A Grand Distortion: Malice and Mythology in Shane O'Neill's Ulster 1558-1567

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Submitted for defense on the sixth of April, 2020

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my primary advisor, Paul E.J. Hammer. His monograph *Elizabeth's Wars* was my introduction to early modern Europe, and he has been a guiding force throughout my time as a student of history. Bringing humor to early modern intrigue is not easy, but without the levity of his guidance this would not be possible.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. David Paradis, for loaning me *Elizabeth's Wars*, but also for teaching me that it is never too late to make our passions our careers.

Professor Myles Osborne was instrumental in refining the craft of historical writing among the 2020 Honors cohort, instilling within us the idea that our silences speak as loudly as our words.

Professor David Glimp took a chance on an unknown student and selflessly gave his time to this endeavor, for which I am truly grateful.

To the entire faculty and staff of the CU Boulder History Department: I remain indebted to your faith, flexibility, and devotion to your craft.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Hiram Morgan of University College, Cork, Dr. Malachy O'Neill of Ulster University, Dr. Sabrina Neu of University of Colorado, Boulder, the staff of the Ulster University and University College Dublin archives, the Dúiche Néill Historical Society, the Coney Island Trust, the Historic Environment Committee of Northern Ireland, the Lough Neagh Trust, the Fulbright Commission, and the United States Department of State.

I would also like to acknowledge the family and friends who have supported me through the past two years, particularly Jason Kennedy, George Hebel, Ivan O'Neill, Leslie Vernon, Regina King, Tony De Marco, Antrip Bhattacherjee, Charlotte Dubost, Dáithí Shannon, Oisín mac Cóil, Zachary Gaskin, Melanie May, Vicki Davis, Nolan Carey, Betsey Biggs, Julia Winfree, Jeffrey Foster, Atli Eíriksson, Bree Lawler, and Verna Cooper.

To my daughters Ginger and Josephine: You have been the driving force behind my studies and also my comfort after long days and hard months. I hope to continue being an example to which you can aspire. I love you, Bug and Bean.

And finally,

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my best friend, David Gordon Johnson, who introduced me to Ireland, who gave hope when I had none, and who would be the first to read these pages. Joey Dunlop has a golden helmet now. I will miss you forever.

Beannacht,

Kate Hatfield Foster

March, 2020

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Glossary of Irish Terms

ard rí	A high king, such as one crowned at Tara
banfeis ríg	The king's symbolic marriage to the land
Ceart Uí Néill	A sixteenth-century list of tributes traditionally owed to the O'Neill overlords
Cóic Conairi Fuigill	"The Five Paths of Judgment," a 7th- or 8th-century tract outlining the requirements for kingship and the responsibilities of kings
Crith Gablach	An early Irish (Brehon) law text prescribing (among other things)how an Irish king should behave
derbfine	A term for a group of men who are within four generations' direct descent of a previous king (*rí*)
fír	The king's truth, or, the king's judgment. Good judgment was seen as a prerequisite for kingship in early medieval Ireland.
lucht tige	The mensal lands surrounding a *rí*'s estate, on which his hereditary officeholders lived and worked
mac flatha	A member of the *derbfine* whose father and grandfather were both *ri*
rechtaire	A hereditary steward to an aristocratic family
rí	A king
tanaise	The title for a *rí'*s deputy
tanaise ríg	A title similar to the English concept of "heir apparent"
tuath	A tribe, or a group of people
urriagh	An under-king, or a sub-chief

Introduction

"He was but a boy, and not of much hope.."

-Edmund Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*[1]

The story is familiar to those who have studied Irish history, and it would be captivating to any modern filmgoer: a rugged Irish rebel, surprisingly ruthless and cunning in battle, is called to appear before a formidable English queen. Clad in fur and barefoot, surrounded by menacing Scots with their blades held high, he strides into the audience chamber with fierce blue eyes alight. He pauses when he reaches the coiffed and powdered monarch, holding eye contact just long enough that the court starts to whisper amongst themselves. Will he go through with it? Will he bend the knee? And then, abruptly, the proud man throws himself on elbows and knees, speaking an incomprehensible tongue, his voice growing louder and more pained as he recites his submission. Perhaps, upon looking up, the dashing young rebel steals a wink at the sovereign. Maybe she cannot help but sneak a smile of her own, no matter how scandalous. In any case, the wild chieftain lives, captivated by a legendary queen.

So goes the romantic legend of Gaelic chieftain Shane O'Neill's 1562 visit to Queen Elizabeth I. Shane was The O'Neill Mór, which translates to 'The Great O'Neill', a title better-known when applied to his nephew, Hugh, who eclipsed him in historical infamy. Shane was the overlord of Tír Eoghain in Ulster: a vast expanse of mountains, farmland, and internecine warfare that stretched across most of modern-day Northern Ireland. The candid and

[1] Edmund Campion, *A Historie of Ireland* (New York: Scholars' Facsimilies and Reprints, 1940), 127. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000196321

often acerbic tone in his correspondence, his mockery of the English army, and his refusal to defer to Elizabeth's representatives during his lifetime earned him the epithet 'an Díomais,' or, 'The Proud.' This thesis aims to examine the genesis of this and other embellishments on the chieftain's life: the myth of Shane O'Neill clearly obscures the truth of the man behind it.

First, it will be useful to situate his career within a complex geography of Tudor-era Irish politics. Shane O'Neill was created The O'Neill Mór at Tullach Óg ringfort in the summer of 1559. This choice represented both adherence to ancestral traditions and the rejection of filial piety. Since the eleventh-century, Tullach Óg was the traditional center of Tír Eoghain, the domain of the Northern Uí Néill clan Cenél nEógain, to which Shane, his father, and his nephew Aodh Rua Uí Néill (Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone) belonged. Traditionally the most powerful clan in Ireland, the leadership of the Uí Néill through the Kingship of Tara was frequently tantamount to ceremonial sovereignty over Ireland as a whole. The dynasty's dominance is underscored by the fact that for over five hundred years, from the late fifth-century until the ascent of Brian Bóruma in 1002, the vast majority of the High Kings of Ireland hailed from their lineage.

The progenitor of the Cenél nEógain Uí Néill, Niall Glúndub mac Aodha, claimed the kingship of Aileach, a domain encompassing the base of Inis Eoghain (Inishowen) Peninsula in modern-day County Donegal. His justification for this royal claim was his alleged descent from Niall Noígíallach, more famously known as Niall of the Nine Hostages. Following Niall Glúndub's defeat at the hands of Vikings at the battle of Áth Cliath (Islandbridge) in the fall of 919,[2] the power of the lineage declined, eventually lapsing into obscurity during the

[2] Benjamin T. Hudson, "Niall mac Áeda, called Niall Glúndub, King of Ailech and High King of Ireland." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 September 2004; Accessed 15 January 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20077

eleventh-century with the ascent of Brian Bóruma and the litany of political upheavals that followed. Because of this, the true origins of the Tír Eoghain O'Neills remains uncertain. The Cenél nEógain eventually lost hold of their power to the related family Clann mac Lochlainn, who were inspired by Bóruma's display of military might, and a civil war broke out that lasted until the King of Ireland, Ruaidrí ua Conchobair, invaded the Inis Eoghain peninsula in 1167.[3] To end the war between the two Uí Néill branches, Ruaidrí installed a puppet king, Áed in Macáem Tóinleasg, over the half of Tír Eoghain south of Sliabh gCallann (Slieve Gallion).[4] This Áed in Macáem Tóinleasg was the direct descendant of the O'Neill line that ruled Tír Eoghain until the Flight of the Earls in 1607. No extant sources remain detailing the Uí Néill/O'Neill lineage between the dawn of the eleventh-century and Áed's rise to power, leading many Irish historians to draw the conclusion that Áed may not have been an O'Neill at all, but a leader who simply adopted the surname. He consolidated his hold on the kingship of Tír Eoghain by submitting to Ruaidrí. His son Áed "the Fat" also maintained his hold on authority by submitting to the English in the thirteenth-century before rebelling once again when Anglo-Norman viceroy Hugh de Lacy began usurping Áed's power by using the English title of Earl of Ulster.[5] This began a pattern of alternating assertions of power between the English and the Tír Eoghain O'Neills that would last for nearly four hundred years.

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[3] M.T. Flanagan, "Ua Conchobair, Ruaidrí [Rory O'Connor], High King of Ireland." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004; Accessed 18 January 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20522

[4] Katharine Simms, "Late Medieval Tír Eoghain: The Kingdom of 'The Great O'Neill,'" in *Tyrone: History and Society*, ed. Charles Dillon and Henry A. Jefferies (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2000), 127.

[5] Katharine Simms, "Ó Néill, Aodh [Hugh O'Neill, Aodh Méith], d. 1230." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 September 2004; Accessed 2 February 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20774

Seán mac Cuinn Ó'Neill (anglicized as Shane O'Neill)[6] was born around 1530 to his predecessor as The O'Neill Mór, Conn Bacagh mac Cuinn Ó Neill (hereafter Conn Bacagh) and his wife Sorcha, a daughter of the chief of the rival Clann Aodha Buidhe (Clandeboye) O'Neills. Sorcha died in Shane's infancy, either during his birth or shortly thereafter. Shane was subsequently fostered to the Donnelly family, who served as the hereditary marshals to the O'Neill dynasty. Ciaran Brady's biography of Shane mentions that fosterage with a subordinate sept suggests that Shane was one of several younger sons. A son with the likelihood of becoming *tanaise ríg* (anglicized as Tanist)[7] and inheriting the kingship would normally have been fostered with a family capable of providing significant military and political benefit to the clan's political fortunes. Despite reports by sixteenth-century historians and Shane's own claim to be the eldest legitimate son of Conn Bacagh, Brady draws the conclusion that Shane was a younger son whose elder legitimate brothers are known to have survived into adulthood. Shane's rise to power was, therefore, "the quite unexpected triumph of one of the least advantaged players in an extremely dangerous game."[8]

Shane's birth order is of primary importance because the crux of his disagreement with the English rested upon differences in regnal succession between the Gaelic tradition and the male-preference primogeniture to which Conn Bacagh agreed as part of his formal submission to Henry VIII. Following the defeat of the Silken Thomas rebellion and the resultant Geraldine League intrigues in 1535-1537, Conn Bacagh, like his ancestor Áed "the Fat," found himself in

[6] The author will generally refer to Gaelic people and places within Ireland by the names by which they were known by the Gaelic Irish during the sixteenth-century. In the case of Seán mac Cuinn however, the author will employ the anglicization 'Shane' due to the ubiquity of this name in relevant primary sources and historiography. The author will use Dublin instead of Dubh Linn for the same reason.
[7] A role occupied by the chief's heir apparent, the tanaise rig is discussed below.
[8] Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill* (Dublin: Historical Association of Ireland, 1996), 24.

need of outside authority to bolster his control over a fractious Tír Eoghain. Under the policy of 'surrender and regrant' advocated by English Lords Lieutenant as the optimal method of extending the English crown's political control over Ireland, Conn Bacagh agreed to exchange his Gaelic titles for English titles and to adopt English regnal succession practices. In 1542, he was consequently named Earl of Tyrone. The barony of Dungannon was simultaneously created as the title for the heir to the earldom. Conn Bacagh's relationships with the members of his family were variable in cordiality, like many familial relationships in late-medieval Gaelic septs. At the time of his submission, he chose his illegitimate son Feardorcha (anglicized as Matthew) as his heir, a move that was endorsed by the English. Feardorcha, the son of a blacksmith's wife named Alison Kelly, came into Conn Bacagh's household as an adult. By the 1540s, his father's support had made him a powerful figure in Tír Eoghain. At this time, Shane was not even considered as a possible heir. He had several legitimate elder brothers and, as Edmund Campion noted, "he was but a boy, and not of much hope."[9]

Conn Bacagh's unorthodox choice of heir and the English determination to elevate Feardorcha's claim at the expense of his half-brothers eventually ignited a triangular civil war between Conn Bacagh, Shane's elder brothers, and the Baron of Dungannon, who was supported by the English. Initially, Shane supported his father. His first recorded action as an adult was in 1548, when he led a raid into the territory of the neighboring Clann Aodha Buidhe O'Neills, killing the son of their chief.[10] By 1551, however, Shane had chased Conn Bacagh out of Tír Eoghain. The earl fled to the Pale and was subsequently arrested. Dungannon's abortive attempt to end Shane's ascent into political power through assassination diminished the baron's status

[9] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 127.
[10] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 24.

among Gaelic Irish chieftains. Meanwhile, the power of Shane's elder brothers Turlough, Conn, and Briain also declined. Turlough is known to have submitted to the English. Conn disappeared from the records entírely during the wars, and the last known record referencing Briain is his inclusion in a list of hostages given to the English in 1552 as assurance of Shane's obedience.[11] Although the English still recognized Feardorcha as Conn Bacagh's heir to the earldom of Tyrone, by the time Shane reached the age of twenty-two they were obligated to accept the "practical reality" of the younger O'Neill's political dominance. Although the English awarded Shane a pension in 1553 which essentially confirmed his position as the successor to the O'Neillship, they continued to insist upon Feardorcha's succession to the earldom on the basis of English law. The difference between entitlement to the O'Neillship and the earldom was therefore defined by the aforementioned differences in regnal succession[12].

The Gaelic system of succession, known to the English as tanistry, provided for the selection of a new king (*rí*) by a group known as the *derbfine*. The *derbfine* was defined as all males within four generations' descent of a previous *rí* of the same clan. This group chose one from among themselves to succeed as *rí*. In theory, any member of the *derbfine* could be elected. In practice, however, the successful candidate was nearly always the son or brother of a previous *rí*. The eventual successor was also nearly always groomed for kingship prior to his predecessor's death in the role of *tanaise ríg*, a role similar to that of an heir apparent. For example, Shane's *tanaise ríg*, Tarlach Luinneach O'Neill, eventually succeeded him following the former's death in 1567 and remained The O'Neill Mór until his own death in 1595. This

[11] "Sir Thomas Cusake, 22 December 1552." *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 129. SP 61/4 f.230.
[12] For a brief overview of Shane's early political life, see Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 25.

process of preparation and election eliminated problems of primogeniture known to cause conflict in the English succession, such as the accession of an infant king and rule by an incompetent or mentally ill king. Henry VI, who ruled England from 1422 to 1461 (and briefly again in 1470-71) was both of these. He succeeded his father at nine months of age and was crowned king of both England and France before his tenth birthday, "without any suggestion that an adult prince should be preferred."[13] He was a profligate spender who demonstrated an inability to control the conflict which escalated between his chief advisors. Following a mental breakdown in 1453, these qualities and the prospect of his infant son Edward becoming king contributed to the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses. Because successors to Gaelic kingships were invariably adult males with significant political support, they avoided these dynastic pitfalls.

On the other hand, tanistry could lead to explosive internecine conflict if the *derbfine* could not unanimously agree on an heir. Conflict like the civil war between the O'Neill sons in the 1550s was endemic to Gaelic society, as was ascent to power through force. Shane's alliance with the Scots mac Donnells against Dungannon and the English in 1554 cemented his dominance over his half-brother and the rest of the O'Neill septs. Therefore, according to the society in which he had grown up, Shane viewed his claim to the O'Neillship through conquest as legitimate. He had to: as a younger son with a living elder brother, election by the *derbfine* was the only way he could claim legal authority over Ulster. Shane continued in vain to press for official recognition as his father's *tanaise ríg* through the most of the 1550s. Disappointed with the continued English promotion of his half-brother's claims to his father's titles, Shane

[13] R.A. Griffiths, "Henry VI (1421-1471), King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 September 2004; Accessed 19 January 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12953

assassinated Dungannon in 1558. Although Dungannon's son inherited his English aristocratic title, he was created neither Earl of Tyrone nor The O'Neill Mór because of Shane's power and prestige. Conn Bacagh died the following year, and Shane was subsequently inaugurated as The O'Neill Mór at Tullach Óg. As the recognized chief by Gaelic right, he immediately began a claim to his father's English titles. Shane's military power and his network of political alliances were unquestionably worthy of both titles, but they failed to convince the English to grant him the earldom by statute of Parliament. Instead, Shane's pursuit of his claims ultimately rested on the identity he assumed at Tullach Óg: that of the husband of the land, and the king of Ulster.

This was unacceptable to the English, and particularly to those members of the political elite tasked with negotiating his relationship to the Crown. After England's official return to Protestantism in 1558, the fear of popery was at the forefront of policy for men like Elizabeth's secretary of state, Sir William Cecil. Particularly foreboding for Cecil was the prospect of an alliance between the several Catholic territories surrounding him: Spain, France, Scotland, and Gaelic Ireland. Ireland and Scotland were flashpoints of concern because their proximity to England could potentially provide Spain or France a base for an invasion of England. Shane O'Neill, as we will see, engaged in diplomatic relations with both Continental powers, but his story is particularly entwined with that of Scotland. Meanwhile, politicians and monarchs who embraced the English Reformation mandated changes in style and culture through sumptuary laws and religious discrimination. The bright colors, elaborate ornamentation, and ritualistic behavior that the English witnessed in the Roman Catholic tradition—and particularly in the Gaelic Irish—were to be avoided in favor of a unified Protestant identity across both domains.

Yet there is another, unofficial dimension to the anxieties that caused the English political elite to mythologize Shane O'Neill as a uniquely Irish villain: specifically, anxieties relative to personal rank and to gender identity. England's first true experience of a queen *suo jure* had been divisive. Mary Tudor married Philip II of Spain—a Catholic prince who actively sought to repair England's relationship with Rome—to the dismay of many high-ranking men in the government. Mary also famously instituted burnings of Protestants, which were memorialized in books such as John Foxe's 1563 *Book of Martyrs*. Upon Mary's death, English apprehension regarding a female monarch did not entirely dissipate. Though Elizabeth was a staunch defender of the Protestant cause, she famously remained unmarried and childless throughout her 45-year reign. Her reluctance to take a husband or to name a successor caused internal divisions at court and conflict with England's neighbors. Elizabeth had also grown up as a bastard under English law, which caused many Catholics to question her legitimacy. Shane took advantage of his well-known bloodline by asserting his dominance relative to the queen, her representatives, and foreign sovereigns in a manner that challenged the position of the male English elite. One example of this is the case of Thomas Radclyffe, third earl of Sussex. Sussex, a member of one of the most powerful English aristocratic families, resented Shane's refusal to work with him. His resentment is evident in the vitriolic language which he applied to the Gaelic chieftain in his correspondence and publications. But he was also concerned for his personal rank and status with the queen, as were other courtiers in England and Ireland such as Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, Gerald Fitzgerald, eleventh earl of Kildare, and particularly Sir Henry Sidney, the Lord Deputy under whom Shane's career ignominiously ended. The result was the frequent use

of polemics in written and published material, and disinformation disseminated about Shane and his allies at court and abroad.

Aside from a small collection of Shane's personal letters and fragmentary Irish annals, what we know about Shane O'Neill comes mostly from the hand of his enemies. It is therefore little wonder that he appears in historical accounts after his death as a violent barbarian, a devilish rogue, or a drunken brute. Yet how much truth lies in these tales, and more importantly, why were they created? This thesis seeks to answer these questions. First, it examines Shane's kingship from the point of view of the Gaelic Irish. It has been argued by historians such as G.A. Hayes-McCoy that Shane's primary purpose was retaining the authority and power of The O'Neill Mór.[14] Chapter I will examine ancient rituals of kingship, explaining how Shane employed each one to earn legitimacy and gain the respect of his Irish subjects to the chagrin of Elizabeth and the English elite. In order to maintain his authority in Ulster, however, Shane needed the support of an English administration that was making increasingly aggressive moves to consolidate their control beyond the borders of the Pale. Chapter II, therefore, discusses the negotiations for his visit to London and his official submission to the Queen. The chapter examines the motivations and consequences behind Shane's actions before commencing to analyze the reasons behind the English responses to them. Finally, Shane's intrigues were not confined to Ulster and London alone. Chapter III discusses Shane's diplomacy with Spanish and Scottish authority figures relative to his English adversaries. It examines exactly how Shane's provocation of English fears and his place as an occasional pawn for English ends combined to orchestrate his downfall and his historical reputation. The aim of the work as a whole is to trace

[14] Hayes-McCoy, G. A, "The Making of an O'Neill: A View of the Ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 33 (1970): 89-94.

the development of a uniquely Irish archetype, echoes of which reverberate through the history of Ireland into the present day.

Chapter I:

Law, Ritual and Legend: Kingship in Ulster

"'Twas not the reply of a puny boy—the warrior-ox of the dear Western world..."

-Echtra mac nEchach Muimedóin

(The Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedón)[15]

Throughout his career, Shane O'Neill implemented careful performance of Gaelic rituals and practices that had been carried out since the Dark Ages. His public promotion of this Irish identity served two purposes: it targeted the English government's insecurities regarding its place relative to a land of warlike Catholics, and it served to reinforce his own specific pretensions to kingship in Ulster. Shane's behavior suggests that he employed Gaelic identity as a deliberate challenge to the Tudor regime. Although Shane's later actions and the recovery of his treasure following his death indicate a degree of anglicization and a willingness to cooperate with the English,[16] Shane did not aim for his rule of Ulster to be largely ceremonial in a way similar to modern-day constitutional monarchies like the present British crown. He intended these performances to establish him as the rightful king of Ulster rather than a claimant to a vassal's title. Shane O'Neill intended to assert himself as Elizabeth I's social equal—or, considering the circumstances of her birth, her superior.

Sovereignty in Ireland was an inherently masculine prospect. In the cycles of Irish folklore, the topography of Ireland was usually personified as a woman. The king's initiation,

[15] Maud Joynt, "Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin." *Ériu* 4 (1910): 105. Accessed January 3, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/30005640.
[16] Henry Sidney, "Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of His Government of Ireland, 1583." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 3 (1855): 92. Accessed March 28, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/20608746.

known as *banfeis ríge*, was known as the "king's wedding, and was considered his symbolical marriage to the sovereignty of the territory or the entíre island."[17] This concept was present in both literature and law. The sovereignty myth was expressed through tales of several masculine archetypes. The best example is arguably that of Niall Noígíallach, not least because he is one of the legendary progenitors of the O'Neill lineage. The saga of Niall "of the Nine Hostages" is extant in three different forms, most prominently the poetic and prose versions of *Echtra mac nEchach Muimedóin*, or *The Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedón*. In Niall's case, the 'loathly lady' literary trope augments the standard sovereignty myth. The 'loathly lady' myth concerns an ugly female character who undergoes a transformation when approached by a male hero despite her ugliness. Following her transformation, the 'loathly lady' becomes incredibly beautiful, and usually offers herself or another reward to the hero. In a display of parallels to Shane's own formative years, the *Echtra* tells the story of Niall's conflict with his half-brothers in order to be named his father's successor. Following the enslavement of his mother Cairenn by his jealous stepmother, Niall is compelled to participate in a test devised by the druid Sithchenn to determine the rightful king. The sons of Eochaid enter a blacksmith's shop which ignites into flames. As the brothers emerge, Sithchenn evaluates them based on what they chose to save during their escape. He proclaims Niall, who brought the anvil and hammer - the most essential of the smith's tools - the winner.[18] Niall succeeds, therefore, not because of his martial prowess or his renowned beauty, but because of his ability to reason and the quality of his judgment.

A king's judgment was one of the concepts of sacral kingship that dates back to the 7th-century law tract *Cóic Conairi Fuigill*, or 'The Five Paths of Judgment'. The tract describes

[17] Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2000), 96.
[18] Joynt, "Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin," 111.

the qualities necessary to become an overking: he must be free of legal problems (*innraic*), be physically unblemished, he must have a certain amount of property (*ni bi rí rí cen fola*), he must never have committed theft, and he must belong to the *derbfine*—or more specifically, be *mac flatha* (son of a king and grandson of a king)."[19] The ideal qualities of a king are therefore a combination of circumstance (i.e., lineage) and personal characteristics (i.e., martial prowess, or the ability to reason under duress.) Importantly, the *Cóic* also indicates that, although the eldest son was typically expected to succeed his father, there were occasions where a younger son would inherit his father's position instead.

The eighth-century tract *Crith Gablach* contains "law, maxims, and testimonies"[20] which delineate the authority and responsibilities of a king. Most important among these is the king's judgment, known as *fír* (the king's truth). An early Irish king was expected to be the final arbiter of conflict among his *tuatha* and *urriaghs* (underkings), dispensing judgment in cases where his subjects cannot come to terms. Perhaps the best example of Niall's judgment in comparison with his half-brothers is found in his encounter with the 'loathly lady' of sovereignty. In this story, Niall and his four brothers find themselves thirsty after hunting. The first brother, Fiachna, goes to search for water and encounters a repulsive woman guarding a well, whose "spiked tooth-fence about her jaws was more hideous than all the goblins of Erin."[21] Fiachna asks the woman for water, to which she responds that she will trade it for a kiss. He refuses, saying he would prefer to die of thirst, and returns to camp empty-handed. Ailil and Briain follow suit: each meet the woman and none of them disclose their encounter with her to the other brothers.

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[19] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland: 400-1200* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 91. Ó Croínín gives a detailed description of elements of regnal succession that augments Eoin mac Neill's earlier research.
[20] *Crith Gablach*, verse 5. Accessed 20 January 2020. http://exploringcelticciv.web.unc.edu/prsp-record/text-crith-gablach-2/
[21] Joynt, "Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin," 101.

Brian, the oldest, kisses her briefly. Though he also returns without water, the hag indicates that his descendents will visit Tara, while cursing the seed of Mongfind's other sons.

Niall is the last of the brothers to encounter the woman. When she asks for a kiss, Niall assents, and "he [strains] her to his breast and bosom, as if she were for ever his own spouse."[22] As Niall mounts her, the loathly lady is transformed into a beautiful woman, whose countenance was "blooming...like the crimson lichen of Leinster crags," and whose "locks were like Bregon's buttercups."[23] She identifies herself as Flaithius, the Sovereignty of Erin, the Gaelic name for Ireland. Flaithius declares that Niall is "the princely heir of Tara, 'neath which shall be long extended battalions."[24] Ireland is thus not a woman easily owned or taken: only a clever man intimately familiar with its people and geography is qualified to take her to bride. Here we have an example of the king's *fír*: Niall, being the last to pass judgment, evaluated the circumstances and decided his survival and that of his brothers superseded any hesitation he may have had in copulating with an unappealing prospect. This myth also highlights the masculinity of the ideal king: it is Niall's virility that ultimately compels Flaithius to yield her true self and proclaim his right to dominance.

Early modern Irish parallels to this trope are found in the Gaelic marriage customs to which Shane adhered. To the Gaelic Irish, marriage was not a monogamous partnership, but a political tool. Just as Niall earned his sovereignty by copulating with Flaithius, Shane O'Neill earned political favor based on his choice of wives. Following his 1561 capture of Calvagh O'Donnell and his wife, the Dowager Countess of Argyll Katherine mac Lean, the Crown

[22] Joynt, "Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin," 105.
[23] Ibid.
[24] By "many extended battalions," she means that a long line of Niall's descendants shall be *ard rí*. See Joynt, "Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin," 107.

declined to interfere on the O'Donnell's behalf as the negotiations for Shane's visit to court were in full-swing. This upset her stepson, the new earl of Argyll, who subsequently declined to participate in further English-backed raids in Antrim. He negotiated the captives' release with Shane himself, continuing to maintain the truce between them (and his sons by mac Lean, the mac Shanes) for the rest of his life.[25] Upon release, Katherine chose to marry Shane. She brought a regiment of galloglass, a dowry and the approval of her father, Hector Mór mac Lean, to the marriage. Though the couple was still married when Shane was assassinated in 1567,[26] their marriage might not have lasted had Shane received his demands of the English. This is because Shane, commensurate with Irish custom, viewed a potential wife as a timely political asset rather than a permanent life partner. Indeed, he had previously been married to the O'Donnell's daughter - a marriage he repudiated following the breakdown of relations with her father.[27] Following his audience with Elizabeth in 1562, Shane sought an "English gentlewoman of noble blood to wife"[28] as a condition of his submission and a symbolic conquest. Remarkably, the woman upon whom he focused was Lady Frances Radcliffe,[29] sister to the earl of Sussex. Just as he had previously neutralized the earl of Argyll by marrying his stepmother, so Shane now sought to eliminate Sussex's hostility through marital diplomacy. On the other hand, James Hogan also argues that the "self-abasing" tone of his requests for a wife and the importance of

[25] Jane E.A. Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 131.
[26] Christopher Maginn, "O'Neill, Shane [Sean O'Neill] (c. 1530–1567), chieftain." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 2 January 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20785.
[27] Ibid.
[28] "Shane O'Neill to The Queen, 8 February 1561." *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 3: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 14. SP SP63/3 f.29.
[29] James Hogan, "Shane O'Neill comes to the court of Elizabeth." In *Féilscríbhinn Torna: essays and studies presented to professor Tadhg Ua Donnchadha (Torna) on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, September 4th, 1944*, ed. Séamus Pender (Cork: Cork University Press, 1947): 168.

his own Gaelic identity indicates that Shane's request may have been less-than-sincere: in other words, Shane may have been having a laugh by deliberately antagonizing Sussex.[30]

A second archetype of Irish mythology whose story illustrates the union between land and king is that of the hero of Leinster, Fionn mac Cumhaill. Possibly the dominant example of archetypal Irish masculinity, Fionn led the eponymous Fíanna, a fraternity of warriors dedicated to repelling foreign invasions and protecting the *ard rí* (high king) of Ireland. In Fionn's lifetime, this *ard rí* is the pseudo-historical Cormac mac Airt, purported author of the Brehon Laws.[31] As with Niall Noígíallach, Fionn's connection with the kingship is bolstered by virility: Cormac gives two of his daughters, Grainné and Aillbe, to Fionn in marriage. But it is another sovereignty myth that gives Fionn his fame: the story of the birth of the poet Oisín, who grows up to narrate the Fenian myths. 'Fenian' is a derivative of Fionn/Fianna, and the word and its meaning have carried much significance to proponents of Irish sovereignty. It is no coincidence that the largest opposition party in both houses of the modern Irish Oirechtas, Fianna Fáil ('Sons of Destiny'), is named after the hero.[32] A transatlantic revolutionary movement adopted his name in the nineteenth-century, cementing the term 'Fenian' as an accolade to Irish republicans and a pejorative to Unionists to the present day.

Fionn's deeds are narrated by Oisín, who described his parents' meeting in terms that recall the natural environment:

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[30] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill Comes to the Court of Elizabeth," 169.
[31] Mary O'Dowd, "O'Donnell, Calvagh, lord of Tyrconnell (d. 1566), chief." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 23 Jan. 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20550.
[32] Fianna Fáil was started by Éamon de Valera, who at the time was the leader of the opposition to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 that ended the Irish War of Independence. De Valera and his supporters opposed the treaty chiefly because it did not provide for complete independence from the United Kingdom.

> She spoke to Fionn and told him who she was, and as she spoke her voice was like the sound of summer waterfalls, or the gentle May-time breeze playing in the tree-tops of a young wood.

Oisín's mother was Sadhbh, a maiden turned into a fawn by the scorned Black Druid of the faery folk. While out hunting one evening, Fionn and his companions gave her chase. Acting as a conduit between Fionn and the natural environment of Ireland, the hounds Bran and Sgeolaun recognized the truth of the fawn's humanity and refused to attack. Confused, Fionn approached the fawn, and "to his great surprise, he saw her lie down in the heather in front of him." That night, having brought the fawn back to his keep, Fionn woke to Sadhbh standing over him, having become "the most beautiful maiden he had ever set his eyes upon."[33] Fionn fell in love with her, and the two married. This was not the last the couple heard of the Black Druid: while the hero fought pirates near Dublin, the antagonist returned disguised as Fionn himself. Once again cursed, the fawn Sadhbh disappeared. Years later, Fionn found a "beautiful young boy with long golden hair"[34] in the woods—Oisín. Like the sovereignty of Ireland, Oisín was a product of the union of man and nature. While Sadhbh did not give Fionn kingship in the way that Flaithius bestowed Tara upon the descendants of Niall, a primary goal of an early Irish warrior was renown. Their son Oisín was the narrator of the Fenian cycle and thus the instrument of his father's enduring fame. Conversely, when the son met masculinity in the form of his father, he rose to become the greatest poet in Irish mythology.

As an aristocratic scion of O'Neills and Geraldines, Shane would certainly be very familiar with the stories of Niall Noígíallach and Fionn mac Cumhaill. Parts of these legends were older than Irish literacy, existing in oral poetry until scholars began to write them into

[33] Eileen O'Faolain, *Irish Sagas and Folk Tales* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1954), 142.
[34] O'Faolain, *Irish Sagas and Folk Tales,* 145.

manuscripts. The Book of Ballymote is a fourteenth-century compendium containing genealogies, laws, a key to the Ogham script, and an incredible range of the aforementioned Fenian Cycle material. It was written in County Sligo, and in 1522 was purchased by Hugh (Áed Óg) O'Donnell, half-brother of the aforementioned Calvagh, for "140 milch cows."[35] Calvagh seized control of Tír Conaill in the 1550s before Shane captured and imprisoned him in 1561. This means that, on a practical level, at least one manuscript containing the Fenian cycles seems likely to have been in Shane's possession for half a decade before Sir Henry Sidney finally restored the O'Donnells. Whether or not Shane took a personal interest in the Book of Ballymote, the fact remains that generations of Gaelic Irish were raised upon oral retellings of these myths. These stories formed the foundation of Gaelic identity, customs, and ideals.

James MacKillop discusses this phenomenon in the monograph *Fionn mac Cumhaill: Celtic Myth and English Literature*. Discussing the Fenian Cycle, MacKillop states that an Irish student "would master phrases of Fionn's nobility just as he would learn others for Achilles' prowess, Croesus' riches, and Orpheus's harp of gold."[36] Contemporary clergy were also aware of the popularity of these tales as well: in a dedicatory epistle for a 1567 prayer book, Bishop Carsewell of Argyll deplored the Fenian legends, saying that the faithful were more interested in tales of Fionn mac Cumhaill than in God himself.[37] Knowing this, the striking parallels between the lives of Niall, Fionn, and Shane seem readily apparent. All three men felt they were cheated out of their rightful place in society by groups of people responsible for their father's deaths. All

[35] *Leabhar Bhaile an Mhóta, RIA MS 23 P 12: Cat. No. 536.* 1391 CE, Accessed 22 January 2020. https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/book-ballymote-leabhar

[36] James MacKillop, *Fionn mac Cumhaill: Celtic Myth and English Literature* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 43.

[37] MacKillop, *Fionn mac Cumhaill*, 45.

three had to use martial prowess, a king's *fír*, and their own masculine attributes to earn their positions of authority. Adding a coincidence to this parallel is the Black Druid's given name: *Fear Doirche*, meaning 'Dark Man,' the same name given to Shane's rival, the Baron of Dungannon.

Having established the traditions of kingship in which Shane O'Neill was undoubtedly raised, the question turns to how he performed these traditions. Three elements to his performance demonstrate why his pretensions to kingship represented an intentional challenge to Tudor authority through Gaelic identity: his initiation at Tullach Óg, his support of his foster-brother's deanship of Armagh, and the tone of his communication with Elizabeth and her privy council.

Shane O'Neill's initiation as The O'Neill Mór (The Great O'Neill) took place at Tullach Óg, a ringfort approximately 15km north of Dungannon, in late summer of 1559. The early Christian site located on the mensal lands of the kings of Tír Eoghain had been the symbolic center of Ó Néill authority for nearly five hundred years. During the sixteenth-century, the O'hAgain family, the O'Neills' *rechtaires*, were the hereditary stewards of Tullach Óg. They were one of several families belonging to the O'Neills' *lucht tige*. Members of a king's *lucht tige* were what Elizabeth FitzPatrick terms "service kindred"[38]— families that enjoyed hereditary privileges and immunity from taxation in exchange for providing material and administrative support to the king's household. The range of services provided by the *lucht tige* could include farming, collecting taxes, and composing poetry. The O'hAgain clan, primary residents of the ringfort, were also the O'Neills' sheriff and tax collectors. Shane's foster family, the Donnellys,

[38] Elizabeth FitzPatrick, "Gaelic service kindreds and the landscape identity of *lucht tighe,*" in *Becoming and Belonging in Ireland AD c.1200-1600: Essays in Identity and Cultural Practice*, ed. Eve Campbell, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, and Audrey Horning (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2018), 173.

who functioned as marshals and poets, also "had a clear and distinctive role… as laid down in *Ceart Uí Néill*."[39] A 1602 map by English cartographer Richard Bartlett details the area of Tullach Óg.

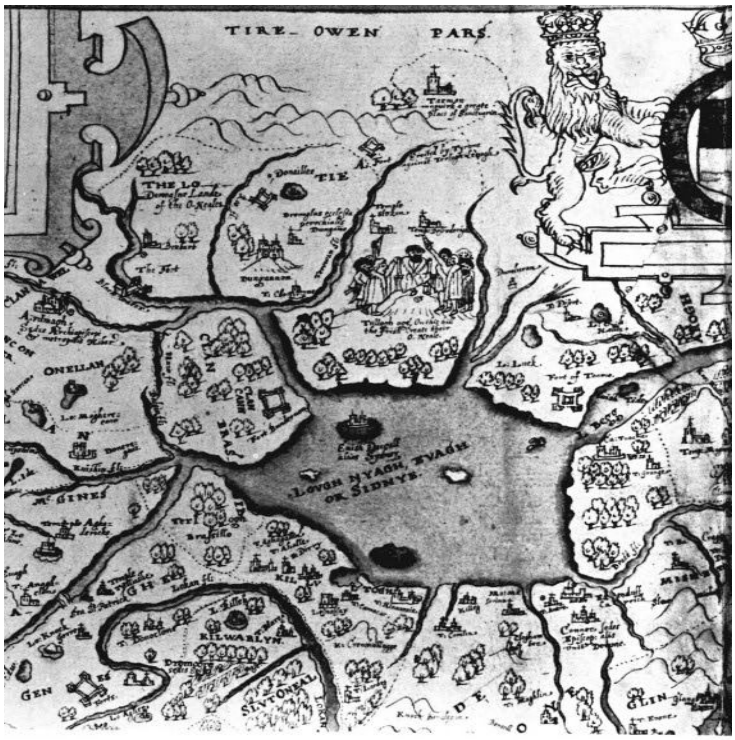

Fig. 1. Drawing showing the inauguration of O'Neill at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone, as it appears on a map made in 1602. (Detail of Map No. 16, in Dartmouth Collection, Maritime National Museum, Greenwich, London.)

Source: Hayes-McCoy, G. A. "The Making of an O'Neill: A View of the Ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 33 (1970): 89-94.

Upon a hill is pictured a new king in a stone chair. On one side, a man rests his hand on the chair. On the other, a different man holds a shoe over the king's head.[40] During inauguration

[39] Ó Doibhlin, Diarmaid, "Tyrone's Gaelic Literary Legacy," in *Tyrone History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Charles Dillon and Henry A Jeffries (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2000), 420.
[40] Hayes-McCoy, G. A. "The Making of an O'Neill: A View of the Ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 33 (1970): 89-94.

ceremonies at Tullach Óg, O'hAgain's privilege was to proclaim Shane The O'Neill Mór and hand him the rod of kingship. The O'Cuinn, Shane's chief vassal, tied one shoe onto Shane's foot and cast the other over his head. This ritual represented a desire for the new *rí* to follow a righteous path. These privileges were solemn responsibilities to many of Shane's *urriaghs* and their presence at the 1559 inauguration augments Shane's claims to legitimate succession to his father's position.

Yet Shane's inauguration also illustrated the fickle loyalty for which he is characterized by historians because it rejected filial piety. Conn Bacagh gave up the title of O'Neill Mór upon his submission to Henry VIII in 1542, an action which Shane would grow to deplore. Shane's *banfeis ríg* at the ringfort was thus a public spectacle designed to inform Elizabeth's government that he rejected the terms of his father's submission in favor of Irish law. Son and grandson to previous *rí*, Shane's position as a member of the central *derbfine* was unquestioned. His frustration of English efforts against him by an unpopular Lord Lieutenant (the Earl of Sussex) and his network of Irish political alliances precluded significant objection to his kingship. This was, of course, made easier by Dungannon's assassination two years prior. Dungannon's sons, Brian and Hugh, were children under the protection of the English. His uncle, successor, and rival Tarlach Luinneach assumed the role of *tanaise ríg*. At the moment of his inauguration Shane was what the sovereignty of Erin told Niall Noígíallach his descendants would be — the head of a 'battalion.'

The significance of the ceremony at Tullach Óg as a deliberate counterpoint to English political hegemony in Ireland is evident in the manner in which English chroniclers spoke about the rituals performed here. Gerald of Wales began an English tradition of viewing Irish kingship

as inferior when he described the *banfeis rígh* in his *Topographia Hibernica*, a chronicle of his visit to Ireland with King John I in 1185. Gerald's account of the *banfeis* was salacious: here the king had "bestial intercourse" with a white mare "before all, professing himself to be a beast also."[41] The mare was then slaughtered and the meat boiled. Next, the new king bathed in the broth while the people took turns drinking from the cauldron. As a high-ranking member of the Norman invading class, Gerald had reason to portray the Irish as subhuman and un-Christian. The trope of the savage native aside, there is scant evidence such a ritual actually occurred in medieval Ireland. While Daniel Fickett-Winbar makes an excellent case relating horse rituals in Irish sacral kingship to larger Indo-European traditions[42], it remains that *Topographia Hibernica* offers the only known description of a sex act between the king and a horse. Fickett-Winbar's analysis of the sixteenth-century Gaelic hagiography *Betha Mholaise Daiminse* (Life of Saint Molaise) supports the existence of equine sacrifice, but no reading of the text constitutes evidence that fully corroborates Gerald's account. Elizabeth FitzPatrick's analysis of Irish inauguration sites during the high and late medieval periods also indicates that, while a horse was an integral element of these initiation rituals, the only mounting of a horse was literal: done "from the king's back" by the ecclesiastical *comharba* (the successor to the headship of a monastery) in order to take physical possession of the animal and complete the king's symbolic submission to his people.[43]

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[41] Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica, trans. Thomas Forster (Toronto, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000), 78.
[42] David Fickett-Winbar, "Ritual Details of the Irish Horse Sacrifice in Betha Mholaise Daiminse," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 40 (2012): 315-343.
[43] Elizabeth FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration and Gaelic Ireland c. 1100-1600: A Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2004), 6.

In his sixteenth-century account of Ireland, Edmund Campion says Shane "was reputed for the rightfull Oneale, tooke it, kept it, challenged superiority over the Irish Lords of Ulster, and warred also upon the English part."[44] William Camden, writing in the early seventeenth-century, describes Shane's ascent thus: he "tooke upon himselfe the Title of *O-Neale,* covering his head, after a barbarous manner, with that hee wore upon his legges and feete, cast himselfe into Rebellion."[45] Both of these English chroniclers emphasize Shane's initiation as a deliberate grab for power. Furthermore, each example also associates the act of succession with an act of rebellion. Richard Stanihurst's description of Ireland in *Holinshed's Chronicles* concurs, interpreting the inauguration in the way that Shane intended: "Thus, having perforce entered into his father's inheritance, he scorneth at the English government, and after the Irish manner proclaimeth himselfe Oneile."[46] G.A. Hayes-McCoy summarized English reactions to Shane's inauguration by asserting that "the making of an O'Neill was seen as an attempt to unmake the Tudors."[47] Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, also directly acknowledged the ceremony's rebellious significance in 1602 when he pointedly destroyed the *Leac na Rí*: a sandstone slab surrounded by remnants of megaliths that served as the O'Neills' coronation chair.

Along with inauguration at Tullach Óg, patronage of the cathedral at Armagh lent the O'Neills a sense of legitimacy which extended the dynasty's influence from the political into the

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[44] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 127

[45] Camden, *Annales the true and royall history of the famous empresse Elizabeth Queene of England France and Ireland &c. True faith's defendresse of diuine renowne and happy memory. Wherein all such memorable things as happened during hir blessed raigne ... are exactly described,* 1625, p.66. Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011. Accessed 2 February 2020. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A17808.0001.001?view=toc

[46] Richard Stanihurst and Raphael Holinshed, "A Playne and Perfect Description of Ireland," *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, vol. 6*. (London: J. Johnson, 1808): 329.

[47] Hayes-McCoy, G. A, "The Making of an O'Neill: A View of the Ceremony at Tullaghoge, Co. Tyrone," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 33 (1970): 90.

ecclesiastic sphere. This sponsorship was centuries in the making, dating back to the conflict between Armagh, Iona, and Kildare for supremacy over the early Irish church. Brian Bóruma was the first to officially recognize Armagh's primacy in 1005 when he gave the cathedral "a twenty-ounce collar of gold."[48] His reasoning behind this display of generosity was, again, legitimacy. Bóruma sought to associate himself with Armagh because of Armagh's affiliation with the most famous ecclesiastical figure in Irish history— the Apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick. In comparison to the church on the Continent and in the Greek East, Christian organization in Ireland was fluid and not easily categorized. Because Ireland had never been formally occupied by imperial Rome, it remained a pastoral society free of the urban centers that formed the basis of early ecclesiastical organization in Gaul and Britain. Primatial sees in former Roman territory were metropolitan in character. These ecclesiastical *civitates* extended their jurisdictional authority to surrounding provinces. The division of Irish society into approximately 150 semi-nomadic *tuatha* (clans) precluded its organization along metropolitan lines. Instead, the monastic movement eventually dominated the early Christian landscape across the island.

According to the Celtic religious system that developed in Ireland and northern Great Britain, parent monasteries arose that claimed authority over federations of smaller parishes, called *paruchiae*. The *paruchiae* were not territorially contiguous as were Continental and British dioceses.[49] The Columban federation, for example, was based on the island of Iona off the coast of Scotland, yet its subsidiary affiliates were from places as far South as Kells and as far north as Moray Firth. Each of the three major Celtic monasteries was affiliated with a saint: Columba (Iona), Bridgit (Kildare), and Armagh with Patrick. Additionally, each of these

[48] James Stuart, *Historical Records of the City of Armagh* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1900), 51.
[49] Ó Cróinín, Early Medieval Ireland, 166.

federations enjoyed symbiotic relationships with major dynasties. These political affiliations were sources of material prestige and protection for the Church and offered legitimacy for the sponsoring dynasties. When a *rí* of a *tuath* led a conquest of neighboring peoples, his tribe's affiliated monastic federation correspondingly absorbed monasteries associated with the defeated *tuatha*. Perhaps the best indication of this is when a sixth-century bishop, Áed of Sleaty (a bishopric comprising parts of central and southern Leinster) granted his family of churches to Bishop Segene of Armagh in exchange for the primatial church's protection.[50] While Áed did not specify the reason behind this grant in extant written records, historians of early medieval Ireland such as Dáibhí Ó Cróinín speculate that the bishop felt threatened by the rising power of a Kildare backed by the powerful Uí Dunlainge.[51] Áed's submission to Armagh may have been an effort to maintain a level of independence for his *paruchiae* while allying his parishioners to a primatial church backed by an equally powerful dynasty - the same Uí Néill from which Shane's line claimed descent.

The association of the Uí Néill with Armagh is heavily dependent on Armagh's association with St. Patrick. Two seventh-century hagiographers of Patrick, Muirchú moccu Machtheni (who dedicated his Life to the aforementioned Áed of Sleaty) and Tírechán, a bishop of the Connachta, connect the Uí Néill with Patrick through Niall Noígíallach's son, Loíguire.[52] In both tales, Patrick encounters Loíguire during a pagan feast held at the Hill of Tara on the same evening as Easter. He performs several miracles in front of the *ard rí* and his men. Despite

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[50] *The Patrician Texts of the Book of Armagh*, ed. Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979), 178.
[51] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, 175.
[52] For Muirchú, see *Vita Sanctii Patricii*, transl. Ludwig Bieler, I.15-I.21, https://www.confessio.ie/more/muirchu_english# .
For Tírechan, see *Collections*, transl. L. Bieler, https://www.confessio.ie/more/tírechan_english#.

Loíguire's initial duplicity, Patrick eventually succeeds in converting him to Christianity. The blending of the pagan and Christian worlds in Dark Ages Ireland is evident in Tírechan's account of the death of Loíguire's daughters. While approaching "the well called Clébach," the princesses Ethne and Fedelm encounter Patrick. They ask him how they may encounter his God, to which he responds, "I wish to join you to the heavenly king since you are daughters of an earthly king, if you are willing to believe." He offers them holy communion, but tells them that only in death will they meet Christ. The princesses affirm their willingness to believe, take the Eucharist, and "sleep" immediately. Tírechan informs us that Loíguire's brother and one of his druids interred the girls in a *ferta*, the name for a pagan mound burial. Both men convert to Christianity after listening to Patrick's preaching. They surrender possession of the *ferta* to Patrick, who builds a church on the site.[53] The daughters' conversion and burial represents the death of Uí Néill paganism and the dynasty's incorporation into a Christianized Ireland. Both hagiographers and modern historians agree that the historical elements of Patrick's story took place in the fifth-century CE, meaning that, by the time Shane O'Neill was born, his dynasty's purported affiliation with Patrick was over a thousand years old.[54]

The monastery at Armagh capitalized on this association with Patrick during its primatial contest against the Kildare and Iona confederations. Armagh's case for the primacy grew in tandem with Patrick's legend, so that by the time Pope Innocent II officially declared it the

[53] The story of Ethne and Fedelm is found in Tírechan, *Collections*, pt. 26.
[54] Tírechan states "From the passion of Christ to the death of Patrick one counts 433 years" in *Collections*, part 2. Muirchu states "From the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ one reckons 436 years to the obit of Patrick." in *"*Preface to the Life of Holy Patrick the Confessor,*" Vita Sancti Patricii*. For a modern historian's argument, see Eoin mac Neill, *St. Patrick: Apostle of Ireland* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), 7.

primatial see in Ireland in 1139, its archbishop received the title of "heir of Patrick."[55] Patrick James Wadden argues in his doctoral dissertation for the University of Oxford that this propaganda-driven affiliation was a series of intentional acts perpetuated by both Armagh and the Uí Néill for "power, protection, and authority."[56] Although modern historians agree that Patrick's historical seat was likely Downpatrick rather than Armagh, the archbishops of the latter have been known as 'heirs of Patrick' at least since the time of the ninth-century archbishop Torbach, for whom the Book of Armagh that contains Tírechan's *Collections* was compiled. An example of the mutual and sustained connections between the O'Neills and the Armagh is found in a letter from the federation's prelate to Art O'Neill during the reign of Henry VIII. The prelate, who styles Art as "Prince of Ulster," exhorts him to "make the king your friend."[57] O'Neill deference to Armagh in matters spiritual is also apparent here in the way that the prelate felt comfortable addressing a member of the most powerful dynasty in Ireland with advice verging on the paternal. Conversely, Armagh's deference to the O'Neill family is plain when considering the style, "Prince of Ulster"—a style which Shane claimed for himself and which O'Neills were given by Catholics on the Continent and in Rome.[58]

Shane O'Neill's practical association with Armagh was at times as contentious as his dealings with his own family members. Much of this has to do with his relationship with his foster brother, Terence Donnelly. Donnelly was one of Shane's closest confidants. As a

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[55] Stuart implies this when he describes that when Archbishop Malachy approaches the Pope for two palliums: one for Armagh and one for Dublin. "The pope had granted one to its first bishop, St. Patrick," before "placing his mitre on Malachy's head." Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of Armagh*, 63-65.
[56] Patrick James Wadden, "Theories of National Identity in Early Medieval Ireland" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2011), 4. https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:49c662b9-4e14-41b3-972e-ed8475f324c5.
[57] Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*, 149-150.
[58] Thomas Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster: Their History and Genealogy* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers, and Walker: 1907): 142.

descendant of a family with hereditary responsibility for the organization and maintenance of the O'Neill military forces, Donnelly acted as an advisor and secretary to Shane through to the end of his life. Shane sought to repay that support in part by supporting his foster-brother's candidacy to be Primate of Armagh in the early 1560s. This would have consolidated political and religious authority in Ulster in the hands of two notably anti-English figures, the more senior of whom was described by Sir Henry Sidney as "the only great man in Ulster."[59] Pope Pius IV, who still hoped to curry favor with the moderately Protestant Elizabeth, chose a more conciliatory strategy. He appointed Limerick-born Richard Creagh as the new archbishop and sent him to Ireland.[60] Rome may have underestimated the degree to which the English government was opposed to Catholic influence in Ireland: Creagh was arrested immediately upon his arrival and imprisoned in the Tower of London.[61] Upon Creagh's escape in the summer of 1566, he arrived at his archbishopric, intending to take up his position. At this time, the conflict between Shane and the English had entered its final stages. Shane's tactics had shifted. He began styling himself as not only ruler of Ulster, but also as defender of the Catholic faith against English heresy.[62] As such, Shane expected Creagh to support his rebellion. Creagh refused. *The Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh* by James Stuart provides an interpretation of the resulting conflict. While delivering a homily for Shane and several hundred of his soldiers, Creagh "inculcated loyalty"[63]

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[59] "Lord Deputy Sidney to the Earl of Leicester, 1 March 1566," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 3: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 63. SP 63/16 f.83.

[60] Colm Lennon, "Creagh [Crevagh], Richard (c. 1523–1586?), Roman Catholic archbishop of Armagh." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 19 January 2020.

[61] Thomas McCoog, *The Society of Jesuits in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1541-1588: Our Way of Proceeding?* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 63.

[62] A 1565 letter from Shane to Charles IX exclaims, "The time is come, however, when we are all become confederates in a common band, to drive the invader from our shore… Help us, we implore you, to chastise the heretics and schismatics, and to bring back our country to the Holy Roman See." See Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster*, 195.

[63] Stuart, *Historical memoirs of the City of Armagh*, 163.

to the crown. According to the archbishop's 1566 letter to the Privy Council, Shane, unhappy with Creagh's support of the English, had risen in "a great rage" and spitefully "swore in most angry loude talks"[64] to destroy the cathedral as a result.

Indeed, that summer Shane evacuated several of his properties near Armagh, emptied the cathedral of its treasure and plate, and proceeded to burn crops before retreating into central Tír Eoghain. However, the destruction of Armagh in summer of 1566 was probably a strategic move intended to hamper the English advance by denying Sir Henry Sidney's army the opportunity to use the cathedral as a garrison for his troops. Armagh's location between the English Pale and Dungannon made it an ideal base from which to launch attacks into Shane's heartland. Shane's principal stronghold lay at Benburb, halfway between Dungannon and Armagh on the Blackwater River. From the castle's round towers, it is possible to see both cities along with the approach of impending armies. Shane's evacuation of these strongholds indicates he was aware of his weakness in pitched battles against professional soldiers. He also knew that Elizabeth had recently granted Sidney the type of funding necessary to mount protracted sieges.[65] Without the opportunity to repurpose these buildings, the English lacked an easily accessible base of operations. To the disgust of the English, Shane's military successes typically involved guerrilla-style surprise attacks, with larger assaults happening once the English armies were depleted of supplies.[66] Shane may have been unhappy with the archbishop's opinion, but he clearly recognized the political and military value in an association with Armagh. Furthermore,

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[64] Stuart, Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh, 166.
[65] Sidney "was authorized to spend up to £35,000 (st.) in his campaign against O'Neill." See Ciaran Brady, *The Chief Governors: The rise and fall of reform government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 120.
[66] For a brief list of Sussex campaigns cut short due to lack of supplies or surprise attacks, see Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 101.

scorched-earth tactics such as these were widely employed in the pre-modern world, not least by English kings. Yet contemporary English historians chose to ignore the commonalities between Shane's behavior and that of their own countrymen, preferring to ascribe Shane's behavior at Armagh to spiteful, wanton destruction. According to Stuart, Camden writes:

> In our memory, the church and city of Armagh were so foully defaced by the rebel, Shane O'Neill, that they lost all their ancient beauty and glory, and nothing remaineth at this day, but a few small wattled cottages, with the ruinous walls of a monastery, priory, and the primate's palace.[67]

There is no evidence to support the intimation that Shane's intent was vandalism; in fact, much of the ancient beauty and glory went with him when he left. Shane knew the Catholic religious identity of early modern Ulstermen, like their Gaelic cultural identity, was leverage that he could manipulate to bolster his authority among his subordinate septs. Anti-Catholic and anti-Gaelic laws and policies were not new to the sixteenth-century Irish, but the cultural environment surrounding the Tudor Reformations provided for the destruction of physical manifestations of Catholicism in Ireland, such as ornamental vestments, relics, and the buildings themselves. Stuart recognizes this, noting that "when such vital blows were aimed against the Catholic Church, its friends began to look toward this active leader [Shane] as their future champion and chief hope."[68] Furthermore, the aforementioned letter by Creagh also offered his services as a go-between for Shane and the Queen: in essence, to mediate between two great leaders with whom he had not always agreed. Had Shane destroyed the church out of malice, he likely would have been excommunicated. Stuart does indicate that Creagh pronounced a curse at

[67] Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*, 163.
[68] Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*, 158.

one point, but says "this was too much for Shane, who followed him, offering him presents."[69] In fact, in the same letter Creagh defends Shane's action, saying it was "to safeguard his country."[70] The volatility of Shane's relationship with the see of Armagh illustrates his renowned temper, but it also illuminates his knowledge of his shortcomings—another manifestation of a king's *fír*—and the utility of Catholic counter-reformation as propaganda for his pretensions to kingship. Meanwhile, Donnelly's position as both dean of Armagh and Shane's secretary provided the Gaelic populace a visible link between Shane and the Church.

We have discussed Shane O'Neill's symbolic pretensions to kingship by way of the inauguration at Tullach Óg and the religious and military significance of Armagh. A discussion of his performance as *rí* of Ulster, however, remains incomplete without a brief examination of the language he employed when communicating with Elizabeth and especially with Lord Lieutenant Sussex. His interpersonal relations with these two individuals form the genesis of his reputation as a volatile, 'proud' tyrant. He was certainly a temperamental individual who was not immune to fits of passion, but his use of violence and scorched-earth tactics represented no difference from commonly-employed English military and judiciary procedures of the day.[71] In fact, in some respects, Shane was more forgiving than the English: he followed Brehon law, which does not obligate capital punishment but rather provides an option for restitution based upon the severity of the crime and the social status of the victim. Edmund Campion indicates Shane was quite able to uphold these laws, writing that he

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[69] Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh,* 166.
[70] "Richard Creagh, Catholic Archbishop of Ireland to Henry Sidney, 25 December 1566," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 3: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 157. SP 63/20 f.37.
[71] For an analysis of English versus Irish violence, see Patricia Palmer, *The Severed Head and the Grafted Tongue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

> Ordered the North so properly, that if any subject could approve the losse of money or goods within his precinct, he would assuredly either force the robber to restitution, or of his owne cost redeeme the harme to the loosers contentation.[72]

Shane's refusal to behave deferentially unless it was to his strategic advantage frustrated the English and prompted the beginnings of a re-fashioning of his identity. An Irish king's *flaith* was reasoned, moderate, and by the will of the people. To the English, Shane was lustful, cruel, and a tyrant. These characteristics, as we will see, were also applied to female political figures seen as threats to Protestant hegemony in England: specifically, Mary Tudor and Mary, Queen of Scots. Chief among those who would eventually propagandize against Shane in this way were Elizabeth's Lord Lieutenant Thomas Radclyffe, third earl of Sussex, his successor, Sir Henry Sidney, and her secretary of state, Sir William Cecil. There are several reasons why Shane earned the enmity of these men. Some of these involve factional intrigues at court and will be discussed in the following chapters. What is important to Shane's ambition to authority during his ascendance is his refusal to cooperate with virtually anyone but the earl of Kildare and the Queen.

For the most part, the English Crown was accustomed to chiefs of Ireland eventually agreeing to participate in the policy known as surrender and regrant. Under this policy, the chief of a territory made formal submission to the Lord Lieutenant. He relinquished his lands and title, receiving the lands back as a vassal of the Crown. In return for this submission and exchange, the crown gave each chief an English title and the right to sit in the Dublin parliament. Shane's father, Conn Bacagh, was no stranger to rebellion in his earlier years, but political instability and

[72] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 128.

internecine conflict motivated him to acquiesce to the English policy in order to stabilize his position of authority. Unlike his father, Shane viewed the English policies as unjust. He took particular umbrage with the enforcement of policies designed to suppress Gaelic law and culture, particularly those that overruled traditional power structures and weakened The O'Neill Mór's power over his urriaghs. Rather than relinquish his authority to the Tudors as his father had done, Shane continued to assert his superiority over Tír Eoghain and Tír Conaill.

There were two main ways that Shane performed kingship when interacting with English political figures. One was to circumvent the authority of the viceroys, therefore implying that Shane had superior standing. The other was to assert himself as a king in communication with Elizabeth and her counselors. Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex, was first appointed to the position of governor of Ireland in 1556[73]. He was the first English earl to hold that position in nearly 40 years, following a string of bureaucrats and Anglo-Irish magnates. Frustrated with the delicate nature of negotiating with a fractious Gaelic political environment, Sussex doubled the English garrison upon his arrival and immediately set out to expel the mac Donnells, a group of Scottish settlers in the area of Antrim. Expelling the mac Donnells was a priority for Sussex, who explained to Mary I and her husband Philip II that:

> The said James M'Donnell is one of the Redshanks, and has been permitted to overrun the North from the 6th year of King Edward VI. till the coming of the present Lonl Deputy. He had then 7,000 Scots, and had enthralled several chiefs of large countries and many of the people[74].

[73] Wallace T. MacCaffrey, "Radcliffe, Thomas, third earl of Sussex (1526/7–1583), lord lieutenant of Ireland and courtier," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 14 November. 2019. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22993

[74] "Lord Deputy Sussex to the King and Queen, 4 April 1557," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 136, SP 62/1 f.87

Sussex's use of the word 'enthralled' here means enslaved. Redshanks were Scottish mercenaries employed by the mac Donnells and their neighbors the mac Leans, who were in turn under the feudal authority of the Campbells of Argyll. They were Highlanders, which indicates they were more likely to adhere to Catholicism and Gaelic culture. Following the collapse of a rebellion against the Scottish Crown, James mac Donnell was offered a pension by Henry VIII in exchange for his submission and loyalty, but he renewed his allegiance to the Scottish crown when the king failed to grant him the title of Lordship of the Isles in 1545. Mac Donnell's loyalty to the Scottish crown was rewarded with charters for his estates in present-day North Ayrshire, northeastern Antrim, and Rathlin Island. Mac Donnell had four brothers who worked to expand the limits of the clan's territory. The most notorious of these, Somhairle Buidhe, or Sorley Boy, had been harassing English forces in Ulster since the mid-1540s.[75] In this, Somhairle was supported by Shane, who was engaged in the civil war against the Baron of Dungannon and the English. By leasing the services of the Redshanks to Shane, James mac Donnell "took advantage"[76] of his conflict with the English. Shane's employment of redshanks was a practice that would continue for nearly two decades.

Sussex, recognizing the threat of an expanding Scottish population in Antrim alongside the rise of Mary of Guise as the Scottish regent, attempted to conscript Shane and his retainers in the effort to subdue the mac Donnells and evict them from Ireland. The marriage of Mary I to Philip in 1556 ignited the threat of war with France, a threat that Ciaran Brady describes as 'unfounded.'[77] Prominent among the English government's fears at the time was that French

[75] John L. Roberts, *Feuds Forays and Rebellions: History of the Highland Clans 1475-1625* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 63-64.
[76] Roberts, *Feuds, Forays and Rebellions*, 63.
[77] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 28.

soldiers stationed in Scotland would ally with the mac Donnells and begin assaults on English holdings with unprecedented intensity. During similar confrontations between the Ulster Scots and the English government, Lord Deputy Croft requested military assistance from the Gaelic chiefs. Shane did not offer support to the English, avoiding direct contact with Sussex's men while attacking the column's rear guard. Later, following the release of Conn Bacagh and Conn's subsequent renewal of hostility with the mac Donnells, Shane openly backed the Scots against his own family. For these reasons, Shane was seen as a traitor by the English. Yet his alliance with the Redshanks through his neighbor Hugh mac Neill of Clann Aodha Buidhe garnered him "his independent fighting force at precisely the time he needed it."[78]

In 1557, Sussex launched a large expeditionary force against the mac Donnells. Again, he attempted to conscript Shane's services. Shane, unwilling to countenance the loss of his fighting force at a vulnerable point in his career, offered to guide the English army through some of the more difficult Irish terrain. To the dismay of the English, he disappeared with his army rather than face the mac Donnells directly. Brady indicates that this "convinced Sussex of his fundamental disloyalty" and "poisoned"[79] relations between the Lord Lieutenant and the Prince of Ulster permanently. Sussex punished Shane's defiance by looting and burning Armagh in 1557, therefore striking at the heart of The O'Neill's legitimacy. He lodged his troops in the cathedral, but the violence of his attack left the surrounding city in ruin. Following Shane's inauguration as The O'Neill Mór, Sussex continued to antagonize Shane. In 1560, Elizabeth recommended acquiescing to Shane's suit for his father's titles, saying that

[78] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 32.
[79] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 36.

> We think it more meet, especially for the preferment of the person legitimate in blood and next that he is thereof in quiet possession that the deputy shall allow him to succeed his father.[80]

Sussex refused on the basis of Shane's contentious relationships with his *urriaghs*. Yet Shane felt his interactions with the *urriaghs* were his purview, not the Crown's. In 1562, Sir William Cecil posed a set of nineteen questions to Shane as a way to delay the decision surrounding the earldom of Tyrone. Shane, who made a habit of engaging with Anglo-Irish magnates, church officials, and other Privy Council members in order to antagonize Sussex while communicating with Elizabeth, answered in kind. One of the questions posed to Shane concerned his relationships with his *urriaghs*: whether Shane had the right to claim authority over and collect taxes from those who had already declared their submission to the English crown. In his answer, Shane emphasized his famous bloodline, saying that "though the King hath a superiority...yet O'Neill hath old books to show that he hath had of long time risings up of them and tribute paid of them."[81] This establishes Shane's belief that in the matters of politics within Ulster, the O'Neills, backed by the legitimizing power of the centuries-old dynasty, were superior to the Crown. By extension, the authority of the Crown included Sussex's administration.

Beside the practical affront to Sussex's governance in Ireland, in several instances Shane used language where he emphasized his kingship and the legitimacy of a bloodline which he considered to be older than Elizabeth's. During the failed negotiations for a marriage with the sister of the earl of Argyll, Shane swore a "kingly oath"[82] that a purported marriage with Finola

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[80] "The Queen to the Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 15 August 1560," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860), 161. SP 63/2 f.63.
[81] Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster*, 108.
[82] Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster*, 106.

mac Donnell would not obstruct the agreements. But perhaps the most convincing evidence that Shane O'Neill intended others to treat him as a monarch is a well-known letter to Elizabeth in which he emphasized his dynasty's longevity and his claim to authority. "My ancestors were kings of Ulster," he claimed, before listing the territories of the rival chiefs he had subdued. "Ulster is mine and shall be mine. With the sword I won them, and with this sword I will keep them."[83] His assertion of Gaelic authority and O'Neill supremacy would accompany him to London in early 1562. This visit was ostensibly an opportunity for Shane to make a formal submission to Elizabeth, but it would also give Shane the chance to exercise his Gaelic identity and his political acumen. The O'Neill Mór would find himself in an environment of political intrigue far more nuanced than the militant conflicts at home. Yet he would seize the opportunity to argue his claims in dramatic fashion, inciting fundamental change in his relationship with Elizabeth and her court.

[83] Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster*, 192.

Chapter II

Pageantry and Parsimony: Shane's Visit to London

"...Who in pride exceeded all the men upon the earth, abiding no superior,
nor allowing anie equall…"

-Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles*[84]

Shane's visit to court and his submission on Twelfth Night in 1562 is a well-known story. The 'wild' Irishman and his crowd of retainers entered the audience chamber in a bold display of sound and color. The English courtiers, shocked as Shane howled his submission in Irish, viewed him as if he were someone from "China, or America."[85] If Shane's career were made into a film, this event would likely be its centerpiece. But the theatricality of the submission should not overshadow the subtle intricacy of Shane's political choices and the degree to which this visit represented a turning point in policy and portrayal of the Gaelic chieftain.

Following Henry VIII's final break from the Roman Catholic church with the 1534 Act of Supremacy, England found itself in the precarious position of being surrounded by religious enemies. Rebellion soon consumed large swaths of Ireland, led by the Anglo-Irish Lord of Offaly and 10th earl of Kildare, 'Silken' Thomas Fitzgerald. The rebellion failed. In 1537, Kildare and five of his uncles were executed at Tyburn, leaving a child as the attainted Kildare heir[86]. A confederation of Anglo-Irish and Gaelic lords known as the Geraldine League sheltered the boy,

[84] Stanihurst, "A Playne and Perfect Description of Ireland," 329.
[85] Camden, *Annales*, 90.
[86] David Finnegan, "Fitzgerald, Gerald [Garret, Gearóid], eleventh earl of Kildare (1525–1585), magnate," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 3 January 2008; Retrieved 3 February 2020. http://www.oxforddnb.com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-9557.

twelve-year-old Gerald Fitzgerald. With their help, the young Fitzgerald escaped from Ireland. He received pensions from France and Spain, and was educated in Italy before securing a pardon from Edward VI in 1549[87]. Following distinguished service to the Crown during Wyatt's Rebellion, Mary Tudor officially created Fitzgerald earl of Kildare and baron of Offaly in 1554. Some, such as Thomas Radclyffe (the future third earl of Sussex), remained reluctant to trust Kildare's presence in the court.

England's position relative to the Continent and Scotland was also fragile. Following a failed invasion by French-backed rebels in 1557 which seems to have been engineered by an "agent provocateur" employed by her own Privy Council, Mary entered the continental war between the Holy Roman Empire, France, and the Papal States to support her husband, Philip II of Spain[88]. The subsequent French capture of Calais in January 1558 represented a profound moral defeat for Mary and her regime, as Calais represented the last continental vestige of a Plantagenet empire that had once stretched from Scotland to the Mediterranean. By the end of 1558, Mary herself was also dead, leaving the throne to her half-sister, Elizabeth. France continued to pose a direct threat to the new Elizabethan regime, not least through its military partnership with Scotland. France and Scotland had been allies against England since the 1290s. Fearing that French Catholic forces stationed in Scotland would mount an invasion against England, Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary of state, urged financial and military aid for a Protestant rebellion in Scotland. By a mixture of good luck and good management, this intervention proved successful and began the process by which a newly Protestant Scotland broke its Auld Alliance with France and moved toward closer cooperation with Elizabeth's

[87] Ibid.
[88] Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors: England 1547-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 109.

Protestant England. However, these moves to prevent Scotland serving as England's "postern gate"[89] - a direct route for foreign invasion into England - did not fully allay English anxieties about future threats. Ireland's proximity to England was a concern for the same reason and following the success of the Scottish Protestant reformation in 1560, the "postern gate" simply seemed to shift westward across the Irish Sea.

As a result of these developments, the period of negotiations for Shane's visit to London in 1561 featured a number of concessions that Elizabeth may not otherwise have granted. Shane did not leave Ireland immediately; rather, he made several demands in the face of open hostility from Sussex. Chief among these demands was the removal of English troops from Armagh (Irish: *Ard Mhacha*). In 1557 Sussex had led an army into the city of Armagh, "sparing only the cathedral." He burned the city to the ground and proceeded to establish a garrison within the cathedral walls.[90] As the spiritual heart of Tír Eoghain, Armagh was thus a flashpoint for the conflict between Shane and Sussex. By 1561, Sussex believed that eliminating Shane was the most important objective in the political assimilation of the Irish. In a letter to the queen, the Earl expressed his belief that evacuating the garrison from the cathedral would constitute total "hindrance of [her] purpose."[91] In truth, however, Sussex's lieutenancy was facing hindrances. The Anglo-Irish in the Pale were expressing dissatisfaction with his leadership, fomented by the earl of Kildare, whose ancestors had been the traditional viceroys until the time of Henry VIII and whose "driving ambition" was to regain his family's liberties.[92] A series of embarrassing military defeats only prompted Sussex to assert his case more forcefully. In 1561 he issued a

[89] Williams, *The Later Tudors*, 239.
[90] Stuart, *Historical memoirs of the city of Armagh,* 245.
[91] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill comes to the court of Elizabeth," 163.
[92] Finnegan, "Fitzgerald, Gerald", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

proclamation against his enemy which deplored "the presumptuous, arrogant, rebellious, and traitorous deeds of Shane O Neill, since the first coming into this realm of the Earl of Sussex."[93] Despite the signatures of twenty-six other people, including Shane's cousin James Fleming, Baron of Slane, these words indicate that Sussex himself considered Shane's behavior to be a personal affront. Ciaran Brady concurs, asserting that the trajectory of Shane's relations with the government in Dublin was "determined not by the crown nor even by Shane himself, but by the lieutenant's overriding concern to have his own way." Shane had been actively harrying English troops as his father's *tanaiste* since well before Sussex ever stepped foot into Ulster, but it was Sussex's "inflexible determination" to subdue him that precluded any real chance of conciliation between the two parties.[94] A much-quoted phrase in a 1561 letter to Cecil sums up his obstinacy: "If Shane be overthrown, all is settled; if Shane settle, all is overthrown."[95]

For Shane, Armagh's occupation by the English was the primary obstacle to his journey to London. Shane blamed Sussex for his battles against the English forces, claiming that he was forced to defend himself in response to Sussex's predations. Later in 1561, Shane wrote a letter to Sussex and expressed his objections to English occupation, directly blaming Sussex's invasion for the delay in his submission, and refusing to employ the Lord Lieutenant as an intermediary between himself and Elizabeth:

> I am now of the same opinion as I was earlier about going to meet the Queen, except that I now have to endure the amount of obstruction and unbecoming treatment you have inflicted on me, namely, the uncalled-for incursion into my territory. But take note, as long as any son of an Englishman is in my

[93] Proinsias Ó Conluain, "Shane O'Neill's postbag: His letters from Benburb and the woods," *Dúiche Néill: journal of the O'Neill Country Historical Society* 3 (1988): 5.
[94] Brady, *The Chief Governors,* 99.
[95] "Memorandum by Cecill, 19 August 1561," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 178. SP 63/4 f.80.

> country against my will, I shall henceforth send you neither terms nor message, but will forward my complaint some other way to the Queen, telling her how you have impeded me in my purpose.[96]

Here Shane establishes that he considered his kingdom to be his sole domain. He resented the incursion of foreigners and would not submit to the authority of the English in his own land. Shane also had good reason to be suspicious of Sussex's motivations. In a letter to his cousin, the same Baron of Slane, he claimed that he is told "every day that [Sussex] wishes to be styled Earl of Ulster."[97] Whether or not that is true, Shane's concerns about English occupation were valid, especially as Sussex never intended to remove his troops from Armagh. Yet The O'Neill Mór's suspicion did not encompass the full measure of Sussex's ill intent. In August 1561 there was an assassination attempt in which Sussex bribed one of Shane's messengers, Niall Grey, to murder his master. In a letter to Elizabeth, Sussex explains that he promised "to see [Grey] have 100 marks of land by the year to him and to his heirs for his reward."[98] Proinsias Ó Conluain explains that the lack of further mention of both Niall Grey and this assassination attempt indicates the plot's failure, but this would not be the last time Sussex hatched an unsuccessful plan to have Shane killed. In 1563, Sussex hired a 'John Smyth' to poison Shane's wine. Although the tainted libation made The O'Neill Mór and his retainers very ill, Sussex's plot was again a failure. The 1561 attempt on his life and the continuing presence of English troops less than ten miles from his main stronghold at Benburb strengthened Shane's resolve to obtain a safe conduct from the Queen, prolonging the process further.

Sussex was not alone in orchestrating roadblocks to Shane's journey. In August 1560, Elizabeth wrote to Sussex and authorized "the subjugation of Shane O'Neill and the restitution of

[96] Ó Chonluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 17.
[97] Ó Chonluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 14.
[98] Ó Chonluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 20.

the young Baron of Dungannon."[99] This Baron of Dungannon, named Brian, was the son of Feardorcha and was the older brother of the well-known Hugh O'Neill. Meanwhile, Sussex and Cecil organized a federation of Shane's disaffected *urriaghs* and neighbors, promising this Ulster alliance rewards in exchange for their services against The O'Neill Mór. This group included the Scots mac Donnells and Calvagh O'Donnell.[100] Because Tír Chonaill, the ancestral land of the O'Donnells, lay on the northwestern border of Tír Eoghain, the involvement of Calvagh O'Donnell was valuable in opening a second front from which to attack Tír Eoghain. By 1560, Shane was aware that the English and their allies were moving against him with the support of the Scottish Earl of Argyll. He mustered his forces and marched through Ulster, intimidating the *urriaghs* and capturing O'Donnell and his wife at the monastery in Kildonnell.[101] O'Donnell and Katherine mac Lean were held at Benburb for three years before they were released. O'Donnell's claims as to his treatment there form a major backbone for the construction of Shane's historical memory as sexually deviant and barbaric. Following O'Donnell's capture and the withdrawal of the Earl of Argyll from the scheme, the great Ulster alliance against Shane broke apart. It ended in an embarrassing campaign in which the well-provisioned and robust English army sent to support Sussex was first unable to find Shane, and then was routed by an attack on its rear guard.

Another notable feature of Shane's negotiations for his visit to Elizabeth was a loan of £2,000 in order to outfit himself "in an appropriately noble manner."[102] On the surface this may

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[99] "The Queen to the Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 15 August 1560," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 161. SP 63/2 f.63.
[100] "Gilbert Gerranl, Esq., Attorney General of England, to Cecill, 5 September 1560," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 161. SP 63/2 f.73.
[101] O'Dowd, "O'Donnell, Calvagh, lord of Tyrconnell (d.1566)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*
[102] Ciaran Brady, *Shane O'Neill,* 38.

indicate Shane's willingness to assimilate to English culture, but Patricia Flavin notes that Irish aristocrats were sartorial chameleons, changing their attire "depending on the image they wished to portray"[103]. When interacting with Irish, they wore Irish styles, but when interacting with the English, they wore English styles. A woodcut in John Derricke's *The Image of Ireland* portrays Tarlach Luinneach kneeling in front of Sir Henry Sidney, Sussex's successor as Lord Deputy.

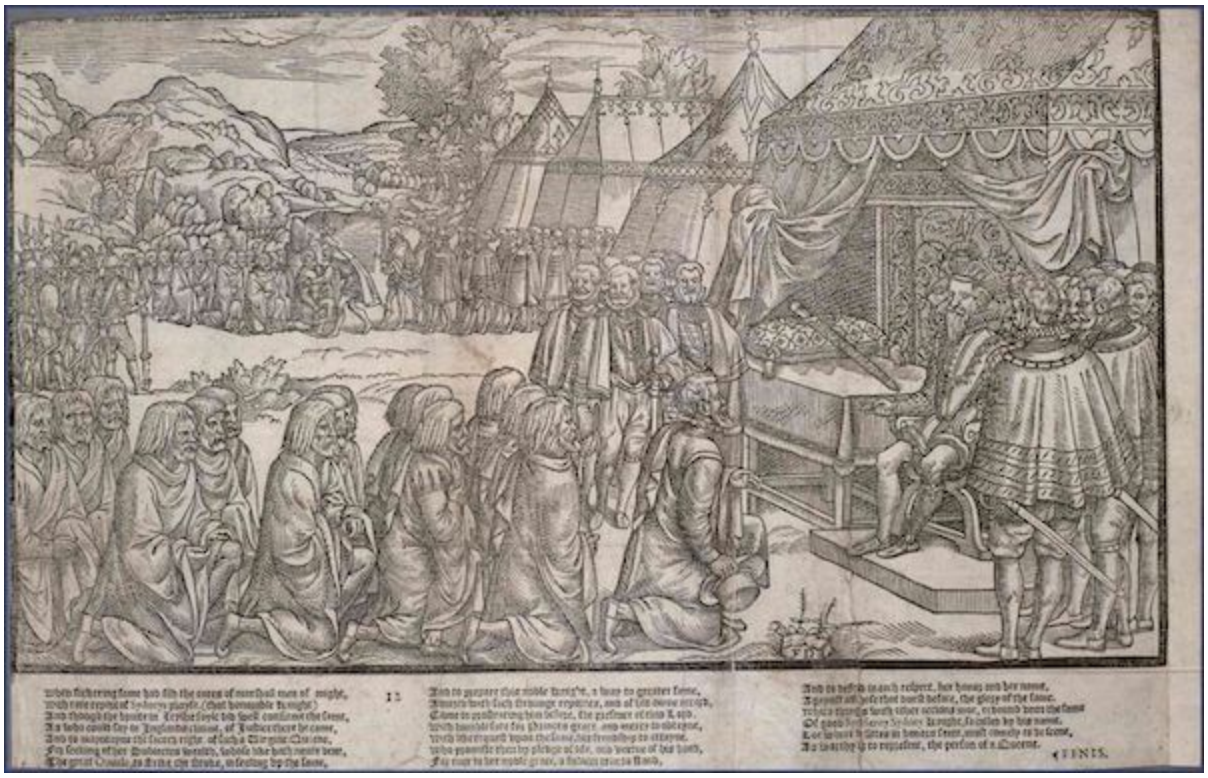

Figure 2: Tarlach Luinneach, bottom center, kneels with an English-style hat in his right hand. Sir Henry Sidney is pictured in the tent on the right.

Source: John Derricke, *The Image of Irlande* (London, 1581), 12. Edinburgh University Library, http://www.docs.is.ed.ac.uk/docs/lib-archive/bgallery/Gallery/researchcoll/ireland.html

[103] Susan Flavin, *Consumption and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Ireland: Saffron, Stockings, and Silk* (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 2014): 97.

In Tarlach's right hand is a wide-brimmed, English style hat. The English considered their style of clothing a form of cultural domination, and introduced an "element of coercion" by requiring Gaelic chieftains to dress in English apparel when making formal submissions.[104] Perhaps this is why the notoriously frugal Elizabeth granted this large loan to Shane. Yet by requesting financial support from Elizabeth, Shane also showed his willingness to challenge her government's management of Irish affairs, specifically the debasement of Irish currency. In particular, Shane's request for English money put a spotlight on the debased coinage current in Ireland. He sent "to her Grace to borrow a piece of money for that the money here is not current in England."[105] This could also be seen as an attack on Sussex, who was the head of the Dublin government. Yet Shane continued to profess his desire to assimilate, complaining that the delay in the manufacture and receipt of suitable clothing was preventing him from traveling to London.

The poisonous interactions between Shane and Sussex meant that Shane could not achieve hegemony over Tír Eoghain and recognition of his father's titles without explicit support from other members of the English political elite. This chapter argues that Shane's visit to court contains the clearest indications that he did not intend perfect obedience to the English crown. It also argues that the visit established Shane as a credible threat on both a symbolic and literal level, particularly to Sir William Cecil's vision of a Protestant British Isles. Shane's defiance of English law through his sartorial choices and his cogent legal arguments augmented his ability to cultivate powerful new friends at court. These new friendships, particularly with Lord Robert

[104] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 101.
[105] Hogan, *Shane O'Neill Comes to the Court of Elizabeth*, 165.

Dudley, caught Cecil's attention and inspired his active enmity. Much has been said about Elizabeth's apparent favor to Shane, particularly in romantic analyses of the nineteenth century as discussed by Margaret Rose Jaster.[106] Indeed, notions of gender and sexual relations formed a large part of the myth of Shane O'Neill as a symbolic threat to the chaste Queen. Yet it is important to note that Elizabeth's perceived favor to Shane was predominantly a function of her frustration with the Lord Lieutenant, who had caused the alienation of the Irish Pale from her government and had also failed multiple times to stop 'The Grand Disturber' from darkening her doorstep.

Appearances were vital to not only Elizabeth's court, but society at large. The process of English state-making in Ireland necessitated a set of laws which the English designed in an attempt to force the Irish to live and dress like English men and women. Commissioners sent to Ireland by Henry VIII to investigate the workings of the Irish government advocated for a new set of sumptuary laws which would challenge the expression of Gaelic culture. These laws included the prohibition of Gaelic language or dress, intermarriage between English and Gaelic Irish, and fosterage with Gaelic families.[107] To the English, these laws represented a desire to homogenize the people of the British Isles into a common English identity under a common English sovereign. "Diversity… in tongue, language, order, and habit…" said the Act, made people believe they "were of sundry sorts, or rather sundry countries, where indeed they be wholly together in one body, whereof his highness is the only head under God."[108] To the Gaelic Irish like Shane O'Neill and his followers, however, these new laws represented the elaboration

[106] Margaret Rose Jaster, "Mythologizing Shane O'Neill," *New Hibernia Review* 11, No. 3 (2007): 81-97.
[107] S.J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland 1460-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 101.
[108] This citation references the Statute Rolls of the Irish Parliament, 28 Henry VIII, cc. 15, 28. Quoted in Connolly, *Contested Island*, 113.

of earlier oppressive legislation by the English in Ireland, such as the 1366 Statute of Kilkenny or the 1494 Statute of Drogheda. None of these sumptuary laws were particularly oppressive in the 1560s, but this was due in large part to the view of the Irish that English clothing represented defeat, to the inability and disinclination of the Dublin government to enforce the laws, and to the relative poverty of the Irish outside of the Pale. While Irish aristocrats, chieftains, and magnates used Gaelic fashion and hygiene to signal defiance, they also possessed English wardrobes (often gifts from English courtiers like those of Elizabeth to the wives of Tarlach Luinneach and the Earl of Desmond)[109] that indicated cooperation. This is the reason that Shane's clothing choices during his submission to Elizabeth were so important. Flouting Henrician sumptuary laws was a deliberate rejection of the custom of Irish chieftains to dress in English fashion when in the presence of an English superior. The symbolic ramifications of what he and his retainers chose to wear represented a powerful challenge to the court and was interpreted in part as a Catholic affront to the Protestant ascendancy.

William Camden's description of Shane O'Neill's entrance into Elizabeth's audience chamber is the source most often repeated in contemporary histories and modern scholarly writing. Although Camden was a child at the time of Shane's submission, it is important to note that Camden had a long-standing professional relationship with Sir William Cecil. For example, Camden spent twenty-two years of his life as second master and head master of the Westminster School, during which time Cecil served as steward. His other famous work, *Britannia*, was dedicated to Cecil, and Cecil (by then Lord Burghley) first suggested that he write the *Annales* in

[109] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 97.

the 1590s.[110] Therefore, while Camden is not a contemporary, he expresses an informed sense of collective shock and wonder on behalf of the witnesses present at the performance of the Gaelic chieftain:

> At the same time, *Shan O-Neale* came out of Ireland, to performe that which he had promised the yeere before, ha|uing for his Guard, a troupe of Galloglassorum, who had their heads naked, and curled haire hanging on their shoul|ders, yellow shirts, as if they had beene died with Saffron, or steeped in Vrine, wide sleeues, short Cassockes, and rough hairy Clokes. The English admired them no lesse, than they should doe at this day to see those of China, or America.[111]

Camden's analysis contains several points of reference that illustrate bias in the early historical memory of Shane O'Neill. It describes Shane and his retinue in a manner that makes them appear uncivilized, but Susan Flavin's analysis of Irish modes of dress and style provide direct evidence that this image was carefully constructed yet largely undeserved. In the first place, Camden describes the heads of the galloglasses as "naked." This is meant to convey two things: first, that they did not wear hats, which was a blatant breach of English sensibility. During the sixteenth century, a pattern of etiquette developed regarding the wearing of hats and the behavior expected of those who wore them. Chief among this behavior was that a socially inferior person would remove his hat when approaching a superior, and the superior would leave his own hat in place. As stated before, the Irish shifted their style depending on the purpose and audience of their interactions. The Irish were known to wear hats, particularly Phrygian caps which remained in fashion in Ireland but had gone out of fashion in England in the thirteenth century[112]. Shane could have insisted the galloglass wear this style, but he did not. By allowing

[110] Wyman H. Herendeen, "Camden, William (1551–1623), historian and herald." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 September 2004; Accessed 13 February 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4431
[111] Camden, *Annales*, 90.
[112] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 72.

his retinue to enter the Queen's audience chamber bare-headed, he discouraged them from showing a form of respect to their social superior. The galloglass' hairstyle was important to the performance of defiance as well. The traditional Irish hairstyle, called the glib, was one in which the back of the hair was clipped short, but the fringe around the face was allowed to grow long and cover the eyes. Another alternative to the glib was to leave the hair uncut, growing it to a length that would cover their ears and neck and also obscure their eyes. This contrasted with English hairstyles, which were shorter and restrained by the brim of their hats. Camden, along with English political figures such as Sussex, likely would have considered the loose hairstyles as evidence of Irish rejection of English norms of behavior. In order to be subject to English law, a person must be easily recognizable. In addition to those who are rendered unrecognizable due to an obscured face, the ability of the Irish to change their hairstyle with nothing more than a knife contributed to the portrayal of the Irish as wild. That the Irish hairstyles tended to cover the eyes and obscure the face was a factor that contributed to Shane's contemporaries' portrayal of himself and his men as lawless.

Another feature of Camden's description is its specific mention of Shane's galloglass soldiers as wearing saffron shirts dyed with urine. Saffron was a contentious substance in early modern England. It had been used by the Irish to dye linen for centuries, but the sumptuary laws of Henry VIII's reign banned the Irish from using this method. The reasoning behind this finds its roots in the conflict between Protestant England and its Catholic neighbors. Stylistically, the use of bright colors was relegated to the Irish following the Reformation. Protestant faith communities advocated the use of 'sad' colors in clothing: black, muted brown, and dull. This is a backlash from the perceived gaudiness of Catholic liturgical ceremony and vestments. Despite

a period of time in which it was briefly fashionable on both sides of the Irish Sea, the color yellow signified cultural independence from Elizabeth's reign[113]. Spain's position as the primary supplier of saffron to the Irish gave this religious distinction a further political bent. In 1561, the wounds of the Marian persecution, particularly memories of burnings of Catholics at the stake, were still fresh to many Protestant English. Mary's Catholic husband, Philip II, was by that time the King of Spain. Although Spain was something of an ally (albeit an uncomfortable one) to Elizabeth in this period, many of her subjects were deeply uneasy about the intentions of Catholic Spain. Indeed, confirming English suspicions, Shane is known to have maintained close contact with the Spanish ambassador to Elizabeth's court, Alvaro de la Quadra, through contacts with the chaplain who accompanied him to London.[114]

The comment about urine is equally interesting because there is a contradiction that Camden fails to mention—likely because it involves an admission of similarity to a group he is attempting to 'other.' In the sixteenth-century, fabric makers fashioned dyes from a variety of natural sources: saffron, but also leaves, berries, twigs, and other plants. These dyes were prone to bleeding and leaching. Therefore, it was (and still is) common practice among textile manufacturers to use a mordant to bind the dye to the fabric's fibers[115]. The ammonia present in urine was a widely-recognized mordant and was used not only by the Irish but by other Continental firms and particularly by the English themselves. Textile firms in Yorkshire traditionally combined alum with urine to make a particularly strong mordant. The demand was so great that "an amount of urine equivalent to the urine stream of 1,000 people for an entire

[113] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 121.
[114] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill Comes to the Court of Elizabeth," 166.
[115] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 120.

year" was shipped to Yorkshire from various locations around the country.[116] Families used special chamber pots to collect urine for use in textile dyes, and buckets were left on street corners for the same reason.[117]

Camden's description of the galloglass' yellow shirts might therefore be intended to highlight one of two things: Shane's involvement with continental Catholics, or Shane's association with filth. The latter appears more likely to have been Camden's aim, though the former was closer to Shane's actual intent. Susan Flavin argues that the word filth has multiple meanings, and "could refer to moral defilement, corruption, and obscenity… [it] also had sexual associations, in particular with regards to female sexuality."[118] This is an indication of the gender-based rhetoric that would ultimately form a core component of the English historical portrayal of Shane's career. By raising the possibility that Shane's retinue used urine to dye their shirts rather than as a mordant, Camden assigns to him a trait that was understood by their contemporaries to be associated with moral corruption and undesirable feminine attributes. That Shane's behavior had the possibility to corrupt his environment and spread to those with whom he associated was a viewpoint shared by Sussex, whose proclamation denouncing Shane contains similar language. Early in his diatribe, Sussex refers to Shane's "cankered and traitorous stomach."[119] In this instance, cankered can be understood to mean "to corrupt." The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates this usage was common in England from the mid-fifteenth-century to the present day. Sussex continues with the assertion that Shane caused "O Donnell, O Reilly

[116] The United Kingdom National Trust, "How Alum Shaped the Yorkshire Coast." (Swindon, United Kingdom: The National Trust, 2019.) Accessed 16 February 2020. https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/yorkshire-coast/features/how-alum-shaped-the-yorkshire-coast
[117] Ibid.
[118] Flavin, *Consumption and Culture*, 131.
[119] Ó Conluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 5.

and others Her Majesty's noble and faithful subjects to *forget their duties* to God and to Her Majesty,[120]" a clear indication that Sussex considered Shane's behavior contagious.

Shane's intent, however, was a carefully calculated performance. He would certainly have been familiar with the sumptuary laws, having grown up in the territory in which they were meant to be enforced. His request for a loan to dress himself in the style of a courtier indicates that rather than being ignorant, filthy, or wild, he was fully aware of the English elite's expectation that he conform to certain standards of appearance. Nevertheless, he chose to flout these customs by having those around him dress in traditional Gaelic attire. He even went so far as to address the Queen and court in Irish before quietly delivering an English translation in writing. By requesting a loan for the purpose of blending in to the English court, he demonstrated he understood the court's expectation for his behavior. Yet by subtly performing the role of a Gaelic chieftain before Elizabeth, Shane showed that his pretension to kingship overruled his desire to conform. As Edmund Campion recalls, many of the witnesses mocked this behavior: "...the Courtiers noteing his haughtines and barbarity, devised his Stile thus, O'Neill the Great, Cousin to Saint Patrick, friend to the Queene of England, and enemy to all the world besides."[121] An element of pride was indeed present in Shane's performance - to challenge a queen in her own home is unquestionably arrogant. Yet the mockery directed toward Shane showed that many in the English court underestimated his political acumen. By clothing his soldiers in saffron, Shane alluded to his traditional Irish Catholicism and perhaps subtly hinted at his potential links with continental powers. Indeed, while Sussex and Cecil carried out Elizabeth's instructions to build an alliance against The O'Neill, Shane was busy petitioning and negotiating with figures

[120] Ó Conluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 10. The italics are the author's.
[121] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland,* 127.

such as papal nuncio David Wolfe, French king Charles IX, Mary Stuart, and the Spanish ambassador Alvaro de la Quadra. Elizabeth and the Privy Council were aware of Shane's intrigues with their Catholic enemies, but they either ignored or tolerated his clear indication that he still considered himself Elizabeth's opponent as well.

Two developments during Shane's residence in London made his enemies increasingly determined to speed up his downfall: his friendship with Lord Robert Dudley and the argument which he presented in support of his claim to his father's titles. Upon arriving at court, Shane was immediately drawn into Dudley's circle thanks to their mutual ally, the earl of Kildare. As Ciaran Brady describes, Kildare and Dudley had much in common. Both were sons of attainted rebels, and both were mistrusted by the Cecil/Sussex faction. Additionally, both men had much to gain in Ireland: Kildare still sought to restore his family to prominence, while Dudley craved "rich sources of patronage and political intelligence."[122] As the most powerful Gaelic Irish chieftain, Shane and his suit served as an opportunity for both men to pursue their prizes. For his part, Shane showed that he knew the most useful people to befriend at court. In a letter to Elizabeth, Shane requested "to attend on the Lord Robert Dudley," in order to "learn to ride in the English fashion; to run at the tilt; to hawk, to shoot, or to use such other good exercises as I perceive my said good lord to be meet unto."[123] Shane was likely introduced to Robert Dudley by Kildare. The favourite was not only an ally of Kildare's, but his influence over Elizabeth exceeded any other courtier's, with the possible exception of Cecil. Shane's intuition had thus gained him two powerful advocates with whom he shared another commonality. All three were inveterate enemies of the earl of Sussex, and all three had, at some point, been the target of his

[122] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 45.
[123] Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster,* 141.

opprobrium. Dudley's conflict with Sussex dated back to their fathers' involvement on opposite sides of the succession dispute following the death of Edward VI in 1553. Dudley's father, the duke of Northumberland, sought to impose a new succession plan that overlooked Mary and Elizabeth Tudor in favor of Jane Grey. Sussex's father, the second earl of Sussex, was a supporter of Mary's claim.[124] Mary's accession to the throne resulted in the execution of Dudley's father and one of his brothers, while another brother died in the Tower.

Kildare's enmity with Sussex stemmed from the latter's fears of widespread revolt in Ireland. Prior to his obsession with the destruction of Shane O'Neill, Sussex was preoccupied with the concept of a Geraldine conspiracy. Early in his service as viceroy, he identified the Geraldines, led by Kildare, as the most serious threat to English hegemony. He suggested to Elizabeth that they employ Kildare's subordinates against him in exchange for English titles, "making some to be viscounts, and some to be barons."[125] In October 1560, frustrated with Sussex's failure to deliver results against Shane O'Neill, Elizabeth chose to send Kildare, who had been restored to a place of prominence within the political elite, as her emissary to negotiate with Shane. Due to Kildare's intervention, Shane eventually signed an agreement at Carrackbradagh. This gave The O'Neill Mór most of the concessions he wanted, including an unfulfilled promise to end the English occupation at Armagh. During the Carrickbradagh negotiations, Sussex was several miles away at Dundalk, but Kildare kept him informed of the developments in the negotiations. Originally, Sussex agreed to the treaty. The Queen and Cecil, however, balked at the provision for removing the garrison from Armagh. Following the

[124] David Grummitt, "Radcliffe, Robert, first earl of Sussex (1482/3–1542)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 September 2004; Accessed 7 Feb. 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22991.
[125] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 73.

disastrous results of Sussex's military campaigns and the disintegration of the alliance he built with Cecil's help, the Queen renewed again turned to Kildare and sent him to complete the final negotiations for Shane's visit. To Sussex this was a disastrous mistake: among other things, he viewed Shane as the "trump card" of the supposed Geraldine conspiracy.[126] Embarrassed that Kildare had successfully undermined him, Sussex chose to travel to London himself to make his own defense before the Queen.

By the time Sussex arrived in England, his standing with the Queen was tenuous. Resentment against Sussex's style of governance had begun to build nearly as soon as Sussex had arrived in Ireland. He rejected advisors who had served the previous viceroy, initiating "the virtual disappearance of political thinking as such."[127] Additionally, he removed members of the previous administration, replacing them with his own friends and family. Sussex's *modus operandi* as Lord Deputy was to fixate on single issues: first Kildare, then Shane O'Neill.[128] He also placed military exploits at the top of his schedule of priorities and largely ignored administrative affairs on the island, particularly the worsening state of the Irish budget. Sussex promoted his campaigns against Anglo-Irish and Gaelic lords to the Queen and her council as being relatively quick, easy and inexpensive. But his military campaigns inevitably required massive expenditure. To make up the short-fall, Sussex took the cess—the process of taxing citizens to procure supplies for the garrisons—to its extreme, demanding ever-increasing payments from the people of the Pale at the same time that their currency was rapidly losing value[129]. Additionally, Sussex made "oppressive" demands of the Palesmen by obliging them to

[126] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 100.
[127] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 81.
[128] Williams, *The Later Tudors*, 265.
[129] MacCaffrey, "Radcliffe, Thomas, third earl of Sussex." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

house and care for the soldiers, their families, and their livestock.[130] The people of the Pale began to complain about unfair taxation policies. Kildare, ever-desirous to supplant his rival and reclaim his family's traditional role as governor, fomented this dissent. Sussex's position in the English court was sufficiently high-ranking that the initial complaints to Westminster about taxation and billeting were largely ignored. However, once his focus shifted entirely to subduing Shane, expenses increased even further. Elizabeth, who was notoriously frugal, grew unhappy with the expenditures when Sussex's series of campaigns to destroy Shane ended in ignominious failure. When the relations between Sussex and Shane grew so strained as to require a mediator between them, Dudley pressed for Kildare's involvement.[131] Kildare, in turn, organized groups of discontented Palesmen and prepared them to appear before the Queen. Thus, by the time Sussex arrived in London to defend his position against Shane O'Neill, he faced a threat not only to his initiative to subdue Shane, but to his career itself.

While in London, Shane argued the case that he should be granted his father's titles before Elizabeth. He was presented to the court by Kildare on Twelfth Night: 6 January 1562. The first point he made was to reiterate his insistence that the Baron of Dungannon was illegitimate. In Shane's opinion, this rendered the original treaty void[132]. That Feardorcha was born out of wedlock to a blacksmith's wife was not a secret: Conn Bacagh and the English had both acknowledged this. The English chose to accept Feardorcha as the heir to Tyrone regardless, contrary to their own laws of succession. But Shane's argument went one step further: he insisted that not only was his half-brother the son of the blacksmith's wife, but of the blacksmith as well. He painted his father as a good man who never turned away a child presented

[130] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 88.
[131] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 102.
[132] Brady, *Shane'O'Neill*, 38.

to him. Ciaran Brady indicates that Shane repeated this narrative several times over several years, and that notes and letters written about these retellings indicate a degree of consistency that bolsters its veracity[133]. Yet, this was not the end of Shane's argument. He had argued his half-brother Feardorcha's illegitimacy before to little effect, so the introduction of this trope into his main argument was merely reiteration included to introduce his more compelling legal argument. Throughout his life, Shane looked to his foster-brother Terence Donnelly for assistance and advice. O'Chonluain implies that some of Shane's letters in Latin may actually have been dictated to or composed by Donnelly.[134] James Hogan indicated that while O'Donnelly was "certainly the best educated and most capable man O'Neill had about him,"[135] he did not accompany Shane to London and was therefore unlikely to be fully responsible for Shane's familiarity with "every aspect of Anglo-Irish law and administration as well as...native law and customs."[136] Hogan asserts that Shane's legal assistants were the younger brothers of James Fleming, Baron of Slane, who was a signatory to Sussex's proclamation against Shane the previous year. One of these brothers, WIlliam, "held the office of 'Judex Tyroniae' in the council of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish officers which O'Neill had set up to assist him in the government of his kingdom."[137]This divergence between brothers is an apt microcosm for the fractious nature of Irish politics. To mount a successful case in London, therefore, Shane needed advisors who were intimately familiar with the differences between English and Irish laws, and who could help him

[133] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 22.
[134] Ó Conluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 4.
[135] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill comes to the Court of Elizabeth," 167.
[136] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill comes to the Court of Elizabeth," 166.
[137] Ibid.

make a case in a way that was sufficiently sophisticated to encourage the English to take him seriously and not dismiss him as "someone from China, or America."[138]

Ultimately, Shane argued that, because Feardorcha was not the son of his father Conn Bacagh, the 1542 treaty between him and the English was void and a new treaty would need to be written. Furthermore, because his father was no longer alive, the English would need to write this new treaty with the present O'Neill Mór. Because the O'Neill Mór was a Gaelic title, the English must negotiate with the chief elected through Gaelic laws—that is, Shane himself. Even if the English were successful at eliminating him and restoring the young Dungannon, Shane said, "there are hundreds of my name who would not allow his pretensions."[139] Furthermore, Shane emphasized that the traditional relationship between The O'Neill Mór and his constituents was one of an officer to his people rather than a king to his subjects. This had a basis in ancient Brehon laws: several examples of Irish law in the *Crith Gablach* explain the rights and obligations of the rí. Conn Bacagh, Shane argued, made the treaty with the English as an individual, not as an officer of his people. Yet the English had been tricked twice over. By accepting an heir that was not even of Conn Bacagh's body, the treaty was invalid under English law. And by treating Conn Bacagh as an absolute monarch, they signed a treaty that was invalid under Irish law as well. This was a dangerous proposition to Cecil and other members of the privy council. Under the terms of surrender and regrant, the English authorities made treaties with chieftains in the same way as they made them with Conn Bacagh. Therefore, as Brady acknowledges, Fleming's brothers had assisted Shane in delivering an argument that "laid bare fundamental problems concerning the nature of the surrender and regrant process itself."[140]

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[138] Camden, *Annales*, 90.
[139] Mathews, *The O'Neills of Ulster,* 138.
[140] Brady, Shane O'Neill, 41.

Elizabeth's dissatisfaction with Sussex is evident in the fact that she allowed Shane to argue his case first, despite Sussex's pleas for the contrary. The earl's arguments were cogent: he argued that The O'Neill Mór was not a title recognized by English law, so Shane's accession to the title was materially irrelevant.[141] Yet Elizabeth was clearly concerned about the Lord Lieutenant's ability to govern Ireland effectively. Kildare brought two groups of Palesmen to Whitehall during this visit. The first was a group of law students who alleged corruption on Sussex's part. They were rebuked for their insolence, but the seed of doubt was planted in Elizabeth and her Privy Council's minds. Kildare followed up with pleas from a group of Anglo-Irish gentry, making the same claims that the law students had: that unfair taxation and debased coinage made their economic prospects intolerably bleak. Faced with the dissatisfaction of "a pillar of English authority on the island,"[142] Elizabeth and Cecil chose to delay an immediate decision about Shane's case in the name of further investigation. Sussex ended his visit to London under siege by accusations of mismanagement and corruption not only from Shane, but also from a wide swath of resentful Palesmen. He returned to Ireland under official suspicion: Dudley had effectively lobbied for one of his proteges, Sir Nicholas Arnold, to conduct an investigation into Sussex's administration. The visit was not only a failure for Sussex, but represented the death knell of his career in Ireland.

Despite these moves against Shane's rival, the Queen and her chancellor effectively eliminated the possibility of good-faith negotiations with Shane through their prevarication. They did this by requiring him to answer a series of questions about his ascent to the O'Neillship and about his understanding of The O'Neill Mór's relationship to his people and to the English

[141] Brady, Shane O'Neill, 39.
[142] MacCaffrey, "Radcliffe, Thomas." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

crown[143]. The English thus questioned an agreement they had already made with Shane: his ownership of the title of The O'Neill Mór. Shane was further disillusioned by Elizabeth's insistence upon interviewing the Baron of Dungannon before making a decision regarding the earldom of Tyrone.[144] Despite the safe-conducts which the Queen had awarded to him, Shane's authority in Ulster grew increasingly fragile the longer he remained in London. In April, his tanaiste, Tarlach Luinneach, assassinated the Baron of Dungannon in an attempt to supplant Shane's authority. Shane responded by quickly signing an agreement with the Privy Council that eliminated some of the concessions he had already negotiated. This shows that Shane's priority, rather than remaining in "quiet obedience"[145] with Elizabeth, was the title of The O'Neill Mór, and the kingship of Ulster. By this time, Shane had no reason to trust the English: they had repeatedly conspired with Shane's *urriaghs* and enemies, they had not removed the garrison from the heart of Tír Eoghain, and they kept him away from his kingdom's affairs for nearly five months.

Shane's visit to London was ultimately a disappointment to both of the primary personalities in the conflict. Shane left with the implicit support of both Kildare and Dudley, but almost immediately began to renege on his agreement with the English. Sussex, meanwhile, continued to campaign against Shane with equally unsuccessful results. Yet the alarming implications of Shane's argument against the legal validity of the surrender and regrant procedure caught the attention of the secretary of state. Having witnessed the defiance which

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[143] "Articles to be Answered by Shane O'Neill, 7 February 1562," In *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 186. SP 63/5 f.41.
[144] Brady, Shane O'Neill, 40.
[145] Simon Adams, "Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), courtier and magnate." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 September 2004; Accessed 16 February 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8160.

Shane expressed during his submission, Cecil decided to continue supporting Sussex. Furthermore, the Gaelic chieftain's alliance with Dudley and Kildare had aroused Cecil's enmity in a factional sense: as the only other courtier who rivaled his influence with Elizabeth due to her "almost total emotional dependence"on him, Dudley had earned Cecil's mistrust.[146] Incidentally, this mistrust had been aggravated a year and a half earlier, when the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Dudley's wife exploded into a court-engulfing scandal that implicated even the Queen. The Amy Robsart scandal and its associated fallout highlighted the question of Elizabeth's marriage prospects—and ultimately the succession[147]. Cecil knew he could not force Elizabeth to make a decision regarding marriage, so he turned to one area where he felt he could improve his chances to realize a Protestant British Isles: the defeat and destruction of Shane O'Neill. The foundation of mistrust and personal acrimony established by the rivals' arguments in court set a path toward destruction that, from Shane's departure forward, became linked with the contrast between Shane's performance of kingship, Elizabeth's role as matriarch of England, and her courtiers' personal desires and fears.

[146] Ibid.
[147] For a thorough examination of Elizabeth's marriage prospects and negotiations, see Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Chapter III

Propaganda and The Formation of Historical Memory

"Thus the wretched man ended, who might have lived like a Prince, had he not quenched the sparkes of grace that appeared in him…"

-Edmund Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*[148]

Shane O'Neill's visit to London was, according to Ciaran Brady, an "unmitigated failure."[149] Elizabeth and her court detained him for nearly five months, during which time his *tanaiste,* Tarlach Luinneach O'Neill, took advantage of his absence and began amassing the support of several of Shane's *urriaghs*. This naked aggression was typical of Gaelic internecine warfare—Shane may have been dismayed by his uncle's behavior, but he likely would have expected it. In April 1562, anxious to return to Tír Eoghain, Shane signed articles of agreement with the Crown that were far less favorable to him than those which they originally demanded. He had experienced the duplicity of the English court in person, and he left with no intention to remain in compliance with Elizabeth. On the other hand, while Shane had ostensibly arrived in London to assure the Queen of his "service and honour,"[150] the English court was well aware of his communication with their Continental and Scottish enemies. So, while Shane gained the initial support of one of the most influential men in Elizabeth's court and continued to enjoy an alliance of one of the most powerful Anglo-Irish magnates, his connections with these powerful

[148] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 130.
[149] Ciaran Brady, "Shane O'Neill Departs From the Court of Elizabeth: Irish, English, Scottish perspectives and the Paralysis of Policy, July 1559-April 1562," In *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland Since 1500*, ed. S.J. Connolly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 28.
[150] O'Chonluain, "Shane O'Neill's Postbag," 17.

political agents and with Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, also aroused the scrutiny of Elizabeth's secretary of state, Sir William Cecil. Following Sir Henry Sidney's interception of a letter from Mary intended for Shane, the English deduced they could not trust Shane's good faith, either.[151]

These concerns about Shane resulted in an escalation of propagandist vitriol directed at Shane and fueled by English anxiety about potential threats emanating from France, Scotland, and Spain. Sussex's increasingly fragile hold on the viceroyalty of Ireland further increased this anxiety, particularly because the grievances of the Pale gentry during Shane's visit convinced Elizabeth that her Lord Lieutenant's failures warranted an official investigation. This was a coup for Kildare and Dudley, whose pick to investigate their rival's performance, Sir Nicholas Arnold, left London for Dublin that spring. Mary Stuart was yet another cause of acute concern for Cecil in particular: an alliance between the Catholic Shane and the religiously tolerant Mary threatened England's "postern gate,"[152] particularly because the Scottish queen had a strong claim to the throne of England and was actively searching for a consort to produce an heir. Ultimately, the English elite were forced to come together and target Shane for destruction, employing the military prowess of Sir Henry Sidney, clandestine intrigue, and an increase in men, money, and malice against him. This required refashioning Shane's image through propaganda intended to establish him as the antithesis of English behavioral, relational, and military norms: in essence, Cecil and his allies created an Irish archetype. Shane's historical attributes—that of the barbarian, the drunk, and the proud—are thus the echoes of anxious English voices. The realities behind these claims, which this chapter addresses, are impossible to verify. Therefore, the

[151] "The Lord Lieutenant to the Queen, 29 September 1562," in C*alendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 205. SP 63/7 f.61.
[152] Williams, *The Later Tudors*, 239.

archetype inspired by Shane O'Neill has remained a reflection of English political insecurity that endures through the present day.

Following Shane's return to Ireland, he "made clear his rejection of the terms that had been forced on him in England"[153] by dismantling the remainder of Sussex and Cecil's Ulster alliance against him. He made an example of one of his disloyal *urriaghs*, Seán mac Con Maguire, through a scorched-earth campaign that prompted the chief of the sept to hide to avoid Shane's fury. Despite the fact that Calvagh O'Donnell remained imprisoned at Benburb and that the territory was controlled by Shane's purported ally, Calvagh's son and *tanaiste* Con O'Donnell, Shane assembled another foray into Tír Conaill and seized over 30,000 cattle.[154] Because Sussex and Cecil were intent upon persuading Elizabeth into a full-scale war against Shane, this turn of events was not disappointing for them. A wasted Ulster could only underscore the idea that rule by this O'Neill Mór meant depredation for Elizabeth's territories. The desire to overthrow Shane's regional hegemony was particularly acute for Sussex, whose own efforts to destroy the Gaelic chieftain had damaged any chance of an accord between Shane and the English state.

While back in England, the Lord Lieutenant had argued his case well before Elizabeth by using Conn Bacagh's acceptance of the terms of surrender and regrant as the crux of his assertions. Whether or not Shane was elected The O'Neill Mór at Tullach Óg was irrelevant to Sussex's case. To the Lord Lieutenant, the simple fact that Conn had yielded made his descendants subject to English law. Therefore, Shane's claim to authority and the earldom of Tyrone had no legal standing, especially as he was not Conn's eldest son. To Sussex, Shane was

[153] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 48.
[154] Ibid.

an upstart. Yet the Gaelic chieftain had repeatedly humiliated him in battle. Furthermore, Shane routinely emasculated Sussex's authority by refusing to meet with him, sending his envoys straight to Elizabeth, and by proving to be at his most conciliatory when treating with the Earl of Kildare. Sussex felt compelled to act against this offense to his authority. As a member of one of England's foremost aristocratic families, his honor was at stake, along with his career. Sussex's vilification of Shane, particularly after the humiliation of 1561 (at which the viceroy was not actually present), may best be viewed in light of a man who was uncertain about the future of his career and of his continued favour in Elizabeth's eyes. As mentioned above, mutual distrust had always been the case between the two men. Pretenses of civil discourse were undermined by bad-faith behavior on both parts. The Lord Lieutenant's June 1561 proclamation was a prime example of vitriol. Sussex wrote a lengthy and scathing indictment of Shane's behavior until then, describing in detail why his failures were the product of "the presumptious, arrogant, traitorous, and rebellious deeds"[155] of his opponent. Sussex took special umbrage with Shane's criticism of the Dublin government's fiscal debasement, describing Shane's remarks as arrogant, proud, and contemptuous.[156] In an apparent show of resentment against Shane's challenge to his own authority, the proclamation focuses far more on Shane's interactions with Sussex rather than the military deeds of this "monstrous, perjured traitor."[157]

The proclamation's publication preceded the rout at Armagh by only one month. The results of this battle and the communication surrounding Shane's surprise of the English force show that Sussex and Cecil's alliance also served the purpose of spreading disinformation around their opponent's victories. In July, Cecil received news from the Lord Lieutenant about

[155] O'Chonluain, Shane O'Neill's Postbag, 5.
[156] O'Chonluain, Shane O'Neill's Postbag, 12.
[157] O'Chonluain, Shane O'Neill's Postbag, 10.

the defeat near Armagh. Sussex, as a mea culpa, explained in a letter that the reason for the loss was "the cowardice of some."[158] Richard Bagwell attributes this cowardice to Sir Jacques Wingfield, who, as commander of the army's rear guard, "allowed himself to be surprised."[159] Cecil addresses Wingfield's behavior in his letter, advising Sussex to allow the cowardice to go unpunished lest the Queen "smelleth the matter."[160] Cecil then doubled down on his plan of action, describing how he had "scattered the matter abroad as a plain overthrow of *Shane's* power."[161] The Countess of Kildare wrote to the court several days later with the truth of the English defeat, but Cecil indicates that his disinformation had served its purpose: the Lady Kildare's letters were greeted with disbelief, which the secretary of state attributed to his own "occupying of men's minds."[162] Sussex cooperated with the secretary of state's plan, indicating in a September letter that he would not discipline Wingfield, "as that would give a colour of truth to the many exaggerated accounts in circulation."[163] Even so, Sussex's failure to either defeat Shane or negotiate his submission in London successfully induced the Queen to take an action that he was loath to face: by the time Cecil had received the aforementioned letter, Elizabeth had sent a letter of her own to Kildare, authorizing the Geraldine to travel to Ireland and complete what Sussex could not.[164] Perhaps this decision was influenced by Robert Dudley, who continued

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[158] Richard Bagwell, *Ireland Under The Tudors: With A Succinct Account of the Earlier History*. Vol. 2. London: Longmans and Green, 1890, 25.
[159] Bagwell, *Ireland Under The Tudors*, 24.
[160] William Cecil, "Seventeen original letters of secy Cecil, to the E. of Sussex; on various public and private affairs," *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library deposited in the British Museum, 1744-1827*, ed. Joseph Planta. London, England: Record Commission, 1802, 522. BL MS Cotton Titus B. XIII, fo. 50r.
[161] Ibid. The italics are the author's own.
[162] Ibid.
[163] "Lord Lieutenant to Cecil, 1 September 1561," in C*alendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603].* Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 180. SP 63/4 f.106.
[164] "The Queen to the Earl of Kildare, 27 August 1561," in C*alendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603].* Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 179. SP 63/4 f.101.

to enjoy a position of high favor with the Queen despite the fact she had been "forced to surrender the idea of making him her successor."[165]

Sussex's suspicions of conspiracy by Shane were not entirely unfounded. Just as Cecil and Sussex undermined relations between Shane and the Queen by orchestrating the Ulster Alliance parallel to their surface-level negotiations, Shane engaged in diplomacy with several of England's enemies, particularly with Spain and with the Queen of Scots and her allies. By the time of Shane's submission, the Spanish were certainly aware of the mounting discord between Shane O'Neill and Elizabeth's Dublin government. One of the unintended effects of the Privy Council's decision to detain Shane in England for several months was for the latter to establish a relationship with Bishop Alvaro de Quadra, the Spanish ambassador to England. "Shane O'Neill and ten or twelve of his principal followers have received the sacrament in my house with the utmost secrecy," he wrote to King Philip II, "as he refused to receive the Queen's communion." [166] De Quadra encouraged his sovereign to cooperate with Shane in undermining the English, adding that the Gaelic chieftain would be "a most important instrument."[167] The Irish had intrigued with the Spanish against the Tudors before. One notable instance was in response to Henry VIII's relationship with Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn. Henry's infatuation with Anne prompted him to seek an end to his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. This angered the Spanish, who considered the forced annulment of 1533 an insult to the youngest surviving daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Concerned with her treatment and with the supremacy of the Catholic faith in Europe, Catherine's nephew, King Charles V, considered an invasion of

[165] Doran, Monarchy and Matrimony, 52.
[166] "Alvaro de Quadra to Philip II, Calendar of State Papers Spanish 1558-67, 235." Quoted in A.F. Pollard, *The History of England from the Ascension of Edward I to the Death of Elizabeth 1547-1603* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910), 425.
[167] Ibid.

England. His ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, reported in May of that year that the Irish would support a war, and "would do in such a case all that they could."[168] Nine months later, at the dawn of the Silken Thomas rebellion, Chapuys commented on the alliance between Thomas Fitzgerald and the disaffected earl of Desmond, asserting that "the Geraldine earls...were in close alliance."[169] In light of this evidence, Sussex's fear of a renewal of Geraldine power appears legitimate. Shane's affinity with de Quadra during a visit in which he purported to submit to Elizabeth, therefore, could only have aggravated this anxiety.

A crucial factor in understanding Spanish commentary regarding England in the early 1560s is that, aside from issues stemming from the English Reformation and Philip's marriage to Elizabeth's predecessor and half-sister Mary, the Spanish were engaged in intrigue with Elizabeth's court for another reason. Philip wished to arrange a marriage between Elizabeth and Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in the hope of preventing the English crown from passing to Mary Stuart and thus upsetting the balance of European power through the union of England with France and Scotland. The Privy Council was equally invested in the question of Elizabeth's succession, but its members disagreed about who Elizabeth's consort should be. This did not escape de Quadra, who commented on English factional intrigue in a letter to the Duchess of Parma in September 1560. At that time, he asserted that Secretary Cecil "was in disgrace."[170] Two years later, in October 1562, he observed of the Privy Council that "out of the 15 or 16 of

[168] Micheál Ó Siochrú, "Foreign Involvement in the Revolt of Silken Thomas, 1534-5." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 96C, no. 2 (1996): 51.
[169] Ó Siochrú, "Foreign Involvement in the Revolt of Silken Thomas," 55.
[170] Alvaro de Quadra and James Gairdner, "Bishop de Quadra's Letter and the Death of Amy Robsart," *The English Historical Review 13*, No. 49 (1898), 85.

them… there were nearly as many different opinions about the succession to the Crown."[171] To Cecil, the question of Elizabeth's marriage in 1560 was so distressing that he told de Quadra he was considering resigning. If the English political elite were unsuccessful in coercing an apparently unwilling Elizabeth to marry, the Queen of Scots had a strong claim to the throne—one that was backed by France, whose defeat of the English at Calais in 1558 resulted in the humiliating loss of England's last continental holding. Yet the candidate whom Elizabeth appeared to prefer was the only man whose influence with the Queen rivaled his own—Robert Dudley. De Quadra made much of Cecil's enmity with Elizabeth's master of horse in his letter to the Duchess, much of which focused on the Amy Robsart scandal. Robsart, the daughter of a Norfolk landowner and the wife of Lord Robert Dudley, died under suspicious circumstances in September 1560. Following the discovery of Lady Dudley's body at the foot of a small staircase, Elizabeth's court was scandalized. If de Quadra is to be believed, Cecil suspected that Dudley and Elizabeth had orchestrated Lady Dudley's end themselves. The Spanish ambassador recounted a conversation between himself and Cecil shortly before the incident in which Cecil "said that [the Queen and Dudley] were thinking about putting to death Robert's wife, and that now she was publicly reported to be ill, but that was not so."[172] De Quadra claimed that Cecil blamed Dudley's ambition and Elizabeth's behavior for his own disgrace at court, stating that "my Lord Robert was trying to drive him out of public affairs." Furthermore, in Cecil's view, "the queen was conducting herself in such a fashion that for his part he thought best to retire."[173] Yet this may be interpreted as an attempt by the secretary of state to influence the Spanish

[171] Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes, "The Earlier Elizabethan Succession Question Revisited," in *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England*, ed. Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2014), 23.
[172] de Quadra and Gairdner, "Bishop de Quadra's Letter," 86.
[173] de Quadra and Gairdner, "Bishop de Quadra's Letter," 85.

ambassador for his own end. Why would Cecil, if he truly feared his loss of rank and status, confide suspicion of Elizabeth's complicity in a murder to someone who had direct access to her? Did he hope that some response by the ambassador might exert diplomatic pressure on the queen and force her to put less trust in Dudley? Like Sussex, Cecil appears to have been wary of the possibility of cooperation among Geraldine partisans and the Spanish. This conversation with de Quadra may also have been intended to warn the ambassador away from Dudley, who he knew by then to be an ally of Kildare's. By driving a wedge between de Quadra and Dudley, Cecil perhaps hoped to advance his policy interests in Ulster as well as undermine his chief rival for Elizabeth's trust.

Yet it was another turn of events during Shane's visit that struck most directly at Sussex and Cecil's fear of his involvement in a wide-ranging foreign and domestic conspiracy. In September 1562, Sussex received a visit from a man named John Smyth, who he described as "my lord treasurer's man." In truth, Smyth was an associate of Robert Fleming, who was a cousin of James, Baron of Slane. Robert, as mentioned above, was one of the retainers who accompanied Shane to London and assisted him with his legal arguments.[174] Fleming, then, was a relative of Shane in the employ of the English. He continued to send information to London on Shane's behalf, and to report about Shane for the benefit of the English, at least until 1565, when the trail of his letters in the *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland* ends.[175] Smyth is known to have attempted to assassinate Shane at a later date. Sussex eventually recommended both Flemyng and Smith be rewarded for their "services in disclosing the dispositions, proceedings,

[174] Hogan, "Shane O'Neill Comes to the Court of Elizabeth," 167.
[175] The last letter from 'Robert Flemyng' appears in February 1565 and concerns Shane's dealings with the Scots. See "Robert Flemyng, February 1565," in C*alendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603].* Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 254. SP 63/12 f.0114.

and practices of Shane O'Neill."[176] The information which this Smyth passed to the viceroy appeared to confirm his continual assertions that Shane was not to be trusted:

> Shane had conference by letters with the Scottish Queen and that if a letter to him [ie Shane] from her and received whilst he was in his journey to your Majesty had come to him before his coming out of Tyrone he would not have gone into England. He declared also that Shane during his being in England had daily conference with the King of Spain's ambassador by means of an Irish priest that came from Rome. He said further that 3 Scots of the McIlanes [i.e., mac Leans], kinsmen to the countess of Argyll, were with Shane travailing for to redeem the countess...[177]

Thus, Sussex had received evidence of Shane's dealings with several adversaries of the English. Shane's contacts with the Spanish have been examined above. That Shane was a Catholic was well-known. Aside from his personal faith, his connection with Armagh, and a priest's role as intermediary between himself and de Quadra, Shane also broke confidence with the Crown by receiving papal nuncio David Wolfe at his home in Tír Eoghain. But it is the Scottish connection that is most important to Shane's eventual defeat and downfall, and it is this particular information—the result of a betrayal of Shane by two of his retinue—that brought these intrigues to the forefront of England's worry. This Scottish connection had two parts. That Shane had also renewed his alliance with the Scots mac Donnells, whose part in the Ulster Alliance all but Somhairle Buidhe had repudiated, could hardly be a surprise. Shane relied upon Scottish mercenaries, and he still had in his possession Calvagh O'Donnell and his wife Katherine mac

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[176] "Thomas, Earl of Sussex, to the Council, 28 Nov 1562," in *Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury ...: preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire ...* London: H.M.S.O., ed. Robert Cecil, Richard Roberts, Edward Salisbury, Montague Giuseppi, and Geraint Owen. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1883, 271. No. 872.

[177] "Lord Lieutenant to The Queen, 29 September 1562," in C*alendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603].* Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 205. SP 63/7 f.61v.

Lean. As mentioned above, the alliance between Shane and the mac Leans would hold, but this letter proved to the English that the mac Donnells were treacherous and must be eliminated from Ireland completely. Mary, Queen of Scots was a more complicated issue.

Mary Stuart arrived in Leith in 1561 to assume direct rule of Scotland and almost instantly began to pursue her objective of being named Elizabeth's successor. Her father, James V, had died when Mary was six days old. In 1548, she was betrothed to the Dauphin of France in exchange for military aid against England and was immediately evacuated to Paris. She was raised in the French court, marrying the future Francis II in 1558. Mary Stuart's claim to the English throne derived from her paternal grandmother, Margaret Tudor, the elder daughter of Henry VII. It also relied on the implication of Elizabeth's bastardy. As the eldest child of Henry VIII, Mary Tudor was viewed as a legitimate monarch by the Catholics, as was Edward VI, who was born after the death of Catherine of Aragon. Because Elizabeth was born while Catherine was still alive, Catholics considered her illegitimate.[178] They believed that Mary Stuart, not Elizabeth, was the eldest surviving legitimate descendant of Henry VII. Her uncles, François, second duc du Guise and Charles, cardinal of Lorraine, encouraged this line of thought, and "no sooner had Elizabeth inherited the throne than Mary quartered the arms of England on her heraldic devices and added 'queen of England and Ireland' to her other titles."[179] To Cecil, the widespread Catholic support that Mary enjoyed was dangerous enough. Cecil assumed that her Catholicism would be a problem for Scottish nobles such as William Maitland, the Earl of Argyll, and even her half-brother the Earl of Moray, who led the Protestant Lords of the Congregation who had maintained power in Scotland since the death of Mary's mother in June

[178] Like Mary Tudor, Elizabeth was also made illegitimate by Henry VIII's annulment of his marriage to her mother. Unlike Mary, Elizabeth was never legally re-legitimized.
[179] Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 65.

1560. Yet Mary carefully avoided challenging the new Protestant church in Scotland when she "heard Mass privately but was content to accept the Reformation; and she made no attempt to reimpose Catholicism."[180] This was a brilliant political strategy intended to consolidate her support in Scotland while strengthening her claim to be Elizabeth's heir in England. That she did this recalls Shane's behavior, whose performance at court of a person dressed up as an Englishman, but surrounded by fundamental foreignness, must have led Cecil to continue the facade of positive relationships as long as necessary with both of them. Yet Cecil's frustration with Mary was compounded by the apparent willingness of Robert Dudley to treat her claim as worthy of consideration.[181] His support may have been because Elizabeth herself seemed to believe that Mary had the best right to succeed her. In an October 1561 conversation, she told Maitland that "in the presence of God I (for my part) know none better, nor that myself would prefer to her."[182] At any rate, through Dudley's influence and her own will, Elizabeth continued to negotiate the possibility of a meeting with Mary in person that was intended to take place in the summer of 1562.[183] The meeting did not happen—an attack by the Guises on Huguenot Protestants in France allowed Cecil to plant the seeds of international conspiracy in Elizabeth's mind. Cecil therefore employed his talent for disinformation against Mary in the same way he had with Shane: through "the scattering abrode" at Court and in London of manuscript newsletters that 'spun' events for political advantage.[184]

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[180] Williams, *The Later Tudors*, 240.
[181] This assertion appears to be Spanish, as it originates from Calendars of State Papers of Spain. See *Doran and Kewes, Doubtful and Dangerous*, 23.
[182] *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janelle Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 63.
[183] Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 68.
[184] Glyn Parry, "The Monarchical Republic and Magic: William Cecil and the Exclusion of Mary Queen of Scots," Reformation 17, vol 1 (2012): 35.

But was this propaganda successful? After all, Cecil had gone to great lengths to paint Shane as a defeated rebel, yet at the dawn of 1563 The O'Neill Mór enjoyed the support of Elizabeth, Dudley, and Kildare, who was arguably the strongest Anglo-Irish magnate. Sussex had issued a proclamation branding Shane a traitor, yet for all his sartorial and diplomatic indications that he remained Gaelic in allegiance, Shane submitted openly to Elizabeth and appeared genuinely to seek an English title. Furthermore, Shane's counter-claims of mistreatment by Sussex were supported by grievances against the viceroy, the assassination attempts mounted on Shane's life, and Sussex's intractability regarding negotiations. In fact, Shane was at the apogee of his power, Dudley's influence continued, Sussex's career was teetering, and Mary Queen of Scots appeared to tether the two courtiers' most significant obstacles to each other in a web of conspiracy. Yet one element of 'John Smyth's' information contained an opportunity for Cecil to solve several problems at once: the instability of the Scots mac Donnells's loyalties. Regarded as an annoyance to the English crown, these Scottish interlopers became the thread by which Shane O'Neill's career was ultimately unraveled.

Sussex's troubles meant that Cecil's chief ally in the endeavor against Shane was now a liability. Shane appears to have made an attempt to isolate his grievances with the English government to those with Lord Lieutenant Sussex. In light of Sussex's polemics against him, an assassination attempt, and the favor of Elizabeth and many of her courtiers, this may have been a wise choice. Yet that would assume good faith on the part of the English crown and, as we have seen, there was little reason for him to believe there was any. Shane, dissatisfied at the terms of the treaty he was forced to sign, nevertheless pushed for its fulfillment while asserting his power on the ground in Ulster. In November 1562, Shane sent Robert Dudley "two horses, two hawks,

and two greyhounds," along with a letter requesting that Dudley continue "to be a mean for his favour with Her Majesty and for the obtaining of his petitions."[185] He also sent similar letters and gifts to Elizabeth and Cecil. This demonstration of compliance was initially complicated by the assault on his *urriaghs* when he returned to Ireland. Because he was their traditional *rí*, Shane viewed these attacks as his prerogative, but Cecil and Sussex used them as evidence of his insurgent nature and pushed for further support for military action against Shane. They portrayed Shane as a tyrant who preyed on his defenseless vassals, particularly following his "refractory and stubborn behavior"[186] in failing to appear at a September meeting of the Dublin council which was organized by Sussex in contradiction with the articles of agreement signed by Shane in London.

Yet Shane received reluctant support from several former members of the Ulster Alliance, none of whom had received what they were promised by Sussex. Fueled by the bitterness of these broken assurances, O'Hanlon "swore it were better to serve the worst Irishman in Ulster than to trust in the Queen."[187] Following the receipt of a horse from Sussex which turned out to be worthless, Maguire himself apparently spoke for his people, begrudgingly admitting that because of the English failure to defeat Shane, "all my men's pleasure is that I should yield."[188] Furthermore, Nicholas Arnold's investigation of the Dublin administration had returned damning results. Arnold claimed that his initial inquiry "had uncovered sufficient

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[185] "Shane O'Neill to the Lord Robert Duddeley, 2 November 1562," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 209. SP 63/7 f.132.
[186] "Lord Lieutenant and Council to the Queen, 20 September 1562," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 204. SP 63/7 f.46
[187] Mathews, *O'Neills of Ulster*, 149.
[188] Mathews, *O'Neills of Ulster*, 152.

evidence of abuse to justify a far more extensive inquiry into the complaints of the Palesmen,"[189] an assertion which was supported by the refusal of the same Palesmen to supply Sussex with supplies on yet another hosting against Shane in 1563. According to historian Thomas Mathews, they said they "would rather be hanged at their own doors... If he looked to find provisions, he would be deceived."[190] Mathews's monograph occasionally reads as a work which reflects the Irish nativist tradition. But he accurately quotes Sussex's complaints in a letter written to Cecil on the 28th of April, where Sussex complains he "could not get a man to serve the Queen, nor a peck of corn to feed the army."[191] In short, Sussex had mismanaged his administration so grossly that even the residents of the English Pale who were presumably more inclined to support the English cause manifested an "indisposition...to have Shane O'Neill suppressed."[192] Shane's mockery of Sussex's forces during the 1563 hosting prompted Sussex to orchestrate another assassination attempt against Shane, this time through having the aforementioned 'John Smyth' poison The O'Neill Mór's wine. According to Ciaran Brady, this achieved nothing more than "a hangover and perfect grounds for [Shane's] refusal to come to the governor."[193] Shane pressed unsuccessfully to have Smyth tried and punished, but the English government's failure to reprimand someone who, unbeknownst to Shane, was in their pay nevertheless added another reason for Shane to mistrust its intentions.[194]

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[189] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 104.
[190] Mathews, *O'Neills of Ulster*, 154.
[191] "Lord Lieutenant to Cecill, 28 April 1563," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 216. SP 63/8 f.80.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 51.
[194] Brady, Shane O'Neill, 53.

Another blow to Sussex's administration came with the revelation that Sussex's captains had conspired to obstruct Arnold's investigation. Fitzwilliam, the administration's treasurer, refused to hand over his accounts, while Sussex's brother Henry Radcliffe "had intrigued with the O'Mores and the O'Connors to provoke renewed rebellion in the midlands"[195] in an effort to discredit Arnold's authority. But the final blow to Sussex's administration arrived in the autumn of 1562 when Elizabeth responded favorably to Dudley's exhortations to send an expeditionary force to defend Protestants against Guise forces in Le Havre. Elizabeth's need to prioritize spending on the French expedition (and her increased dependence on Dudley following her near-fatal bout of smallpox late that year) compounded her view of Sussex's failures. She authorized former Lord Chancellor Thomas Cusack to negotiate a new agreement with Shane. This treaty, completed at Drumcree in September 1563, granted Shane the title of Lord O'Neill, recognized his overlordship of his *urriaghs*, ordered the English evacuation of Armagh, and promised to grant him the earldom of Tyrone at the next summoning of the Dublin Parliament.[196] A disgusted Elizabeth finally recalled the humiliated Sussex, who had reportedly suffered a nervous collapse,[197] from his viceroyalty in April of 1564.

With Arnold now holding the governorship of Ireland, Shane was in an advantageous position. Arnold urged a policy of conciliation toward the Queen, and Shane accordingly expected progress toward fulfilling the promises which they had negotiated at Drumcree. Characteristically, the English court delayed any sort of concrete action, leaving the Drumcree treaty as little more than a "pious declaration of intent" that only served to escalate Shane's

[195] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 108.
[196] An explanation of the terms of the treaty at Drumcree may be found in Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 51-52.
[197] Ibid.

mistrust of the English.[198] In addition, Arnold's administration was ill-fated, ironically due to what Brady terms "Sussex's most damning political bequest."[199] Arnold's conciliatory policies toward Shane O'Neill and his open friendship with the Earl of Kildare aggravated internecine feuds among the Gaelic chiefs, particularly in Munster between the earls of Desmond and Ormond. Emboldened by their relief from Sussex's oppressive policies, the Anglo-Irish magnates began an increasing pattern of conflict that culminated with Ormond's capture of Desmond in 1565. Additionally, Elizabeth's letters patent in response to the Drumcree treaty differed significantly from those upon which Shane had agreed: particularly in the omission of the clause which would have allowed Shane to treat with Elizabeth and the Privy Council directly, rather than to report to her Irish viceroy. Although he was eventually persuaded to relent his objection to the matter, Shane's persistence in circumventing the Dublin administration caused the elite in Elizabeth's court to view his behavior as that of an over-proud and insolent upstart. The treaty had ostensibly given Shane the rights of kingship described in the *Ceart Ui Neill*, namely "the customary right of O'Neill over the province of Ulster."[200] He must have realized this, because it was around this time that he began styling himself "princeps Hibernicorum Ultoni," or, Prince of the Ulster Irish.[201] And when dissatisfaction surrounding Arnold's management of Ireland continued to delay an assembly of Parliament, Shane began again to act on his pretensions of kingship—this time, with the aid of Scottish intrigue.

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[198] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 52.
[199] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 110.
[200] Christopher Maginn, "Shane O'Neill." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 September 2004.
[201] "The Confutation of Shane O'Neill's subtile, 14 February 1562," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573* (London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 187. SP 63/5 f.80r.

Archibald Campbell, the fifth earl of Argyll, was a powerful magnate who dominated the Highlands throughout the volatile Scottish political situation in the 1560s. Like so many other courtiers of the day, he was also a man of shifting political allegiance. Impatient with the English refusal to aid the imprisoned Calvagh O'Donnell and his wife (who was the earl's stepmother), Argyll circumvented the English and negotiated the captives' release. The Scottish earl gave Shane £300 and 400 men,[202] while O'Donnell himself promised to relinquish Lifford Castle and the Inis Eoghain peninsula. However, upon his release, O'Donnell fled to Dublin, where he insisted that Shane had "bound [him] both hand and foot and [had] a great collar of iron set about my neck and a great chain of iron fast to the same collar…. so short that I could not stretch my legs neither rise upright."[203] O'Donnell had been offered an earldom by Sussex and Cecil during the development of the now-defunct Ulster alliance, and part of his purpose in approaching the government was to press for his reward. So, while Sir Thomas Cusack maintained his conciliatory policy toward Shane by arguing that "the O'Donnell should not be created an Earl before O'Neill,"[204] the horror of O'Donnell's imprisonment gave Shane's English enemies an opportunity to portray him as a figure unfit for authority due to his moral failings.

Nevertheless, Shane continued to maintain allies at court, and in this way, the prevarication of Elizabeth to either call a Parliament under Arnold to confirm Shane's earldom or to acquiesce to Cecil and Sussex's promotion of all-out war against Shane worked to his advantage. With Donegal overrun, the Scots macDonnells remained the only force that

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[202] Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 130.
[203] "The Calough O'Donnell to the Queen, 29 October 1564," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 247. SP 63/11/96.
[204] "Sir Thomas Cusake to Cecill, O'Neill and those under his, 17 April 1564," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 247. SP 63/10 f.115.

obstructed his complete dominance of Ulster. This was a dangerous move: although part of his negotiations with the earl of Argyll involved cessation of hostilities against Shane, the mac Donnells were Argyll's dependent clients, and their head, James, was married to Argyll's sister Agnes. Nevertheless, through a series of communications with the Privy Council, Shane and his emissaries began to press for authorization to move against the Antrim Scots. The offer to move against the Scots was apparently a bargaining chip for Shane, which is evidenced by the fact that his pleas for the Drumcree treaty to be ratified by Parliament included offers to expel the Scots from Ulster. In April 1564, Shane's retainer Robert Flemyng approached Cecil, claiming that "If the Queen would encourage O'Neill and give him some aid, he would not leave one Scot in Ireland in less than a year."[205] To the Privy Council, he begged to do "some notable service whereby he might be the better accepted of the queen."[206] Thus encouraged, in early May 1565, Shane met the mac Donnell forces at Glentaisie. Reinforcements intended to support Somhairle Buidhe arrived late; at first light Shane's army surprised the sleeping army and engaged in battle. Shane ultimately shattered his former allies, killing the mac Donnell chieftain, James, and his brother Angus while taking Somhairle Buidhe captive.[207] This was exactly what Cecil wanted: to turn the O'Neills and the mac Donnells against each other, eliminating one or the other of his Ulster adversaries. Yet Shane, no longer impeded by any significant military force, continued his assault on the mac Donnells. He traveled along the coast, seizing their castles. To the horror of the English, he refused to release his Scottish captives, instead choosing to begin populating the mac Donnell territories with his own people and establishing garrisons in the stolen castles. As

[205] "Robert Flemyng to Cecill, 17 April 1564," *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603].* Ed. Hans Claude Hamilton. Vol. 1: 1509-1573 London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 247. SP 63/10 f.109.
[206] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 111.
[207] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 56.

Ciaran Brady notes, "The first sixteenth-century plantation of Ulster had begun."[208] He then turned inland, and began expanding into Breifne and Connacht. Finally, he turned against the Pale, attacking Dundrum and Newry and evicting their garrisons. Shane had thus exceeded the authority bestowed upon him by the still-incomplete treaty of Drumcree. More seriously, the defeat of his former allies led him to investigate further Scottish support, which he attempted to locate in the form of the earl of Argyll.

The defeat at Glentaisie coincided with an upheaval in Scottish politics that embroiled the politics of Ulster with the succession question in England. As part of the negotiations between Mary Stuart and Elizabeth, Elizabeth required Mary to choose an English husband. The English queen's choice was actually her favourite, Robert Dudley, who was uninterested in the match and behaved with indifference.[209] Mary was equally disinterested, and continued to search elsewhere for a suitor. The appearance of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, in Scotland in February 1565 proved disastrous for Mary's reign and the stability of Scottish politics. Darnley had his own claim on the English throne due to his father, the earl of Lennox. That Mary regarded him as a serious suitor dismayed nobles such as Maitland, Argyll, and Moray. Darnley was a Catholic, and they feared that the Protestant Reformation in Scotland would be threatened or destroyed should he become Mary's consort. This fear was not unfounded: following her decision to marry Darnley, "the triumvirate's policies had been rejected and the political influence of Argyll and Moray had collapsed."[210] Despite Argyll's part in a public protest against the match, the Queen of Scots married Lord Darnley, who had been created duke of Albany, at the end of July.[211]

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[208] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 57.
[209] "Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 13 August 1566." SP 63/18 f.80.
[210] Dawson, *The Politics of Religion*, 122.
[211] Dawson, *The Politics of Religion*, 125.

Argyll rose with several other lords in protest and spent the next several years in disgrace on his lands in the Highlands. Yet he remained in contact with the Dublin administration through the Archbishop of Armagh, Adam Loftus. In autumn 1565, Loftus received a forged letter purportedly from Argyll that inquired about Shane's motives and included "detailed information about Scottish politics and geography [that] had probably been provided by Sorley Boy or his other Scottish captives."[212] Loftus immediately notified Argyll, and the two of them turned the forgery over to Arnold's replacement as Lord Deputy: Sir Henry Sidney.

Sidney's appointment to the Deputyship was supported by Cecil and his brother-in-law, Sussex. It was also supported by Kildare and by another of Sidney's brother-in-laws, Robert Dudley, who had been ennobled as Earl of Leicester during Elizabeth's attempt to coerce Mary Stuart into marrying him. Shane had lost the support of his former English allies when his victory at the Battle of Glentaisie proved to them that he could no longer be controlled and that his ambition was too great to abide: in a negotiation with Sir Thomas Stukeley, Shane claimed "I care not to be made an Earl, unless I may be better and higher than an Earl; for I am in blood and power better than the best of them."[213] This struck at their pride: except for Kildare, whom Shane had explicitly excluded in this assertion, the Gaelic chieftain's comment was an assertion of dominance over all of them. This arrogance, combined with Shane's military menace, convinced the former rivals to act together: Shane's performance of kingship had grown too powerful to abide.

[212] Dawson, The Politics of Religion, 136.
[213] Alexander G. Richey, *Lectures on the History of Ireland (2d Ser.) from A.D. 1534 to the Date of the Plantation of Ulster* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 307.

Sidney was popular in Ireland. Kildare's support of his appointment was joined by "several Gaelic chieftains who regarded 'big Henry of the Beer' as their special protector."[214] He had even enjoyed a good working relationship with Shane. Sussex himself had initially advanced Sidney as a candidate to replace him in Ireland in 1559, owing in part to this rapport with The O'Neill Mór; in a letter to the queen he stated that Shane was joined in "gossopryke with the Lord Justice Sydney, which band of friendship he will not break."[215] The 'gossopryke' was Sidney's role as godfather to Shane's son, which he performed in order to persuade Shane to negotiate with the Dublin administration. Yet aside from repeating the tropes established by Sussex and Cecil of Shane as a tyrant and a traitor, Sidney is responsible for some of the more memorable propaganda about him. His portrayal of Shane was nearly melodramatic: he repeatedly referred to Shane as monstrous. He also appears to have perpetuated another trope about Shane (and by extension the Irish) that persisted for centuries: the implication that he was severely alcoholic. Why, then, would Sidney perform a volte-face against his gossopryke? Again, the answer behind vilification of Shane was rooted in anxiety: this time, it was Sidney's anxiety regarding his place among the English aristocracy. Unlike Sussex, Sidney had no title and had ascended to his position on the basis of competent service to the Crown. Though he was well-connected, the fact that his appointment derived from the recommendation of both Leicester and Sussex shows that he was dependent on his higher-ranking brothers in law for his influence with the Queen.[216] Elizabeth herself appears to have been indifferent and at times hostile to

[214] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 113.
[215] "Notes of the Earl of Sussex to induce Queen Elizabeth to allow him to remain in England, February 1559," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Hans Claude Hamilton, ed. Vol. 1: *1509-1573*. London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 152. SP 63/1 f.23.
[216] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 114.

Sidney. Following early failures to contain internecine warfare among the rebellious Gaelic chiefs, she warned him that "we think surely since your going from hence you are entered into some great mist or darkness of judgment, and are like to enter into so great errors for the government of that realm as are not to be suffered…"[217] Another reason behind Sidney's propagandistic treatment of Shane derived from the fact that the primary objective of his viceroyalty was to destroy Shane O'Neill. While Cecil continued to pull the strings with the Scots, Sidney and his men were the 'boots on the ground' who were expected to turn those intrigues into concrete results. With this in mind, it is understandable why Sidney would choose to portray Shane in a dramatically negative light. A final reason for Sidney (and in this case, the remainder of Elizabeth's elite) to portray Shane as dishonorable was because the way in which the Gaelic chieftain was finally defeated had nothing to do with the English military and was instead an act of conspiracy between Sidney and the Scots mac Donnells in response to the birth of a Scottish heir. A line of discourse that illustrates these justifications for propaganda is in Sidney's manipulation of details around Shane's usage of alcohol.

Raphael Holinshed and Richard Stanihurst's chapter about Ireland in *Holinshed's Chronicles* contains a passage that addresses Shane's reportedly erratic behavior when drunk.

> The Queenes maiestie in some termes he would honor, but in deeds he denied all obedience, subtill and craftie he was especiallie in the morning: but in the residue of the daie verie vncertaine and vnsntable, and much giuen to excessive gulping and surfetting. And albeit he had most commonlie two hundred tunnes of wines in his cellar at Dundrun, and had his fill fill therof, yet was he neuer satisfied, till he had swallowed up maruellous great quantities of Vskebagh or Aqua Vite of that countrie: wherof so vnmeasurablie he would drinke and bouse, that for the quenching of the heat of the bodie which by that means was most extremelie inflamed and distempered, he was eftsoones conueied (as the common report was) into a deepe pit, and standing vpright in the same, the earth was cast round about him vp to the hard chin…[218]

[217] "Queen Elizabeth to Lord Deputy Sidney, 13 August 1566." SP 63/18 f.80.
[218] Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles,* 331.

That this information was included in *Holinshed's Chronicles* appears to be Sidney's influence. With the exception of Shane's 1564 capture of a Scottish ship laden with wine and a 1561 missal from Henry Radclyffe commenting about the "superflewity of wine" consumed by the Gaelic chieftain, the majority of the contemporary references to Shane and alcohol come from Sidney's hand.[219] The reference to the deterioration of Shane's temper from morning to evening is an elaboration on a passage from a 1566 letter from Sidney to Leicester.[220] The original architect of the chapters of *Holinshed's Chronicles* that pertain to the later Tudor monarchs was Edmund Campion, whose patron was Sidney's brother-in-law, the Earl of Leicester.[221] Finally, the volume of the *Chronicles* that is devoted to Ireland is dedicated to Sidney himself.[222] The epistle to his *Historie of Ireland* is dedicated to the earl. Campion was mentioned previously in this thesis regarding his portrayal of Irish kingship rituals as barbaric: this description evokes the ritual of the bathing-tub. In the inauguratory ritual, a *rí*'s sub-chiefs drank from the bowl in which he sat to symbolize their acceptance of his kingship. That his retainers set him into a pit and threw dirt around him appears to imply that his drunkenness and his temper 'buried' his authority to govern, and all that needed to be done was to remove his head—a head which Sidney later kept on a pike above Dublin Castle for many years.[223]

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[219] For the capture of the Scottish ship, see "Lord Lieutenant and Council to the Queen, 16 March 1564," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Hans Claude Hamilton, ed. Vol. 1: *1509-1573*. London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 232. SP 63/10 f.72.
For Henry Radclyffe's comments about Shane's alcohol consumption, see "Sir Henry Radeclyff to Cecill, 3 May 1561," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Hans Claude Hamilton, ed. Vol. 1: *1509-1573*. London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 170. SP 63/3 f.167
[220] "Lord Deputy Sidney to the Earl of Leicester, 1 March 1566," SP 63/16 f.83.
[221] Felicity Heal and Henry Summerson, "The Genesis of the Two Editions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford Handbooks Online, 2003), 11.
[222] Colm Lennon, "Ireland," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Felicity Heal, Ian W. Archer, and Paulina Kewes (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford Handbooks online, 2003), 3.
[223] Maginn, "Shane O'Neill," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

How Sidney managed to obtain Shane's head is another well-known instance of what is probably embellishment of what actually occurred. The English and the Dublin administration were now staunchly opposed to his rule. Tarlach, who had been dispossessed by his nephew upon his return from London, had not forgotten about his brief O'Neillship, and continued to conspire with those disaffected by Shane's behavior. Aside from having defeated the mac Donnell army and killed their chief, Shane still held Somhairle Buidhe and refused to ransom him. This would prove to be his fatal mistake. Indications that the mac Donnells were driven by the purpose of revenge rather than from their reputation as mercenaries began to emerge following Glentaisie. In April 1567, Hugh mac Manus O'Donnell, successor to Calvagh, wrote to Sidney explaining that he was in marriage negotiations with James mac Donnell's widow, Agnes Campbell, who "would willingly be allied with him in order to have revenge on O'Neill for the death of her late husband."[224] In the same letter, O'Donnell asks for permission to ally with the Scots against O'Neill. That permission was granted, resulting in the battle at Farsetmore in spring 1567 in which O'Donnell forces trapped Shane and his men in the rising tide of the River Swilly.[225] Hundreds of his men were drowned, and Shane was subsequently left without allies. After considering another theatrical performance in which he would submit to Sidney with a yoke around his neck,[226] he chose instead to treat with the mac Donnells, using his captive as leverage. On 31 May 1567 Shane and a small group of retainers, including Katherine mac Lean, met Alexander Óge mac Donnell and his men outside of Cushendun on the coast of the Irish Sea. Little is known about the events of the negotiation, but on 2 June, Alexander Óge and his men

[224] "Hugh mac Manus O'Donnell to Lord Deputy Sidney, 28 April 1567," in *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Ireland, of the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth, 1509-[1603]*. Hans Claude Hamilton, ed. Vol. 1: *1509-1573*. London, England: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860, 174. SP 63/20 f.148.
[225] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 63.
[226] Maginn, "Shane O'Neill," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

broke off negotiations, murdered Shane and his men, and captured Katherine mac Lean. The popular tales surrounding the account ascribe Shane's murder to a brawl at a feast held to celebrate an accord between the two sides. Each of these versions state that the brawl was a result of drinking, and then of a lewd comment on the part of either Shane or his secretary. Camden's *Annales* says that:

> ...in drinking [the mac Donnells] quarrelled with him, vpon some obscene speeches he vsed of their Mother, and so falling vpon him with their naked swords,* slew both himselfe, and many others of his company.[227]

Campion's version elaborates further, but with different women. In his version, Shane's secretary repeats a rumor that Agnes Campbell offered to marry Shane himself. The secretary goes on to claim that "if thine Aunt were Queen of Scotland, it might beseeme her full well to seeke such a Marriage."[228] This is particularly noteworthy because at the time of the meeting in Cushendun, Mary's prospects in Scotland were bleak: Darnley had been murdered in 1566, her son (and eventual successor to Elizabeth) James had been removed from her custody by the Lords of the Congregation, and one month earlier her protector Lord Bothwell had abducted her and raped her, thereby forcing her into marriage.[229] Campion's version ends the same way as Camden's: Shane and his men are murdered, Shane is decapitated, and his body is tossed into a shallow grave.

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[227] Camden, *Annales*, 169.
[228] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 129.
[229] Julian Goodare, "Mary [Mary Stuart], 1542-1587," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 24 May 2007; Accessed 22 March 2020. https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18248.

Ciaran Brady disagrees with the notion that Shane's murder was motivated by revenge and that it was the result of a drunken brawl, saying that the "confluence of all three" of his reputations: his temper, his appeal to women, and drunkenness "is a nemesis too obvious to eschew."[230] Brady posits instead that, through his agents, Sidney encouraged an imprisoned Somhairle Buidhe to communicate with Alexander Óge. The two then arranged a ruse in which they would pretend to negotiate Somhairle's freedom in exchange for the military assistance which Shane desperately needed. In this version of events, the 'drunken brawl' was actually an assassination ordered by the Dublin administration. Sidney's memoir concurs with this assessment, with Sidney noting that "whereas he looked for service at their hands against me, for service of me they killed him," adding that they "sent me his head, pickled in a pipkin."[231] Why would Camden and Campion's account include such colorful accounts of drunkenness and violence? Perhaps the answer lies in the *Annals of Loch Cé*, which state that Shane "was killed in treachery by the Albanachs, after he had gone to them to their camp under their own protection."[232] If this Irish-language source is accurate, it confirms both Brady's assertion and the idea that Shane's murder was viewed as a perfidious assassination rather than an act of impulse. Campion's account also implies conspiracy, but from a slightly different source. "It is thought that Tirlagh," he writes, "who now usurpeth the name of Oneale, practiced this devise with Agnes, Alexander, and Torwy, when he perceived Shane discouraged and not able to hold out."[233] The veracity of these accounts appear to be supported by the origin of the 'drunken brawl'

[230] Brady, quoted in Caoimhín Breatnach, "The Murder of Shane O'Neill: Oideadh Chuinn Chéadchathaigh," *Eriu* 43 (1992): 174.
[231] Sir Henry Sidney, "Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of His Government of Ireland. 1583," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 3 (1855), 27. Accessed March 28, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/20608746.
[232] *The Annals of Loch Cé*, quoted in Breatnach, "The Murder of Shane O'Neill," 160.
[233] Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, 192.

narrative: according to Brady, their initial appearance is in the 1569 'Act for the Attainder of Shane O'Neill.'[234] This act removed Shane's lands into the custody of the Crown and, apparently, set one of the more enduring myths about Shane into the historical memory of early modern Ulster.

Thus the defeat of the "monstrous monarchall tyrant of Ulster"[235] was complete. Sidney and his allies had successfully crafted a reason behind the assassination that exculpated their own dishonorable actions. Rather than governing his land, asserting himself as a king, and defending himself against English prevarication and provocation, Shane was cast as an avaricious drunkard who was prone to fits of rage and abusive behavior. But specific details of Shane's personality are largely impossible to know. Most of the commentary about Shane that is available is written by his enemies. What we have in Shane's own hand, furthermore, must be taken with a grain of salt. In the first place, his letters were dictated to a retainer and converted into Latin, leaving room for the inevitable variation in diction that results with any translation. Secondly, as discussed above, Shane had a particular talent for provocation: examples include his remarks about the debasement of Irish coinage during his negotiation for the London visit, his flouting of Henrician sumptuary laws in front of Elizabeth, and the blatant assertion of his own superiority toward Elizabeth, her courtiers, and her representatives. These episodes show that Shane's political performance was in many ways theatrical; i.e., specifically intended to provoke a reaction rather than to express the true sentiment of the personality beneath the persona. This boisterous public persona succeeded in infuriating his enemies, but in hindsight it was Shane's fatal flaw—one that remained etched in the minds of historians for hundreds of years. Despite

[234] Brady, quoted in Caoimhin Breatnach, "The Murder of Shane O'Neill," 174.
[235] Sidney, "Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir," 39.

The O'Neill Mór's competence, success, and effective governance, history's conflation of a complicated man with a carefully-crafted myth ultimately obscures the complex reality of politics beyond the Pale.

Conclusion

A Legacy in Doubt

"...his kindred will be bereaved on the account of the onset which the Ulaidh will make…"

-Oidheadh Chuinn Chéadchathaigh[236]

That Shane's murder at the hands of the mac Donnells was viewed as an act of treachery is evident in the way that their ollam subsequently revised a well-known Irish myth, *Scéla Mucce Meic Da Thó*, creating a new tale that sought to portray the asssassination at Cushendun as a rightful act of vengeance against on the part of the mac Donnells for the death of their chieftain, James.[237] Yet as described above, it is important to remember that the historical memory of Shane's character was one based on a clear performance of kingship and on the anxiety which this caused in the minds of Elizabeth and her male courtiers and representatives. In an age where British manhood was threatened by the reigns of powerful women in England and Scotland, viewing Shane as a third point in a triangular relationship helps clarify the fear that the English male elite had regarding their position within English power structures and regarding England's position within the wider European political sphere. For some men, such as Sussex and Sidney, Elizabeth's favor, or lack thereof, drove anxieties over their rank and station within English society. And as Elizabethan politicians, soldiers, and diplomats continued their sixteenth-century consolidation of holdings in the British Isles, the creation of a homogenized culture based on Protestantism appeared to be essential to the creation of a national English identity. The fact that Shane obstructed English efforts to control Ulster became an international embarrassment for the

[236] See Breatnach, "The Murder of Shane O'Neill," 168.
[237] Breatnach, "The Murder of Shane O'Neill," 160.

English.[238] Moreover, while Shane appears to have found some humor in his intentional provocation of English sensibilities, those same provocations allowed men like Sidney and Cecil to manipulate his persona to their advantage. They, and the people among whom they scattered their information, soon came to view Shane and the Gaelic Irish as fundamentally different from English culture—and by extension, English national identity.

In his closing remarks about Shane O'Neill's murder, Sidney expresses his fears of future unrest in Ulster when he remarks that "the lyneage and surname of the O'neles, will breede (hidra fashion) more heades."[239] In Greek mythology, the Hydra was a monster with several snake-like heads who was the offspring of Echidna, a monster with the face of a beautiful woman but the body of a snake. This simultaneously recalls two Irish legends: that of Niall Noígíallach's Flaithius and that of Saint Patrick's expulsion of snakes from Ireland. In fact, one of the epithets ascribed to Echidna is 'Mother of Snakes', which is interesting particularly considering a passage in *Holinshed's Chronicles* which raises the possibility that "there is nothing venomous in Ireland but the inhabitants."[240]

It is uncertain how much Henry Sidney knew of mythology, or to what extent he employed that knowledge in his memoir. Hiram Morgan has argued that John Hooker's translation of Giraldus Cambrensis, which was included in *Holinshed's Chronicles,* was specifically adapted "for an English Protestant imperial class" of the 1580s.[241] In particular, the concept of the snake was used to signify the Gaelic Irish, "whose conquest Hooker hoped to see in his lifetime."[242] That Sidney and the English continued to fear Gaelic culture and rebellion

[238] Brady, *The Chief Governors*, 125.
[239] Sidney, "Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir," 27.
[240] *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 13.
[241] Professor Morgan's argument is analyzed in Lennon, "Ireland," 13.
[242] Lennon, "Ireland," 12.

even after the death of Shane O'Neill appears evident considering the Lord Deputy's use of the Hydra as a metaphor. According to Euripides, every time one of the monster's heads was cut off two grew in its place. This is a characteristic which Sidney references when he worries that the head on a pike above Dublin Castle would sprout more in its place. And Sidney was right: though he may have been the Heracles to Shane's Hydra, the battle for Ulster was not over. Two O'Neill relatives, Tarlach and Hugh, would rise and revolt in Shane's place, resulting in nearly four more decades of scorched earth in Ulster before the Tudor conquest of Ireland was finally complete. Even then, violence there would explode again in the 1640s.

However, when looking at a map of Ireland, the outline of the six counties that still belong to the United Kingdom is very similar to the territory held by Shane O'Neill by ancestral right, by conquest, and by Gaelic law. The Plantation of Ulster may have begun with Shane, as Brady remarked, but modern geography reflects its English manifestation—one enabled by the 1569 attainder that appropriated Shane's lands in the name of the Crown.[243] One other notable theft from Shane and his dynasty still remains in use today by the descendants of the O'Neills' English loyalist adversaries. The Ulster Volunteer Force, under the banner of the Red Hand which was used for centuries by the O'Neill dynasty as a heraldic crest, continued to be employed as a symbol of discrimination against the Gaelic and Catholic Irish through most of the 20th-century. In this way, the distortion of Shane O'Neill's historical memory remains relevant to the present day. While Sir Henry Sidney was correct in thinking that the remnants of the O'Neill clan would trouble his successors, Shane likely had no indication that his battle cry:

[243] Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, 57.

Lamh Dearg Abu, or ‘Red Hand Forever,’ would live on in defiance of his own performance as the last Gaelic king of Ulster.

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