrlanda Üzerine Rehber Bilgiler Derlemesi* kitabının tarihsel yorumunda bir devrim gerçekleştirdiler. Tipperary’li yazar Keating’in muazzam eseri Rönesans hümanizması ve Karşı-Reform gibi entellektüel akımlar ışığında tekrar tetkik edilmeye başlandı. Ancak, Keating’in kitabına eklediği, en az kitabın kendisi kadar önemli ve yukarıda geçen entellektüel akımlar etkisinde yazılan önsözü, henüz yeterince incelenmedi. Mevcut tez ile amaçlanan, polemik türünde yazıya dökülen bu önsözde, Keating’in, isimlerini telaffuz ettiği Stanihurst’ten Davies’e uzanan bir grup Tudor dönemi İngiliz yazarı, nasıl ve neden çürütmeye çalıştığına açıklık getirmektir. Keating İrlandalı olmakla Katolik olmanın birbirine eşdeğer olduğuna inandı ve bunu kitabında böyle yansıtmaya çalıştı. İrlanda Milleti diye adlandırdığı İrlandalı Katolik soylulara kendilerine rehber edinebilecekleri bir doğuş efsanesi yazdı. Keating’in, önsözünde yer verdiği Tudor dönemi yazarlarını ve temsil ettikleri politik ve dini grupları İrlanda Milleti’den ayrı tutması ve otekileştirmesi İrlandalı tarihçileri

Keating'in önsözünü erken Stuart dönemi politik tarihi çerçevesinde incelemeye itti. Ancak, politik ideolojisine nazaran, Keating'in metodolojisinin, Keltik İrlanda'ya yabancı olan Tudor yazarlarına karşı yazdığı polemikte daha çok ön plana çıktığı görülmektedir. Kullanmış olduğu tarihsel methodoloji ele alındığında, Keating, onaltı ve onyedinci yüzyıllarda, anadilde benzer milli tarihler yazan antikeryenler ve tarihçiler ile karşılaştırılabilir. Bu argüman ile örtüşen ve aynı zamanda onu bir ileri boyuta taşıyan mukayese noktası ise Karşı-Reform dönemi tarih yazımıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Geoffrey Keating, Katolik Reformu, İrlanda Katolik Tarih Yazımı, Rönesans Tarih Yazımı, Tudor İrlandası, Stuart İrlandası.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my debt to Assoc. Prof. Cadoc Leighton, my supervisor and the man who has made the study of Tudor and Stuart Ireland possible and meaningful in Turkey.

I am truly grateful to Asst. Prof. Valerie Kennedy for a myriad of favours, from which I shall only relate one. Working on Étienne Pasquier for the third chapter has kept reminding me of our brief weekly meetings, in which she kindly taught me how to handle French pronunciation.

I am also indebted to Mrs. Anne-Marie Thornton for being encouraging, positive and supportive along the way.

My friend, Ravel Holland, patiently listened to all my anecdotes from Irish history and literature, on our habitual Thursday lunch-time sessions.

Last, but not the least, I would like to express thanks to my whole family for their love and support throughout my university career.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: AN IRISHMAN OF MORE THAN ONE WORLD.....	12
CHAPTER III: DEFENDING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE <i>ÉIREANNAIGH</i>	43
CHAPTER IV: GEOFFREY KEATING AS AN ANTIQUARIAN/HISTORIAN: THE CUSTOMS, LAWS AND LANGUAGE OF THE <i>ÉIREANNAIGH</i> ...	69
CHAPTER V: KEATING AS A COUNTER-REFORMATION HISTORIAN AND IRELAND'S SACRED HISTORY.....	87
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION.....	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	107

...

Nor be I any less of them,

Because the red-rose-bordered hem

Of her, whose history began

Before God made the angelic clan,

Trails all about the written page.

...

W. B. Yeats, "To Ireland in the Coming Times"

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Under the patronage of Piers Ruadh Butler of Pottlerath, first earl of Ossory and eighth earl of Ormond, commonly known to his contemporaries as the ‘Red Earl’, and of his wife, Margaret Fitzgerald, countess of Ormond and Ossory, a grammar school was established in 1538 in the town of Kilkenny ‘adorned with many outstanding monuments’. This modest institution was suggestive of both the Earl’s often reputed generosity and his resolve to promote ‘civilitie’ in the Tudor sense of the word. A resourceful local magnate, Piers Butler industriously laid the groundwork for what was going to become Ireland’s premier dynasty in the late seventeenth century.¹ Decades after his decease, the school in Kilkenny grew to be a noteworthy academy under a schoolmaster called Peter White, a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. Many talented students from the distinguished families of the Pale had the privilege to be taught by White, whose merits did not go unremarked by his pupil, Richard Stanihurst. He recalled his teacher by name in the pages of his history as ‘formator iuuentutis’, the moulder of youth.² Stanihurst went further in his eulogies of White, because the Kilkenny school was a model, in the former’s eyes,

¹ The distinguished place that the house of Ormond occupied within the wider context of the Stuart dominions throughout the seventeenth century is apparent in the number of honours that the twelfth earl, James Butler, held. See Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 51.

² For the reference to the grammar school, see *Great Deeds in Ireland: Richard Stanihurst’s De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*, trans. John Barry and Hiram Morgan (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013), p. 103.

for the reformation of Ireland through the dissemination of humanist education: “From his school, as from a Trojan Horse, men of the highest learning came forth into public life”.³ Another scholar from the Trojan Horse, who was also of Anglo-Norman ancestry and of even more notable ability than Stanihurst, was an Irish Franciscan friar and scholar, Luke Wadding. According to the Wadding papers now extant, when the Franciscan was in Rome in 1631, John Roche, bishop of Ferns, related to him what he heard of Geoffrey Keating, the scholar-priest who composed a masterpiece in two books, titled in Irish, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, one of the most popular and influential Irish histories ever written: “One Doctor Keating laboureth much, as I hear say, in compiling Irish notes towards a history in Irish. ...I have no interest in the man, for I never saw him, for he dwelleth in Munster”.⁴ Aside from the fact that the bishop considered it quite extraordinary to visit a province adjoining his see, Roche’s statement attests to a notable truth about Keating, the Tipperary priest. None of his contemporaries mentioned having actually met him. A dearth of contemporary witnesses, therefore, obscures and mystifies Keating’s actual life.⁵ Much of what is today known about Keating’s life is extracted from an early eighteenth-century source, Thomas O’Sullevane’s original preface to the *Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde*.⁶ Keating led a quite different scholarly life from that of many pre-eminent Old English figures such as the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Quoted in Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 100.

⁵ The most popular myth surrounding Keating’s life is probably the Glen of Aherlow tradition. Although the story that Keating wrote *Foras Feasa* in the Glen of Aherlow where he took refuge from the persecution of government officers is here indicated as a myth on account of recent scholarly controversies, it was accepted as a historical truth by many writers down the years. Especially, in the nineteenth century, John O’Mahony associated the Glen of Aherlow tradition with his self-defined mission to instil a sentiment of longing for the fatherland in the hearts of the Irish expatriates in America. See Geoffrey Keating, *The history of Ireland from the Earliest Period to the English Invasion*, trans. John O’Mahony (New York: 1857), p. 7.

⁶ Thomas O’Sullevane, *The Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde* (Dublin, 1722).

Waddings, the Walshes, the Comerfords, the Lombards or the Archers who attended White's lectures in Kilkenny. He was properly educated in traditional Gaelic schools. Accordingly, he was able to synthesise medieval Gaelic manuscript and print sources to produce a narrative of Irish history from the Creation to the Anglo-Norman conquest in the twelfth century. In stark contrast to Stanihurst or any other Old English historian from the Pale, Keating asserted the Gaelic heritage in an origin myth of which both the Old English and the native Irish could be proud by virtue of their shared allegiance to Roman Catholicism.

Insufficient contemporary historical evidence is a striking fact to consider for one who discusses Keating as a historian, given the extent of the territory from southern Ireland to western France in which he is known to have lived and worked, not to mention his critical absorption of the main historiographical traditions which emanated from these regions. Above all else, the *Díon-bhrollach*, the lengthy polemical preface subsequently attached to the two books of history, can be practically construed as concrete proof of Keating being an Irishman of more than one world. This identity is doubtless borne witness to by the scope of his actual itinerary; but, there is also the historiographical odyssey which forcefully permeates the preface to *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, best translated today as *The Compendium of Knowledge about Ireland*.⁷ The present dissertation is intended to fill a current gap in present-day historiography by examining Keating's refutation of a New English tradition of history writing originating in Giraldus Cambrensis and later taken up by a series of Tudor authors from Richard Stanihurst to Sir John Davies. The *Díon-bhrollach*, the preface to *Foras Feasa*, where Keating aggressively takes issue with

⁷ The translation belongs to Bernadette Cunningham. See Bernadette Cunningham, "Seventeenth-Century Constructions of the Historical Kingdom of Ireland", in Mark Williams and Stephen Paul Forrest (eds), *Constructing the Past: Writing Irish History, 1600-1800* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), pp. 9-26.

these writers, each of whom was an outsider to Gaelic Ireland, will be the principal focus while multiple references will also be made to the main text in order to explicate how Keating manages to refute the hostile authors whom he cites.

The controversial purpose of *Foras Feasa* was deliberately made explicit by Keating with the addition of a preface which made it crystal clear to what or to whom the two-part history was intended to respond. The priest-scholar was reluctant to let the work speak for itself. Writing in Irish, he targeted a wider Irish audience than many of his contemporaries who preferred writing in Latin, a language that only an elite and educated section of Irish society could comprehend. Keating cautioned his Irish readers about giving credence to a New English historiography, which circulated unchecked as an authoritative source of information on the history of Ireland.

Whereof the testimony given by Cambrensis, Spenser, Stanihurst, Hanmer, Barckly, Moryson, Davies, Campion, and every other foreigner who has written on Ireland from that time, may bear witness; inasmuch as it is almost according to the fashion of the beetle they act, when writing concerning the Irish. For it is the fashion of the beetle, when it lifts its head in the summertime, to go about fluttering, and not to stoop towards any delicate flower that may be in the field, or any blossom in the garden, though they be all roses or lilies, but it keeps bustling about until it meets with dung of horse or cow, and proceeds to roll itself therein. Thus it is with the set above-named; they have displayed no inclination to treat of the virtues or good qualities of the nobles among the old foreigners and the native Irish who then dwelt in Ireland; such as to write on their valour and on their piety, on the number of abbeys they had founded, and what land and endowments for worship they had bestowed on them; on the privileges they had granted to the learned professors of Ireland, and all the reverence they had manifested towards churchmen and prelates; on every immunity they secured for their sages, and the maintenance they provided for the poor and for orphans; on each donation they were wont to bestow on the learned and on petitioners, and on the extent of their hospitality to guests, insomuch that it cannot truthfully be said that there ever existed in Europe folk who surpassed them, in their own time, in generosity or in hospitality according to their ability.⁸

⁸ Geoffrey Keating, *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: The history of Ireland*, ed. David Comyn and P.S. Dinneen, 4 vols (London: ITS, 1902-14), pp.3-5. Hereafter, Keating, *FFÉ*.

Keating's use of the beetle metaphor, collectively stigmatising the group of authors that he mentions, has a two-fold function. Firstly, it emphasizes the low birth of these authors in relation to the Old English and the Gaelic nobility whom they set out to denigrate. Spenser's implicit criticism of James Butler, tenth earl of Ormond, with regard to the palatinate status of the latter's dominions, can be noted as an appropriate example here.⁹ Secondly, the beetle metaphor reveals an important method that Keating has traced in the writings of Spenser and the other New English authors. They tended to criticize the Catholic nobility with references to the lower orders of the Irish. In early modern Europe, histories were generally written on the basis of noble houses whose ancient genealogies, aristocratic customs and established traditions could be employed to produce a patriotic representation of their various kingdoms. In that New English authors produced texts about Ireland's past according to their personal observations of the customs of the Irish peasantry, they did not conform to the methods of Renaissance history writing. In Keating's words, they acted like beetles.

Keating denominated the foreign authors of his preface collectively as *Nua-Ghaill* (New English); but this designation certainly poses a problem for today's historians who are accustomed to applying the term, usually, in a political context. Foreign settlers who had migrated to Ireland from England since the 1530s were traditionally labelled 'New English'. However, Keating's list constitutes a chimera-like group with writers that no historian of Tudor Ireland today would call New English on political, religious, ethnic or cultural grounds. For example, Richard Stanihurst was from a distinguished Old English family with an established tradition

⁹ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, ed. from the first printed edition (1633) by Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 37.

of involvement in the government of the Pale.¹⁰ James Stanihurst, his father, served as speaker of the Irish House of Commons. Likewise, Edmund Campion, Stanihurst's tutor in Dublin, embraced an Old English point of view when he stayed in Ireland. Giraldus Cambrensis was one of the twelfth-century Cambro-Norman arrivals, who came to Ireland in the company of Prince John, appointed Lord of Ireland after Henry II's conquest. He belonged to an age to which designations such as New English, Old English or Gaelic Irish are inapplicable. These different "semantic clusters"¹¹ are going to be explained in due course in Chapter I; but it suffices to note here that Keating refers to a historiographical tradition by use of the term New English rather than to a politically or religiously defined group. In Keating's view, Cambrensis was as much a New English author as Spenser, who quoted from him by virtue of the fact that they both adhered to a tradition of history writing which had denigrated Gaelic Ireland.

The veracity of Keating's narrative of early Irish history should always be of secondary concern in view of the impact that his present-oriented political and religious ideas exerted on its formation. We are conscious today of the fictive and mythic nature of all history writing and willing too simply to enjoy a vivid narrative, without being troubled about the interest that might be taken in it by a Celticist or a historian of the early middle ages. But it must be of concern to us to observe carefully Keating's present-orientedness and comment on his work in relation to his own age. Thus the importance of the *Díon-bhrollach* for a critical interpretation of *Foras Feasa* will be self-apparent. In the preface to his masterpiece, Keating makes

¹⁰ Colm Lennon, *Richard Stanihurst the Dubliner, 1547-1618* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981), pp. 13-23.

¹¹ Brendan Bradshaw's exact phrase to refer to these terms: Brendan Bradshaw, "Geoffrey Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland", in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 166-67.

it clear that the work is intended to vindicate the Old English and the Gaelic Irish nobility who, not without exceptions, showed dogged determination to maintain their traditional allegiance to Roman Catholicism. Because of their recusancy, the Old English were barred from exercising political power in a kingdom where they still owned more than half of the available land in the period from 1603 to 1641.¹² After 1603, which marked the completion of the protracted Tudor conquest of Ireland, there were visible attempts by the New English government in Dublin to reduce the Old English to the completely subdued and “politically inarticulate” state of the Gaelic Irish.¹³ Inasmuch as Keating’s history sought to vindicate the Old English and the Gaelic Irish nobility, it counteracted a New English history writing which not only gave legitimacy to the state’s rejection of the Catholic nobility, but also blackened the reputation of Ireland in Europe since Ireland was, in Keating’s thought, a kingdom which was traditionally Catholic and Gaelic.

The centrality of the *Díon-bhrollach* to the understanding of the main text is made explicit in its opening paragraph: the refutation of the New English historiography constitutes the methodology of Keating’s *Foras Feasa*.

Whosoever proposes to trace and follow up the ancient history and origin of any country ought to determine on setting down plainly the method which reveals most clearly the truth of the state of the country, and the condition of the people who inhabit it: and forasmuch as I have undertaken the groundwork of Irish historical knowledge, I have thought at the outset of deploring some part of her affliction and of her unequal contest; especially the unfairness which continues to be practised on her inhabitants, alike the old foreigners who are in possession more than four hundred years from the Norman invasion down, as well as the native Irish who have had possession during almost three thousand years. For there is no historian of all those who have written on Ireland from that epoch that has not continuously sought to cast reproach and blame both on the old foreign settlers and on the native Irish.¹⁴

¹² Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, p. 87.

¹³ Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland: 1625-42* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 20.

¹⁴ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 3.

The relationship of Keating to the New English authors whom he cites is more complex than it looks at first glance. On a number of occasions, Keating quotes favourably from them with a view to proving the arguments that he brings up. For instance, in order to point out the privileged status in which the members of the bardic elite, especially the poets, were held in Gaelic Ireland, Keating refers to a statement that William Camden, the most prominent English antiquarian of the Elizabethan Era, makes in his major work, *Britannia*. “These princes (he says) have their own lawgivers, whom they call ‘brehons’, their historians for writing their actions, their physicians, their poets, whom they name ‘bards,’ and their singing men ...”.¹⁵ He distorts Camden, who was actually trying to demonstrate similar traits in the native Irish and the ancient barbarian tribes, in the footsteps of Cambrensis. Camden describes the brehons as “being a sort of most unlearned men”¹⁶. Keating, of course, is seeking to emphasize the preservation of arts and civil order in the remotest period of Gaelic Ireland.

Although Keating may sometimes quote favourably from the New English authors, even at the cost of deflecting the original sense of the statements he uses, his purpose is to undermine the authority of these scholars as historians of Ireland. In so doing, Keating is selective in his refutations and, on some occasions, these indicate an ideological stance that Keating takes up in *Foras Feasa*. For example, his disputation with Sir John Davies upon the latter’s denigration of some of the most fundamental notions of Brehon Law such as tanistry, gavelkind and *eric* foreshadows Keating’s repeated argument in *Foras Feasa* that the Irish nobility were able to cultivate order and justice through their own indigenous judicial system.¹⁷ This

¹⁵ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 71.

¹⁶ William Camden, *Britain or a chronographicall description of the most flourishing kingdomes. England, Scotland and Ireland*, trans. Philemon Holland (London: 1610), pp. 140-41.

¹⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, pp. 67-71.

argument is the very antithesis of Davies' assertion that the practice of the Brehon laws seriously hindered a thorough conquest of Ireland till the accession of James VI and I in whose reign Common Law began irrevocably to replace them throughout all the provinces.

The discourse of Keating's *Díon-bhrollach* against the Tudor polemicists of the latter half of Elizabeth I's reign may create an impression that *Foras Feasa* is an early modern composition, the interest of which is merely limited to the shared history of two Stuart kingdoms. This is rather misleading, by virtue of its intellectual concerns such as Renaissance humanism and Counter-Reformation. Keating's history is on a par with similar general histories written in Europe throughout the seventeenth century. Recent scholarship has convincingly argued for the European dimension of *Foras Feasa* by pointing out the considerable influence of a humanist methodology and a Counter-Reformation perspective on the work.¹⁸ Before recent historical studies started to examine Keating and his masterpiece in the light of the humanist principle of *ad fontes* and its commitment to Counter-Reformation Catholicism, *Foras Feasa* was chiefly valued among language enthusiasts who found in the text an excellent idiomatic display of Classical Irish. Historians used to see Keating merely as a learned priest striving to rescue the last remnants of a medieval Gaelic literature, endangered by conquest and colonization.

Taking into account Keating's learning and use of it as a teacher in the Irish college of Bordeaux when Europe was divided along confessional lines, Nicholas Canny has introduced the consideration of the impact of the Counter-Reformation in the study of *Foras Feasa*.¹⁹ Canny has indicated the Tipperary priest's success in merging Irishness with Roman Catholicism. While placing Keating in his Munster

¹⁸ Bradshaw, "Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland", pp. 166-68.

¹⁹ Nicholas Canny, "The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580 – 1670", *P&P* 95 (1982), pp. 100-1.

setting, Bernadette Cunningham has noted his display of early Irish Christianity to be thoroughly supportive of the strictly organized and efficiently pastoral Catholic Church of the Counter-Reformation era.²⁰ Also acknowledging the impact of Counter-Reformation historical scholarship on Keating, Brendan Ó Buachalla has traced in *Foras Feasa* the humanist tendency to give prior authority to ancient primary sources contemporaneous with the events which they described.²¹ The purpose of the present dissertation is to explicate Keating's disputation with New English historians throughout the *Díon-bhrollach*, with close consideration of the above-mentioned intellectual influences that recent scholarship has unearthed.

Of all the early medieval saints whose names are associated with Ireland, historians have access to most information about St. Patrick's life, because his own quite substantial writings have survived to this day. However, they are barely able to place St. Patrick within the political and cultural context of the Gaelic world where he performed his missionary activities, so extensive is their ignorance of it. An exactly opposite situation applies to Keating. In the first chapter, a series of cataclysmic events which transpired in the late Tudor and the early Stuart periods and contributed to the division of the Irish society along sectarian lines will be traced according to their visible effects on Keating's history writing. To note the network of Irish seminaries established in the Catholic countries of Europe is important to the study of Keating's historiography. In France he gained enriching perspectives on the historical image of the kingdom of Ireland, which were not readily available to Irish Catholics remaining at home. In the second chapter, Keating's ideas about the sovereignty of Ireland will be investigated. Keating projected his understanding of the precarious relationship between the Catholic nobility and the English Crown into

²⁰ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, pp. 105-170.

²¹ Brendan Ó Buachalla, "Annála Ríoghachta Éirinn: An Comhthéacs Comhaimseartha", *Studia Hibernica* 22-3 (1982 – 3), pp. 75-88.

his depiction of early Irish kingship. The construction of his narrative on a seamless line of Irish high kings ruling in collaboration with the higher orders of Irish society is suggestive of Keating's idea that the sovereignty of Ireland always remained in the Gaelic and the Old English nobility.

The main subjects dealt with in the third chapter are the Renaissance antiquarianism and historiography that *Foras Feasa* forcefully exhibits. Especially, Keating's emphasis on the continuity of Irish customs, laws and language within the time period that his history covers will be carefully examined. Where possible, comparisons will be drawn between Keating and similar antiquarian-historians in Britain and France. Hector Boece, George Buchanan, William Camden and Étienne Pasquier are notable examples. In the final chapter, the Tridentine convictions of Keating and how these shaped his depiction of early Irish Christianity will be considered in detail. In that he claimed the early Irish church, that is to say, St. Patrick's church, for Roman Catholicism, Keating is comparable to the Czech historians who strove to demonstrate after 1620 that the Roman Catholic Church in Bohemia was closer to the purity of early Christianity than the Reformed faith. Keating nurtured a similar concern and depicted the early Christian church in Ireland as standing in conformity with the Tridentine church of the early seventeenth century.

CHAPTER II:

AN IRISHMAN OF MORE THAN ONE WORLD

Be it in Ireland or on the European mainland, Geoffrey Keating was a man of more than one world. If this argument cannot be reasonably sustained against the backdrop of his inescapably sketchy biography, it can surely be sustained by his historiography. For the latter attests to the fact that the Tipperary scholar could well absorb, in his history writing, the cultural and intellectual breadth of the Gaelic Irish, the Old English and the New English communities in Ireland. Furthermore, as far as their writings related to the history of Ireland, he was well capable of citing distinguished modern historians from Scotland and England such as John Mair, Hector Boece, George Buchanan or William Camden as well as many pre-eminent classical authors like Solinus, Strabo, Diodorus Sicilius, Tacitus or Julius Caesar. However, his real success undoubtedly lies in the conformity of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* with the general histories written in Europe during the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation periods. When taken at face value, the preface to *Foras Feasa* may indicate that it is merely a polemical piece, written in reaction to the New English treatment of Irish history; but Keating did not neglect to observe the concerns of early modern antiquarians and historians in his methodology. No matter how aggressive its tone may be, Keating did not allow his polemic to corrupt his methodology, because his strongest line of defence against the New English writers

was that they did not write as proper historians should have done, blinded by their politically-motivated endeavours to denigrate Gaelic Ireland. The later chapters of the present study will demonstrate that the principles of history writing, as they were expressed in the writings of early modern historians such as Polydor Virgil, were not observed by the New English authors. Nor did they actually matter to them when it came to writing the history of Ireland.

Seathrún Céitinn, to use the Irish form of his name, was born around 1580 in the vicinity of Cahir, a well-populated town situated in the south of County Tipperary. This part of Tipperary also comprised a significant section of the ancient district of the Decies, stretching beyond Tipperary into Waterford. In Cahir, the Keatings were a respectable Old English family that should likely be placed among the affluent Catholic gentry of Munster. In *Foras Feasa*, Keating did not conceal his pride in being an elite member of the Old English community in Ireland. On the contrary, he was certain that his English ethnicity would increase his credibility in the eyes of his audience, especially on subjects related to the history of Gaelic Ireland. He set himself as an author of English descent, who was writing the history of the Gaels. “Whoever thinks it much I say for them, it is not to be considered that I should deliver judgement through favour, giving them much praise beyond what they have deserved, being myself of the old Galls as regards my origin”.²² The bulk of the two books of *Foras Feasa* actually concerns the history of the Gaelic nobility, with only a few chapters at the end of the second book featuring the deeds of the Anglo-Norman adventurers, both before and after the twelfth-century conquest. This is in stark contrast to the histories of an earlier generation Old English historians, such as

²² Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 77.

Edmund Campion or Richard Stanihurst, who gave little attention to the Gaelic past in their narratives.

It was only natural to Campion and Stanihurst that they wrote the history of the kingdom of Ireland on the basis of the glorious deeds of the Anglo-Norman settlers. In their texts, the account of pre-Norman Gaelic Ireland was only preliminary to what ensued.²³ Keating, on the other hand, claimed the Gaelic heritage to give an ancient and illustrious historical image to the seventeenth-century kingdom of Ireland. The arrival of the Anglo-Norman lords, to whom the Old English traced their origins, was only added to the existing pattern of historical events described in *Foras Feasa* in order to legitimize the Old English presence in Ireland throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The difference of perspective between the two Dubliners and Keating towards Gaelic Ireland can partly be explained in terms of political particularism as the Old English community in Cahir, a provincial town, was more inclusive of the native inhabitants of Ireland than its counterpart in Dublin.²⁴ However, a more decisive factor in the formation of the historiographies of these three Old English scholars was probably education.

The most notable element in Keating's early life was undoubtedly his training and formation at one of the traditional Gaelic institutions of higher learning. Commonly referred to as bardic schools, but teaching a wide range of subjects – genealogy, mythology, brehon law, grammar, language and above all *seanchas* (historical lore or broadly speaking history) – these educational institutions provided their students with the knowledge of older forms of Irish to the point where they

²³ The second chapter of Campion's *Two Bokes of the History of Ireland* is titled 'The Temporall Nobility'. With the exception of brief references to the O'Briens of Thomond and the O'Neills of Tyrone, Campion's designation of the mid-sixteenth-century temporal nobility of Ireland only covers the Old English gentry. See Edmund Campion, *Two Bokes of the History of Ireland*, in James Ware (ed.), *The historie of Ireland collected by three learned authors, viz. Meredith Hanmer ..., Edmund Campion ..., and Edmund Spenser* (Dublin, 1633), pp. 5-9.

²⁴ Bradshaw, "Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland", p. 179.

could make sense of medieval Irish sources: annals, chronicles, genealogies or poems. Thanks to their special training, members of the bardic elite could copy the original texts for the use of the posterity. By the early seventeenth century, a large collection of medieval material existed in manuscripts but they could only be read by scholars of the calibre of Keating, who had acquired the required training in the bardic schools. Noting the existing corpus of similar texts in Old English, the survival of a larger body of Old Irish manuscripts in prose and verse through the devoted studies of the bardic classes strikes us as a unique phenomenon.²⁵ Keating took considerable pains to assert that his Irish sources were thoroughly reliable because they were continuously transcribed by capable hands trained in the study of *seanchas*. “Furthermore, the historical record of Ireland should be considered as authoritative, the rather that there were over two hundred professors of history keeping the ancient record of Ireland, and every one of them having a subsidy from the nobles of Ireland on that account, and having the revision of the nobility and clergy from time to time”.²⁶ In *Foras Feasa*, multiple political and cultural characteristics are attributed to the bardic classes, one of which delineates their crucial role as the keepers of *seanchas*. Keating attended a school of *seanchas* at Burgess. It was run by a distinguished Gaelic family with a long tradition of bardic learning in Munster, the Mac Craith historians and poets.

The town of Cahir was situated in the barony of Iffa and Offa. In the sixteenth century, the region was under the overlordship of the Butlers of Cahir, a cadet branch of the Butlers of Ormond. In Keating’s youth, Theobald Butler, first baron of Cahir, was renowned for his patronage of the hereditary learned classes. The Mac Craith

²⁵ Katherine Simms, *Medieval Gaelic Sources* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), p. 12.

²⁶ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 81.

historians and poets also shared in the generosity of the Butlers of Cahir.²⁷ In *Foras Feasa*, generosity stands as one of the most admirable characteristics which have traditionally defined the Gaelic and the Old English nobility of Ireland. However, by the use of the word ‘generosity’, in Irish, *flaitheamhlacht*, Keating means exactly the kind of arrangement which existed between the Mac Craith scholars and the Butlers of Cahir. “Bear witness the literary assemblies which were proclaimed by them, a custom not heard of among any other people in Europe, so that the stress of generosity and hospitality among the old foreigners and the native Irish of Ireland was such that they did not deem it sufficient to give to any who should come seeking relief, but issued a general invitation summoning them, in order to bestow valuable gifts and treasure on them”.²⁸ In addition to their invaluable contribution to the thriving of literature in Ireland during the Middle Ages and beyond, the hereditary learned classes also assumed a cultural role of a political nature.

In its most basic definition, *seanchas* included the range of historical knowledge that a *file* or a bardic poet needed to acquire in order to compose encomiastic verses in praise of a patron lord. In their panegyrics, it was traditionally expected of a poet to recite the genealogy of a ruling chieftain in relation to his particular locality. It was not uncommon, for instance, that a poet reciting a praise-poem in the presence of an O’Brien lord in the sixteenth century traced his glorious genealogy back to Brian Bórainmhe. Keating synthesized a considerable number of poems in his history writing. Below is an example of Keating’s use of poetry to ascertain with historical evidence how long Brian Bórainmhe ruled without strife.

The boiling of the sea, a rapid flood,
Was Brian of Breagha over Banbha of variegated flowers,
Without sadness, without calumny, without suspicion,

²⁷ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, pp. 17-25.

²⁸ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, pp. 5-7.

Twelve years lasted his prosperity.²⁹

Keating's justification for making so much use of poetry was that verse tended to be more memorable and less liable to alteration than prose. For the keepers of *seanchas* "framed the entire historical compilation in poems, in order that thereby the less change should be made in the record; and also, that in this manner, it might the more be committed to memory by the students who were attending them".³⁰ In *Foras Feasa*, the hereditary learned classes were treated with as much sanctity as the clergy which assumed some of the former's functions after the coming of St. Patrick.

Originally it was customary for the Gaelic lords to sponsor generously learned poets so that they could "increase their status and thereby accumulate cultural capital".³¹ The most distinctive difference between the Gaelic political system and the English government was that the former lacked a chancery where legal and economic arrangements could be recorded on paper. Therefore, a piece of poetry mattered more than a written legal document: it carried on the immemorial tradition. "Thy nobility is thy charter/ Art's isle was held by thy ten forebears".³² Katherine Simms has delved into the origins of the Gaelic custom of retaining a group of secular scholars with diverse abilities. "In the post-Norman period, when control of the Church rested largely with the English king and the Continental monastic orders, Irish rulers had to turn elsewhere to find a theoretical justification for their authority – to the secular learned classes of bards, brehons, and historians, and to the immemorial tradition expressed in the secular inauguration-rite".³³ Keating carefully captures the political role that members of the hereditary learned

²⁹ Ibid, iii, p. 263.

³⁰ Ibid, i, p. 91.

³¹ Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie, *Stories from Gaelic Ireland: Microhistories from the Sixteenth-century Irish Annals* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p. 55.

³² Quoted in Katherine Simms, *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987), p. 1.

³³ Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, p. 16.

classes fulfilled in legitimizing the authority of the patron chieftains. The most striking example is probably the inauguration scene in the second book, where a chronicler actively participates in the royal ceremony. “It was the chronicler’s function to place a wand in the hand of each lord in his inauguration; and on presenting the wand he made it known to the populace that the lord or king need not take up arms thenceforth to keep his country in subjection, but that they should obey his wand as a scholar obeys his master”.³⁴ The last phrase neatly summarizes the close relationship between the political order in the secular sphere and the cultivation of arts and scholarly disciplines. In so doing, it also marks the importance of the mutual relationship between the bardic elite and the chieftains, both of which were numbered among the nobility and sometimes closely related to each other. Later chapters will show the centrality of the bardic elite in Keating’s antiquarian search to prove that the Irish kings did not neglect language and learning.

Descendants of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman arrivals, the Old English feudal lords did not fail to adopt some of the political means that the Gaelic chieftains had traditionally developed in order to aggrandize their power within their territories. Patronage of the hereditary learned classes was only one of the many Gaelic customs that the Old English came to practice down the years in imitation of the native Irish lords. Gaelicisation was characteristically strongest in the areas which lay outside the boundaries of the Pale. Along with Gaelicisation, there was a great deal of cross-fertilization between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English. The denomination in the late-Middle Ages of the Burkes, an Old English family in Connaught with a colonial history in Ulster, as the O’Burkes offers an extreme

³⁴ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 11.

example of the assimilation of the Old English nobility to the Gaelic way of life.³⁵ This degenerative process, as it was denominated, did not go unremarked by Cambrensis even in the early thirteenth century when the Anglo-Norman lords were just accommodating themselves to co-existence with the native inhabitants. It certainly did not go unregarded by the English government in the Pale. In 1366, on the initiative of the English executive in London, a series of legislative measures known as the Statutes of Kilkenny were enacted in order to prevent the medieval English lordship in Ireland from declining further in both political and cultural respects. The body of legislation codified in the Statutes of Kilkenny was intended to consolidate the area under Anglo-Norman control with a view to securing political stability in the entire lordship; but how effectively it was enforced outside the confine of the Pale has remained a controversial point.³⁶ However, the simple fact that the Statutes of Kilkenny were designed by the English government and were statutory measures to ward off the effects of Gaelicisation suggests that the threat of degeneration was taken quite seriously.

When their constant itinerancy is taken into account, it is not surprising that the activities of the bardic elite did not escape the prying eyes of the New English polemicists. Some did not conceal their interest in Irish poetry. Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney were certainly among such careful observers. In his “Defence of Poesy”, Sidney wrote: “In Turkey, besides their law-giving divines, they have no other writers but poets. In our neighbouring country [of] Ireland, where truly learning

³⁵ To further comprehend the protracted process of how the Burkes were almost wholly gaelicised in the late- Middle Ages and of how the territory of these Old English lords were transformed into an English earldom again in the late- sixteenth century thanks to the efforts of Richard Burke, fourth earl of Clanricarde, see Bernadette Cunningham, *Clanricarde and Thomond, 1540- 1640: Provincial Politics and Society Transformed* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012).

³⁶ See Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 3-21.

goes very bare, yet are their poets held in a devout reverence”.³⁷ However, both authors were severely critical of the political service that the poets were indirectly rendering by lauding and thereby legitimizing the noble lineages of the Gaelic and the Old English lords. What Spenser particularly could not stand was the support they gave to some of the Gaelic lords and Old English magnates, who tended to assemble private armies and operated outside the Crown’s jurisdiction: “whomsoever they finde to be most licentious of life, most bolde and lawless in his doings, most dangerous and desperate in all parts of disobedience and rebellious disposition, him they set up and glorifie in their rithmes, him they praise to the people, and to yong men make an example to follow”.³⁸ In the preface to *Foras Feasa*, Keating’s vindication of the bardic elite is set against the denigrating remarks of the Old English reformists such as Stanihurst or the New English colonialists such as Spenser. Keating could not allow the unsavoury comments about the hereditary learned classes to go unchecked, no matter from which political group they emanated, because they were essential to his treatment of time-honoured institutions such as kingship or parliament, which formed a significant section of Keating’s narrative in *Foras Feasa*.

To its west, Keating’s part of Tipperary adjoined an extensive plantation territory in County Cork. The plantations on the former Desmond lands in the 1580s were by no means the first plantations attempted in Ireland. However, in view of the scale of the population movement from England and the active involvement of the senior policy-makers in the English Privy Council, the Munster plantation presented a stark contrast to the earlier plantations, which had been constructed around military garrisons in Leix and Offaly. The Munster plantation was founded according to

³⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, “The Defence of Poesy”, in Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 214.

³⁸ Spenser, *A View*, p. 76.

vigorously debated programmes aimed at expropriation, conquest and Anglicization. James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald was personally influential in the chain of events which culminated in the first and the second Desmond rebellions. A fanatical soldier and a landowner in County Kerry, James fitz Maurice served Gerald fitz James Fitzgerald, fourteenth earl of Desmond, his uncle, as a military retainer during the latter's incarceration in London in the course of the 1570s. Collaborating with the like-minded Old English gentry in Munster, James fitz Maurice declared that the Tudor reformation, in view of its explicit advocacy of Protestantism, invalidated the papal bull, *Laudabiliter*, by which Pope Adrian IV invested Henry II with the rule of Ireland. Accordingly, James fitz Maurice called on Philip II of Spain to reassume the overlordship of Ireland.

When the first Desmond rebellion ended in disaster, James fitz Maurice went to Rome and returned to Ireland with a papal army in 1579 with a view to starting a crusade against Queen Elizabeth I, who had been excommunicated by the papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis* in 1570.³⁹ The call for a crusade against a heretical queen was answered by some of the Old English lords in Leinster, chiefly James Eustace, third Viscount Baltinglass. The failure of the second Desmond rebellion inevitably implicated Gerald Fitzgerald, fourteenth earl of Desmond, who had recently been released, in a vicious insurrection against the government forces in Munster. The death of the fourteenth earl put paid to the earldom of Desmond, within the boundaries of which “a hierarchal settlement which would draw on the resources of people of wealth, and therefore of high social standing, in England”⁴⁰ was intended. However, what in practice transpired was very different from what was envisaged in

³⁹ G. A. Hayes-McCoy, “Conciliation, Coercion, and the Protestant Reformation, 1547-71”, in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 89.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 129.

theory. People of modest means could also secure themselves plantation lands as reward for their service to the Crown during the previous decade. Edmund Spenser, for instance, had served Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton, lord deputy of Ireland as a private secretary during the second Desmond rebellion. He accompanied the Lord Deputy in his fierce campaigns in Leinster and Munster where martial law was declared in 1580.⁴¹ The militarisation of Irish society in the course of the Desmond rebellions is reflected in Spenser's *View*, where the Elizabethan poet describes the Irish customs in a strictly military context. In addition to civil administrators like Spenser, military captains were also awarded estates in the Munster plantation. Sir Walter Raleigh, for instance, acquired extensive lands in County Cork in consideration of his military service in Ireland during this period. Royal service increasingly became the political ethos of the New English parvenus, as they owed their advancements to being 'servitors' to the Crown.⁴²

The Desmond and Baltinglass rebellions introduced a religious ideology to the political violence perpetrated by the recalcitrant Gaelic and Old English lords ever since the end of the relatively peaceful deputyship of Sir Anthony St. Leger, renowned for his conciliatory policies, in the mid-sixteenth century. Although, on the pastoral front, attempts by Ignatius Loyola to introduce the Counter-Reformation to Ireland resulted in failure during the Henrician period, James fitz Maurice could successfully use Counter-Reformation notions as political propaganda in the 1570s and the 1580s. Even before the spread of a Counter-Reformation zeal which would later be adopted and used by Hugh O'Neill, second earl of Tyrone during the Nine Years' War, the Desmond and Baltinglass rebellions had convinced the government of the unreliability of the Old English in political affairs. For these two Old English

⁴¹ Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 167.

⁴² Nicholas Canny, *The Upstart Earl: A Study of the Social and Mental World of Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork, 1566-1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 132-35.

rebellions greatly damaged the precarious political stance which they were trying to maintain between spiritual allegiance to the Papal See and loyalty to the English Crown. The intransigence of James fitz Maurice and Viscount Baltinglass gave legitimacy to suspicions about the loyalty of the Old English recusants.

In *A View*, Spenser accuses the Old English of being more of a threat to the political stability in Ireland than the Gaelic Irish. “No, for some of them are degenerated and growne almost mere Irish, yea, and more malitious to the English then the Irish themselves”.⁴³ Spenser’s argument is in parallel with the systematic displacement, during the latter Elizabethan period, of the Old English from bureaucratic positions in Dublin and the provinces. With few aristocratic exceptions, their dogged determination to remain steadfast in their loyalty to Roman Catholicism precluded the Old English recusants from serving a Protestant monarch. In asserting that Ireland was traditionally a Gaelic and a Catholic kingdom, Keating implicitly demanded political recognition for the Catholic nobility and the Catholic Church. On account of their noble lineage, Keating held that the Catholic gentry were entitled to hold political authority in Ireland.

It is arguable that *Foras Feasa* was actually the history of the Catholic nobility of Ireland, not of all the Irish people. Keating’s history is replete with factual and allegorical stories aimed at presenting the virtues of the Catholic nobility such as valour, piety, generosity, hospitality and learning. In a sense, *Foras Feasa* had the conventional purpose of teaching by moral examples. The target of its moral instruction was undoubtedly the Catholic nobility who, in Keating’s view, needed to refashion themselves according to the virtues of their ancestors. For those virtues best described the honourable image of Ireland. It was because of those virtues that

⁴³ Spenser, *A View*, p. 54.

Ireland could be regarded as equal to other noteworthy kingdoms of Europe. Likewise, Stanihurst, in the introduction to his *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*, exhorted the Catholic nobility of the Pale to travel more often to Europe in order to cleanse the European mind of prejudice and calumnies about Ireland. “For the aristocracy of Ireland are stuck so fast in the soil of their native land, as if it were birdlime, that they think it something death to visit foreign peoples.”⁴⁴ The preface to *Foras Feasa* demonstrates that the compendium was written to vindicate the Irish nobility *per se*, not the island of Ireland. “If, indeed it be that the soil is commended by every historian who writes on Ireland, the race is dispraised by every new foreign historian who writes about it, and it is by that I was incited to write this history concerning the Irish, owing to the extent of the pity I felt at the manifest injustice which is done to them by those writers”.⁴⁵ For political reasons of their own, the New English polemicists were extremely inclined to denigrate the Gaelic and the Old English nobility. In the early modern period, land was the basis of social status and political power and the landed interests of the Catholic nobility were inimical to the reform programmes which the New English were devising.

Keating was particularly resentful at the habitual practice of the New English authors of reproaching the Catholic nobility on account of the ignominious conduct of the lower classes. Keating’s resentment at this general tendency in the New English historiography was grounded on a fundamental method of history writing during the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation periods. Histories were typically framed around the genealogies and the past deeds of the noble houses with a view to reminding them of the moral virtues and the political wisdom of their

⁴⁴ Stanihurst, *Great Deeds in Ireland*, p. 79.

⁴⁵ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 77.

ancestors. Polydore Virgil, whom Keating quotes in relation to how history should be written, expresses his idea of history in his *De rerum inventiobus*:

Histories, of all other Writings, be most commendable, because it informeth all sorts of people, with notable examples of living, and doth excite noble-men to insue such activity in enterprises, as they read to have been done by their Ancestors; and also discourageth and dehortheth wicked persons from attempting of any heinous deeds or crime, knowing, that such acts shall be registered in perpetual memory, to the praise or reproach of the doers, according to the desert of their endeavours.⁴⁶

In composing the two books of *Foras Feasa*, Keating anticipated moral and political reform in the conditions of the Catholic nobility in early seventeenth-century Ireland. The deterioration of their political circumstances was a direct consequence of their sinful defection from the ways of their ancestors. Thus, present-oriented expectations of moral and political improvement were central to Keating's composition of the history of Ireland's Catholic nobility.

Keating's purpose in adding the *Díon-bhrollach* to the two books of *Foras Feasa* was not to produce a refutation for every single historical untruth that hostile authors, foreign to Gaelic Ireland, uttered. *Foras Feasa* was itself designed as an authoritative source book which could be resorted in order to counter the controversial statements which circulated in the New English historiography. The *Díon-bhrollach* was instead composed to nullify the authority that certain New English historians enjoyed as historians of Ireland. Fynes Moryson was, for instance, one such figure. Moryson travelled to Ireland as chief secretary to the lord deputy, Sir Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who was sent to Ireland with a military objective, to put an end to Tyrone's rebellion. As in the case of Spenser, Moryson's first visit to Ireland was at a time when the Irish society was heavily militarised. His principal work, *Itinerary*, is essentially a piece of travel writing which contains in its

⁴⁶ Polydore Virgil, *De rerum inventoribus*, in *Polydori Virgili de Rerum Inventoribus*, trans. John Langley (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), pp. 29-33.

second part, in addition to a general description of Ireland's geographical characteristics, an account of the Nine Years' War from the perspective of Lord Mountjoy.⁴⁷ A widely travelled Renaissance figure, Moryson's *Itinerary* is not merely restricted to his observations in the neighbouring island. It also comprises historically valuable but plain accounts of his journeys to distant countries, such as Italy, Poland or Turkey.

When Moryson was in Ulster, he was astonished by the Irish cabins, made of clay and wattle, where native people lived in the same room with their livestock. In this regard, he shared the views of John Barclay, a Scottish author, better known for his *Icon animorum*, a collection of sketches where Barclay sets out to describe the distinctive characters of nations.⁴⁸ Barclay's comments were quoted by Keating. "They build (says he, speaking of the Irish) frail cabins to the height of a man, where they themselves and their cattle abide in one dwelling".⁴⁹ Without disputing the accuracy of Barclay's observation, Keating reproves him for the incompleteness of his observations.

I think, seeing that this man stoops to afford information on the characteristics and on the habitations of peasants and wretched petty underlinings, that his being compared with the beetle is not unfitting, since he stoops in its fashion to give an account of the hovels of the poor, and of miserable people, and that he does not endeavour to make mention or narration concerning the palatial princely mansions of the earls and of the other nobles who are in Ireland.⁵⁰

According to Keating, Moryson's *Itinerary* and Barclay's *Icon animorum* should not be read as authoritative books about Irish history because their authors failed to mention the remarkable deeds of the Irish nobility, without which it was

⁴⁷ Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary ... containing his ten yeeres travell through the twelve dominions*, 3 vols (London: 1617).

⁴⁸ John Barclay, *Icon animorum* (London, 1614).

⁴⁹ Quoted in Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 55.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

methodologically unacceptable to write a general history of Ireland according to the standards of the age.

Historiographical nomenclatures, Gaoidhil (Gaelic Irish), Sean-Ghaill (Old English) and Nua-Ghaill (New English), referring to successive waves of foreign settlers in Ireland at different time periods, had been at Keating's service before he started to write *Foras Feasa*. They had also been employed with varying forms by the foreign authors, whom Keating criticized, when they wrote of Gaelic Ireland. What makes Keating's historiographical rhetoric revolutionary is his ingenious but by no means, original use of the term, *Éireannaigh* (Irishmen). The word existed in early seventeenth-century bardic poetry to denote the inhabitants of the island of Ireland, as a merely geographical expression. However, in Keating's writing, it gained religious and political significance.⁵¹ The vision of the bardic poets was inescapably local, narrowed by the provincial politics of the lords from whom they secured patronage. Having lived in France for a considerable period of time, Keating had the opportunity to view Ireland from outside. This enriching perspective, not available to the traditional bardic poets, many of whom never departed from Ireland, enabled Keating to imagine the whole kingdom of Ireland as a single political entity. According to Keating's interpretation of Irish history, the sovereignty of the kingdom of Ireland traditionally belonged to the *Éireannaigh*, an amalgam of the Gaelic Irish and the Old English communities. Both the latter denominations were already losing their ethnic ramifications by the early seventeenth century.

For instance, Donough MacCarthy, second viscount Muskerry, and later first earl of Clancarthy, was a nobleman of Gaelic provenance in County Cork. Yet, he was a staunch supporter of Catholicism and the king's prerogatives in Ireland. He

⁵¹ See Marc Caball, "Religion, Culture and the Bardic Elite", in Alan Ford and John McCafferty (eds), *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 167.

joined the Confederate Irish in Kilkenny during the 1640s. In terms of how he expressed his political and religious convictions, Muskerry should be construed as Old English, irrespective of his Gaelic origins.⁵² Likewise, Randall MacDonnell, marquis of Antrim, behaved as an Old English peer in Ireland, although he had an illustrious Gaelic pedigree as the head of the Clan Donald.⁵³ Both the identities of Muskerry and Antrim show that the term, Old English, lost its ethnic significance through years of co-habitation and cross-fertilization with the native inhabitants. “To plot the distribution of the Old English in this way, on the evidence of descent provided by surnames, is, however, very largely to beg the seventeenth-century question, for by this stage membership of the group was in fact polarized between two criteria: though the denotation of the term was demographic, historical and racial, its connotation was political and religious.”⁵⁴ The same argument can also be applied to the New English group persuasively.

Drawing on the common allegiance to Roman Catholicism of the Gaelic Irish and the Old English, Keating created an imaginary community called the *Éireannaigh*. However, Keating’s creation had a sound political basis as well. In the early seventeenth century, the Gaelic Irish came to adopt a political stance which the Old English had been characteristically following. It was a precarious position which suffered in the shadow of the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle. In comparison to the Stuarts, the Habsburgs could with considerable success manage to dictate this principle, especially in their German principalities. On most occasions, throughout the seventeenth century, the Old English land-owning elite found it difficult to reconcile their spiritual allegiance to the Roman Pontiff with their professed loyalty

⁵² Clarke, *Old English in Ireland*, p. 135.

⁵³ Jane Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim, 1609-1683* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵⁴ Clarke, *Old English in Ireland*, p. 16.

towards the Stuart kings. The Catholic gentry of Ireland proved to be an anomaly in the Stuarts' multiple monarchy at a crucial time in Europe, when the religion of the ruler was succeeding in determining the confession of his dominions. Only in the reign of James II did their problem seem to be briefly resolved. But the rallying of the Catholic nobility behind the last Stuart monarch on the English throne had disastrous consequences for them.

After the decease of Hugh O'Neill in Rome, Peter Lombard, the exiled archbishop of Armagh, who had served the earl as a diplomat in the Nine Years' War, struggled to find a working accommodation between the Catholic nobility and the Stuart monarchs, relying on the theological writings of the Jesuit scholars, Bellarmine and Suarez.⁵⁵ Lombard distinguished between spiritual and temporal allegiance, thereby making it possible for the Catholics to acknowledge the Stuart king as their lawful sovereign. Insufficient though this profession of divided loyalty was for the Stuarts, the Gaelic Irish were quick to embrace it without troubling their conscience: the death of Hugh O'Neill had long extinguished the hope for a foreign invasion under the auspices of the exiled Ulster earls, and thus, the Gaelic Irish gladly adopted the Old English stance in relation to the English Crown. Almost a decade after Keating wrote *Foras Feasa*, the Old English joined the Gaelic Irish at a historical moment on the Hill of Crofty to pressurize Charles I into accepting a series of religious and political reforms, imitating the Scottish covenanters.⁵⁶ It was an uneasy alliance between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English, not without its divisions, right from the beginning. Nevertheless, in *Foras Feasa*, the construction of a shared Gaelic and Catholic past for the Old Irish and the Old English nobility, however fictional it was, was not totally independent of the political processes which

⁵⁵ Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, p. 137.

⁵⁶ Micheál Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland, 1642-1649: A Constitutional and Political Analysis* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), p. 25.

had moulded and reshaped the relations of the two communities from the Statues of Kilkenny to the Hill of Crofty.

In his *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*, Stanihurst severely criticizes the intermarriages between the natives and the Anglo-Irish. Intermarriage was commonly resorted to as a means of establishing political alliances within the nobility across the two communities. Stanihurst, however, regarded the practice as a cause of degeneration. “But to continue with the task in hand: these Anglo-Irish, whom we are now describing, are so dissociated from those ancient Irish that the least of all the tenant farmers living in the English province would not give his daughter in marriage to even the most noble Irish chieftain”.⁵⁷ Writing of the Pale gentry such as the Nugents or the Plunketts, to whom he was closely related, Stanihurst applauds their resolve to preserve their Englishness against the threat of Gaelicisation.⁵⁸ However, implicit in Stanihurst’s applause is his reproach of the provincial Old English nobility for descending into Irish ways. From Stanihurst’s perspective, which is indisputably that of someone accustomed to viewing Ireland from Dublin, there are two Irelands: Ireland of the Pale and the rest. It was the objective of the Pale reformers to make it one by making the latter conform to the former.

Keating does not seem to pay too much attention to the inherent differences in the Old English perspective towards the native inhabitants. By the time that he was writing, provincial Old English magnates, who used to be very jealous of their autonomy and operated outside the effective control of the Crown government, were successfully pacified and their political particularity, distinct from that of the Old English in the Pale, diminished, if it did not entirely fade. Not surprisingly, Keating

⁵⁷ Stanihurst, *Great Deeds in Ireland*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis* was dedicated to Stanihurst’s brother-in-law, ‘the most illustrious Patrick Plunket, Lord Baron Dunsany’. Ibid, p. 77.

assumes that Stanihurst's statement relates to the entire Old English nobility without any geographical distinction.

I ask Stanihurst which were the more honourable, the more noble, or the more loyal to the crown of England, or which were better as securities for preserving Ireland to the crown of England, the colonists of Fingall, or the noble earls of the foreigners who are in Ireland, such as the earl of Kildare, who contracted alliance with Mac Carthy *Riabhach*, with O'Neill, and with others of the nobles of the Gael; the earl of Ormond with O'Brien, with Mac Gil Patrick, and with O'Carroll; the earl of Desmond with Mac Carthy *Mór*, and the earl of Clanricard with O'Ruarc. I do not reckon the viscounts nor the barons, who were as noble as any settler who was ever in Fingall, and by whom frequently their daughters were given in marriage to the nobles of the Gael.⁵⁹

Keating speaks of the once powerful earldoms of Kildare, Ormond, Desmond and Clanricarde, where the Old English nobility and gentry were in closer relations with the Gaelic lords than were the Old English nobility and gentry of the Pale. That Stanihurst and Keating, two Old English intellectuals, took up different viewpoints in relation to the Gaelic lords is not merely a matter of geographical perspective, but also of period and politics. In contrast to the latter half of the Elizabethan era, in the 1630s, the Gaelic Irish already embraced a political ideology acceptable to the Old English, who, disempowered by the New English, found themselves in the adverse condition that the Gaelic Irish had been forced to endure in the aftermath of the Tudor conquest, after 1603. The individual historiographies of Stanihurst and Keating show how the Old English opinion of the native culture evolved over these years from aloofness to comprehension.

The political and cultural rapprochement between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English in the early seventeenth century found its literary expression in Keating's use of the term *Éireannaigh*. The history of Ireland as it is read in *Foras Feasa* is the history of the *Éireannaigh*. *Éireannaigh* is a much more comprehensive and

⁵⁹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 33.

inclusive designation than ‘Gaelic Irish’ or ‘Old English’, bringing both together. Nevertheless, it has an exclusive aspect in the sense that it conceptualizes the New English as intrinsically different from either. The *Éireannaigh* have noble lineages which can be traced back to antiquity, as seen from the genealogies provided in *Foras Feasa*. On the contrary, the New English were the arrivistes who sailed to Ireland with their minds bent on elevating their social status. Being a colony, Ireland offered generous land opportunities for those Tudor adventurers who could not have enhanced their social status if they had remained in England where social mobility was far less possible for them. “Medieval people had to explain themselves and, if possible, confer the cachet of antiquity on their respective houses, for to be parvenus was to be devoid of all right, rank or dignity”.⁶⁰ Roman Catholicism is what the *Éireannaigh* uniformly adhere to; but, the New English were Protestants with only a very recent past. Drawing on the illustrious nobility and devout Catholicism of the *Éireannaigh*, Keating built a coherent narrative which encouraged his readers to think of Ireland as an ancient kingdom, inherently Gaelic and Catholic. Referring collectively to all the New English authors who had not hesitated in the past to use reproachful language against the Irish Catholic nobility, or in his words, against the *Éireannaigh*, Keating argues in the *Díon-bhrollach*: “If only indeed they had given their proper estimate to the Irish, I know not why they should not put them in comparison with any nation in Europe in three things, namely, in valour, in learning, and in being steadfast in the Catholic faith ...”.⁶¹ The impressive content of *Foras Feasa* proves by historical evidence what Keating proudly claims in the *Díon-bhrollach* about the military prowess, scholarly erudition and gracious piety of the Irish Catholic nobility.

⁶⁰ Howard B. Clarke, *Pathfinders to the Past: The Antiquarian Road to Irish Historical Writing, 1640-1960* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), p. 6.

⁶¹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 79.

During the Renaissance period, historians tended to practice their profession with a rhetoric of nationhood. As previously shown, Stanihurst's history writing exhibits a patriotic attachment to the English Pale, "a province surrounded by English lands as if by a fence of palings".⁶² Dublin and the surrounding four counties constituted the *patria* of Stanihurst. *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis* gave little space to the Gaelic past and told predominantly of the history of Ireland after the Anglo-Norman conquest, in a manner that would legitimize the rights of the Pale nobility to the ownership of their lands and to the government of the kingdom of Ireland. Keating's fatherland included Gaelic Ireland too. Keating's employment of the Gaelic *seanchas* and literature in general to compile a history of Ireland was methodologically in line with the concern of his contemporaries in Europe to prove the ancientness of their respective kingdoms. Basing the history of Ireland firmly on a Gaelic past helped Keating convince his readers that Ireland was, if not the most, at least one of the most ancient kingdoms of Europe. From Camden, a prominent English antiquarian with a European audience, to augment his credibility, Keating quotes: "Not unjustifiably was this island called 'Ogygia' by Plutarch, i.e. most ancient".⁶³ Argument for antiquity was a matter of great importance among early modern historians. Especially in Western Europe, after the rise to power of centralizing royal dynasties, such as the Tudors or the Valois, historians struggled to assert that their kingdom was the most profoundly ancient. For to be upstarts was inimical to the nobility's sense of honour. In Renaissance France, for example, many historians wholeheartedly acknowledged the Gallic origins of the French kingdom.⁶⁴ The history of the conquered province of Gaul, as it was mentioned in the writings of

⁶² Stanihurst, *Great Deeds in Ireland*, p. 105.

⁶³ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 45.

⁶⁴ R. E. Asher, *National Myths in Renaissance France: Francus, Samothès and the Druids* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 44.

classical authors, was the exact medium through which French historians could create a classical and illustrious origin-myth for the kingdom of France.

The absence of reference to a sixteenth- or a seventeenth-century French historian in *Foras Feasa* does not negate the certainty that Keating was familiar with this historiography. He studied and taught at a recently established Irish college in Bordeaux. His scholarly activities, however, were not strictly confined to this particular Irish college. There was a network of Irish colleges in France, which Keating might have attended.⁶⁵ Increasingly, from the 1580s and the 1590s, Irish Catholics began to immigrate to Catholic countries in Europe, where they could freely establish educational and religious institutions, a liberty denied to them at home.⁶⁶ With regard to history writing, St. Antony's College at Louvain was the most prominent one among the seminaries opened by the Irish abroad. For a group of Franciscan scholars from Donegal produced at Louvain a singular masterpiece, as outstanding as *Foras Feasa*. Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and his colleagues wrote what is today known as *the Annals of the Four Masters*, as it was compiled, unlike *Foras Feasa*, in an annalistic form. Unlike the medieval Irish annals, most of which were contemporaneous with the events which they were describing, *the Annals of the Four Masters* had a retrospective outlook towards past events. Keating's strong emphasis on hagiography suggests the existence of a Louvain dimension to his scholarship because the purpose for writing *the Annals of the Four Masters* was to construct a historical narrative into which the lives of the Irish saints could be placed.⁶⁷ Considering his involvement in the continental Irish colleges which pursued

⁶⁵ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, p. 25.

⁶⁶ John J. Silke, "The Irish Abroad, 1534-1691", in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 587-633.

⁶⁷ Bernadette Cunningham, *The Annals of the Four Masters: Irish History, Kingship and Society in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 22-23.

humanist curricula, it is not surprising that Keating's use of the Gaelic past looks remarkably similar to the French employment of the Gallic heritage in their general histories.

In *Foras Feasa*, Keating built a chronological narrative out of a synthesis of Irish medieval texts available to him in various forms, namely, annals, genealogies, chronicles and poems. The manner in which Keating formed his narrative is yet another indication of a continental influence on his history writing. Medieval Irish chronicles, not different from any of their European counterparts, lacked coherent narratives and had little authorial voice. Events were usually described as independent from each other and with minimal interpretation. In the early seventeenth century, Irish medieval literature, in so far as it related to the history of Ireland, was insufficient in its scope and too outdated to respond to the tastes catered by the Renaissance history writing. Furthermore, the sharp decline of the Gaelic political system, in the years after 1603, put an end to the possibility of any Gaelic lord standing free of the Crown's jurisdiction. The Anglicization of the Gaelic earldoms, especially in respect of tenure, had been in progress since the 1530s; but it proved to be a protracted and slow process, which only met its objective, at least in political terms, with the Flight of the Earls in the 1610s. The expansion of Tudor rule at the expense of the native lords severely damaged the patronage networks on which the survival of the Gaelic learned classes depended. The ruin of traditional Gaelic institutions of higher learning, which the Tudor conquest brought about, disrupted the training of erudite poets, skilled in the Irish language and its literary traditions. It was they who had preserved and transmitted to later generations the medieval historical texts. In the 1610s, a German-born British planter in Ireland, Matthew De Renzy, urged, in his letters, the destruction of the manuscripts of the hereditary

learned classes so that the Gaelic language could be exterminated.⁶⁸ In *Foras Feasa*, Keating's interpretative synthesis of Gaelic sources, beneath his methodological concern for primary material, points to a heroic struggle to save Irish medieval manuscripts of precious value from falling into oblivion.

As previously pointed out, medieval Irish chronicles did not possess an all-Ireland perspective. The range of events treated in these chronicles tended to be rather provincial. In 1541, the Kingdom of Ireland Act officially invested Henry VIII with the right to call himself the King of Ireland. The Act for Kingly Title constitutionally placed Ireland on an equal footing with England.⁶⁹ Ireland was regarded as an independent kingdom separate from England, but inalienably under the same monarchy. In the 1630s, Keating decidedly saw Ireland as a kingdom equal in status to Scotland and England, all three kingdoms then being Stuart dominions. These political thoughts of autonomy had their reverberations in the ecclesiastical and cultural spheres. For instance, in the early seventeenth century, James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland (1625 – 1656), stood for the independence of the Church of Ireland. A similar approach is echoed in Keating's refusal of Hanmer's claim that "the archbishop of Canterbury had jurisdiction over the clergy of Ireland from the time of Augustine the monk".⁷⁰ Now that Ireland was designated as a kingdom in the mid-sixteenth century, with an act passed through the parliament in Dublin, it needed a new history of its own, stressing its newly acquired regal status. The search for a new history of Ireland came at a crucial time, when the universities of northern Europe had successfully adapted to humanist teaching. Therefore it should not come as a surprise that the Irish historical renaissance began

⁶⁸ Brian Mac Cuarta SJ, "'Sword' and 'Word' in the 1610s: Matthew De Renzy and Irish Reform", in Brian Mac Cuarta SJ (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), p. 127.

⁶⁹ Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century*, p. 233.

⁷⁰ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 53.

in the latter half of Queen Elizabeth's reign, with scholars like Stanihurst and Campion, who had distinguished university backgrounds.

Keating held the idea that the kingdom of Ireland consisted of the *Éireannaigh*, to whom its sovereignty traditionally belonged. The Irish Catholic nobility, by virtue of their steadfast attachment to Catholicism and their respect for Gaelic culture, was representative of the kingdom of Ireland, which was, as *Foras Feasa* vividly displayed, always Catholic and Gaelic. In the preface to *Foras Feasa*, Keating took issue with the Tudor literati who produced the first pieces of history writing about Ireland in the humanist fashion. Some of those authors, like Stanihurst, were born in Ireland. Others, like Spenser and Davies, were newcomers. Not all of them published their writings as histories of Ireland. For instance, Spenser's *View* was disseminated as a political treatise. However, it could also be construed as a work of history. Keating certainly thought that *A View* had pretensions to be such. In the work, Spenser consistently appealed to existing historical texts, available in English translations, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Giraldus Cambrensis' *Topographia Hibernica*, in order to produce historical justification for Ireland's political situation. Keating was extremely irritated with the almost complete disregard in which the Gaelic Irish and their writings were held in the Tudor historical scholarship of the late Elizabethan period. In the texts of authors such as Stanihurst and Spenser, the stubborn continuation of a discourse of barbarity and savagery, borrowed from Cambrensis, was particularly disturbing. In their political treatises, New English polemicists did not solely rely on personal observations and experiences. As an exigency of the humanist method of writing, they were obliged to have recourse to primary texts such as the *Topographia*, the author of which, Cambrensis, was almost as foreign to Gaelic Ireland as the New

English of the sixteenth century were. Guided by their political ideology, New English authors did not hesitate to reiterate, in their texts, the prejudiced and highly dubious comments of Cambrensis and other medieval authors.

When he was in France, it was particularly annoying to Keating to observe that the Europeans gave credence to the New English historiography. Parts of Cambrensis' *Topographia* were available to a European audience through the New English historiography which circulated unchecked in Europe as an authoritative source of knowledge about Ireland. In 1602, William Camden's *Anglica, Hibernica, Hormannica, Cambrica, a veribus scripta ...* was published in Frankfurt. It contained the calumnious commentaries of Cambrensis' *Topographia*, composed four centuries before.⁷¹ Cambrensis' exotic description of the Irish landscape and the barbarity of the people inhabiting it attracted Latin readers in Europe. "Just as the countries of the East are remarkable and distinguished for certain prodigies peculiar and native to themselves, so the boundaries of the West also are made remarkable by their own wonders of nature."⁷² Scurrilous commentaries about the Gaelic Irish were seriously damaging the image of Ireland, which was, in Keating's opinion, as honourable a kingdom as any in Europe, especially in view of its antiquity. In *Foras Feasa*, Keating places the kingdom of Ireland in a strictly European context, since it was his ambition to re-elevate Ireland's reputation in Europe.

During the Renaissance, vernacular histories of various kingdoms grew to be popular in Europe. Historians struggled to prove that their national language was more deep-rooted than other languages, including even Latin and Greek. Language

⁷¹ Bernadette Cunningham, "Representations of King, Parliament and the Irish People in Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* and John Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus* (1662)", in Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 134.

⁷² Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. by John J. O'Meara (London: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 31.

was a mark of civility and it was preliminary to the cultivation of the arts. Keating preferred writing in the vernacular language, to a considerable degree simply because the bulk of his sources existed in Irish. According to Keating, the history of Ireland is best written with the sources written in Irish. Without recourse to the medieval Irish documents, it was impossible, Keating pointed out, to produce a genuine account of early Irish history. In the preface to *Foras Feasa*, Keating regularly stresses the inability of the New English authors to read medieval Irish chronicles. It was methodologically inappropriate to undertake the writing of a history of early Ireland without any knowledge of the medieval Irish manuscripts. Since they were unable to read the medieval Irish chronicles, for which they did not have much respect anyway, New English authors resorted predominantly to medieval English books, the authority of which as historical texts came under increasing attack in the early seventeenth century. In his *Historia*, Geoffrey of Monmouth provided a vivid and uninterrupted account of the early history of Britain from the first settlements and the foundation of the monarchical tradition by Brutus to the rule of a series of British kings, including notably King Arthur. Since Geoffrey set out to narrate a far earlier period than his own time without any substantial reference to sources which emanated from this period, the *Historia*'s authority as a work of history was rejected by some pre-eminent Renaissance historians like Polydore Virgil. The same point could be made about the *Topographia* in which Cambrensis does not refer to "a lay nor a letter, of old record or of ancient text, chronicle or annals, supporting him".⁷³ Keating rebuked the excessive use by the New English writers of such anachronistic texts, which failed to enjoy the esteem of prominent Renaissance historians. Keating's two principal Irish texts, *Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* and *Réim Ríoghraidhe*

⁷³ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 19.

Éireann (the latter containing ancient and early medieval king-lists) provided the backbone of his historical narrative.⁷⁴ Both were widely circulated medieval texts, and the former provided an elaborate account of the ancient history of Ireland as it unfolded in a series of foreign invasions and settlements. *Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* or *the Book of the Takings of Ireland* thus set a useful pattern by which the history of Ireland could be interpreted and written. At the end of the second book of *Foras Feasa*, the successful inclusion of the Anglo-Norman nobility into the pattern of the earlier waves of invasion, including the Gaelic settlements, achieved Keating's purpose. The depiction of early Irish history in successive waves of foreign invasion also had a major impact on the way the New English authors structured their histories. However, they tended to interpret the early settlements as conquests or plantations. Hanmer, for instance, regarded the taking of Ireland by the Scythians as a sort of early plantation. For they, in Hanmer's opinion, "planted themselves" in Ireland.⁷⁵ As Hanmer's projection of the Tudor discourse of colonization into early Irish history indicates, the *Leabhar Gabhála* pattern was quite malleable and could be moulded to fit different contexts and periods.

Leabhar Gabhála presented an origin-myth which, in the manner of medieval synthetic historiography, traced the island's population far back to the Creation. However, in its medieval form, *Leabhar Gabhála*'s verses could not thoroughly satisfy Keating who searched for a historical narrative which would not only honour Ireland in its recent status as a kingdom, but also appeal to the *Éireannaigh*. Royal genealogies contained in *Réim Ríoghraidhe Éireann* or *Succession of Kings of Ireland* helped Keating to establish a seamless line of Irish high kings. Keating

⁷⁴ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, p. 65.

⁷⁵ Meredith Hanmer, *The Chronicle of Ireland*, in James Ware (ed.), *The historie of Ireland collected by three learned authors, viz. Meredith Hanmer ..., Edmund Campion ..., and Edmund Spenser* (Dublin, 1633), p. 6.

forged a monarchical tradition to which, following the Anglo-Norman conquest, Henry II and his successors were added. Thus, the rights of the Gaelic Irish and the Old English to landownership and political power in the seventeenth century were historically legitimized. There was a sequence of royal genealogies through which the *Éireannaigh* could trace their history back to the remotest antiquity. In this way, Keating built a concept of honour defined by nobility and tradition. The identity of the *Éireannaigh* was closely dependent on the possession of noble and ancient genealogies. In *Foras Feasa*, the noble pedigrees of the *Éireannaigh* could be stretched back to the Creation and the Deluge. The tracing of the origins of the *Éireannaigh* so far back had two definitive purposes. Firstly, Ireland's image as an ancient kingdom was reaffirmed. Secondly, the strong link between nobility and political power was stressed. Long tradition of possession gave the *Éireannaigh* sovereign rights over the kingdom of Ireland, which were being entirely alienated. By using the *Leabhar Gabhála* tradition, Keating downplayed the differences between the native Irish and the more recently arrived Anglo-Normans, thereby building "an integrative framework for all Ireland's pre-reformation communities".⁷⁶ Under an overarching succession of royal genealogies, which forcefully stressed an inherent historical link between the *Éireannaigh* and the sovereignty of the kingdom of Ireland, Keating as an antiquarian engaged in a study of the kingdom's institutions. The complicated relationship between the Irish Catholic nobility and the English Crown in the early seventeenth century was reflected in Keating's assertion that the sovereignty of Ireland always belonged to the *Éireannaigh*. Through *Foras Feasa*, Keating asked for the recognition of the political rights of the Irish Catholic

⁷⁶ David Finnegan, "Old English Views of Gaelic Irish History and the Emergence of an Irish Catholic Nation, c. 1569-1640", in Brian Mac Cuarta SJ (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), p. 201.

nobility vis-à-vis the English Crown. The *Éireannaigh* were entitled to have their say in the government of the kingdom of Ireland because it was they who originally gave to the English Crown by their willing submission the right to rule the kingdom of Ireland. *Foras Feasa* propagated the idea that the royal prerogatives in Ireland were dependent on the co-operation of the Irish Catholic nobility in the government.

CHAPTER III:

DEFENDING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE *ÉIREANNAIGH*

Henry smiling within himself, saith, Loe whether
and where then wilt goe and wander for me, it shall
be lawfull for thee, take Dedalus wings and flye
away.⁷⁷

Richard Stanihurst

Hector Boece is probably the most respected sixteenth-century historian in *Foras Feasa*, even though a number of controversial statements in his *Scotorum Historia* aroused objections from Keating. Keating's fascination with the Scotsman's masterpiece seems to have led to an imitation of some of Boece's methods and ideas in *Foras Feasa*. An adept humanist scholar, Boece's history writing was heavily shaped by classical historiography, most particularly by Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.⁷⁸ The appeal of Livy's histories for Boece lay in the formation, through history writing, of an ancient Roman virtue, against which the character of all subsequent generations of Romans could be measured. In both Keating's and Boece's histories, the morally instructive aspect of history writing is readily apparent, as both authors strove to create an ancient Gaelic virtue, through which the contemporary nobility could refashion itself. Building on the medieval chronicles of John Fordun and Walter Bower and making use of a series of Gaelic documents no longer extant,

⁷⁷ Hanmer, *Chronicle of Ireland*, p. 120.

⁷⁸ To grasp to what extent Livy influenced the formation of Boece's narrative, see William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 57-9.

Boece wrote a great work of history, a lengthy account of the Scottish people from the first settlements and the foundation of the kingdom of Scotland by Fergus I in 330 BC until the end of King James I's reign.⁷⁹ Strikingly, Boece's construction of an uninterrupted line of Scottish kings of Dalriadic origin is replicated by Keating in *Foras Feasa*, who offered a similar depiction of the Irish high kingship. Boece's insistence on the existence of a Gaelic monarchical tradition in ancient Scotland evoked notions of autonomy and independence against the growing threat of English and French intervention in sixteenth-century Scotland.⁸⁰ Likewise, the centrality of royal genealogies to the historical narrative in *Foras Feasa* is a conscious choice by Keating to stress the sovereign rights of the *Éireannaigh* in reaction to the overlordship of the New English minority in seventeenth-century Ireland.

Of all the foreign authors whose names are mentioned on the opening pages of the *Díon-bhrollach*, Keating decided to refute Cambrensis first. This was not an arbitrary decision. For English Renaissance historians, the *Topographia* proved to be the key material for writing the ancient and early medieval history of Ireland. Although this archdeacon of Brecon does not acknowledge the use of any Irish text, the third and the last section of the *Topographia*, which deals with the foundation of the island's native population, strongly suggests a *Leabhar Gabhála* influence. Cambrensis intended his short work to be long-lasting, and appealing to posterity. Dedicating the *Topographia* to his patron, Henry II, Cambrensis remarked:

I could, as others have done, have sent your highness some small pieces of gold, falcons, or hawks with which the island abounds. But since I thought that a high-minded prince would place little value on things that easily come to be – and just as easily perish – I decided to send to your

⁷⁹ Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historiae a prima gentis origine* (Paris, 1527).

⁸⁰ Roger A. Mason, "Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Past", in Edward J. Cavan and Richard J. Finlay (eds), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 103-4.

Highness those things rather which cannot be lost. By them, I shall, through you, instruct posterity. For no age can destroy them.⁸¹

Given the ubiquitous presence of parts of the *Topographia* in the New English historiography, the Cambro-Norman scholar was clearly successful in both of his objectives. In his writing, Cambrensis places more authority on personal observations than textual evidence. “For it is only when he who reports a thing is also one that witnessed it that anything is established on the sound basis of truth”.⁸² In spite of his renown for being a far-travelled man, as he was by medieval standards, it is rather dubious how much of Ireland Cambrensis actually saw in his short stay. Some of his commentaries about the physiognomy and the habits of the Irish people are clearly fabulous, implying a tendency in the author to give a pagan character to the Irish. Without making any distinction between the lower orders of the Irish and the aristocracy, Cambrensis described the Irish as once devoutly Christian people who fell from grace and civility and had to be restored to both by forceful conquest.

The amazingly detailed description of the inauguration rite of the O’Donnell chieftains of *Cinéll Conaill*, designated as Tyrconnell in the sixteenth century, is probably one of the most quoted sections of the *Topographia*.⁸³ Campion was no exception to the group of Tudor polemicists who gave space to this custom in their writings. “In Ulster thus they used to Crowne their King, a white cow was brought forth, which the King must kill, and seeth in water whole, and bathe himselfe therein starke naked, then sitting in the same Caldron, his people about him, together with them, he must eat the flesh, and drinke the broath, wherein he sitteth, without cuppe or dish or use of his hand”.⁸⁴ As a guest of the Stanihurst family in Dublin, Campion could not have believed that the O’Donnell earls, in the sixteenth century, were still

⁸¹ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 32.

⁸² Ibid, p. 35.

⁸³ See Ibid, p. 109.

⁸⁴ Campion, *History of Ireland*, p. 17.

practicing such barbarous customs. Why did the Oxford don recount it in his history, then? At the time when Campion was writing his *Historie of Ireland*, Ulster was the most Gaelic province of Ireland. Cambrensis' original motives for accusing the Gaelic nobility of barbarity and paganism were shared by Campion and other Old English polemicists of sixteenth-century Ireland. The autonomy of the Gaelic nobility was a political force which stood in the way of the Tudor reformation of Ireland. Their so-called uncivil and unchristian manners could legitimise their deposition. Since the conquest of Ireland remained incomplete until the final year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, from the twelfth century to the late-sixteenth century, political exigencies continued to call for the verbal degradation of the Gaelic nobility by the reform-minded Anglo-Irish. Thus, the *Topographia* did not lose its appeal in the sixteenth century, even though the value of such anachronistic medieval texts was being questioned by humanist scholars. Campion too was a humanist writer. Nevertheless, when the political matter of Ireland was in question, he left aside his humanist scruples. Uncritical reading of the *Topographia* as a reliable source of knowledge about ancient and early medieval Ireland was a common characteristic of the New English authors whom Keating challenged. Cambrensis acted "as the bull of the herd for them for writing the false history of Ireland, wherefore they had no choice of guide".⁸⁵

Among the New English authors spoken of in the *Díon-bhrollach*, William Camden received the least criticism from Keating, who held him in great regard. There were only three instances in which Keating refuted Camden's statements.⁸⁶ Without exception, these were when Camden derived information from the *Topographia*. Keating starts his criticism of the New English historiography in the

⁸⁵ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 153.

⁸⁶ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, p. 94.

third chapter of the *Díon-bhrollach*, following a brief rectification of some commonly held untruths articulated by three classical authors, Strabo, Solinus and Pomponius Mela. The first author with whom Keating takes serious issue is, unsurprisingly, Cambrensis. The fact that the first refutation of Cambrensis is essentially related to the sovereignty of the *Éireannaigh* is not merely coincidental. Sovereignty was an oft repeated theme in *Foras Feasa*. The account of the early invasions in *Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* inescapably created an impression that Ireland was an unfortunate kingdom which had many times been subjugated to foreign rule. Subjugation implied inferiority. Keating firmly held to the idea that the kingdom of Ireland was in no way inferior to any other kingdom in Europe. From the early settlements to the Anglo-Norman invasion, Keating asserted that “no foreign nation ever acquired full supremacy over Ireland except the tribes that successively occupied it, namely, Partholon, the clanna Neimidh, the Fir Bholg, and the Tuatha De Danann, and the sons of Milidh.”⁸⁷ In this regard, Keating was not different from Renaissance historians in Europe, each of whom struggled to prove that his fatherland was a sovereign and unconquered kingdom. The submission of a kingdom to foreign rule undermined the reputation of its nobility. The argument that the *Éireannaigh* constituted a sovereign community, unconquered and in no way inferior to another, was crucial for Keating who, as an Old English priest, had to live the aftermath of the Tudor conquest.

Heinrich Bebel (1472 – 1516), a German humanist and a friend of Erasmus, celebrated the superiority of the German principalities vis-à-vis the rest of the countries in Europe. Addressing to Emperor Maximilian I, he laudatorily asked: “What other nation on this earth has such well-born princes and so high-minded a

⁸⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, ii, p. 399.

nobility as ours? What people can boast braver knights and more self-sacrificing warriors? ... Long ago, as we learn from the ancients, the limits of Germany were the Vistula and the Hungarian frontier on the east, the Rhine in the west, the Danube in the south, and the ocean in the north.”⁸⁸ Almost half a century later, William Camden wrote with a similar rhetoric of patriotism: “They [the English] have traversed with most happy victories both France and Scotland, brought away their kings captives, conquered Ireland and the Isle of Cyprus, ... They beside many other notable discoveries, twice compassed the whole globe of the earth with admirable successes, ... Good Lord, how spaciouly might a learned pen walke in this argument!”⁸⁹ More and more examples can be produced from the national histories written during the Renaissance to prove that the concept of sovereignty was central to them. The crucial point is that the writing of a national history was a rather belated phenomenon in the context of Gaelic Ireland. When Keating set out to produce a similar national history for his *Éireannaigh*, the Irish Catholic nobility, overwhelmingly disempowered, were facing the reality of the post-Tudor conquest. This probably explains why Keating finished his historical narrative at the Anglo-Norman conquest, unlike Stanihurst or Campion, who preferred stopping at the viceroyalty of Sir Henry Sidney. Keating did not wish to cope with the political complexities of the Tudor conquest, which could have disagreeable implications for a national history celebrating the unlimited sovereignty of the *Éireannaigh*.

Cambrensis grounded the unconditional right of the English Crown to rule Ireland on five definite arguments. Two of these had classical origins. The other

⁸⁸ Quoted from Heinrich Bebel, *Oration in Praise of Germany*, in Gerald Strauss (ed.), *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington, Ind. : Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 69-70.

⁸⁹ William Camden, *The Inhabitants of Britain*, in R. D. Dunn (ed.), *Remains Concerning Britain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 15-18.

three were more recent.⁹⁰ In the course of *Foras Feasa*, Keating dealt with every one of these five arguments through which Cambrensis legitimized Henry II's assumption of the sovereignty of Ireland. In the *Díon-bhróllach*, though, Keating dealt only with the one which was related to King Arthur and one Gillamar, an Irish king, whose existence in history is as legendary as that of the British king to whom he allegedly paid homage.

We shall set down here a few of the lies of the new foreigners who have written concerning Ireland, following Cambrensis; and shall make a beginning by refuting Cambrensis himself, where he says that Ireland owed tribute to King Arthur, and that the time when he imposed the tax on them at Caerleon was, when the year of the Lord was five hundred and nineteen, as Campion sets forth in his chronicle, in the second chapter of the second book, where he says that Gillamar was then king of Ireland.⁹¹

Cambrensis recounted this strange anecdote, drawing on the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁹² Interest in the Galfridian account of British history and King Arthur in particular was revived during the Tudor period, since the Tudor dynasty had a Welsh pedigree. The Welsh regarded themselves as the heirs of the British past. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Tudors promoted the dissemination of the Arthurian stories. The presence on the English throne of a dynasty with a Welsh pedigree was influential in the relatively peaceful incorporation of Wales into England by the acts of union in the 1530s.⁹³ Welsh polemicists believed that the glorious days of the British kings, vividly narrated in the *Historia*, would be revived under the Tudors, who were thus destined to create a greater Britain. It was with this vision in mind that Henry VII named his elder son, Prince Arthur.

⁹⁰ Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. and trans. by A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), bk. 1, chs. 31-33.

⁹¹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 13.

⁹² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. by L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966; repr. 1980), p. 227.

⁹³ See Philip Jenkins, "Seventeenth-century Wales: Definition and Identity", in Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 213-36.

The Galfridian tradition was enthusiastically welcomed by an active group of Tudor propagandists who envisaged the foundation of a unitary empire in the British Isles, ruled from England under the Tudors. Geoffrey had created a majestic image of King Arthur, who, according to the *Historia*, exercised unrestricted authority not only over the British Isles, but also the whole of the Atlantic and Scandinavian worlds. This imperial image appealed greatly to the Tudors whose expansionist policies in the British Isles and the Atlantic world in general could thus attain historical legitimacy. Of the New English authors mentioned in the *Díon-bhrollach*, Spenser seems to have gravitated towards this imperial discourse to the point where he regarded Ireland and Scotland as one. “Therefore it commeth thence that of some writers, Ireland is called Scotia-major, and that which is now called Scotland, Scotia-minor”.⁹⁴ In the latter half of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, especially after her excommunication, external threats to England’s Protestantism were very much alive. Spenser was convinced that England’s confessional identity as a Protestant kingdom could not be secure without political domination over Ireland and Scotland. “Religion and politics were inextricably linked”.⁹⁵ Ireland, especially, occupied a major place in the political discourse of the Protestant writers like Spenser, not least because it was home to the only standing army in the Tudor dominions. Spenser was certain that Ireland would, in future, play a critical role for the Protestant establishment in England.

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is, of course, of little importance whether Cambrensis was right in his assertion about Gillamar’s homage to King Arthur at Caerleon. It is equally insignificant how Campion managed to date this event or whether his dating was accurate. What needs to be carefully studied are the

⁹⁴ Spenser, *A View*, p. 45.

⁹⁵ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, p. 4.

historiographical and the political implications of Keating's counter-argument against what he perceived as an insufferable falsehood, habitually reiterated by the New English authors.

Howbeit, notwithstanding that (the author of) Polychronicon, and (Geoffrey of) Monmouth, and others of the new foreigners assert this Gillamar to have been king of Ireland, I defy any of their followers (to show) that there is a lay or a letter from the ancient record of Ireland in which there is mention or account of Gillamar having ever been king of Ireland: unless it be to Muircheartach the Great, son of Earc, they call it, who was king of Ireland, and was a contemporary of King Arthur; and Muircheartach could not have been tributary to King Arthur, because, that he himself was mighty in Ireland and in Scotland, and that it was he who sent his six brothers into Scotland, and that it was one of them became the first king of the Scotie race in Scotland, namely, Feargus the Great, son of Earc; and moreover, that it was by the Scots and the Picts King Arthur himself was slain.⁹⁶

In the same manner as Bebel extolled the military prowess of the Germans or Camden that of the English, Keating celebrated that of the *Éireannaigh*. In national histories, laudation of past heroic achievements was a common method of asserting the superiority of a particular nation over the others. Besides piety, learning, hospitality and generosity, valour is one of the distinctive characteristics through which Keating puts the *Éireannaigh* in comparison with other European nobilities. In the extract, however, Keating also does something else of great import. He dismisses and reverses the imperialist discourse enshrined in the New English historiography.

In *Scotorum Historia*, drawing on the Scottish chroniclers, John Fordun and Walter Bower, Boece reaffirmed the Dalriadic origins of the Scottish kingdom. However, he added that the Gaelic inhabitants of Britain possessed a different ancestry from those of Ireland. Boece was determined to attribute a distinct pedigree to the Scottish nobility, which would exalt their independence in relation to any foreign influence in the sixteenth century.⁹⁷ Quoting from John Mair, another

⁹⁶ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 15.

⁹⁷ Ferguson, *Identity of Scottish Nation*, 71.

Scottish historian and a contemporary of Boece, Keating showed his disagreement. “However, I am content with the opinion of a reputable Scotch author, Johannes Major, who asserts that it is from the Gaels of Ireland the Gaels of Alba sprang. He speaks in these terms: ‘For this reason, I assert,’ says he, ‘that whatever stock the Irish be from, the Albanians are from the same stock.’”⁹⁸ Keating stressed the political and military involvement of the Gaelic clans, either of Scottish or Irish provenance, in Britain during the early middle ages to counteract the New English claims that the British kings such as Arthur and Gurguntius exerted imperial influence over Ireland long before the twelfth century conquest. The military exploits of Irish warriors in Britain dispelled the argument that the Irish kings were tributary to their British counterparts.

When the Scots and the Picti heard that the Romans had refused to come any more to the aid of the Britons, they collected and assembled a large host, and marched towards the wall referred to [Hadrian’s Wall], and overpassed it and devastated all Britain, so that the Britons were obliged to abandon their stone fortresses and dwellings and betake themselves for refuge to woods and wildernesses, where their sole food was the flesh of the wild beasts they hunted; and the remnant of them that survived wrote piteously to the consul who was in Rome, whose name was Boetius, soliciting him for aid; and what they said was that they were hemmed in between the enemy and the sea, for as many of them as took to the sea, fleeing from the enemy, were drowned; and as many of them as turned from the sea were slain by the enemy, as Beda [The Venerable Bede] says in the thirteenth chapter of the first book of the History of Sacsa,
⁹⁹

Reinterpreting Bede’s account of the Scottish incursions into Britain after the departure of the Romans, Keating brings to light a golden age of the Gaels, when the Scots of Ireland and Scotland together exerted military superiority over the Britons. “From this it may be inferred that the oppression exercised by the Scots of Ireland over the Britons was very great.”¹⁰⁰ In the early seventeenth century, Ireland’s

⁹⁸ Keating, *FFÉ*, ii, p. 59.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 395.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

ambiguous status as a kingdom/colony conveyed a sense of inferiority in relation to Scotland and England. Through a chauvinist account of the Irish incursions into Britain, Keating attempted to uphold Ireland's sovereign image vis-à-vis the other two Stuart kingdoms.

As an antiquarian, Keating manifested a keen interest in the history of institutions. Especially, the institutions of kingship and assemblies were integral to his political representation of Ireland as a sovereign kingdom, impressive in its ancientness. Keating embedded the Stuart perceptions of kingship and parliament in early Irish history. This projection into early Irish history of a seventeenth-century view of constitutional institutions is immediately and extensively observed in Keating's construction of an unbroken line of Gaelic high kings and an archaic quasi-parliamentary body, called *Feis Teamhra* or *The Feis of Tara*. In *Foras Feasa*, high kings are fashioned rather like Renaissance princes, in that they are not merely praised for their martial skills, but also for their righteousness, discretion, judiciousness, wisdom and learning. Before the spread of Christianity, Keating argues, it was "those who were most zealous for the aggrandisement of the public weal that the men of Ireland elected to rule the districts".¹⁰¹ Following the coming of St. Patrick, faithful devotion to Christianity became an important consideration as well.

The institution of the high kingship, as it was defined in *Foras Feasa*, was a central element for the seventeenth-century representation of Ireland as an honourable kingdom. Keating constructed a tradition of rule by a line of Irish high kings, into which Henry II was legitimately incorporated in the twelfth century as an overlord of Ireland, lacking nothing that an Irish high king had possessed. Gaelic

¹⁰¹ Ibid, iii, p. 11.

high kingship was not given a great deal of consideration in the New English historiography. In *A View*, one of the interlocutors in the dialogue, Eudoxus enquires: “What? Was there ever any generall King of all Ireland? I never heard it before, but that it was always (whilst it was under the Irish) divided into foure, and sometimes into five kingdoms or dominions.”¹⁰² Keating forged a monarchical tradition of high kings based on royal genealogies available in *Réim Ríoghraidhe Éireann*. The past existence of rule by high kings evoked notions of political autonomy and sovereignty for the *Éireannaigh*, who could proudly trace their descent back to the high kings, described in a chronological order in *Foras Feasa*. In addition, the possibility of stretching the royal genealogies back to the Creation reinforced Ireland’s image as an ancient, if not the most ancient kingdom in Europe.

In bardic poetry, a recurrent trope of fertility was commonly employed by poets to sanction the legitimacy of a lord – a very ancient religious notion that seems to have endured into the seventeenth century. Coronation was interpreted as a sort of marriage between the ruler and the land. Similarly, in his depiction of the institution of high kingship, Keating drew a close association between the virtue of a ruler and the prosperity of his realm. “Eochaidh, son of Earc, son of Rionnal, son of Geannan, held the kingship ten years. There was no rain or bad weather during his time, nor yet a year without fruit and increase. It is in his time injustice and lawlessness were put down in Ireland, and approved and elaborated laws were ordained in it.”¹⁰³ *Lia Fáil* or the Stone of Destiny was a coronation stone which gave a physical form to the symbolic relationship between the ruler and the country. According to Keating, “whatever place it would be in, [it would be certain] that it is a man of the Scotie nation, i.e. of the seed of Míleadh of Spain, that would be in the sovereignty of that

¹⁰² Spenser, *A View*, 25.

¹⁰³ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 199.

country.”¹⁰⁴ *Foras Feasa* informs us that upon his inauguration, Fergus I, the first of the forty kings of Scotland as numbered by Boece, requested the stone from his brother, Muirheartach the Great, who was then the high king of Ireland. During Edward I’s invasion of Scotland, the stone was forcibly taken from Scone Abbey to Westminster where it was put within the coronation chair. The story of the circulation of the stone across the three kingdoms was recounted by Keating with national pride, to emphasize the impeccable Gaelic genealogy of the Stuart kings, Charles I and his father, James.¹⁰⁵ As an elite member of the Old English community in Munster, Keating did not have any scruples about accepting the legitimacy of Charles I’s rule in Ireland, since his royal lineage could quite properly be stretched back to the list of the Irish high kings, mentioned in *Foras Feasa*. Gaelic Stuarts had replaced British Tudors.

Out of the Gaelic custom of tanistry, Boece developed the idea of an elective monarchy. In contrast to primogeniture, tanistry theoretically conferred the kingship upon the ‘eldest and worthiest’ candidate among surviving kinsmen of the deceased king, by a system of election within the ruling lineage. Alternatively, it could be determined during the king’s lifetime by the appointment of a *tánaiste* [heir apparent], who was expected to succeed on the king’s decease. In most cases, the title went to the candidate who had at his command the largest and the strongest number of military retainers. Boece found in tanistry the kind of arrangement that he envisaged should exist between the king and the nobility.¹⁰⁶ The king should be accountable to the nobility and the co-operation of the nobility in matters of state should be sought. Bearing in mind the estrangement of the Irish Catholic nobility

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 207.

¹⁰⁵ Bernadette Cunningham, “Representations of King, Parliament and the Irish People”, p. 144.

¹⁰⁶ Mason, “Civil Society and the Celts”, p. 108.

from political power in the early seventeenth century, it is unsurprising that Keating thought likewise.

Now the reason why one person is made king over tribes and over districts is in order that each one in his own principality should be obedient to him, and that none of them should have power to resist or oppose him during his sovereignty, and to have it understood that it was by God who is Lord and ruler over all that he has been appointed king over the peoples to govern them, and hence that they are bound to obey him and to bear in mind that it is the same only God who is Lord of Heaven and of earth and of hell that gave him that authority, and that it was from Him he obtained sovereignty; and frequently it was the cleverest and most learned people in Ireland who were chosen to reign, to repress evil, to adjust tribute, to make treaties of peace, such as Slainghe, son of Dealá ...¹⁰⁷

Taken at face value, Keating's statement can be read as merely a defence of the divine rights of the kings. Yet, there is more behind it. Keating embraces an idea of kingship akin to Boece's. Monarchical government should be firmly grounded on a perfect concord between the king and the nobility. Given his argument that the institution of Gaelic high kingship was elective and derived from an original contract between the king and the aristocracy, Keating can easily be mistaken for a political theorist.¹⁰⁸ Yet, he was only responding to particular political conditions in early seventeenth-century Ireland. This was rather a matter of national pride for him. Keating gladly approved Boece's deduction, out of the custom of tanistry, a system of elective kingship. This had strong political ramifications for the complicated relationship between the *Éireannaigh* and the Stuart kings, which continued unresolved throughout the seventeenth century, until the succession of a Catholic, James II.

¹⁰⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Jane Ohlmeyer, "Introduction: for God, King or Country? Political Thought and Culture in Seventeenth-century Ireland", in Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

The Feis of Tara was a prehistoric assembly of the ruling elite of Ireland, attended only by the higher members of the Irish nobility. Kings, tanists, captains and members of the bardic elite were the chief participants in the sessions of this assembly, celebrated with ostentatious rituals. Like an early modern parliament, it had a legal aspect. The Feis of Tara also functioned as a higher court of justice, where criminal offenses and legal disputes concerning the nobility were arbitrated. For Keating, an antiquarian/historian, the Feis of Tara was the origin of the modern Irish parliament.¹⁰⁹

Now the Feis of Tara was a great general assembly like a parliament, in which the nobles and the ollamhs of Ireland used to meet at Tara every third year at Samhain, where they were wont to lay down and renew rules and laws, and to approve the annals and records of Ireland. There, too, it was arranged that each of the nobles of Ireland should have a seat according to his rank and title. There, also, a seat was arranged for every leader that commanded the soldiery who were in the service of the kings and the lords of Ireland. It was also the custom at the Feis of Tara to put to death anyone who committed violence or robbery, who struck another or who assaulted another with arms, while neither the king himself nor anyone else had power to pardon him such a deed.¹¹⁰

General characteristics of an early modern parliament resonate in the ancient assembly of the Feis of Tara, which was not, as Keating claimed it to be, regular and rigorously binding. Yet, the description of it as such attributed a centuries-old tradition of constitutional government to the *Éireannaigh* and glorified Ireland's historical image in relation to other countries in Europe.

In the early seventeenth century, denied access to the person of the monarch, the Irish Catholic nobility made increasing use of the parliament in Dublin as a platform to voice their political interests. At the beginning of the century, the Catholic representation in the Irish parliament, whether of Old English or Gaelic extraction, was overwhelming. Through new ennoblements and the creation of new

¹⁰⁹ Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Keating, *FFÉ*, ii, p. 133.

constituencies, especially in Ulster, the Crown planned to curb the Catholic majority in the House of Commons. Still, the Irish Catholics were determined to resolve their conflicts with the king through constitutional means. Consistent attempts by the Irish Catholic lawyers to have the King and the English executive in Dublin endorse the Graces under statutory law attest to the importance of the parliament in their political thought.¹¹¹ For the Irish Catholics, the Dublin parliament was a dependable native institution where they could secure their tenurial, political and religious rights in perpetuity. Bent on a naval campaign against Spain in the 1620s, Charles I needed the financial support of the Irish Catholic nobility. Perceiving the king's financial request as an excellent opportunity to prove their loyalty to the Crown, the Irish Catholics agreed to pay their share in annual subsidies. In return, they asked for a range of legal, social and religious reforms, known as the Graces. The most critical articles related to tenurial rights. The Old English wanted to put an end to the threat of confiscation. Article 24 had the king promise that "For the better settling of our subjects estates in that kingdom, we are pleased that the like Act of Grace shall pass in the next parliament there touching the limitation of our titles not to extend above threescore years, as did pass here the 21 Jacobi, ..."¹¹² Despite incessant appeals by the Irish Catholics, the English executive procrastinated and the required act never passed.

In *Foras Feasa*, the refashioning of the Feis of Tara as an early modern parliament reminded the *Éireannaigh* that they had a long history of participation in the government of their country. As the established nobility of the kingdom, their tradition of parliamentary representation went back to the ancient period. Keating took a meticulous care to describe the decorum in the Feis of Tara.

¹¹¹ Clarke, *Old English in Ireland*, pp. 47-52.

¹¹² Quoted from *ibid*, p. 245.

The Munstermen on the south side,
Without falsehood, without injustice;
And the Leinstermen, sufficient in strength,
Face to face with the high king.

The Connaughtmen behind the king,
To preserve history truly;
The under king of Aruidhe near him
In a special high seat,

On the right of the king of mighty Tara,
Without falsehood, without churlishness,
The Oirghialla, a defense were they
Without overlapping, without strife.¹¹³

Keating's exposition of the form and order of the Feis of Tara bears an astonishing resemblance to the organisation of the general assembly of the Confederate Irish. In the 1640s, a decade after Keating wrote *Foras Feasa*, the Irish Catholics established a confederacy in Kilkenny in a positive response to the 1641 rebellion, which had started in Ulster, but quickly spread to other provinces. Under the professional guidance of pre-eminent Catholic lawyers such as Patrick Darcy and Nicholas Plunkett, the Confederate Irish set up a general assembly where each of the four provinces of Ireland was equally represented.¹¹⁴ In the way that it was described in *Foras Feasa*, the Feis of Tara reflects Keating's conception of the ideal relationship between the Stuart king and the *Éireannaigh*. The king sits in his parliament, where he is in audience with the Catholic nobility. The Irish Catholics from each province are fully represented, irrespective of their ethnicity, and their noble privileges are duly respected.

Elective high kingship was the core idea on which Keating grounded his perception of the sovereignty of the *Éireannaigh*. The Gaelic system of succession, tanistry, as opposed to primogeniture, did not place the kingdom permanently in the possession of the king and his family. The sovereignty of the kingdom always

¹¹³ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 39.

¹¹⁴ Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, pp. 48-49.

remained in the leading nobility which elected the high king and his *tánaiste*. Keating repeatedly argued that the Irish did not alienate their freedom at any time during the pre-Norman period. Although he slightly twisted Camden's original meaning, it still delighted Keating to observe that even the English antiquarian acknowledged this truth about the history of Irish freedom in his *Britannia*. "Howbeith I can hardly persuade perswade my selfe to beleeeve, that this countrey at any time became subject to the Romans."¹¹⁵ Unsubjugated from the beginning, the Gaelic ancestors of the *Éireannaigh* jealously guarded their sovereignty. According to Keating, the right of the English Crown to rule Ireland was based on an original twelfth-century agreement between the Irish nobility and Henry II. By their willing submission to the English king, the Gaelic Irish nobility did not unconditionally surrender their sovereign rights. In their view, Henry II became another high king in all but name. In other words, he was elected. Put in the context of the early seventeenth century, this could be read as a manifestation of the sovereign rights of the Irish Catholic nobility vis-à-vis the Stuart dynasty. The Stuarts had to restore the Irish Catholic nobility to political authority since the dynasty's claim to rule Ireland was originally dependant on noble consent.

Drawing on the material provided in *Cogadh Gaedheal re Gallaibh* or *The War of the Irish with the Foreigners*, Keating recounted the tyrannous years that the Gaelic nobility endured under Turgesius, a despotic Viking ruler, who assumed the kingship by force rather than election. Presenting the reign of Turgesius as one of great suffering, Keating implicitly argued for the legitimacy of elective kingship.

Here is a short account of the slavery of the Gaels under the Lochlonnaigh, and of the rent and tribute imposed on them, to wit, a Lochlonnach king over every cantred in Ireland, and a chief over every district and an abbot over every church, a steward over every townland,

¹¹⁵ Camden, *Britain*, 65-66.

and mercenary or hired soldier over every house, while the householder had not the disposal of as much as a hen of his own property; and were there but one stripper in the house neither the babe one night old nor the sick would get her milk, but it was kept for the soldier, and if he were not satisfied he took the householder with him to the assembly in pledge for his maintenance. The Lochlonnaigh exacted an ounce of gold each year from every man in Ireland or else the nose from his head. And neither lord nor lady wore a mantle or dress but the cast-off clothes and mantles of the Lochlonnaigh; they were not permitted to give instruction or frequent church – but the Lochlonnaigh were in their churches and in their duns – with no professors or clergy, without books or jewels in the abbey-churches and monasteries through fear of them; without a *filé* [bard], without a philosopher, without a musician according to the laws of the country; without the daughter of a king or lord or chief wearing silk or embroidery; without the son of a king or a chief learning feats of agility or casting; with no feast or banquet held among friends, but what remained after the foreigners had been sated therefrom.¹¹⁶

Lochlonnaigh is the Irish appellation, meaning ‘Strong at Sea’, which Keating used in *Foras Feasa* to refer to the Vikings who were active in Ireland during the ninth and the tenth centuries. Keating’s above-quoted account of the tribulations of the Gaelic nobility certainly cannot be read for the detail of the Viking period in Irish history. But it can be perused to discover Keating’s perception of the Tudor period. Dealing with this period, present-day historians still struggle to avoid a grand discourse of conquest, colonization, Reformation and Anglicization. Although not available to them in this vocabulary, the memory of the Tudor conquest was not a distant memory to the *Éireannaigh* in the early seventeenth century. A particular native response to the New English hegemony in Ireland resonates in Keating’s depiction of the tyranny of Turgesius. Dissolution of the monasteries, transgressions by the military personnel, burdensome taxation, threat of expropriation and prohibition of certain indigenous customs were cited as some of the grievous afflictions that the Gaelic nobility were subjected to by the *Lochlonnaigh*. But Keating’s readers would not have failed to associate them with recent times.

¹¹⁶ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 175-7.

Keating warned his readers not to exchange faith for favour. Addressing the Irish Catholic nobility in his sermons, Keating preached that “adherence to the practice of their faith openly in the face of adversity and even persecution was the responsibility and duty of Christians”.¹¹⁷ As a Counter-Reformation priest, Keating believed that official restoration of the Catholic faith was crucial to the stability of political order in Ireland.

The severity of the servitude to which the *Lochlonnaigh* had brought the Gaels was the cause of great trouble to all the men of Ireland; and the remnant of their clergy that survived, and that were wont to hide themselves in woods and in secret places leading pious lives in wretchedness, earnestly prayed God to release them from the tyranny of Turgesius. They fasted also against him, and directed each of the faithful laity who were subject to them to do the same. And God heard their prayer, and put Turgesius in the power of the Gaels...¹¹⁸

In early seventeenth-century Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church functioned as an outlaw institution, but with astonishing efficiency because it possessed an elaborate diocesan structure to match that of the Church of Ireland. Although their presence in the kingdom was illegal, priests were provided with patronage and shelter by the Catholic nobility. Priests, themselves, usually came from the higher ranks of the society and their education in Europe was generously funded. According to Keating, the survival of the *Éireannaigh* as a separate political community, distinct in its Catholicism and Irishness, could only be secured by the spiritual and cultural support that the Catholic Church could provide.

In *Foras Feasa*, the tyrannical reign of Turgesius was a political allegory for the Tudor conquest. Keating was extremely disinclined to bring the discussion of the Tudor conquest to the forefront of his disputation with the New English authors because the New English landowners justified their dominating presence in early seventeenth century Ireland with reference to the full sovereignty that the Tudor

¹¹⁷ Cunningham, *World of Keating*, 43.

¹¹⁸ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 179.

conquest, they assumed, bestowed upon them. In the opinion of the New English tractators, conquest gave absolute authority to the conqueror over the conquered. This political thought is perhaps best expressed in *A View*, where Spenser argues with assurance that “it is in the power of the conqueror to take upon himself what title he will, over his dominions conquered. For all is the conquerours, as Tully to Brutus saith”.¹¹⁹ Compared with the Stuarts, whose taintless Milesian genealogy he extolled, Keating had little esteem for the Tudors. The only Tudor monarch referred to in *Foras Feasa* is Henry VIII in whose reign the clergy allegedly began to indulge themselves to lechery.¹²⁰ It matters little whether Keating’s comment is accurate or not, it is the perception behind it which is instructive. Henry VIII was to be criticized for introducing the Reformation to Ireland.

Because of its adverse political implications for the sovereignty of the *Éireannaigh*, Keating refrained from dwelling on the intricacies of the protracted Tudor conquest, but not from the concept of conquest itself. On the basis of their conformity or lack of it to Christian mores, he differentiated between two types of conquest. Securing the submission and loyalty of the conquered alone should make a Christian conqueror content. He should not attempt to assimilate the people who have submitted to him by exterminating their language. He should not make a colony of the conquered land by planting new settlers from his kingdom. In these regards, the Norman conquest of England was a godly conquest because William the Conqueror allowed the native people to continue using their language. On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain was an un-Christian conquest because Hengist, one of the Saxon chiefs, “swept them [the Britons] from the soil of Britain, and sent people from himself in their places; and having altogether banished

¹¹⁹ Spenser, *A View*, 18.

¹²⁰ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 59.

everyone, he banished their language with them.”¹²¹ In *A View*, one finds the very antithesis of Keating’s ideas about how a conquest should be properly carried out.¹²² Keating contradicted the New English polemicists who found fault with Henry II’s conquest of Ireland because of its incompleteness and of its failure to reduce the Gaelic lords to unconditional subjugation. For Keating, the twelfth-century conquest, to which the Old English elite like himself traced their origins back, was a Christian conquest similar to William of Normandy’s conquest of England. For Henry II did not aim at a whole-scale expropriation of the native nobility. Keating established an implicit association between Hengist’s ruthless invasion of Britain and the Tudor expansion in Ireland. He was quite ingenious in this association. The Old English nobility - *Sean-Ghail* - were proud of their Norman descent. The Tudor newcomers, on the other hand, were called, *Sasanaigh*, thereby reminding Keating’s Irish readers of the Saxon invaders who ravaged Britain in the sub-Roman era.

Since the Irish histories of the late Elizabethan authors usually covered a time period from the twelfth century to the sixteenth, conquest was inescapably a pervasive theme. The incompleteness of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland was a common theme in the New English historiography. The Pale reformers such as Stanihurst argued that a series of political and social reforms would save the Queen from the necessity to attempt a second conquest of Ireland, which would certainly be extremely costly and could have only uncertain outcomes. In contrast, Spenser and other New English authors were rather sceptical of the effectiveness of any reform prior to a second and final conquest which would create the necessary political and social conditions on which reforms, both in the ecclesiastical and secular spheres, could be laid. Although the group of English intellectuals in late Elizabethan Ireland

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 37.

¹²² Spenser, *A View*, 22.

did not adhere to a common line of political thought about the necessity of a second conquest, they were united in the idea that Ireland was bound to be thoroughly conquered and reduced to civility. The conquest of Ireland was thought to be a pre-determined event, augured even in classical times. King Arthur was not the only figure whom the New English propagandists extracted from the Galfridian corpus.

The prophecies of Merlin were occasionally quoted in political texts to convey the impression that Ireland was predestined to be conquered by England. In the second book of his history, Campion mentioned one of the most commonly cited prophecies of Merlin with regard to Ireland, and tried to assert its reliability with a far-fetched assertion that its truth was sanctioned by various pre-eminent Irish saints, including St. Patrick. “Merlin prophesied; that five should meete, and the sixt should scourge them. This sixt they now construed to be Henry, in whom the five pettie Kingdomes were united. Of the same conquest prophesied their foure notable Saints, Patricke, Brachon, Coline, and Moling”.¹²³ In his legal history of the kingdom, Sir John Davies, solicitor-general for Ireland, maintained the view that the twelfth-century conquest failed to bring about the submission of the Gaelic Irish, who continued to live under their own judicial system. A thorough conquest of Ireland was only achieved in 1603 because it was followed by the effective application of the Common Law throughout the kingdom. Refusing to define Henry’s II’s taking of Ireland as a conquest, Sir John Davies reinterpreted the same prophecy of Merlin, noted or composed by Cambrensis and later taken up by Campion and several other Tudor writers. “To this we may adde the prophesy of Merlin, spoken of also by Giraldus. *Sextus moenia Hiberniae Subuertet, et regions in Regnum rediguntur*. Which is performed in the time of King James the sixt; ... and withal, the Irish

¹²³ Campion, *History of Ireland*, 61.

Countries beeing reduced into Counties, make but one entire and undevided kingdome”.¹²⁴ Whoever was the ‘sixth’, believed to have been prophesied by Merlin, whether Henry II or James I/VI, it was Britain’s destiny to conquer Ireland. When the perception in the New English historiography of the Tudor conquest as one of total submission is taken into account, it seems only natural that Keating felt obliged to produce a redefinition of conquest. Either the Anglo-Norman conquest or the Tudor conquest, in the manner that they were dealt with in the New English historiography, meant the subordination of Ireland to England. The superiority of any foreign kingdom over Ireland would never be acceptable to Keating. As with his fellow historians on the European mainland, the historical image of his fatherland was ever that of an independent kingdom.

During the Renaissance, medieval histories such as Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, which described historical events before their times without substantial primary evidence, suffered much reproach. Yet, New English authors were not concerned with the methodological inappropriateness of having recourse to the Galfridian accounts in writing the history of Ireland. Two of the five arguments, on which Cambrensis based the claim of the English Crown to rule Ireland, were extracted from the *Historia*. “A man who needs five reasons to justify his actions is clearly arguing from a weak position”.¹²⁵ Aware of the looseness of four of his arguments, Cambrensis introduced *Laudabiliter* as a legal document which “should in itself be sufficient to perfect our case and put the finish touch to it”.¹²⁶ The papal bull of Adrian IV graciously invested Henry II with the government of Ireland, on

¹²⁴ Sir John Davies, *A discovery of the state of Ireland: with the true causes why that kingdom was never entirely subdued ... until ... his majesty’s most happy reign* (London: 1613), p. 77.

¹²⁵ R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 110.

¹²⁶ Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, Bk. 1, Chs. 31-33.

condition that the king would be prepared to reform the corrupted state of religion in Ireland. In the late sixteenth century, it would be unimaginable for the New English scholars to legitimize Queen Elizabeth I's possession of Ireland by means of a papal grant. They, after all, denied the authority which granted Ireland to the English Crown.¹²⁷ Thus, they turned to material from the Gafridian accounts, referring to imperious British kings like Arthur and Gurguntius.

When Keating quoted from Cambrensis to the effect that Ireland "remained free and unconquered from any attack of foreign peoples" from prehistory to the twelfth century, he did not exclude the Roman pontiff.¹²⁸ Upholding the reputation of a pope, Keating claimed that Adrian IV was misinformed about the religious state of Ireland in the twelfth century.

Here I must express astonishment at a condition in the bull of Pope Adrianus in which he granted Ireland to Henry II. Here is the condition according to Stow's Chronicle, to wit, that Henry II was bound to reform and build up the Catholic Faith which had fallen down in Ireland. For it is not likely that the Pope would put that condition in his bull unless some party had given him to understand that the Faith had lapsed in Ireland.¹²⁹

The period from the coming of St. Patrick to the arrival of the Anglo-Norman adventurers was woven with delicate care by Keating because it was integral to the image of the Irish kingdom as inherently Catholic and Gaelic. Confronting a New English tradition of history writing, which purposefully displayed the Gaelic inhabitants of Ireland as prone to superstition and pagan ways, Keating instructed the *Éireannaigh* of the piety of their early medieval ancestors. They were not likely to let religion decay. The need for a reformation of religion in Ireland could not be honestly presented as a justification for conquest.

¹²⁷ Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 96.

¹²⁸ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography of Ireland*, 123.

¹²⁹ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 351.

John Lynch was one of Keating's first translators, producing a Latin translation of *Foras Feasa* in the 1650s. He plainly rejected the argument that the sovereignty of Ireland was at the pope's disposal to deliver to Henry II.¹³⁰ As opposed to Lynch, Keating acknowledged that the pope had such a capacity regarding Ireland. However, as he redefined Henry II's conquest in the light of elective kingship, Keating did the same with the papal bull. He asserted that it was not the Donation of Constantine which placed the island of Ireland at the pope's disposal to give to whomever he wished.¹³¹ At no time did the emperor assume the sovereignty of Ireland, because it was never occupied by the Roman troops. Instead, it was again the nobility of Ireland, who submitted the sovereignty of Ireland to the Pope of their own accord.

From all we have said it is plain that it is not true to say that there was neither king nor chief ruler over Ireland until the Norman Invasion; and it is moreover plain that the Roman Pontiff had never definite authority over Ireland any more than he had ever over Spain or France or other countries until the time of Donnchadh, son of Brian Boraimhe, who went to Rome, as we have said above, himself and the nobles of Ireland consented to the Bishop of Rome's having authority over them, because they were wont to contend with one another for the mastery of Ireland.¹³²

Not a long time before Henry II was entrusted with the rule of Ireland by the pope, the Irish nobility had in a sense yielded the high kingship to the Roman pontiff in his capacity as a secular prince. However, as in other instances, the Irish nobility did not definitively alienate their autonomy. His possession of the sovereignty of Ireland was still conditional on their consent.

¹³⁰ Cunningham, "Representations of King, Parliament and the Irish People", pp. 141-4.

¹³¹ For the reference to the Donation of Constantine, see W. Ullmann, "Donation of Constantine" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4 (1966), pp. 1000-1.

¹³² Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV:

GEOFFREY KEATING AS AN ANTIQUARIAN/HISTORIAN:

THE CUSTOMS, LAWS AND LANGUAGE OF THE

ÉIREANNAIGH

Againe the very English of birth, conversant with the
savage sort of that people become degenerate, and as
though they had tasted of Circe's poisoned cup, are
quite altered, such a force hath education to make or
marre.¹³³

Richard Stanihurst

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an antiquarian as someone who “studies or is fond of antiquities”. A more elaborate and precise definition of an antiquarian in technical language is not going to be attempted in the course of the present chapter. What is instead sought for is an explication of the main differences between an antiquarian and a historian in terms of how each perceived and carried out his profession in the early modern period. By the time Keating finished writing *Foras Feasa*, “though there was certainly an overlap between the two genres, there were also distinctions”.¹³⁴ To prove that both genres manifest themselves very sharply in *Foras Feasa*, some of the fundamental features which distinguished a historian from an antiquarian in the early seventeenth century need to be underlined. While it is not disputed that there were collectors in the Middle Ages, who may

¹³³ Raphael Holinshed. *The... Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande ...* (London: 1577), iii, ch. 1, p. 29.

¹³⁴ Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 129.

possibly fall into the definition of antiquarians, it was only during the Renaissance that a form of antiquarianism intrinsically linked to textual study of classical sources took shape. Although most humanists professed that they were attempting to return to the moral and political excellence of the ancients, especially the Romans and the Greeks, they were present-minded and interpreted classical texts for the changing times. In this relentless quest to unearth the past, antiquarians contributed to the textual study of classical literature through supplementary knowledge drawn from the study of material remains and artefacts such as monuments, coins and inscriptions. It was from antiquarians, with notable philological skills, that sixteenth-century historians learnt to appreciate the superior value of primary sources. Especially in the latter half of the sixteenth century, in northern Europe, historians extended the application of antiquarian techniques into medieval texts and undertook the writing of general histories, the periodisation of which included, as in *Foras Feasa*, both ancient and medieval times.

The most obvious antiquarian aspect of Keating's history writing is the degree of importance and authority given to the critical interpretation of medieval Irish texts in *Foras Feasa*. Towards the end of his preface, Keating gives a short list of the Irish medieval manuscripts which he consulted.¹³⁵ In addition to *Leabhar Gabhála Éireann* and *Réim Ríoghraidhe Éireann*, there was a multiplicity of Irish medieval documents that Keating regarded as authoritative, and he stood up for their authority. Some of these do not survive and others do not survive in the form in which Keating read them. It matters little to what extent these medieval manuscripts could have been trusted by a historian of the time, writing about the ancient history of Ireland. Certainly there were errors in the transcription of them from the early

¹³⁵ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, pp. 79-81.

middle ages onwards. What truly matters for the purposes of the present chapter is that Keating construed them to be authoritative according to the antiquarian standards of his day and put them on a par with the medieval texts that the Scottish, English, Spanish or French historians were traditionally using. In fact, Keating placed a higher value on the historical record of Ireland, supported by his belief that Ireland was the most ancient kingdom in Europe and did not suffer any foreign invasion. At this juncture, it is worth noting that Keating points to the relative paucity of primary sources for English history of the early Middle Ages and the period before. Quoting from *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*,¹³⁶ the still extant work of Gildas, a sixth-century British writer, Keating remarks that the invasion of Britain by Germanic tribes led to the destruction of “any ancient texts, or monuments, by which they might know the condition of the time which preceded the Saxons”.¹³⁷ Keating produced a scholarly criticism of the New English historiography according to the main concerns of the pre-eminent antiquarians of his time, and confidently argued that the English medieval sources consulted by the New English authors as primary evidence were not authoritative for writing the ancient or early medieval history of England, let alone of Ireland.

When it came to writing a general history of Ireland, in that he asserted his preference for medieval texts written in the Irish language, Keating was a better antiquarian than any of the foreign authors hostile to Gaelic Ireland, whom he set out to refute, including even Camden, “the learned Antiquary of this our age”.¹³⁸ Having pointed out an important justification for treating Keating as a worthy antiquarian, it needs to be mentioned that Keating was more than an antiquarian. He was not a mere compiler of ancient and medieval documents. In terms of style, antiquarian writing

¹³⁶ See Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (London: Phillimore, 2002).

¹³⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 25.

¹³⁸ Hanmer, *Chronicle of Ireland*, p. 9.

characteristically lacked chronology and coherence. Its practitioners gave one separate narrative after another for every principal text that they examined. These narratives allowed little authorial voice, and were not arranged chronologically. In *Foras Feasa*, Keating displayed an interpretative synthesis of the Irish medieval manuscripts that he had recourse to in his research. Texts such as *Leabhar Gabhála* or *Réim Ríoghraidhe* were not offered in their entirety, thus departing from an antiquarian fashion. Keating was selective in terms of what he wished to retrieve from his primary sources. He reinterpreted an existing corpus of medieval Gaelic documents in order to build a vivid, comprehensive and consistent narrative that would justify his present political and religious ideas and appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the *Éireannaigh*.

Before Keating assembled his primary sources, there was no doubt in his mind about what kind of historical image he wanted to cast for the kingdom of Ireland. His sources were to give textual authority to the general narrative which was intended fully to support that image. Ireland was an ancient kingdom, a fact attested to by the history of its institutions, customs, laws and language, going back to antiquity. It was inherently Catholic and Gaelic. Furthermore, it was an independent kingdom in itself, just like England and Scotland. It was distinctive by virtue of its indigenous culture, “a kingdom apart by herself, like a little world”.¹³⁹ Keating ordered and expounded his primary sources within the context of a general narrative which gave historical legitimacy to these perceptions and exalted the reputation of Ireland in Europe. The history of Ireland was in no way inferior to the history of any other kingdom in Europe, even to the history of Rome, as long as appropriate sources were employed to write its history, rather than Monmouth’s *Historia* or Cambrensis’

¹³⁹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 39.

Topographia. As much as Keating was present-minded, he was also future-oriented. As an antiquarian, he meant his list of medieval Irish documents to be available to the use of the posterity. “Whoever shall desire to write fully and comprehensively on Ireland hereafter, he will find, in the same ancient books, many things desirable to write of her which have been purposefully omitted here, lest, putting these all in one work, thereby this compilation should less likely come to light from the greatness of the labour of putting them in one writing.”¹⁴⁰ Keating had no intention of monopolizing the interpretation of his primary sources. He stated that those were the appropriate sources to write a history of Ireland in conformity with the methods of seventeenth-century historians. Readers, interested in other aspects of Irish history than what he was, could go and look at those sources for themselves.

Keating, this Irish historian of Anglo-Norman descent, was also a French-educated historian. In *Foras Feasa*, the construction of a chronological and coherent historical narrative out of a medley of disparate medieval documents attests to the fact that Keating shared the intellectual concerns of a number of prominent French historians, especially of Étienne Pasquier (1528-1615), who, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, changed the face of French historiography. The change involved moving from the production of medieval chronicles or other types of contemporary history to the making of general histories, narrating the history of the French kingdom *en entier* from the ancient period to the sixteenth century. The French literati, particularly those trained in the study of law like Pasquier, did not remain blind to the antiquarian methods of textual study that their Italian counterparts developed in the early years of the Italian Renaissance. Why could not the French write the same histories that the Florentine writers such as Petrarch, Bruni or

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 95.

Guicciardini did in imitation of classical Roman historians such as Livy and Tacitus?¹⁴¹

In his preface to *De Viris Illustribus*, Francesco Petrarch, one of the forerunners of early modern antiquarianism, propounds his preference for “things seen rather than read, contemporary rather than ancient, so that posterity would receive from me information about this age just as I have received from the ancients information about the distant past”.¹⁴² It is from the Italian humanists that the French received the understanding of textual study. Medieval historical scholarship as it dealt with French history was deemed to be insufficient in various respects by sixteenth-century scholars educated in humanist fashion at respectable French universities, such as Paris, Bourges, Valence, Orléans and Toulouse. Before the sixteenth century, French historical writing existed in two main traditions: It either fell into the category of contemporary history (memoirs, commentaries, etc.) or of universal chronicle. *Leabhar Gabhála* is an Irish equivalent of the second of these traditions. In universal chronicles, though, ancient history was only a short prelude to the local history of more recent times. Medieval histories were not elaborately comprehensive in their treatment of the historical periods which preceded them. The main characteristic concerns of early modern history writing such as chronology, coherence and entirety were absent in medieval historical records.

Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), a Spanish historian who taught in the universities of Paris and Louvain, briefly described what sixteenth-century French historians believed they needed: “It is well to learn the course of history from the beginning of the world or of a people continuously right through their course to the

¹⁴¹ For the reference to the works of the afore-mentioned Florentine humanists, see James Bruce Ross, *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 120-127.

¹⁴² Francesco Petrarch, *Long Preface to De Viris Illustribus* (1351 – 1352), in Benjamin G. Kohl, “Petrarch’s Prefaces to *De Viris Illustribus*”, *History and Theory* 13, no. 2 (1974), pp. 132-144.

latest time for, then, all is more rightly understood and more firmly retained than if we read it in disconnected parts, in the same way that in a description of the whole world, land and sea are placed before the eyes at a glance”.¹⁴³ Vives observed that the stress of entirety was an importance consideration for classical historians, such as Paulus Orosius, who described “the course of history from the foundation of Rome to his own times, giving a suitable summary of historical events.”¹⁴⁴ By the time Vives enthusiastically voiced his exhortations, his students had already absorbed the body of antiquarian methods that the Italians had previously developed, the most critical of which, as the above quotation from Petrarch indicates, was the prioritization of primary evidence in history writing. The French humanists acquired from their Italian counterparts the required antiquarian erudition to re-examine the existing corpus of medieval texts, and to produce a comprehensive history of France, which would commence with an account of the ancient period, proceed to the middle ages and halt at the contemporary times in a pattern that is continuous and meaningful.

The need to reinterpret the medieval history of France had a particular urgency during the turbulent years which followed the decease of King Henry II in 1559.¹⁴⁵ The emergence of a constitutional crisis severely threatened the principal institutions of the French kingdom such as the Crown, the Church, the *parlements* and the universities. The authority of all these institutions had to be sanctioned and justified by history writing. The importance of the traditional privileges of the French institutions for the effective government and, indeed, preservation of the kingdom had to be explained by means of histories, which would firmly fixate their origins in antiquity. For antiquity meant legitimacy in the present. The new history, *la nouvelle*

¹⁴³ Juan Luis Vives, *On Education*, in Foster Watson (trans.), *Vives: On Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), pp. 236-240.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ George Huppert, *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 31.

histoire, had to instruct the age about the value and potency of French institutions, customs, laws and language at a time when French society was undergoing a constitutional crisis – the product of the religious conflicts which accelerated in the aftermath of Henry II's death. With *Recherches de la France* (1560), Étienne Pasquier, became one of the greatest exponents of the new history.

Originally a Parisian lawyer, Pasquier was familiar with the application of antiquarian techniques to the examination of legal documents. He was able to do the same with medieval historical texts. If there is one feature of Pasquier's history writing that he was extremely proud of, that is certainly his consistent endeavour to support his arguments with documentary evidence.¹⁴⁶ As a historian who had a strong penchant for antiquarian erudition, Pasquier was more interested in antiquity than the middle ages. He reconstructed the ancient history of France to ascribe honourable origins to French institutions, customs, laws and language as they existed in the sixteenth century. "To understand what were the rights of the crown, of the church, of the *parlement*, of the Estates, of royal offices, one had to understand how these institutions had grown up in time".¹⁴⁷ In *Recherches de la France*, Pasquier provided an impeccable historical continuity for the institutions of France from antiquity to the medieval period, and down to his own day. In doing so, he departed from the medieval tradition of tracing the beginnings of the history of the French kingdom to Troy. He did not give credence to the eponym, Francus, which indicated that this son of Priam was the ancestor of the Franks. Firstly, as an antiquarian/historian, he did not wish to propagate a fact which could not be verified by any contemporary source. Secondly, in his quest to prove that France was the most ancient kingdom in Europe, he aspired to go much further back, beyond the era

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 47.

of the Franks. He started with the *Gaulois*, thereby rejecting an existing tradition of history writing exalting the Trojan origins of France - one very popular indeed in the reign of Francis I. Thirdly, Pasquier was resolved to stress that the origins of the kingdom of France were distinct from those of the German principalities, the histories of which were also traced back to Troy.

In his *Historia Brittonum*, Nennius sought to “trace the history of the Britons (that is, the Welsh) as descendants of the legendary eponymous Trojan immigrant ‘Britto’ (or the Roman consul ‘Brutus’) down to the late seventh century”.¹⁴⁸ In the early twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, chiefly interested in constructing a long and an uninterrupted tradition of monarchical rule by British kings, reiterated Nennius’ basic narrative sketch of the origins of the Britons. During the Renaissance period, belief in the Trojan origins of the British was little altered. In his dedicatory epistle to Queen Elizabeth I, Richard Beacon, the author of *Solon His Follie*, perhaps the second most important sixteenth-century political treatise about Ireland after *A View*, exclaimed: “Therefore goe forward Brutus, for thy glory in reforming, is farre greater then the glory of Romulus in building and instituting of the citie of Rome”.¹⁴⁹ Keating did not need to cleanse the Irish historiography of the Trojan myths as Pasquier did in revising the French tradition. The Gaels, descendants of the Greeks, not the Trojans, were, unlike the Franks, already in the land in remote antiquity. However, Keating still produced a short criticism of the use of the Trojan eponym, Brutus, in the New English historiography as a part of his extended objective to point to the methodological defaults of its adherents.

... it is not from Brutus Britain is called Britannia, and, if it were, that it should be Brutia or Brutica it should be called; and it were likely, if it

¹⁴⁸ David E. Thornton, ‘Nennius (fl. c.770–c.810)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19892>, accessed 17 Aug 2014].

¹⁴⁹ Richard Beacon, *Solon his follie, or, A politique discourse touching the reformation of common-weales conquered, declined, or corrupted* (Oxford: 1594), p. 4.

had been from Brutus it was named, that Julius Caesar, Cornelius Tacitus, Diodorus Siculus, or Bede, or some other ancient author would have stated whence is this word Britannia; and since they knew not whence is the name of their own country, it was no wonder they should be in ignorance of many of the ancient records of Britain, and therefore, it is not strange that Spenser likewise should be ignorant of them.¹⁵⁰

Rejection of the Trojan origins of the British is indicative of at least two significant features of Keating's history writing. Firstly, the Tipperary scholar-priest dismissed the Galfridian tradition as anachronistic and fabulous. Secondly, he nurtured methodological concerns that closely echo those of Pasquier and his contemporaries in France.

What did Pasquier mainly read to write about the Gaulish ancestors of the French? For medieval chroniclers in France did not give much space to the Gallic past. Pasquier found Gaul in Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*.¹⁵¹ He downplayed the degree of barbarity that Caesar had attributed to the population. From Caesar's observations on these Celtic peoples, Pasquier constructed a favourable account of the Gallic customs, laws and language. These people who inhabited Gaul before the Roman and Frankish conquests were superior to the Britons and the Romans by virtue of the excellence of their civilization.

Et en autre endroit faisant la description ou topographie de la Grande Bretagne, il [Caesar] dit que 'ceux qui resseoyent en la ville de Cantium, estoient les mieux appris du pays, pour autant qu'elle estoit maritime & approchant des mœurs & façons du Gaulois'. De sorte que l'on peut par-là connoistre en quelle reverence estoient les manieres de faire de nos Gaulois à l'endroit des nations prochaines, & mesmement envers ce grand Jules Cesar. Et vrayment à bonne raison, parceque, qui considerera de près leur ancienne police, il trouvera un pays merueilleusement bien ordonné. Car combien que la Gaule fust bigarrée en factions & puissances, comme nous voyons maintenant l'Italie (qui fut veritablement le premier defect de leur Republique, & pour lequel finalement ils se ruïnerent) toutes-fois en cette varieté d'opinions fondées

¹⁵⁰ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 25.

¹⁵¹ See Julius Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. Jane F. Gardner (London: Penguin Books, 1982).

*pour leur grandeur, si avoient-ils une Justice generale par laquelle estoit rendu le droict à un chacun particulier.*¹⁵²

Consistently evolving to meet the needs of changing times, French institutions, Gaulish in origin, managed to survive to the sixteenth century and contributed to the political unity of France. The political fragmentation of Italy was a direct consequence of the failure of the Roman institutions to survive into the present age. In Pasquier's opinion, the fact that French institutions were alive and flourishing was enough to assert their superiority over Roman institutions. Likewise, the French language was of greater value than Latin, simply because it survived from antiquity to Pasquier's time. Thus, Pasquier produced another justification for his decision to write the new history of France in the vernacular. Published in French, *Recherches de la France* would appeal to a much wider audience, a consideration that Keating had also taken into account before he started to write *Foras Feasa*.

Pasquier was not, of course, engaged in an assault on the reputation of the Italians. After all, the methods of textual study that were available to him were developed by an earlier generation of Italian humanists. Julius Caesar, whom Pasquier heavily relied on in his depiction of ancient Gaul, was Roman. "*Toutes choses par moy deduites, par maniere devant jeu, non point que par elles j'entende deprimer en aucune façon l'Italien : mais aussi afin qu'il entende que se sommes à luy inferieurs, ny en police & bonnes mœurs, ny en bonne conduite de guerre, soit que nous advisions l'ancienne Gaule, ou nostre nouvelle France*".¹⁵³ Pasquier strove to defend the institutions, customs, laws and language of the inhabitants of ancient Gaul against the calumnies of the Italian historians. They were in no way inferior to the Roman phenomena. Pasquier's historical construction of a Franco-Gallic identity

¹⁵² Étienne Pasquier, *Les Recherches de la France*, in *Les Ouvres D'Estienne Pasquier Contenant Ses Recherches de la France, ...* (Amsterdam : 1723), p. 8.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 12.

bears striking parallels with the adoption in *Foras Feasa* of the Gaelic past as the ancient history of the kingdom of Ireland. Since there was actually a Gaelic community in early seventeenth-century Ireland, which gravitated in political and religious outlook to the position of the Old English, Keating's narrative of ancient history, in a manner that could historically legitimize the recent rapprochement between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English, was extremely relevant to the nation's contemporary ideological sensibilities. Michael Kearney, who translated *Foras Feasa* into English in 1635, offered an ideological interpretation and "emphasized the need for the just administration of the law which Keating had recommended".¹⁵⁴ Again taking up the matter of the constitution, Kearney demanded equal representation in parliament for the Irish Catholics.

Since he accepted Caesar's account as his starting point, Pasquier could think of the geography of Gaul as the *Urheimat* of the French. They had always inhabited it and there cultivated their time-honoured customs. But Ireland was not the land where the customs of *Éireannaigh* were originated, since the early communities were foreign immigrants. It was in the ancient kingdom of Scythia that the ancestors of *Éireannaigh* first began to cultivate great art and learning, which continued unabated till Keating's own day. In *Foras Feasa*, the noble pedigrees of *Éireannaigh* were brought back to Scythia, which was "never subdued by any foreign dominion".¹⁵⁵ It was from Scythia that early settlers arrived in the island of Ireland in successive waves. Their journeys had already been described in *Leabhar Gabhála*, though less vividly than they were in *Foras Feasa*. Partholón, Neimheidh, the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha De Danann and lastly the Milesians were originally the Greeks of Scythia, from whom the *Éireannaigh* proudly derived their descent. These were all of the

¹⁵⁴ Cunningham, "Representations of King, Parliament and the Irish People", p. 151.

¹⁵⁵ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 229.

posterity of Magog, son of Japheth, son of Noah. Thus, Keating traced the noble lineages of the Irish Catholic nobility back to the Noachian flood, from where it could easily be extended to the Creation with reference to the Old Testament account. For the Counter-Reformation historians of the seventeenth-century, the dispersal of nations after the Noachian flood was “a recognised point of departure not only for the study of ethnicity but also for the construction of national identities”.¹⁵⁶ Drawing on the medieval narrative in *Leabhar Gabhála*, Keating started the history of the *Éireannaigh* at the Creation, and accordingly claimed that the kingdom of Ireland was the most ancient in Europe.

What held together the *Éireannaigh* of the highest pedigree? Beneath an overarching narrative of royal genealogies, patterned to fit in with the successive reigns of the high kings, Keating shaped a continuity of Irish customs, laws and language. The Scythians excelled other ancient nations by the magnificence of their laws. However, unlike Pasquier, Keating was living under the bitter reality of a recent foreign conquest. In the aftermath of the Elizabethan conquest, effective exercise of the Common Law by the circuits of assizes, which began to take place in all of the provinces, seriously diminished the practice of Brehon Law. Why did Keating believe that he was obliged to defend, against the calumnies of the New English polemicists, a judicial system which was becoming obsolete? During the Renaissance, the idea that laws were the organic products of the societies which lived under them was a commonly held one among jurists. To prove that the ancestors of the *Éireannaigh* always kept good order from the Scythian period onwards, the Brehon laws which they produced had to be vindicated against their misrepresentation in the New English historiography.

¹⁵⁶ Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 9.

Sir John Davies found various faults with the native judicial system in Ireland, which he believed prolonged the inevitable conquest of the kingdom by the English Crown till 1603. In his *Discoverie of the State of Ireland*, Davies mainly focused on three principal legal customs, namely, tanistry, gavelkind and *eric*. Of the three, the first had already been discussed at length. Gavelkind is a system of land tenure based on partible inheritance. In stark contrast to primogeniture, the available land is thrown into common stock upon the decease of the chieftain and redivided among the surviving members of the sept.

And by the Irish custome of Gavellkinde, the inferiour Tennanties were partible amongst all the Males of the Sept, both Bastards and Legittimate: and after partition made, if any one of the Sept had died, his portion was not divided among his Sonnes, but the cheefe of the sept, made a new partition of all the Lands belonging to that Sept, and gave everie one his part according to his antiquity.¹⁵⁷

The last word of this explanation of gavelkind by Davies, illustrates the importance of pedigree in Gaelic society. Genealogies functioned as legal documents in determining who would receive a given portion of the land. From Davies' point of view, the customs of tanistry and gavelkind created uncertainty about ownership of estates.

Eric refers to the price set upon a man according to his status, paid by way of a blood-fine in cases of murder and certain other crimes, to absolve the offender from further obligation or punishment. In this respect, it is similar to the old Anglo-Saxon custom known as wergild. The exaction of *eric* makes clear that Brehon Law is based on retributive justice. "For, whereas by the just and Honourable Law of England, & by the Lawes of all other well-governed Kingdomes and Commonweals, Murder, Man-Slaughter, Rape, Robbery, and Theft, are punished with death; By the Irish Custome, or Brehon Law, the highest of these offences was punished onely by Fine,

¹⁵⁷ Sir John Davies, *A Discoverie*, p. 168.

which they called an Ericke”.¹⁵⁸ Keating’s refutation of Davies in the *Díon-bhrollach* is grounded on the fact that the latter’s arguments are clearly anachronistic. This is an intelligent counterpoint that Pasquier, as a lawyer of great repute in Paris, might also have come up with. “My answer in this matter is, that there is not a country in the world in which a change is not made in statutes and customs, according as the condition of the country alters”.¹⁵⁹ Keating acknowledged that tanistry, gavelkind and *eric* were not suitable for seventeenth-century Ireland; but “they were necessary at the time they were established”.¹⁶⁰ Brehon Law, not least by virtue of its antiquity, was one of the integral components of Irish culture, just like other Gaelic institutions and the Irish language, which made the kingdom of Ireland distinct from others. Keating did not undertake the vindication of Brehon Law because he believed that it should be reinstated. As a quick look at the late sixteenth-century French historiography also demonstrates, enactment of laws, like the cultivation of art and the growth of language, were important marks of civility in the opinion of the humanist historians who struggled to prove, with a chauvinist air, that their respective kingdoms inherited the greatest civilization from antiquity.

In *A View*, Spenser’s interest in antiquarianism manifests itself very sharply. Bart van Es argues that Spenser was not unfamiliar with antiquarian studies in England, of which Camden was the greatest exponent. “William Camden was acquainted with Sir Philip Sidney and Spenser’s collective praise of the two in *The Ruines of Time* may suggest the poet knew them together”.¹⁶¹ Van Es also explains to what end Spenser applied his nascent antiquarian skills. “Spenser’s *View*, composed within a decade of this date [1590], is certainly one of the texts that makes use of the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 166.

¹⁵⁹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 67.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 71.

¹⁶¹ Bart van Es, *Spenser’s Forms of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 85.

newly strengthened parallel between early societies and current primitive ones”.¹⁶² However, in constructing parallels between contemporary Irish society and ancient communities, Spenser failed to observe the essential methods of early modern antiquarianism if he had a concern for them at all. Where documentary evidence failed, he tried to establish linguistic or customary comparisons. For instance, in support of his idea that Leinster was originally populated by the Britons who crossed over the Irish Sea, Spenser forged British genealogies for some of the most renowned Leinster clans such as the O’Tooles, the O’Byrnes and the Cavanaghs. “As the O’Tooles are called of the old British world Tol, that is, a Hill Countrey, the Brins of the British word Brin, that is Woods, and the Cavanaghes of the Caune, that is, strong; so that in these three people the very denomination of the old Britons doe still remaine”.¹⁶³ In *Foras Feasa*, linguistics seems to be the least trusted auxiliary science of history.

Keating respected Camden as an antiquarian of England. Yet, he did not ascribe him the same credit when it came to Irish history, since Camden did not make use of medieval Irish sources. “Now the seanchus of Ireland, whose function it is to investigate and preserve an exact account of every event that ever happened in Ireland, is more deserving of credit than the opinion of Camden, to whom Irish history never gave up its secret from which he could derive a knowledge of the affairs of Ireland”.¹⁶⁴ Keating certainly did not show the same degree of courtesy to the other foreign authors writing about Gaelic Ireland. Of Spenser he wrote, “I am surprised how Spenser ventured to meddle in these matters, of which he was ignorant, unless that, on the score of being a poet, he allowed himself license of

¹⁶² Ibid, pp. 95-6.

¹⁶³ Spenser, *A View*, 52.

¹⁶⁴ Keating, *FFÉ*, ii, p. 75.

invention, as it was usual with him, and others like him, to frame and arrange many poetic romances with sweet-sounding words to deceive the reader”.¹⁶⁵

In *De Rebus Hibernia Gestis*, Stanihurst set out to denigrate the hereditary learned classes and the Gaelic institutions of higher learning in which they were educated. In *Foras Feasa*, Keating traced the origins of these elite groups back to Scythia. They were responsible for the survival of the Gaelic customs, laws and language, from classical times to the twelfth century, where Keating’s historical narrative ended. Stanihurst specifically targeted the poets, the Brehon judges, the harpists and the physicians.¹⁶⁶ As with Camden and Spenser, Keating reproached Stanihurst for being “blindly ignorant in the language of the country in which were the ancient records and transactions of the territory and of every people who had inhabited it”.¹⁶⁷ Keating did not question the degree of Stanihurst’s acquaintance with the expertise of the hereditary learned classes. After all, as a Dubliner, he was not entirely unfamiliar with their operations. What Keating actually reacted to was Stanihurst’s presumption that he had authority to write about the bardic elite without knowing the language which they spoke, in which they were trained, and through which they performed their professions.

Even without venturing into the main text of *Foras Feasa*, one may find out in the refreshingly original preface, the *Díon-bhrollach*, that Keating shared the antiquarian concerns of sixteenth-century French historians. In that he formed a vivid historical narrative out of a synthesis of medieval Irish documents that he had carefully digested in accordance with antiquarian methods of textual study, Keating matched the French exponents of *la nouvelle histoire*, among whom Pasquier enjoyed an estimable place. Keating did for the *Éireannaigh* what Pasquier had done

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, i, p. 31.

¹⁶⁶ See Stanihurst, *De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*, pp. 119-35.

¹⁶⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 43.

for the French. He constructed an illustriously ancient, Gaelic and Catholic history of Ireland, of which the *Éireannaigh* could be proud. Moreover, Keating probably had a better sense of humour.

CHAPTER V:

KEATING AS A COUNTER-REFORMATION HISTORIAN AND IRELAND'S SACRED HISTORY

This is a filthy people, wallowing in vice. Of all the
peoples it is the least instructed in the rudiments of
the Faith.¹⁶⁸

Gerald of Wales

In a way similar to many other literary aspects of European intellectual life in the seventeenth century, history writing was intensely influenced and bolstered by the division of Europe along confessional lines. Inheriting a well-structured humanist mode of writing from the early Renaissance period, when the methods of the philologists had been successfully applied to historical research, a number of historians, most of whom had clerical backgrounds, produced ecclesiastical histories. During the middle ages and much of the early modern period, history was regarded as an imperfect account of how God operated in the world. This fundamental approach was little disturbed, but many seventeenth-century scholars were specifically interested in the histories of national churches, at a time when these establishments were being refashioned under increasing demand for reform during the Reformation. Catholics and Protestants alike began to conduct academic research, firmly directed by their religious and political convictions, into early

¹⁶⁸ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography of Ireland*, 106.

Christian history. Admittedly, their objective was to return to and explore the purity of the primitive Church as they perceived it. However, “they both were interpreting Christianity for the changing times”.¹⁶⁹ Both sides were in earnest contention to claim the purity of the primitive Church for the specific ecclesiastical institutions to which they adhered. The argument about whether Protestantism or Roman Catholicism was closer to the purity of the early Church was central to the works of both Protestant and Catholic historians. Intellectuals engaged in controversies to justify historically the doctrinal, and especially ecclesiological positions of their own religious bodies. *Foras Feasa* is not an ecclesiastical history of the Irish people, the *Éireannaigh*. Nor was it meant to be. Yet, Keating had an antiquarian’s interest in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland as an institution, in the same manner that he was concerned with secular institutions such as kingship and parliament. Giving an institutional form to early Irish Christianity, Keating easily dismissed the New English history writing on the grounds that it displayed early Irish Christianity as superstitious, corrupted and in disarray. In his depiction of the earliest Irish church, St. Patrick’s church, Keating was heavily influenced by his Tridentine values, and especially by the fact that a Roman Catholic structure along Tridentine lines was being successfully established in Ireland during the 1620s, when bishops began to replace vicars-apostolic.

The writing of an Irish Protestant history was as belated as the writing of an Irish Catholic history in the early seventeenth century. It started with James Ussher, bishop of Meath and later, archbishop of Armagh. The primate’s efforts to forge an

¹⁶⁹ Robert Brexley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press: 1999), p. 2.

illustriously ancient history for the Church of Ireland were widely appreciated.¹⁷⁰ In the *Díon-bhrollach*, Keating does not get involved in a theological disputation with a scholar of Ussher's calibre about whether the early church in Ireland was Calvinist or Catholic. Keating did not believe that it was his task to refute the Reformed historians, such as Ussher, projecting their Calvinism into early Irish Christianity. Given that Ussher, as an Old English prelate, embraced the Gaelic heritage, there was much, anyway, in Ussher's historiography that Keating could approve. Neither did Keating believe that his part was to produce a Counter-Reformation ecclesiastical history. *Foras Feasa* merged Irishness with Catholicism. Yet, this was not just any kind of Catholicism. The form of Catholicism that Keating promoted in his history-writing was not an archaic type that the Tipperary priest unearthed from the mystery of St. Patrick's Gaelic world and introduced to the *Éireannaigh* as an alien notion. It was Tridentine Catholicism and its incorporation as integral to Irish Gaelic identity was already being promoted in the early seventeenth century by zealous Irish priests trained in Europe.

The Tudor state experienced a decisive failure in implementing the *cuius regio eius religio* principle in Ireland. The political consequences of this failure have already been discussed in the preceding chapters. Its adverse impact on the Church of Ireland remains untreated. However politically disadvantaged they were becoming in comparison to their Protestant counterparts, the Catholic nobility's survival into the seventeenth century facilitated the establishment of a well-organized Roman Catholic Church in confrontation with the Church of Ireland. Keating was aware of the importance, for the survival of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, of the reciprocal relationship which existed between the Irish nobility and the Catholic

¹⁷⁰ Alan Ford, "Ussher and Irish History: *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates*", *James Ussher: Theology, History and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 208-22.

clergy. After Brian Bórimhe had thrown off the foreign yoke of the *Lochlonnaigh*, his first act as a high king without opposition was to “restore and build churches, and give every cleric his own temple according to his rank and right to it”.¹⁷¹ The Henrician Reformation in Ireland was, in the first place, intended to terminate the exercise of papal jurisdiction. It did not bring about a radical liturgical change.¹⁷² With traditional religious practice and belief left substantially undisturbed, no reaction to the new order was provoked. The success, during the 1540s, of Sir Anthony St. Leger’s initiative, “Surrender and Regrant” in peacefully reconciling the Gaelic elite to the Tudor Crown may be used to demonstrate this point. The reigns of Henry VIII’s immediate successors on the throne were too brief to “to fix confessional identities in Ireland”.¹⁷³ In 1560, with the adoption by the Irish parliament of the English Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, a new Protestant denomination, the Church of Ireland replaced the medieval church, at least in theory. It became the official church of a kingdom where the landowning nobility was predominantly Catholic. The Elizabethan reformers were certain that the nobility would be converted to the Protestant faith in due time.

The Tudor sword was strong, but insufficient for its purposes. The Tudor state in Ireland lacked the political and social infrastructure necessary for enforcing the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle. In spite of the priority of this problem for the Tudor state in Ireland, the self-sufficiency of the kingdom could not be ensured. Consequently, the management of the Irish treasury continued to be a serious financial burden on the English Exchequer especially during the tumultuous periods

¹⁷¹ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 261.

¹⁷² G. A. Hayes-McCoy, “The Ecclesiastical Revolution, 1534-47”, in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 64-5.

¹⁷³ Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Confessionalisation in Ireland: Periodisation and Character, 1534 -1649”, in Alan Ford and John McCafferty (eds), *The Origins of Sectarianism in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 38.

when political instability increased. Insufficient funds available to the Church of Ireland denied it efficiency in reaching out to the bulk of the Catholic gentry. Furthermore, there was a visible dearth of learned native clergy skilled in the Irish language. When James Ussher became the bishop of Meath in 1621, there was only one other native prelate. All the other members of the episcopal bench were imported from England. In Europe, generally, universities proved to be critical institutions in determining the confessional identity of a kingdom's nobility.¹⁷⁴ The foundation of a university in Dublin, which was originally an Old English idea¹⁷⁵, was realized only very late in the sixteenth century. When it was finally established, in 1592, Trinity College, Dublin, failed to appeal to the Catholic gentry, who instead sent their sons to Catholic institutions on the European mainland. With a few aristocratic exceptions, the obvious failure of the Tudor state to Protestantize what became a Catholic elite left a religious vacuum filled by seminary priests like Keating. *Foras Feasa* is an eloquent demonstration that these Counter-Reformation priests managed to merge Irishness with Tridentine Catholicism. Their Protestant counterparts singularly failed to make Protestantism Irish.

Even though the Gaelic political structures collapsed with the Tudor conquest, Samantha A. Meigs argues, the survival of Catholicism into the early seventeenth century was achieved by the efforts of the Gaelic learned elite, the *aes dána*. "All parts of Christendom had scholars, but only Ireland had a living bardic tradition which intersected with religious life in unusual and sometimes startling

¹⁷⁴ See Elizabethanne Boran. "An Early Friendship Network of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, 1626-656", in Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (ed.), *European Universities in the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), pp. 116-34.

¹⁷⁵ See "The Oration of James Stanihurst, Speaker of the Parliament", quoted in Campion, *History of Ireland*, p. 131.

ways”.¹⁷⁶ The *aes dána*, according to Meigs, managed to pass on a pervasive notion of conservatism to the early modern period and this eventually determined that Ireland would be Catholic. To this was added weight of the activities of the Counter-Reformation literati, some of whom had, like Keating, bardic training. Not rejecting Meigs’ argument entirely, Marc Caball does not believe that there was an inherent distaste on the part of the Irish nobility for religious innovation. Counter-Reformation, after all, was itself an innovation. Caball, instead, stresses the cultural competence of the Counter-Reformation activists in introducing Tridentine Catholicism to the Irish gentry in the Irish language.¹⁷⁷ In addition, with *Foras Feasa*, Keating forged an ancient history which argued, persuasively for his readers, that the Tridentine movement for reform did not constitute a complete rupture with the past. Keating stressed religious continuity from the coming of St. Patrick to the Tridentine Catholicism in the seventeenth century.

Contrary to a view often held, the Council of Trent (1545-63) was “a pastoral as well as a doctrinal council”.¹⁷⁸ Senior clergy and theologians who attended all or some of the sessions at Trent expressed their deep concerns about the notable ineffectiveness of a number of dioceses in tending to the spiritual care of their communities, especially in circumstances when the bishops were absentees. A friar of the order of St. Augustine, Luther’s reformation profited, in its initial stages, from the pastoral inefficiency of the ecclesiastical establishments. In seventeenth-century Ireland, the official church only appealed to an already Protestant landowning elite. In contrast, Counter-Reformation propagandists, whether of the secular or the regular clergy, could successfully preach to the bulk of the Irish population. Keating’s

¹⁷⁶ Samantha A. Meigs, *The Reformations in Ireland: Tradition and Confessionalism, 1400-1690* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Caball, “Religion, Culture and the Bardic Elite”, pp. 181-2.

¹⁷⁸ John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 17.

hagiography in *Foras Feasa* vividly reflects the pastoral aspect of the Tridentine movement for reform. According to Keating, St. Patrick was not merely interested in the conversion of the chieftains. He was a vigorous pastor spreading the light of the Gospel in Ireland.

Three score years and one,
Few there are to whom it is not a mystery,
In Ireland with many prodigies
Did Patrick continue to preach.¹⁷⁹

Keating reinterpreted the life of St. Patrick with reference to Tridentine precepts, and intended it to be morally instructive to the Counter-Reformation clergy in Ireland.

Keating laid great emphasis on the continuity of papal jurisdiction in Ireland from the time of St. Patrick to the twelfth century. This alone would identify Keating with other Counter-Reformation historians in Europe. In Keating's view, St. Patrick was not an adventurous minister acting on his own initiative. He was sent by the pope as an ordained bishop on a mission to "plant the Faith" in Ireland.¹⁸⁰ He was accompanied by "a number of prelates" – thirty in number, he declared.¹⁸¹ Identification of St. Patrick as a bishop on a papal mission to Ireland reveals some fundamental notions about Keating's construction of the primitive Church in Ireland. Keating unwaveringly points out that the Church in early Irish history was apostolic. Upon his arrival, St. Patrick, assisted by the thirty bishops who followed him, established the apostolical succession in the land, uninterrupted from that day to the Anglo-Norman invasion. Thanks to a succession of bishops and archbishops, the Catholic Church did not cease to exercise spiritual authority over the kingdom since the first planting of the Faith. Thus, Keating succinctly implied that the Counter-Reformation church in seventeenth-century Ireland was not a novelty at all. In a

¹⁷⁹ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 31.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, iii, p. 15.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 19.

world where antiquity and tradition were regarded as the true marks of authenticity, the continuity of papal jurisdiction since the early middle ages was crucial to the Counter-Reformation propaganda. Perhaps, more than its propagandist value, the existence of papal jurisdiction in St. Patrick's Ireland justified the Roman Catholic establishment in the 1620s, which was forced to operate as an outlaw institution.

Until recently, the existence of an indigenous Celtic church, which developed completely free from the jurisdiction of Rome, has been maintained as a truism by a number of historians. Oliver Padel states, the term, 'Celtic Church', "although it was widespread during the twentieth century, is not accepted today by historians".¹⁸² The Christianity of the early medieval Celtic-speaking areas was certainly distinctive in a number of noteworthy respects. However, in this it merely exemplifies the pluriformity that was characteristic of the Christianity of the age. Ireland's deviance from Rome was no greater than that of southern Italy or Visigothic Spain. Keating's expressed perception of early Irish Christian Ireland's conformity to Rome must be read as an anachronism, simply because the church of St. Gregory the Great and St. Columba was not that of St. Pius V and Archbishop Creagh. But, then, neither did the religion of Clanmacnoise anticipate that of Calvin's Geneva, as Keating's opponents would have had it do. The undeveloped historical specificity of the seventeenth century did not allow Keating (unless, *per impossibile*, he adopted a contemporary Protestant view) to do anything other than make the early Irish church conform to a Tridentine model. That his depiction served his contemporary needs was inevitable as well as advantageous.

¹⁸² Oliver Padel, "Christianity in Medieval Cornwall: Celtic Aspects", in Nicholas Orme (ed.), *A History of the County of Cornwall*, vol. 2 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 38. For more information on the argument about the concept of an independent Celtic church, see also Wendy Davies, "The Myth of the Celtic Church", in Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (eds), *The Early Church in Wales and the West: Recent Work in Early Christian Archaeology, History and Place Names* (Oxford: Oxbow, 1992), pp. 1-20.

Keating refuted the New English authors whose commentaries ran contrary to his own depiction of early Irish Christianity. Some of his refutations basically stood as a peremptory vindication of the Irish clergy against the New English calumniators. For instance, Keating took issue with Campion with regard to the latter's statement that "the Irish are so credulous, in a manner, that they will regard as truth whatever their superior may say, however incredible".¹⁸³ Keating seems to have never given a serious heed to Campion as a historian, who, after all, "spent but ten weeks in writing the history of Ireland".¹⁸⁴ In this particular instance, Keating simply rejects Campion's statement as unfounded and restores the reputation of the Irish clergy. In certain disputations with Hanmer, who appears to be the most firmly refuted New English author in *Foras Feasa*, we find some important aspects of Keating's Tridentine convictions disclosed. A Church of Ireland clergyman, Hanmer asserted,

In the yeere 850. lived Patricke the Abbot of Ireland, Abbot and Confessor. For there were two Patrickes, the first a very learned and godly man, the second a Abbot, and given to superstition, and founder of the faboulous Purgatorie, which goeth in Ireland under the name of Saint Patrickes Purgatorie; so write Ranulphus, Monke of Chester, and Bale, Bishop of Ossry, though Stanihurst allow not of it-, but attribute it to the first Patricke, and that without warrant.¹⁸⁵

Writing at the turn of the century, Hanmer admitted having recourse to Stanihurst's contribution to the Irish section of Holinshed's chronicles. Stanihurst's Roman Catholicism little troubled Hanmer because his *Description of Irelande* (1577) was one of the few available English texts written during the Renaissance about the history of Ireland. However, on the sanctity of St. Patrick's Purgatory, Hanmer refused the Dubliner. Instead, he trusted in the account of John Bale, bishop of Ossory.

¹⁸³ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 63.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹⁸⁵ Hanmer, *Chronicle of Ireland*, p. 86.

John Bale was one of the canonical authors of England's Protestant historiography. After Queen Mary reinstated Roman Catholicism in England and Ireland, Bale fled to the continent where he produced a number of controversial anti-Catholic martyrologies. These religious writings provided key material for John Foxe's highly influential *Actes and Monuments*.¹⁸⁶ Hanmer, who was greatly influenced by the forerunners of the Reformation scholarship in England, naturally followed Bale. Keating's refutation of Hanmer on the matter of the foundation of St. Patrick Purgatory may appear to be a mere defence of the sanctity of an important pilgrimage site for the Irish Catholics. However, it can easily be construed as a reaction to the Protestant interpretation of early Irish Christianity by Reformed historians who struggled to claim the early church in the British Isles for the now reformed Church of England, of which the Church of Ireland was generally held to be only an extension. According to Keating, it is a "malicious lie Hanmer has asserted here, in hope that thereby the Irish would have less veneration for the cave of Patrick".¹⁸⁷ The representation of St. Patrick as a bishop, acting under papal authority, was central to Keating's scholarly endeavour to bring the early church in Ireland in line with the Tridentine reform movement.

In the 1620s, James I was resolved to put an end to the hostilities between England and Spain, ongoing from the late-Elizabethan period. To reconcile the two kingdoms, the King decided to arrange a royal marriage between Prince Charles and the Infanta Maria Anna. James I had to tolerate the establishment of a Roman Catholic diocesan structure in his kingdom of Ireland to see his policy of a Spanish match work. According to Keating's account, St. Patrick's first deed, after he secured the Christianization of the island, was to establish an episcopal hierarchy. Drawing

¹⁸⁶ John Foxe. *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous days* (London, 1563).

¹⁸⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 69.

on the work of Nennius, regarded as the author of the ninth century historical compilation, *Historia Brittonum*, Keating informed that St. Patrick erected “355 churches, he consecrated the same number, 355, of bishops, and he ordained priests to the number of three thousand”.¹⁸⁸ Keating presented Nennius’ approximate figures as precise.¹⁸⁹ But it is far more important to note Keating’s use of the nearest contemporary source in British historiography to give out an account of St. Patrick’s mission that would help legitimize the episcopal hierarchy of the Tridentine church in seventeenth-century Ireland.

St. Patrick thus ensured that the church he found would be episcopally governed. He next dealt with the problem of how it would be organized. A functioning diocesan structure was established to manage the administrative affairs of an *ecclesia* which “was then flourishing”.¹⁹⁰

Moreover, it is certain from the Irish annals that Patrick made two archbishops in Ireland, to wit, the archbishop of Ard Macha [Armagh] the primate of Ireland, and the archbishop of Cashel; the primate of Ard Macha being over all Ireland and especially over Leath Cuinn [the northern half of Ireland], and the archbishop of Cashel directly over Leath Mogha [the southern half of Ireland], while the primate had higher authority over him.¹⁹¹

St. Patrick’s work was only preliminary to the establishment of a complex and fully-developed diocesan administration in 1100, when at the instigation of Muircheartach, son of Toirdhealbhach, son of Tadhg, son of Brian Bórainmhe, the Synod of Raith Breasail was convened.¹⁹² It was in this synod, well-attended by the clergy of Ireland and a papal legate, dioceses and archdioceses that resembled more closely those of the Counter-Reformation Church in early seventeenth-century Ireland were

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 21.

¹⁸⁹ Nennius, *History of the Britons* (*Historia Brittonum*), trans. J. A. Giles (Dodo Press, 2007), ch. 54.

¹⁹⁰ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 21.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

erected.¹⁹³ That the Synod of Raith Breasail took place, with Papal permission, almost half a century before the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland had an added significance for Keating. Firstly it dismissed the capital argument in *Laudabiliter* that the religious state of Ireland was in need of urgent reform. Secondly, it provided a conclusive counter-argument against the representation of medieval Irish Christianity in the New English historiography as corrupted and superstitious.

In harmony with his fundamental insistence that Ireland is an independent kingdom in itself, Keating rejected Hanmer's claim that the archbishops of Canterbury possessed jurisdiction over any of the Irish sees.

Further I finde recorded, that it was the manner to consecrate Bishops in this sort, and that the Monarch of Ireland in regard of his royall principallitie and title of honour with other priviledges belonging to his Monarchie, had negative voyce in the nomination of Bishops throughout his Realme. Secondly, how the Archbishop of Canterbury took of him that was so consecrated, a corporall oath of Canonically obedience (as his predecessours formerly used) to him and his successors; and lastly, gave him letters testimonial thereof to the Monarch and King of Leinster.¹⁹⁴

In Keating's narrative, Ireland is a sovereign kingdom, not just in the secular sphere, but also in the ecclesiastical one. "For it is certain that the archbishop of Canterbury had no jurisdiction over the clergy of Ireland until the time of William the Conqueror, and even then he had not jurisdiction, except over the clergy of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick; and it is those clergy themselves who placed themselves under the control of the archbishop of Canterbury, ..."¹⁹⁵ After the Reformation, it was inconceivable, of course, that the Catholic Church in Ireland would be subject to heretical Canterbury in any way. Keating was merely anxious to assert the sovereign image of Ireland in both aspects, ecclesiastical and secular, in the period of which he wrote.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 303.

¹⁹⁴ Hanmer, *Chronicle of Ireland*, p. 95.

¹⁹⁵ Keating, *FFÉ*, i, p. 51.

The Council of Trent was much concerned with the question of the pastoral authority of the bishops in their dioceses. Much diminishing it was the autonomy of religious orders. As a priest, Keating belonged to the secular clergy and upheld their superiority over the regulars. This Tridentine principle resonates in *Foras Feasa* to a noticeable extent. The Venerable Bede hinted in the second book of his *Historia Ecclesiastica* that a group of bishops in Scotland were subordinate to St. Columba, the founder of the important monastery in Iona.¹⁹⁶ It must have astonished and dismayed Keating to read in Bede's account of the controversy over the dating of Easter that an abbot, no matter how estimable he was, enjoyed authority over Scottish bishops. The *Historia Ecclesiastica* was an immensely authoritative work which constituted the foundation of the study of early Anglo-Saxon history. Still, Keating felt himself obliged to rectify what he perceived as an obvious error: it was unthinkable that venerated saints of the early Gaelic church could have so grossly deviated from Catholic principles. According to the Tipperary priest, it was not submission, but a sense of veneration that the bishops displayed towards the person of St. Columba, who "gave them the light of the Faith".¹⁹⁷ As with that of St. Patrick, Keating Tridentinized the hagiography of St. Columba, as it existed in earlier historical texts.

The failure of the Stuarts to alter the confessional identity of the Irish Catholic nobility in the aftermath of the Tudor conquest can be juxtaposed and contrasted with the success of the Habsburgs in making Bohemia Catholic after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620.¹⁹⁸ It should be noted, in this context that there are striking parallels between *Foras Feasa* and the extensive corpus of Counter-

¹⁹⁶ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (London: Penguin Books: 1968), bk. II, ch. IV.

¹⁹⁷ Keating, *FFÉ*, iii, p. 87.

¹⁹⁸ Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, p. 133.

Reformation historical scholarship that emanated from Bohemia after 1620. In a religiously divided Europe, the writing of histories helped sustain confessional identities. *Foras Feasa*, for instance, popularised the union of Tridentine Catholicism with Irishness and precluded conformity with the Church of Ireland. And in the way a new Bohemian Catholic identity was constructed by historians. Catholic historians started to produce a wide range of historical compilations from hagiographies and martyrologies to local studies in order to promulgate the idea that the Protestant Reformation in the principality was only an unfortunate interlude, originating in the medieval heresy which unfolded under the inspiration of John Hus. When exiled Protestant historians struggled to prove that there was continuity between early Christianity in Bohemia and the reform process which began with the Hussites, they were rivalled by their Catholic compatriots, who strove to persuade their readers that the Reformation was a radical deviation from the Christian tradition of Bohemia. Thus, different Czech historians produced different interpretations of the Bohemian past according to their religious affiliation. In every case, a historical text contributed to the formation of two confessional identities, defining both of them positively and negatively.

Although the historical scholarship of the Bohemian writers, most of whom had clerical identities, may seem to be theoretical, it had practical purposes as well. Hagiographies and martyrologies, especially, were re-examined in order to enrich the quality of the sermons to be addressed to the faithful. The lives of the medieval saints were re-investigated and subjected to methodological antiquarian study, as a preliminary to a pastoral call to worship them and seek their intercession. A Catholic scholar and the dean of the cathedral of St. Vitus at Prague, Jiří Barthold Pontanus of Breitenberg, made valiant strides in this regard. He “revitalized the cults of early

Czech saints who had long been neglected”.¹⁹⁹ The most pre-eminent figure was St. Wenceslas, the patron saint of Bohemia. Bohuslav Balbín was even more diligent and committed than Pontanus. He explored “local archives, private manuscripts collections and monastic libraries in an effort to celebrate the glories of a *Bohemia sacra*”.²⁰⁰ A prolific writer, he would produce more than thirty invaluable texts which included a biography of Prague’s first archbishop and a vindication of the Czech language. A similar antiquarian competence can be attributed to Geoffrey Keating, who strove to recover the memory of Ireland’s saints in *Foras Feasa*.

¹⁹⁹ Louthan, *Converting Bohemia*, p. 117.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER VI:

CONCLUSION

With regard to the political and religious challenges, in the post-1603 period, that the Old English nobility had to confront in a kingdom where they were debarred from exercising political influence commensurate with their social status, Raymond Gillespie argues, “Old English culture fluctuated between tradition and modernity, with some such as Keating or Lynch looking to the distant past to resolve their contemporary tensions, while others, including Bellings, adopted more modern solutions, drawn in many cases from European models.”²⁰¹ Keating and his Latin translator, Lynch, the author of *Cambrensis Eversus*,²⁰² were not alone in using the medium of history to redefine the Irish Catholic community in the changing times. There were other erudite clerics of Old English provenance such as Peter Lombard, John Copinger, Henry Fitzsimon, Stephen White, David Rothe, Patrick Comerford, Richard Rochford and Theobald Stapleton. The corpus of historical compilations and political treatises that those scholars produced is doubtless crucial to the understanding of the transformation of Irish society in the early seventeenth century. However, none of them attained the same degree of popularity that *Foras Feasa*

²⁰¹ Raymond Gillespie, “The Social Thought of Richard Bellings”, in Micheál Ó Siochrú (ed.), *Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 228.

²⁰² As the title of his work also indicates, John Lynch composed *Cambrensis Eversus* in reaction to Giraldus Cambrensis’ *Topographia Hibernica* and *Expugnatio Hibernica*, both of which were incorporated into William Camden’s *Anglica, Hibernica, Hormannica, Cambrica, a veteribus scripta ...*, printed at Frankfurt in 1602. See John Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus* (St. Malo, 1662), ed. and trans. Matthew Kelly, 3 vols (Celtic Society, Dublin, 1848 -52).

enjoyed. It was widely diffused in manuscript. In a manner dissimilar to his aforementioned co-religionists, Keating's preference for writing in a form of Irish, intelligible to his contemporaries, secured the extensive dissemination of *Foras Feasa*. As previously pointed out, though, Keating's choice of language was not merely affected by his concern for dissemination. It was also a methodological exigency for him: to make *Foras Feasa* compatible with similar national histories that had earlier been produced on the European mainland and in the vernacular languages.

As the seventeenth century wore on, ethnicity was being replaced by social status and religious affiliation as more influential factors in the identification of political communities in Ireland. Ethnic divisions between the Irish Catholics became increasingly indistinct through intermarriages, common interests in land tenure and political power. The new rapprochement of the two politically-segmented communities, the native Irish and the Old English, led up to the birth of an Irish Catholic nation in the 1640s, united in their noble lineages and profession of loyalty to Roman Catholicism.²⁰³ The Irish Catholics were resolved to stand up for the ancient liberties of the kingdom of Ireland, preserved in its profound institutions, such as the kingship, the parliament and the Catholic Church. Written in the early 1630s, *Foras Feasa* was the ancient history of the emerging Irish Catholic nation, denominated as the *Éireannaigh*. Having completed his early education in the bardic schools, Keating viewed the Gaelic heritage positively. One of the most distinctive features, which differed Keating's history writing from that of other contemporary Old English historians, was his adept use of medieval Irish manuscripts. Producing an interpretive synthesis of medieval Irish documents as well as English and Latin

²⁰³ Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, 11.

sources, Keating provided an original narrative of Irish history, with which the Irish Catholic nobility could proudly affiliate themselves by means of the genealogies attached to the end of the main text.²⁰⁴ Keating intended to put the Irish Catholic nobility on a par with their European counterparts in terms of ancientness and honour. The incorporation of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman arrivals to a prolonged and elaborate account of ancient and early medieval Gaelic history justified the Old English presence in seventeenth-century Ireland.

It has been a notable achievement of recent historiography to accelerate a revolution of understanding of *Foras Feasa* by contextualizing the work and its author in view of Renaissance humanism and the Counter-Reformation movement. However, new perspectives that recent historiography has introduced to the study of *Foras Feasa* have not been seriously applied to Keating's disputation with a group of Tudor authors, enumerated in the polemical preface, the *Díon-bhrollach*. Keating's polemic has been valued for its political implications for early Stuart Ireland. However, its historiographical aspect has been largely ignored. Keating imported European, particularly French methods of modern historiography into the writing of Irish history in the Irish language. He reconstructed Ireland's Gaelic past in order to give an ancient and honourable image to the kingdom of Ireland, in imitation of late sixteenth-century French writers, like Pasquier, who embraced the Gallic heritage. A continuous narrative of Irish history from the remotest antiquity to the twelfth century shows Keating's concern for entirety and coherence, absent in the Irish medieval historical scholarship. In *Foras Feasa*, Keating tried to prove that the Irish Catholic nobility, the *Éireannaigh*, were equal to their European counterparts in valour, piety, generosity and hospitality. At one hand, he emphasized the importance

²⁰⁴ Keating, *FFÉ*, iv, pp. 81-118.

of Irish customs, laws and language in making the kingdom of Ireland distinctive from other kingdoms in Europe. On the other hand, he struggled to prove that the history of this kingdom was integral to the history of Europe.²⁰⁵

Still, of far more significance, was Keating's elevation of history writing in the Irish language to European standards. Having studied in an Irish seminary college in Bordeaux, Keating learnt how to apply antiquarian methods to the writing of a history in the humanist style. When he was in France, Keating did not relinquish his ties with Ireland. When he returned home to function amongst the Munster Catholic gentry, he moved easily in the upper echelons of Irish society and was in communication with scholars who had access to medieval manuscripts. These documentary sources enjoyed a prime place in Keating's history writing, since he gave superior value to primary evidence. As an antiquarian, Keating selected his sources cautiously. However, when it came to forming a chronological and coherent narrative out of his primary sources, Keating departed from the antiquarian tradition. He did not merely provide a sequence of one narrative after another on the basis of each manuscript source which he consulted. He was pragmatic. He extracted from his primary sources only what was useful, and relevant to the idea of Irish history, which he had already formulated in his mind. The outcome was an illustriously ancient history of the kingdom of Ireland, written in entirety, coherently and chronologically. Keating was at pains to follow the methodological standards of pre-eminent sixteenth and seventeenth-century historians. In return, he reproached a mixed group of Tudor authors, who failed to observe those standards in their histories of Ireland.

²⁰⁵ Keating attached a section of synchronisms to the end of his two books, which placed Ireland chronologically into the history of Christendom. See Keating, *FFÉ*, iv, pp. 119-149.

The religious ideology of the Counter-Reformation was communicated to the readers of *Foras Feasa* through the construction of a golden age of early Irish Christianity. The Patrician Church was presented as a historical paradigm for the Tridentine Church of the early seventeenth century. Keating forged a continuity of Tridentine precepts tracing them back to the early middle ages from the twelfth century. It is possible to notice Keating's adherence to Tridentine values, even in the *Dion-bhrollach* without reading the two books of *Foras Feasa*. His disputation with Hanmer reveals some fundamental notions about Keating's conception of the Roman Catholic Church in early seventeenth-century Ireland. As a secular priest, Keating stressed the superiority of the secular clergy over the regulars. St. Patrick was a bishop sent by Rome on a papal mission to convert the Irish and establish an episcopal hierarchy in Ireland. The description of St. Patrick's Church as tightly organized and efficient in tending to the pastoral needs of the Irish Catholics was influenced by Keating's perception of the Tridentine Church in Ireland, which could remarkably establish an elaborate diocesan structure in the 1620s. In reconstructing early Irish Christianity in close conformity with the Roman Catholic Church of the early seventeenth century, Keating is comparable to his Czech counterparts, who essayed to prove that the Bohemian Church was inherently Catholic. Hagiography, martyrology and description of pilgrimage sites were the main narrative instruments by which Keating and contemporary Bohemian historians claimed the primitive churches for the Roman Catholic establishments in Ireland and Bohemia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Barclay, John. *Icon animorum*. London, 1614.

Beacon, Richard. *Solon his follie, or, A politique discourse touching the reformation of common-weales conquered, declined, or corrupted*. Oxford, 1594.

Bebel, Heinrich. *Oration in Praise of Germany*. In Gerald Strauss (ed.). *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation*. Blooming, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Bede. *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price. London: Penguin Books, 1968.

Boece, Hector. *Scotorum Historiae a prima gentis origine*. Paris, 1527.

Caesar, Julius. *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. Jane F. Gardner. London: Penguin Books, 1982.

Camden, William. *Britain or a chorographicall description of the most flourishing kingdomes. England, Scotland and Ireland*, trans. Philemon Holland. London, 1610.

_____. *The Inhabitants of Britain*. In R. D. Dunn (ed.). *Remains Concerning Britain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

Campion, Edmund. *Two Bokes of the History of Ireland*. In James Ware (ed.). *The historie of Ireland collected by three learned authors, viz. Meredith Hanmer ..., Edmund Campion ..., and Edmund Spenser*. Dublin, 1633.

Davies, Sir John. *A discovery of the state of Ireland: with the true causes why that kingdom was never entirely subdued ... until ... his majesty's most happy reign*. London, 1613.

- Foxe, John. *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous days* .. London, 1563.
- Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. and trans. by L. Thorpe. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966; repr. 1980.
- Gerald of Wales. *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. and trans. by A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978.
- _____. *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. by John J. O'Meara. London: Penguin Books, 1982.
- Gildas. *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works* (London: Phillimore, 2002).
- Hanmer, Meredith. *The Chronicle of Ireland*. In James Ware (ed.). *The historie of Ireland collected by three learned authors, viz. Meredith Hanmer ..., Edmund Campion ..., and Edmund Spenser*. Dublin, 1633.
- Holinshed, Raphael. *The... Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande* London: 1577.
- Keating, Geoffrey. *Foras feasa ar Éirinn: the history of Ireland*, ed. David Comyn and P. S. Dinneen. 4 vols, London: ITS, 1902-14
- _____. *The history of Ireland from the earliest period to the English invasion*, trans. John O'Mahony. New York, 1857.
- Lynch, John. *Cambrensis Eversus* (St. Malo, 1662), ed. and trans. Matthew Kelly. 3 vols, Dublin: Celtic Society, 1848 -52.
- Moryson, Fynes. *An itinerary ... containing his ten yeeres travell through the twelve dominions*, 3 vols, London: 1617.
- Nennius. *History of the Britons (Historia Brittonum)*, trans. J. A. Giles. Dodo Press, 2007.
- O'Sullevane, Thomas. *The Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde* Dublin, 1722.
- Pasquier, Étienne. *Les Recherches de la France*. In *Les Ouvres D'Estienne Pasquier Contenant Ses Recherches de la France*, ... Amsterdam, 1723.

- Petrarch, Francesco. *Long Preface to De Viris Illustribus* (1351 – 1352). In Benjamin G. Kohl. “Petrarch’s Prefaces to *De Viris Illustribus*”, *History and Theory* 13, no. 2 (1974).
- Sidney, Sir Philip. “The Defence of Poesy”. In Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.). *Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Spenser, Edmund. *A View of the State of Ireland*, ed. from the first printed edition (1633) by Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Stanihurst, Richard. *Great Deeds in Ireland: Richard Stanihurst’s De Rebus in Hibernia Gestis*, ed. John Barry and Hiram Morgan. Cork: Cork University Press, 2013.
- Virgil, Polydore. *De rerum inventoribus*. In *Polydori Virgili de Rerum Inventoribus*, trans. John Langley. New York: Burt Franklin, 1971).
- Vives, Juan Louis. *On Education*. In Foster Watson (trans.). *Vives: On Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913.

Secondary Sources

- Asher, R. E. *National Myths in Renaissance France : Francus, Samothès and the Druids*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.
- Boran, Elizabethanne. “An Early Friendship Network of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, 1626-656”. In Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (ed.). *European Universities in the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998.
- Bradshaw, Brendon. “Geoffrey Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland”. In Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds). *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- _____. *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Breyley, Robert. *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999.

- Caball, Marc. "Religion, Culture and the Bardic Elite". In Alan Ford and John McCafferty (eds). *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Canny, Nicholas. *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- _____. *The Upstart Earl: A Study of the Social and Mental World of Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork, 1566-1643*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- _____. "The Formation of the Irish Mind: Religion, Politics and Gaelic Irish Literature 1580-1670", *P&P* 95 (1982).
- Clarke, Aidan. *The Old English in Ireland, 1625-42*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1966.
- Clarke, Howard B. *Pathfinders to the Past: The Antiquarian Road to Irish Historical Writing, 1640-1960*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012.
- Cunningham, Bernadette. *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000.
- _____. *The Annals of the Four Masters: Irish History, Kingship and Society in the Early Seventeenth Century*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010.
- _____. "Seventeenth-Century Constructions of the Historical Kingdom of Ireland". In Mark Williams and Stephen Paul (eds). *Constructing the Past: Writing Irish History, 1600-1800*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010).
- _____. "Representations of King, Parliament and the Irish People in Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* and John Lynch's *Cambrensis Eversus* (1662)". In Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed.). *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- _____ and Raymond Gillespie. *Stories from Gaelic Ireland: Microhistories from the Sixteenth-century Irish Annals*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003.
- _____. *Clanricarde and Thomond, 1540-1640: Provincial Politics and Society Transformed*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012.

- Davies, R. R. *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100-1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Davies, Wendy. "The Myth of the Celtic Church". In Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (eds). *The Early Church in Wales and the West: Recent Work in Early Christian Archaeology, History and Place Names*. Oxford: Oxbow, 1992.
- Ferguson, William. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.
- Finnegan, David. "Old English Views of Gaelic Irish History and the Emergence of an Irish Catholic Nation, c. 1569-1640". In Brian Mac Cuarta SJ (ed.). *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011.
- Ford, Alan. "Ussher and Irish History: *Britannicarum ecclesiarum antiquitates*", *James Ussher: Theology, History and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Gillespie, Raymond. "The Social Thought of Richard Bellings". In Micheál Ó Siochrú (ed.). *Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001.
- Hadfield, Andrew. *Edmund Spenser: A Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- _____. *Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Hayes-McCoy, G. A. "Conciliation, Coercion, and the Protestant Reformation, 1547-71". In T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds). *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- _____. "The Ecclesiastical Revolution, 1534-47", in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds). *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Huppert, George. *The Idea of Perfect History: Historical Erudition and Historical Philosophy in Renaissance France*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970.
- Jenkins, Philip. "Seventeenth-century Wales: Definition and Identity". In Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds). *British Consciousness and Identity: The*

- Making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Kidd, Colin. *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Lennon, Colm. *Richard Stanihurst the Dubliner, 1547-1618*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981.
- Lotz-Heumann, Ute. "Confessionalisation in Ireland: Periodisation and Character, 1534 - 1649". In Alan Ford and John McCafferty (eds). *The Origins of Sectarianism in Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Mac Cuarta SJ, Brian. "'Sword' and 'Word' in the 1610s: Matthew De Renzy and Irish Reform". In Brian Mac Cuarta SJ (ed.). *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011.
- Mason, Roger A. "Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Past". In Edward J. Cavan and Richard J. Finlay (eds). *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002.
- Meigs, Samantha A. *The Reformations in Ireland: Tradition and Confessionalism, 1400-1690*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997.
- Ó Buachalla, Brendan. "Annála Ríoghachta Éirinn: An Comhthéacs Comhaimseartha", *Studia Hibernica* 22-3 (1982 – 3).
- Ohlmeyer, Jane. *Making Ireland English: the Irish Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- _____. *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim, 1609-1683*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- _____. "Introduction: for God, King or Country? Political Thought and Culture in Seventeenth-century Ireland". In Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed.). *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- O'Malley, John W. *Trent: What Happened at the Council*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Ó Siochrú, Micheál. *Confederate Ireland, 1642-1649: A Constitutional and Political Analysis*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008.

- Padel, Oliver. "Christianity in Medieval Cornwall: Celtic Aspects", in Nicholas Orme (ed.). *A History of the County of Cornwall*, vol. 2, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010.
- Ross, James Bruce. *The Portable Renaissance Reader*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Silke, John J. "The Irish Abroad, 1534-1691". In T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds). *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Simms, Katherine. *From Kings to Warlords: The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987.
- _____. *Medieval Gaelic Sources*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009.
- Van Es, Bart. *Spenser's Forms of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.