Celtic Shakespeare

The Bard and the Borderers

Edited by

Willy Maley and Rory Loughnane

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Margaret Downs-Gamble's early research focused on manuscript transmission of John Donne's poetry. Subsequent research included the variant texts of Shakespeare's plays, the socio-political effect of oral, manuscript, print and digital transmission on various genres of early modern texts, and most recently the rhetorical constructions of Celtic peoples in early modern England. She first served as a professor at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, and is now at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. A founding member of the digital archive project with the John Donne Society, she is currently researching a book-length manuscript, 'Imagining Empire: Waging Rhetorical War against the Celts'.

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Acknowledgements

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Prologue
Díonbrollach: How Celtic Was Shakespeare?

John Kerrigan

The 2011 film of *Coriolanus*, directed by and starring Ralph Fiennes, was highly praised by reviewers. Many found themselves gripped by the intense, central performance; others were drawn in by Brian Cox's engaging Menenius and the cold, manipulative Volumnia of Vanessa Redgrave. What almost all agreed on was the energy that the movie picked up from its modern-dress, contemporary setting, with placard-wielding street protesters pitched against the army, and irregular forces led by Aufidius moving in on Rome. Released during the early stages of 'the Arab spring', the film caught for audiences the excitement and uncertainty of that revolutionary moment. It owed more, however, in its conception to the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Largely filmed in Belgrade, it presents Rome as a fragmenting centre, threatened by Aufidius's army of Volscians. CNN-style bulletins cut into the action with footage designed to recall the secession of Slovenia, the slide into war between Serbia and Croatia, and ethnic-religious brutality in Bosnia (a path that the Arab spring would follow, as unrest moved to Syria). To bring all this back to Shakespeare, and to a frame of reference appropriate for his British actors, Fiennes introduced reminders of another state breaking up. He cast an audibly accented Scot – Gerard Butler, b. Paisley, 1969 – as Aufidius, and the Northern Irish actor James Nesbitt (b. Ballymena, 1967) as one of the troublesome tribunes. Here was a centralized Rome challenged by a disorderly Celtic margin.

The idea that *Coriolanus* should join *Henry V*, *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* as a play caught up in the British problem had already been aired by scholars during the early to mid-2000s, at a time when the new British history was becoming lodged in Shakespeare studies. By then, no one could doubt that problematic features of the early modern state system were reflected in such works as *1 Henry IV* and *Macbeth*, set in turbulent phases of English, Welsh and Scottish history. The only question was how far the issue extended. Was the Cyprus of *Othello*, like Sycorax and Prospero's island in *The Tempest*, a version of Ireland? Was *Hamlet* a play about Scotland? – an old contention, revived. In the case of *Coriolanus*, the case could seem rather speculative, unduly allegorical. 'The play's Rome and Antium', Alex Garganigo observed, 'as states extremely close to one another and so alike in language, customs, and government as to be virtual mirror images, are very similar to England and Scotland. Like James, Coriolanus, after he defects to the Volscians, plans to unite the two states; … it would have been quite easy for

Englishmen to see James and his Scottish entourage as a kind of invading force'.[1] Looking for sharper contrasts, I argued that '*Coriolanus*, which works with London perceptions of Anglo-Scottish difference in the polarity that it establishes between the fractious, politically complex world of Rome and the more archaic, aristocratic, and militaristic milieu of the Volscians, responds to the stubbornness of MPs in the Commons (Tribunes of the people) during the union debate as it reached its climax in the parliamentary session of 1607'.[2]

Both lines of argument could be strengthened. Cathy Shrank has reinforced the case for seeing early modern London in civic, republican terms, underpinned by classical concepts, like the Rome of Coriolanus.[3] And the association between Scotland and martial, mercenary prowess – it is Coriolanus's tragedy that he becomes a mercenary leading the Volscians, with revenge as his reward – is brought out in *Celtic Shakespeare* by Vimala Pasupathi. Another fine piece in this book, by Stewart Mottram, on *Cymbeline*, underlines the importance of imperial, military power to the royal image of James VI and I, too often simplified in scholarship as a peace-maker. Part of his appeal to the English was that, by bringing in the martial Scots, he would strengthen Protestant Britain in its confrontation with Hapsburg Europe.

Evidence of this sort helps draw *Coriolanus* into the circle of archipelagically-marked texts which, in *Celtic Shakespeare*, has been enlarged beyond *1 Henry IV* and *Hamlet* to include *Venus and Adonis* as a poem that glints and echoes with reminders of the Irish wars (Thomas Herron), *As You Like It* as a comedy about English settlement in 'the cuntrie called the Ardes' (Chris Butler), and, as Rory Loughnane indicates, in an exceptionally valuable discussion, *Henry VIII* as a play that registers the significance of Wales in the Henrician polity. Other plays again are shown to have acquired an Irish dimension as a consequence of the way they figure and are refigured in later literary and cultural phenomena – as Willy Maley shows with *Othello*, and as Rob Doggett and Robin Bates demonstrate in W. B. Yeats's Celticizing of King Richard II and George Bernard Shaw's aggressive adaptation of *Cymbeline*.

As conjunctions with the Celtic, these are more or less persuasive instances, but of decidedly unlike kinds. They require different approaches from the critic and imply different relationships between text and history. With *Venus and Adonis* and *As You Like It*, as with Margaret Downs-Gamble's discussion of *Macbeth*, we are dealing with geopolitical and cultural implications that may have been clear to contemporaries but that now need careful excavation and retuning to bring out. Nicholas McDowell's weighty account of 'Milton's Shakespeare and the Wars of

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[1]   Alex Garganigo, '*Coriolanus*, the Union Controversy, and Access to the Royal Person', *Studies in English Literature*, 42 (2002): pp. 335–59, p. 340.

[2]   John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 18.

[3]   Cathy Shrank, 'Civility and the City in *Coriolanus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54 (2003): pp. 406–23.

the Three Kingdoms', like Doggett's essay on Yeats, looks at what polemic and critique could extract from the plays at high points of cultural controversy. When it comes to *Coriolanus*, the long process of reception and adaptation brought out what was merely traced into it when it was composed in the wake of the failed attempt by James to unite England/Wales and Scotland.

Rewind for a moment, to *Hamlet*. We can safely say that Saxo Grammaticus did not write up the story of Amleth to make medieval readers think about Mary Queen of Scots and the Elizabethan succession. The same goes for Belleforest, though his sixteenth-century version of the narrative is shot through with matters of state that Elizabethan readers would have found familiar. That Shakespeare recast what he found in the *Ur-Hamlet* to reflect Scottish and British issues is by now generally agreed. Yet those implications receded over the next couple of centuries. You do not find them – to go back to the movies – in Olivier's film, or in the all-inclusive epic directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh (b. Belfast, 1960). The issues could be reignited. You could cast Gerard Butler as Fortinbras (as Scottish as James VI). But the main point is that Shakespeare did not so much write a British-problem play called *Hamlet* as contribute to the transmission of the existing story by shaping a version which with whatever degree of purpose made Anglo-Scottish issues as they stood in 1600 accessible to his audience.

With *Coriolanus*, the principle is similar but the schedule is rather different. Shakespeare's main source, Plutarch's *Lives*, makes it clear that the Volscians follow Coriolanus in order to reclaim lands and cities that the Romans have taken from them and to secure the same rights in Rome that the Latin people had been granted. Coriolanus' life, in Plutarch as in Livy (a secondary source for the play), is thus a chapter in the story of Roman conquest and incorporation up and down the Italic peninsula. In the play we do not hear about the Tolerinians, Vicanians, Pedanians and Bolanians (supportive of Rome) that are mentioned by Plutarch. We are merely told by Cominius, when the Volscians advance with Coriolanus, that 'All the regions / Do smilingly revolt'.[4] This elision is one sign that Shakespeare was writing *Coriolanus* as a tragedy, not a late history play. But the politics of incorporation and resistance are sufficiently present in the tradition to which the play belongs for these background complexities to re-emerge when the British state system achieved in 1707 the union that James had sought a century earlier, only for the United Kingdom to suffer a series of Jacobite aftershocks. Hence the Celtic-edge issues raised by John Dennis's adaptation, *The Invader of His Country* (1720), by the Scot James Thomson's more free-standing *Coriolanus* (1749) and by Thomas Sheridan's Dublin version, *Coriolanus: Or, The Roman Matron* (1755) – long before Ralph Fiennes cast Gerard Butler and James Nesbitt.

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4   William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 4.6.108–9, quoting, as throughout, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997).

In his Dedication of the published text of *The Invader of His Country* to Thomas, Duke of Newcastle, Dennis bitterly regrets that his play had been denied performance the year before it appeared in print, i.e. in 1719, because 'it then had been most seasonable, when the Nation was in the uneasy Expectation of a Double Invasion from *Sweden* on the *North*, and from *Spain* on the *West* of *England*'.[5] As it happens, the Jacobite leaders landed with Spanish troops not in England but at Loch Duich in the Celtic, Western Highlands, where they tried, with little success, to re-ignite the loyalty of the clans to James Francis Edward Stuart, after the failure of the better-known 1715 rebellion. Both risings sought to undo the union of 1707 and to give the Celtic north and west of Scotland (as well as Catholic Ireland) rights that were being denied by the Hanoverian crown. The '15 is recalled in Dennis's Prologue, which praises those who resisted the Old Pretender and his Scottish and Irish supporters:

> For as when *Britain*'s Rebel Sons of late
> Combin'd with Foreign Foes t'invade the State,
> She to your Valour and your Conduct owes,
> That she subdued and crush'd her num'rous Foes:
> We shew, to Night, such Treasons to prevent,
> That their Guilt's follow'd by their Punishment, …

Fortunately this adaptation is not just a stream of Hanoverian propaganda. A voice is given to the Volscian cause that goes back through Shakespeare to his sources. When Volumnia (roughly as in Shakespeare) urges her son to 'reconcile the jarring Nations only', and not complete his assault on Rome, he says that to do so would betray the Volscians, who 'At least' seek 'Restitution of the Lands / The *Romans* so unjustly have usurp'd from them' (71). Overall, however, Dennis's writing is slanted against the Jacobitism of the Celtic periphery. Near the end of the play, Volumnia becomes a divinely inspired prophet of the Hanoverian *imperium*, enlarging to control 'all the Land around'. The Highlanders will be occluded and the Scots become North Britons:

> Even now the Years
> Come crouding on, for so the Gods inspire me,
> When *Rome* shall all the Land around possess,
> And even the Name of *Volscian* be no more. (78)

As the author of *Liberty* and 'Rule Britannia', James Thomson (b. Ednam, Roxburghshire, 1700) is usually classified as a North-British Whig. Politically that is where his allegiance lay, but culturally the picture is intricate. Links have been found between his English verse and Gaelic poetry;[6] he wrote his 'Elegy upon

5   John Dennis, *The Invader of His Country: Or, The Fatal Resentment* (London, 1720), A3r.

6   Derick S. Thomson, 'Gaelic Poetry in the Eighteenth Century: The Breaking of the Mould', in Cairns Craig (gen. ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, vol. 2: *1660–1800*,

James Therburn of Chatto' in Scots; and his reaction to the '45 showed some of the same sympathy for the people and the culture shot to pieces at Culloden that we find in that other North-British Whig, Tobias Smollett's *Tears of Scotland*. This is clear in his *Coriolanus*, which he began writing in 1742, but which he worked at until 1746 (it was first performed, posthumously, three years later). Even those who doubt that the tragedy was prompted by the Jacobite threat from the outset are inclined to agree that, 'having reviv'd the idea of writing a play on the subject of Coriolanus', Thomson 'took advantage of the increased public interest that the loose parallel of the historical situation offered'.[7] The analogy between Coriolanus leading a Volscian army to the gates of Rome, then falling out with his officers, and the Young Pretender leading Scottish and Irish troops from Glenfinnan as far south as Derby, only to disagree with his Council and petulantly blame his officers, is clear. But the lasting interest of the play lies in the motives given to the Volscians.

Thomson takes up Shakespeare's story about half-way through, with the Volscians poised to strike into Roman territory. The dialogue is elevated, neoclassical and diffuse, lacking Shakespeare's knotted austerity, and the play owes more to Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus than it does to Plutarch. But Thomson shares Plutarch's interest in the fate of the Italic peoples. With impressive Whig consistency, he indicates that it is not just those loyal to Hanoverian Rome who deserve liberty. This is why Tullus (Aufidius) resists a plan proposed by the Pythagorean Galesus to offer an easy peace to the Romans, in order to avoid bloodshed. We should assail tyranny and free mankind. Much better compel the Romans than try to curb them by treaties. His associate, Volusius, agrees. The Volsci should unite their cantons (who might be the pro-Jacobite clans), and learn from the fate of the Latins (who might be the Irish): 'Learn Wisdom from your Neighbours. Peace with *Rome* / Has quell'd the *Latines*, tam'd their free-born Spirit, / And by her Friendship honour'd them with Chains.' What we want, Tullus goes on, is 'Restitution of our conquer'd Cities, / And fair Alliance upon equal Terms'[8] – an equal alliance between the nations, as many had wanted in Scotland before the Act of Union, not the sort of incorporation that 1707 had brought about. Like the Jacobites, Volusius hopes that invasion from the lands all around will pitch Rome into civil war:

> It fast approaches now, the Hour of Vengeance,
> To this fam'd Land, to ancient *Latium* due.
> Unballanc'd *Rome*, at Variance with herself,
> To Order lost, in deep and hot Commotion,
> Stands on the dangerous Point of Civil War; … (10)

ed. Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 175–89, pp. 181–2.

7   John C. Greene (ed.), *The Plays of James Thomson 1700–1748*, 2 vols (New York: Garland Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. clxxxi. Cf. James Sambrook, *James Thomson, 1700–1748* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 256.

8   James Thomson, *Coriolanus* (Dublin, 1749), p. 9.

Unity against union is the aim. Tullus hopes that 'One Spirit may unite us in the Cause / Of generous Freedom, and our native Rights, / So long opprest by *Rome's* encroaching Power' (10).

The argument between peace and war is well advanced and suitably conflicted before Coriolanus arrives at Tullus' fireside. When he joins forces with the Volscians, there is a risk of Tullus slackening in his resolve, and Volusius urges him to stand by the ,cause of liberty. The effect is to drag out the issues. As Voltaire pungently noted, Thomson's tragedies 'want perhaps some fire; and it may be that his heroes are neither moving nor busy enough'.[9] In his leisurely way, however, Tullus is still a resistance leader, daring to tell Coriolanus that the Romans are no better than thieves. What the protagonist proposes in reply sounds exactly like the union that many Scots had rejected in 1707 and that the Jacobites opposed in 1745. He expects the approbation, the thanks, of the Volscian people, he says, because he

> will obtain them such a Peace
> As thou durst never ask; a perfect Union
> Of their whole Nation with imperial *Rome*
> In all her Privileges, all her Rights.
> By the just Gods, I will! What would'st thou more?
> TULLUS What would I more! Proud *Roman*; This I would;
> Fire the curst Forest where these *Roman* Wolves
> Haunt and infest their nobler Neighbours round them;
> Extirpate from the Bosom of this Land,
> A false perfidious People, who, beneath
> The Mask of Freedom, are a Combination
> Against the Liberty of Human-kind,
> The genuine Seed of Outlaws and of Robbers. (54)

It is a cultural as well as political stand-off. Defiantly, Coriolanus insists on the superiority of Rome. The civilized centre belongs to history, to progress, the periphery to torpor and darkness:

> 'Tis not for such as Thou, so often spar'd
> By her victorious Sword, to talk of *Rome*,
> But with Respect and awful Veneration.
> Whate'er her Blots, whate'er her giddy Factions,
> There is more Virtue in one single Year
> Of *Roman* Story, than your *Volscian* Annals
> Can boast thro' all your creeping dark Duration! (54)

This dichotomy has proved destructive in almost every war with a colonial aspect from Anglo-Powhatan Virginia to Israel/Palestine. Thomson is too caught up in the values of Whig Britain to denigrate Rome's empire of liberty. Veturia, for instance – Shakespeare's Volumnia – is plainly to be admired when she tells her

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[9]   Quoted in Greene (ed.), *Plays of James Thomson*, vol. 1, p. xiii.

son that she will take her own life 'while Rome is free' rather than see him become the city's 'Tyrant' (51). Relatedly, at the end of the play, Galesus, who has risen to power after the murder of Coriolanus by Tullus and Volusius, pays tribute to the dead protagonist but sees him as, like the Young Pretender, justly punished (by his allies and followers) for leading an invasion of his own country. As the final authority of Galesus shows, however, Thomson does keep up a flow of sympathy towards the Volscians. The Druidical Pythagorean shows what priestly wisdom can be found among those denied a place in history by the imperial centre.

I have been quoting from the Dublin edition of Thomson's play – it was published more or less simultaneously in London – but we can be more Irish about it. His *Coriolanus* intersects with Shakespeare's most fully in the version of the tragedy staged in Dublin by the Irish actor, dramatist and theatre-manager Thomas Sheridan (b. Dublin, c. 1719). The son of Swift's close friend, Dr Sheridan, and father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, he had by the 1740s a record of putting on plays with Irish content that points beyond a desire to please local audiences to an interest in what Irishness amounted to and how it related to England. Captain O'Blunder, the title-role of his two-act farce, *The Brave Irishman* (1737, perf. London 1746) has been described by Joep Leerssen as the first '*counter*-Stage Irishman', stocked with conventional traits but not losing the audience's approval when pitched into metropolitan society. He has 'a brogue, bulls, a shillelagh, a predilection for stealing kisses from handsome servant girls, a tendency to burst into song'.[10] O'Blunder makes his rival, the conceited Frenchman Monsieur Ragou, eat a 'Praty',[11] like Fluellen forcing Pistol to eat a leek. He has himself, as people keep saying, a potato face, and he is agreeably proud of his 'Eshtate, at *Ballmascushlain*, in the County of *Monaghan*, and the *Baronry* of *Coogafigby*' (22). It is a warm, diverting play, popular in Dublin but also well-judged for export.

The indulgent treatment of O'Blunder hardly proves Sheridan a cultural nationalist, but the reputation that he acquired after the riot that attended the revival in his theatre of Voltaire's *Mahomet* in 1754, for being a stooge of Dublin Castle, who sought to quash the repetition of speeches that were critical of the administration, simplifies his position. He did show loyalty to the Crown. After the Battle of Culloden, this son of a Jacobite sympathizer spoke a prologue 'on the Occasion of the glorious and happy Victory … over the Rebels in Scotland'. A bonfire and a barrel of ale were set up outside the theatre to celebrate Cumberland's success.[12] But the mixed nature of Sheridan's audience, which included Catholic gentlemen prickly about their status[13] and Protestant radicals like his friend

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[10] Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century* (1986; Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p. 116.

[11] Thomas Sheridan, *The Brave Irishman: Or, Captain O'Blunder* (Dublin, 1746), p. 20.

[12] Esther K. Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock-Alley* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 68.

[13] See the Kelly riot of 1747, discussed by Sheldon, *Sheridan*, pp. 82–106.

Charles Lucas, as well as Hanoverian loyalists, would have encouraged him whatever his opinions to produce plays that accommodated different points of view. His 'Declaration' after the *Mahomet* riot, that theatre should aim for 'strict Neutrality'[14] commends this stance as a matter of principle. Most likely, as Fintan O'Toole says, an appearance of orthodoxy went along with 'patriot' sympathies.[15] If, on the one hand, Sheridan was staging such dull, blameless spectaculars as *Hibernia's Triumph* to entertain the Lord Lieutenant ('Enter *Liberty*, *Peace*, *Commerce* and *Plenty*'),[16] on the other he was mixing with the 'country party' and raising money – around the date of the first performance of *Coriolanus* in February 1752 – for a monument to 'that glorious Patriot … Jonathan Swift'.[17]

Sheridan had planned to stage Thomson's play in 1749, but he fell ill and was then discouraged by its reception at Covent Garden. When he returned to the material a couple of years later, he dovetailed Shakespeare's with Thomson's text, alternating passages. It sounds like a clumsy procedure, but the adaptation still reads well, and it became the basis of most productions of *Coriolanus* until the nineteenth century, even though, when it was first performed in London, in 1755, the audience had a chance to sample the fully Shakespearean text that was being performed in another theatre by Garrick. Sheridan knew what he was working with. A large part of the Smock Alley repertoire under his management was made up of Shakespeare plays; he performed 18 leading roles himself.[18] Craftsmanship alone, however, does not account for the success of *Coriolanus* in Dublin, where it played for five nights on opening and was subsequently revived. It was helped by political ferment, with patriots objecting to the placing of Englishmen in government posts, and to Irish revenues going to London – unionism without consent. Not long after the premiere of *Coriolanus* this controversy came to a head in the Money Bill dispute (1753–55).

More immediately, a context was set by explicit argument about union, after the suppression of the '45. Lord Hillsborough's treatise, *A Proposal for Uniting the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland* had been published in 1751. It immediately elicited an *Answer* that noted, among other points, that union had not pacified North Britain, 'since every Attempt at his Majesty's Crown takes its Rise from [Scotland] and may, probably, be owing in a good Degree to the

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[14]   Thomas Sheridan, *A Vindication of the Conduct of the Late Manager of the Theatre-Royal* (Dublin, 1754), quoted by Sheldon, *Sheridan*, p. 202.

[15]   Fintan O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss: The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London: Granta Books, 1997), p. 19.

[16]   *Hibernia's Triumph: A Masque … Written in Honour of King William III* (Dublin, 1749), p. 6.

[17]   Sheldon, *Sheridan*, p. 180.

[18]   See Esther K. Sheldon, 'Sheridan's *Coriolanus*: An Eighteenth-Century Compromise', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14 (1963): pp. 153–61, p. 153; Sheldon, *Sheridan*, esp. pp. 155–60.

Union itself'.[19] This clearly bears on the injection of such Thomson lines into the play as Coriolanus' promise, 'I will obtain [for the Volscians] a perfect union / Of their whole nation with imperial Rome'.[20] When Tullus calls the Romans 'the genuine seed of outlaws and of robbers' (75), he may not belong to the patriotic line put together by Wolfe Tone out of 'Roger O'Moore, Molyneux, Swift and Dr. Lucas, all good Irishmen'.[21] The play pre-dates the full-blown patriot programme of Grattan. But it shows that opposition was in the air, both Jacobite disaffection – recently highlighted by Éamonn Ó Ciardha[22] – and 'country party' disgruntlement.

That Sheridan believed that Scottish warfare and the question of union with England would interest his Dublin audience is shown less directly by *Coriolanus* than by his production of John Home's *Douglas* in 1757, after it had been rejected by Garrick in London.[23] To the consternation of Dr Johnson, Sheridan had a medal struck for Home 'for his having enriched the Stage with a Perfect Tragedy'.[24] Johnson's disapproval of *Douglas* may have been partly impelled by his Scotophobia. Successfully premiered in Edinburgh ('Weel lads; what think you of Wully Shakespeare now?'), it became a favourite with the Irish Volunteers, published in Dublin, Belfast and Newry and performed in Limerick and Galway.[25] This is but one strand of a tangled fabric of Scottish-Irish cultural connection that developed in the mid- to late eighteenth century, from controversy about the origins of Ossian to the use of Jacobite iconography by the United Irishmen – all of which built up the infrastructure of what became known as 'the Celtic Fringe'. It is in that context that *Coriolanus* came to matter for this volume.

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Yet is this *Celtic* Shakespeare? Is it not better described – like much else in this collection – as *archipelagic* Shakespeare? What do *Coriolanus*, *As You Like It* or *Henry VIII* have to do with misty glens, banshees, Welsh harps, the Glasgow football team and everything else we now call Celtic? Some distinctions are in order. In the early modern period, the word 'Celtic' identified the people found by the Romans in Gaul, their French-speaking successors, and by extension, thanks to Julius Caesar's observation that the tribes of *Britannia* resembled the Gauls, the

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[19] Anon., *An Answer to the Late Proposal for Uniting the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin, 1751), p. 48.

[20] Thomas Sheridan, *Coriolanus: Or, The Roman Matron* (London, 1755), p. 75.

[21] Theobald Wolfe Tone, *Memoirs*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), vol. 1, p. 263.

[22] See his *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), ch. 6.

[23] On *Douglas* and the union see my *Archipelagic English*, p. 357.

[24] Sheldon, *Sheridan*, pp. 228–9.

[25] Robert Crawford, 'The Bard: Ossian, Burns, and the Shaping of Shakespeare', in Willy Maley and Andrew Murphy (eds), *Shakespeare and Scotland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 124–40, p. 128; Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 70.

British Celts (Boudica, Caratacus, etc.), who were agreed to have been pushed into what became Wales by the Saxons. Some believed that the Celtic Britons survived in the Scottish Highlands, while affinities were found between the Gaelic Irish and the ancient British (though Scythian and Iberian origins were also posited for the Irish). Those interested in language, such as Edmund Campion, noting similarities between Irish and Scottish Gaelic and what remained of the Brittonic tongue, were particularly inclined to think of the Ur-British as ancestors of the Gaels. So Celtic was a shifting category, with several aspects, not yet gelling into the nineteenth-century belief that there was an ethnically distinct, pan-Celtic zone running from Brittany up through Cornwall, Wales and Ireland to the Western Isles and the Highlands.

Shakespeare nowhere uses the word 'Celt' or its cognates, and it would clearly be an exaggeration to say that ideas about the Celtic shaped his view of the world in the way a later Celticism furnished the imagination of early Yeats and Hugh MacDiarmid. Yet the words 'Celt' and 'Celtic' are common enough in the work of his contemporaries – including Spenser and Drayton – and this collection establishes that, for educated members of the early modern audience as well as for Shakespeare, the multifaceted category of the Celtic underlay, cut across and compounded with other ways of understanding history and identity. Often Celtic is a relatively simple, geopolitical term, referring to France. At other times the Celtic lies deep in the classical past. Yet when Milton, for instance, describes Comus (the son of Bacchus and Circe) 'Roaving the *Celtick*, and *Iberian* fields' before he 'betakes him to this ominous Wood' near Ludlow,[26] there is an implication of Welsh-Celtic magic and Irish otherness that is no less immediate for being ancient.

There are, broadly speaking, two consequences. First, to think about Celtic Shakespeare reminds us how misleading it is to confine archipelagic accounts of his drama to the three kingdoms of England/Wales, Scotland and Ireland – a set-up already open to the objection that it is a back-projection from the modern state system. The essays in this volume – including Philip Schwyzer's probing analysis of the Bretons/Britons in *Richard III* – show that Celtic France and Brittany (like Norway and Denmark, in another permutation) were part of Shakespeare's archipelago. The French and the Irish kernes (the latter added to his sources by Shakespeare)[27] are mutual, Celtic enemies of England in *1–2 Henry VI*; France, Scotland and Brittany ('Brittaine')[28] are points of contest in *Edward III*; in *Henry V*, we are not just looking at England and its Celtic frenemies Jamy's Scotland, Fluellen's Wales and MacMorris's Ireland, but at the intimate other, France, whose Salic Law, Willy Maley and Rory Loughnane suggest, in their vital, informative introduction to this book, would have had Celtic overtones.

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[26]   John Milton, 'A Mask … Presented at Ludlow-Castle', in *Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin* (London, 1645), pp. 67–120, p. 78.

[27]   See *2 Henry VI*, 4.8.25–31.

[28]   William Shakespeare et al., *The Raigne of King Edward the Third* (London, 1596), A4v, D3v (where 'faire Brittayne' does mean Britain), I4v.

Second, and more sharply, to focus on the Celtic reminds us of the distinctness of identities around the edges of Elizabethan England that were not readily absorbable into James VI and I's 'Great Britain'. The Welsh-language dialogue and song of Mortimer's wife, the Gaelic-like babble of the witches in *Macbeth*, MacMorris's turbulence in *Henry V*, when he threatens to behead Fluellen: these cannot be elided into a three-kingdoms geometry. In the older scholarly literature, such as J. O. Bartley's *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney* (1954), Shakespeare is seen as reproducing stereotypes. *Celtic Shakespeare* helps us grasp how actively he made drama out of contrasts, highlighting the strangeness of the Celt, even when, as Andrew Power shows in his astute essay on *Macbeth*, he used non-Celtic sources (in this case, Seneca) to characterize what was strange.

Certainly the genealogy of Shakespeare's Celts – from Arviragus and Guiderius with their old British harp and mountain life-style through late-medieval Glendower and his daughter to Parson Evans in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* – is variously marked as not-English throughout. The effect is very different from what Colin Kidd has found in the learned literature. As he demonstrates in *British Identities before Nationalism* (1999), the common descent of the peoples of Northern Europe from Biblical Japhet is the usual theme:

> The Celts were commonly identified with the posterity of Gomer, son of Japhet. The British Celts of Wales were almost exclusively linked to Gomer, but the Gaels of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, while sometimes located within the Gomerian family tree, were often associated instead with the Scythian lineage of Magog, another of Japhet's sons. The Germanic and Gothic peoples tended to be traced either to Ashkenaz, son of Gomer, or to Magog. Despite the fluidity and indeterminacy in the taxonomies generated by ethnic theology, it is possible to probe networks of ethnic affinity which were dramatically different from the categories forged later in the nineteenth century by the secularising disciplines of philology and racialist ethnology. Two paradigms existed in which the Celt was kindred to the Teuton, rather than the 'other'. Either the Gomerians and Ashkenazian Germans were yoked together in one system, or in the other the Gaels and the Magogian Goths shared the same ethnic roots.[29]

It is true that Shakespeare does not present a consistent, racialized contrast between Celts and Saxons. In *1 Henry IV*, *Henry V* and even *Cymbeline*, Welshness, Irishness and Scottishness are pieces of a patchwork in which we find not a single, English norm but the North Country downrightness of Hotspur, the Eastcheap argot of Pistol, the Italianate guile of Iachimo, and so on.

Even so, he does invoke an ethnically loaded Celtic/Saxon dichotomy. As Schwyzer points out, Richard III whips up opposition to 'the Breton', 'the Welshman' Richmond[30] by exploiting the conjunction between Bretons and

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[29]   Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 61.

[30]   *Richard III*, 4.3.40, 4.4.407.

Britons that has been obscured by editors (who emend or split the ambiguous term 'Britaines'). Richard pitches his followers against invaders who are objectionable because they are Bretons from across the channel – as bad as the French – but also because they are Britons in the Elizabethan sense of being Welsh:

> Remember whom you are to cope withal:
> A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
> A scum of Bretons [Britons] and base lackey peasants, …
> Let's whip these stragglers o'er the seas again,
> Lash hence these overweening rags of France,
> ….
>   *Drum afar off*
>   Hark, I hear their drum.
> Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight, bold yeomen! (5.6.45–68)

This double slur against the Armoric, Breton Celts and the Cambrian Celts is designed to rally Englishmen around the last Saxon king of England. The next monarch of England and Wales and lord of Ireland would be a Welsh Briton who was also Celtic-French (Henry VII was descended from Owen Tudor and Henry V's widow, Catherine of Valois). On his accession, in line with Merlin's prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth, the fountains of Brittany no doubt gushed forth, Cambria was full of joy, and the island of the Saxons and the Celts was called by the name of Brutus.[31]

Remember Hotspur on Glendower:

>   Sometime he angers me
> With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
> Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
> And of a dragon and a finless fish,
> A clip-winged griffin and a moulten raven, … (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.144–8)

Everyone knows about the Welshness of the Tudors, inheritors, according to Elizabethan panegyrists, of the imperial crown of the ancient British king, Arthur. What Professor Schwyzer's essay points to is a broader-than-Welsh Celtic context, one that, in Galfridian terms, sets the history plays in the perspective of an almost apocalyptic struggle between the Red Dragon of the Celts and the White Dragon of the Saxons. In this, *Richard III* is not unique. Schwyzer notes, for example, the suggestiveness of the name of Prince Arthur in *King John*, associated with both Brittany and the ancient, noble Britons. The transition of 1603 starts to look less significant. Long before *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare was writing British plays with a Celtic edge.

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[31]   Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Bk VII, ch. iii; *The British History … From the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth*, trans. Aaron Thompson (London, 1718), p. 212.

The connection between Wales and Brittany would be strengthened. As intellectual historians have noted, there was an early eighteenth-century watershed in the historiography of the Celts. At Oxford, the Welsh polymath Edward Lhuyd – following the pioneering, philological example of George Buchanan – explored the remains of ancient Britain and brought out continuities and P- and Q-Celtic distinctions between Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, the Ireland that he visited in search of bardic manuscripts, and Gaelic Scotland.[32] At the same time, in Paris, the Breton-born Cistercian, Paul-Yves Pezron argued for the common origins of the Welsh and the Bretons. Pezron reinforced the belief that the Celts were descended from Gomer, and claimed that folk memories of a mighty European Celtic empire survived in the myth of the Titans. Philologically, he maintained that the Welsh and the Bretons shared a common language, passed down from Gomer. This foreshadowing of pan-Celticism did not, however, lead Pezron sharply to distinguish between Celts and Teutons. Gomer was the father of Ashkenaz, founder of the German race. Thinking of this sort fed easily into the Saxon-Celtic antiquarianism of the English. Pezron's *L'Antiquité de la nation, et de la langue des Celtes* (1703) was promptly translated[33] and widely read, and it laid some of the foundations of the Celtic Revivals to come.

There had been earlier Celtic Revivals, of a sort, in eighth-century saints' lives, medieval romance and the Reformation rediscovery of the early British church. We can say, however, for the sake of simplicity, that, if the period between Spenser and Milton gave us Celtic 1, Edward Lluhd and the Abbé Pezron take us to Celtic 1.1. Celtic 2 is a later, British phenomenon, emerging after, and to some extent in response to, the Jacobite rising of 1745. The story is well known, though its implications for Shakespeare are less familiar. Macpherson gathers (or forges) Ossian in 1760. In Wales, Evan Evans digs out manuscripts of *Y Gododdin* and Taliesin, and publishes, to the acclaim of such English men of letters as Dr Johnson, *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards* (1764). In Ireland, the Protestant Ascendancy was developing an interest in Gaelic antiquities; with the help of Irish-speaking, Catholic scholars Charlotte Brooke published her *Reliques of Irish Poetry* in 1789. It was during this period that the word 'Celtic' developed its Romantic atmospherics. But although Celtic 2 involved imitation and emulation between the four nations, there was not yet the full-blown pan-Celticism that would be a feature of late nineteenth-century Europe, with its Celtic congresses. Nor should we necessarily look for separatist sentiment. Evans explores the Welshness of an early medieval British world, highlighting the epic poetry and heroism of the old, Celtic north of England. Macpherson celebrates the Highlands as preserving an archaic, Romantic Britishness.

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[32] See his *Archaeologia Britannica: Giving Some Account … of the Languages, Histories and Customs of the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain* (Oxford, 1707).

[33] *The Antiquities of Nations; More Particularly of the Celtae or Gauls, Taken to be Originally the Same People as Our Ancient Britains*, trans. David Jones (London, 1706).

The effect of all this on the English was not merely to encourage the use of Celtic subject matter, as in Gray's 'The Death of Hoel', 'The Triumphs of Owen' and 'The Bard'. There was an appeal to England's own antiquity, most notably in the publication of Percy's *Reliques* (1765), and this is part of the envelope within which Shakespeare became 'the Bard'. As Robert Crawford notes, in a precursor volume to *Celtic Shakespeare*, Shakespeare acquired this title in the wake of the Ossian craze.[34] It would oversimplify, however, to see him becoming 'the Bard' as a Percy-like backdating of his role as the English national poet. His eighteenth-century elevation has too often been regarded as an epiphenomenon of English nationalism. He was the better able to represent England because he could stand in for an increasingly imperial, expansionist Britain (the princes of *Cymbeline*, Prospero and Caliban). And of course such a vision would be anodyne – as well as ill-adapted to the realities of the '45 and unrest in Ireland – if there were not a place in it for the irregular Celticism of Glendower and Lady Macbeth. For this reason, Shakespeare was not just called, like Burns, 'the Bard', but 'the Bard of Avon', a phrase which, as Maley and Loughnane point out, combines two Celtic words (*bardd yr afon*, 'the poet of the river').

The barding of Shakespeare during Celtic 2 was residually Galfridian. It is as though the archaic, Celtic elements in his work (the Red Dragon) began to assert themselves against Shakespeare as the spirit of English history. Prince Hal and Falstaff met their match in Garrick's Macbeth. The parallel that could be drawn between Shakespeare and the structure of the state, as an English dramatist (of the 1590s) who became British as the English crown became British, and who would become more British after the Acts of Union and the growth of empire, remained viable for a long time. Ted Hughes reanimates it with Jungian energy in *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* and his laureate poems about the Royal Family. Celtic 3, however, brought Shakespeare into conjunction with Wales and Ireland in equally potent, long-lasting ways. Seamus Deane finds the beginnings of this Celtic Revival in Burke.[35] Howsoever that may be, it was visibly initiated in (the Breton) Renan's 'Sur la poésie des races celtiques' (1854) and carried into English by Arnold's Oxford lectures, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), a much-discussed work which, as Rob Doggett reminds us in his essay in this collection, went on to inform Yeats's vision of Richard II as an honorary Celt.

This is a bizarre interpretation. Richard leads an invasion of Ireland, and he makes no secret of his contempt for the 'rough rug-headed kerns, / Which live like venom where no venom else / But only they have privilege to live' (2.1.157–9). When Arnold says that 'Germanic England would not have produced a Shakespeare', that 'perhaps one is inclined to be always looking for the Celtic

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[34]   Crawford, 'The Bard'.
[35]   Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880–1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), ch. 1.

note in him',[36] he is using the Bard of Avon in his campaign to sweeten, enlighten and patronize what he regarded as philistine, middle-class England, and it is to this that Yeats responds as he reacts against the money-making, unionist ethos of Protestant, Victorian Dublin. As so often with Celtic 3, 'the Celtic note' turns out to be an inversion of 'English' values. Arnold was inspired by (another Breton) La Villemarqué's *Barzaz Breiz* (1839) and by Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion* (1849), but the Celtic Shakespeare that he handed down owes little to the corpus of Celtic writing that was being recovered by French and German philologists. We should not forget, however, that one purpose of his lectures was to encourage the foundation of chairs of Celtic.[37] Though he infamously looked forward to 'The fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogenous, English-speaking whole', anticipating with equanimity the disappearance of Welsh-speaking from Wales, as Cornish had disappeared before it, he wanted scholars to explore Celtic culture as it had been before Anglicization set in.[38] You could call it Celtic 4 or Celtic Zero, the newest and oldest Celticism of all.

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At which point, where is Shakespeare? How much contact did he have with the far-flung Celtic domains around the early modern archipelago? Many have noted the probability that he was taught by a Welsh schoolmaster, the Catholic Thomas Jenkins, in Stratford. One of his likely patrons, as we shall see, was the bilingual Denbighshire magnate and poet, Sir John Salusbury. After 1603, some contact with Gaelic-speaking lairds at court can be assumed in a leading member of the King's Men. Less plausibly, it has been proposed that he went to Ireland during the 1580s, or was himself – when not busy being Sir Francis Bacon or the Earl of Oxford – an Irishman. The suggestive yield of such speculations should not be entirely dismissed, but it is more sustainable in poetry and drama than in academic discourse.

In Frank McGuinness's play *Mutabilitie* (1997), for instance, William does go to Ireland, at some point in the 1590s, ahead of the climax of the Munster rebellion. His arrival, in the company of the actors Ben and Richard, fulfils the prophecy of the File that 'a man shall come from a river' and 'sing the song of all songs, … Bard meaning poet / River meaning aibhne'.[39] The Bard of Avon tries out a version of Sonnet 18 with the File, who supplies him with the poem's last line (23–4), and something like the love juice of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is heard about in folk belief (25) – 'He shall speak our stories' the File predicts (35). William also

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[36] Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960–77), vol. 3, pp. 291–386, pp. 341, 378.

[37] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p. 386.

[38] Ibid., pp. 296–7.

[39] Frank McGuinness, *Mutabilitie* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 2.

visits Edmund the epic poet, whose household at Kilcolman has been infiltrated by rebels. His outlook remains Protestant – whereas William is a papist, sharing a sensibility with the Irish – and he is devoted to the Marian substitute, Gloriana, the fairy queen. 'What is my nation?', Edmund asks (51), to which William flatly replies 'England', giving a simpler answer than MacMorris – who asks the same question in *Henry V* – has received from the scholars.

How far does McGuinness lead us to a Celtic Shakespeare? That the plot of *King Lear* has Irish and Welsh analogues hardly advances the case. What of the language question? There are scraps of Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic in the plays: Pistol's '*Calin o custure me!*' sounds like garbled Irish, and Jaques's 'Ducdame' might be Irish *an dtiocfaidh* or a Welsh phrase meaning 'come hither'.[40] In *1 Henry IV*, Glendower and his daughter both speak, as she sings, in Welsh. *Macbeth* includes Gaelic names. Given that the Oxford and Norton editions change the Glendower of early editions to Glyndŵr, why not read Mac Bethad for Macbeth, Scoine for Scone, and so on, which would present a more Celtic Shakespeare? Reviewing the Irish-language evidence, Michael Cronin concludes that the 'plays contain within them attitudes towards language difference, particularly with respect to the Celtic rim, that are by no means triumphalist and homogeneous'.[41] His is a perceptive, linguistically inward account. Yet it has to be weighed against the arguments of Patricia Palmer, who deplores attempts by monoglot, Anglophone critics schooled in post-colonialism and the British problem to say things about Shakespeare and Ireland without investigating the Gaelic sources that show how far his representations of the Celtic start from and loop back to early modern English preconceptions.

Palmer's essays on 'Missing Bodies, Absent Bards' and on 'Writing the Beheading' are among the richest comparative discussions in the field.[42] Rather than re-vamp our readings of Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland* and MacMorris's lines in *Henry V*, she urges, we should tap into Irish-language material. The advice is sound, but Palmer begs questions in turn:

> It is important to recognise that the comedy of Fluellen's and MacMorris' speech is not just a comedy of dialect. Phonetically, syntactically, and idiomatically, their speech is marked by their first languages, by Welsh and Irish. Yet the play manages to shrink down all the complexity of cultural alignment and worldview entailed in linguistic difference to the merely comic status of differences in dialect. But behind the blathering Fluellen, behind blustering MacMorris, is

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[40]   *Henry V*, 4.4.4; *As You Like It*, 2.5.48–53.

[41]   Michael Cronin, 'Rug-headed Kerns Speaking Tongues: Shakespeare, Translation and the Irish Language', in Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (eds), *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 193–212, p. 201.

[42]   For significant, relevant work by Spenserians see Richard A. McCabe, *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment: Elizabethan Ireland and the Poetics of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 2, Thomas Herron, *Spenser's Irish Work: Poetry, Plantation and Colonial Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. chs 8–9.

another language. Out there in those unacknowledged Celtic languages are worlds that the English text can only caricature but never lead us to. Nor, equally importantly, can any amount of deconstructive critical play lead us there either. It can only bring us, yet again, to a vanishing point.[43]

We could dispute at length how far language difference is 'merely comic' in *Henry V*. More immediately, how do we know that Fluellen and MacMorris – who seem to be granted here a life beyond the text – have Welsh and Irish as their first languages? The question matters in relation to Palmer's larger outlook, in which bilingualism, cultural mixing and shared élite values in divided Ireland and beyond are played down.

Fluellen I shall return to. As for MacMorris, as Stephen O'Neill insists in the final chapter of this book, we have heard enough about him for now,[44] and should be investigating (as Palmer partly does) the representation of Irishness in works by Shakespeare's contemporaries. But it would be good, before we leave him, to have, if not a clearer answer to the question 'What ish my nation?' (3.3.61) then a better appreciation of how Shakespeare, as a dramatist rather than a lecturer on early modern nationalism, pitched the lines and body language of MacMorris to leave his question open, if indeed answerable. For Shakespeare, as for MacMorris, the question is a *challenge*. It has been argued that he should be taken as a New Englishman, from a settler family, who would have had limited if any Irish and who would be insulted to be considered not English. More likely, given that 'MacMorris' is a Gaelicized version of Anglo-Norman 'Fitzmaurice', he should be taken as Old English. In which case, English marked with Gaelic speech patterns would still be his likeliest first language, and loyalty to the Crown his unreliable posture.

What of the language said to be 'behind' his English? In 'Missing Bodies' Palmer makes acute, evocative use of a praise-poem by Domhnall Mac Dáire and of Eochaidh Ó hEóghusa's 'Fúar liom an adhaighsi dh'Aodh' ('On Maguire's Winter Campaign') – showing, with the latter, how little Shakespeare's depiction of Henry V and his run-down troops before Agincourt resembles the depiction of a Munster rebel c. 1600 (in this case, Hugh Maguire), whatever literary criticism might claim.[45] Yet bardic poetry, at this date, was a broad, evolving phenomenon, plastic in its use of conventions, not a quasi-anthropological record of 'native', Gaelic experience. Like the English verse which sometimes impressed it,[46] it was absorbing Renaissance humanism. It shows the effects of the Counter

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[43] Patricia Palmer, 'Missing Bodies, Absent Bards: Spenser, Shakespeare and a Crisis in Criticism', *English Literary Renaissance*, 36 (2006): pp. 376–95, pp. 384–5.

[44] Notwithstanding which, see the start and finish of my 'Oaths, Threats and *Henry V*', *Review of English Studies*, 63 (2012): pp. 551–71.

[45] Her target is Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 143.

[46] See Marc Caball, *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1558–1625* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), p. 4, citing articles by Mícheál Mac Craith.

Reformation, which sought to make common cause between English papists like McGuinness's William, or Nicholas Sander joining the rebels near Smerwick, and Irish Catholics.[47] In their search for patronage, the bards were not just loyal to the likes of Maguire. They praised New English landowners and their wives (e.g. Margaret Stafford) as they had earlier come to praise the Old English, using devices employed to celebrate the Old Irish élite. It would not be long before Tadhg Ó Dálaigh was acclaiming (c. 1618), in traditional terms, that enemy of the Munster rebels, George Carew.[48]

What of language and nation? The force-field was shifting during and after the Nine Years War, but the *filí* did not have a Romantic-period belief that their language should be identified with the spirit of the nation. Their attachments were often local, to the *tuath*, and they praised values and attributes that were shared by English, Welsh and Scottish élites.[49] It would be stretching a point to say that the willingness of Eochaidh Ó hEóghusa (the poet of 'Maguire's Winter Campaign') and Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, in 'Mór theasda dh'obair Óivid' and 'Trí coróna i gcairt Shéamais', to greet the accession of James VI and I resembled that of Shakespeare in Sonnet 107. As Breandán Ó Buachalla has shown, however, they viewed the advent of a monarch with*f* a Gaelic pedigree as propitious.[50] 'An ghrian lionneardha do las …', 'The brilliant sun lit up', writes Ó hEóghusa: 'King James is the dispersal of all mist: / the joint mourning of all he changed to glory; / great the signs of change.' Just as *Macbeth* leans towards identifying James with Saxon ancestry and Anglicization (through Malcolm), as though the Scottish king were claiming the three kingdoms on an English footing, so 'Trí coróna i gcairt Shéamais' sees him as having authority in 'red-sworded Ireland' by right of his origins, not by virtue of his ruling out of London.[51]

As for Palmer's beheading essay, it shows that early modern English accounts of the Irish as wilful, brutal decapitators, who played football with men's heads, was a distortion of the atrocities in Ireland: 'far from being the exclusive sport of the wild Irish, this was a game which all sides played.'[52] The English pursued a policy of hacking the heads off rebels to display them on spikes and battlements as the punishment due to traitors, but also, one could speculate, to revenge and

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[47]   On Dr Sander see Christopher Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 131–7.

[48]   Caball, *Poets and Politics*, pp. 118–23.

[49]   On the values and attributes of the élites see e.g. Brendan Kane, *The Politics and Culture of Honour in Britain and Ireland, 1541–1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[50]   See his essay 'James our True King: The Ideology of Irish Royalism in the Seventeenth Century', in D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political Thought in Ireland since the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 7–35.

[51]   Quoting the texts and translations in Caball, *Poets and Politics*, pp. 85–9.

[52]   Patricia Palmer, '"An Headlesse Ladie" and "A Horses Loade of Heades": Writing the Beheading', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60 (2007): pp. 25–57, p. 26.

expel the fear instilled in them by the decapitating reputation of the Irish. For Palmer, the Irish reverence for severed heads is more profound than the English pursuit of terror: 'For the pre-Christian Celts, the severed head gave access to the sacred' (48). She cites Brian Ó Gnímh's elegy on the death, in 1586, of Alasdair Mac Somhairle Mac Domhnall, one the MacDonalds of Antrim and the Isles, as drawing on 'a complex tradition of writing that gave expression to both the haunting liminality of the severed head and its inalienable humanity' (48).

The entire discussion sheds light on a notorious passage in Spenser's *View* about the head of Murrogh O'Brien:

> at the execution of a notable traitor at Limericke, called Murrogh O-Brien, I saw an old woman which was his foster mother, take up his head, whilst he was quartered, and sucked up all the blood that runne thereout, saying, that the earth was not worthy to drinke it, and therewith also steeped her face and breast, and tore her haire, crying and shrieking most terribly.[53]

Spenser is repelled, and aims to make the reader so. To be aware of the Irish-language sources, and the Celtic history behind them, is to be inoculated against his propaganda. As Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin puts it, 'That demented hag speaks for a culture of intimate bonds, of bodily and verbal affections that we know closely with our tongues because we know the language and the poetic shapes, the keening formulae and the bardic idiom of praise, which gave them expression.'[54]

Do these accounts of English-Celtic difference put Irish materials at a further remove from Shakespeare, as Eochaidh Ó hEóghusa's poem about Maguire leads away from *Henry V*? There is a case for saying that, on the contrary, they tell us more about *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*. Consider the bloody sergeant:

> The merciless Macdonald –
> Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
> The multiplying villainies of nature
> Do swarm upon him – from the Western Isles
> Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied,
> And fortune on his damnèd quarry smiling
> Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak,
> For brave Macbeth …
> … unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,
> And fixed his head upon our battlements. (1.2.9–23)

This asks to be recalled at the end of the tragedy, when Macduff enters displaying Macbeth's head. An Anglocentric interpreter would say that we are simply being shown the punishment of rebels and traitors. But why the focus on the head as

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[53] Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 66. Cf. Palmer, '"An Headlesse Ladie"', p. 40.

[54] Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, 'Acts and Monuments of an Unelected Nation: The *Cailleach* Writes about the Renaissance', *The Southern Review*, 31 (1995): pp. 570–80, p. 571.

trophy? In whatever light the play puts the phenomenon, it must be a feature of the Celtic culture described by Palmer. Compare MacMorris's threat to decapitate Fluellen, and Guiderius's beheading of Cloten.

The war between Duncan and Macdonald is usually taken to be the conflict of a divine right monarch against a rebel, that between Macbeth and his Anglo-Scottish enemies as one of legitimate primogeniture (Malcolm) against a usurping tyrant. This, however, is to assume an English system of government, ignoring the extent to which *Macbeth* incorporates a Celtic world-view. It is to set aside the independence of the Lordship of the Western Isles long beyond the date of the play's action, the role of tanistry in early Scottish royal succession (breached by Duncan's promotion of Malcolm to Prince of Cumberland), and the competitiveness of Scottish feuding society – all of which was well understood, even prejudicially exaggerated, in Jacobean England. Macdonald's struggle against Duncan must have its reasons. In Holinshed, a messenger sent into the MacDonald Lordship is killed. The play does not report this act, but it leaves open the question of how just the aggression might be.[55] The background is partly to be found in the failed plantation in the Western Isles that was initiated in 1596. James VI sent the Fife Adventurers, led by Ludovic Stuart, second Duke of Lennox, to occupy Lewis, where they were resisted by local clans including the MacDonalds of Sleat.[56] The settlement was renewed, in this region of clan-based, feuding autonomies, in 1605. James's sending of troops to Kintyre at this date to suppress the rebellious Angus MacDonald has been seen as one of the topical sources of *Macbeth*.

From a Celtic point of view, the tragedy thus has an interface with such poems as 'A Mhic Iain Mhic Sheumais', which deals with the aftermath of the battle of Carinish in North Uist (1601), 'part of a feud between the MacLeods of Harris and Dunvegan (Sìol Tormaid) and the MacDonalds of Sleat'.[57] The leader of the MacDonalds, Dòmhnall mac Iain mhic Sheumais, was wounded, and it is said that the song was composed by Nic Còiseam, his foster-mother, as she and a group of women pulled the arrows from his body.

A mhic Iain mhic Sheumais,
Tha do segeul air m'aire. …

Gruaidh ruiteach na fèileachd
Mar èibhil ga garadh. …

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[55] Cf. Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, pp. 99–101.

[56] Christopher Highley, 'The Place of Scots in the Scottish Play', in Maley and Murphy (eds), *Shakespeare and Scotland*, pp. 53–66, pp. 59–60; for contexts see Allan I. Macinnes, 'Crown, Clans and Fine: The "Civilizing" of Scottish Gaeldom, 1587–1638', *Northern Scotland*, 13 (1993): pp. 31–56.

[57] Headnote, text and translation quoted from Colm Ó Baoill (ed.), *Gàir nan Clàrsach / The Harps' Cry*, trans. Meg Bateman (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1994), pp. 50–54. I am grateful to Máire Ní Mhaonaigh for elucidation.

[Son of Iain, son of Seumas,
news of you weighs heavy,

Flushed cheeks of bounty,
hot like a live coal

Since the day you took to the ocean
darkness has lain on the mountains.

The skies look gloomy,
the stars have grown murky.

The days of the Battle of the Cèith
my nursling was needed.

The day of the Battle of the Runnel
your shirt was blotted.

The arrow stuck out of
the skilled body of whiteness,

The blood of your sweet bosom
was soaking through the linen.

The blood of your noble body
on the surface of the country.

I drank it
till my breath was choking. …]

Much could be said about this in relation to the Celtic ethos of *Macbeth* – the prominence of father-son relationships (the second half of the poem is about a son of Dòmhnall mac Iain mhic Sheumais, apparently killed in the battle), the importance of rumour and news (the speaker wants to go out in a coracle to gather tidings, *sgeula*), but it is closest, of course, to Murrogh O'Brien's foster-mother, the *cailleach*, drinking the blood from his body and smearing her face and breast with it. In that case it is the blood of decapitation, as in *Cymbeline*, where Imogen finds the headless corpse of Cloten and thinks it that of Posthumus:

> O,
> Give colour to my pale cheek with thy blood,
> That we the horrider may seem to those
> Which chance to find us!
> [*She smears her face with blood*] (4.2.331–4)

The stage direction in the Norton edition, derived from the Oxford *Complete Works*, follows from what Imogen says. Yet it is questioned by Roger Warren in his single-volume Oxford *Cymbeline*. He argues at length in his introduction

that the blood gets on her face by hugging Cloten's trunk. Martin Butler's New Cambridge edition leaves it open whether Imogen daubs her face or inadvertently gets it blood-stained. Neither can explain why she would smear her cheeks. But Shakespeare clearly derived this (the episode is not in Holinshed) from accounts of the Celtic world, and he chooses to present the action sympathetically, not, as in the case of Spenser's *View*, with revulsion.

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From Ireland we have gone clockwise to the 'Irish' of Macbeth's Scotland and round to the part of Celtic Britain that would later become Wales, near the landing-place of Richmond/Henri Tudur, Milford Haven. Wales, in fact, is the likeliest location – due to its proximity to Stratford and London, both of which had Welsh-speaking inhabitants, and its importance in Tudor myth – for finding a Celtic Shakespeare. And the case must start with Glendower, whose Galfridian-British traits carry over into later, Elizabethan ideas of Celtic magic and prophecy:

> Give me leave
> To tell you once again that at my birth
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
> The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds
> Were strangely clamorous to the frighted fields.
> These signs have marked me extraordinary,
> And all the courses of my life do show
> I am not in the roll of common men. (*1 Henry IV*, 3.1.34–41)

This, addressed to Hotspur, is not Fluellen's English, but anyone with ears to hear can tell that it is not the English of Southwark. There is, of course, a view that English itself has a Celtic substrate. If so, it is more evident in grammar and syntax – diverging from Germanic norms – than lexis[58] (the *Oxford English Dictionary* says that it includes only 588 words of Celtic origin). In this case, though, and not just because of the echoes of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Glendower's talk of omens and prophecies, we seem unusually close to a Celtic base. There is a sense, in such poetic convolutions as 'strangely clamorous to the frighted fields', of him translating, as he speaks, from Welsh.

Hotspur, of course, is unimpressed, and their cultural incompatibility keeps leading them back to language. When they quarrel about the course of the Trent, the dialogue may well play on 'the relative shortage in Welsh of words for "yes" and "no" where in certain contexts, such as this, the verb has to be repeated each time with appropriate changes of person'.[59] The clarity of Glendower's rebuttal is

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[58]　See e.g. the special issue of *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 109/2 (2011), on the languages of early Britain.

[59]　Quoting Paul Russell (private correspondence) whose input has helped my discussion of the Celtic substrate and Glendower's dialogue.