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Unstable Races?

Cultural Appropriation and Ethnic Stereotypes in Late Medieval and Early Modern England and Ireland

Abstract: The article examines a specific connection between practices of cultural appropriation and racialising attributions that emerged in the aftermath of the English conquest of Ireland in the late Middle Ages and early modern period. It will be examined whether or to what extent analogies to modern concepts of race can be observed in this context. To this end, the focus is placed on contemporary perceptions of the adoption of cultural phenomena by the English conquerors who settled in Ireland from the 12th century onwards and in some respects assimilated into their social environment. These perceptions are then linked to contemporaneous forms of ethnic stereotyping put forward by the English in relation to the native Irish in order to legitimise the conquest of the island. It is argued that the transfer of this stereotyping to those actors who, as descendants of the English colonists, had adapted to their cultural environment in Ireland was accompanied by the formation of a specific concept of 'race' in the sixteenth century, which is instructive in terms of the discursive orders in which it emerged. Against this background, similarities and differences between medieval and modern concepts of race are discussed.

The mostly Catholic Irish immigrants who went to the United States and to England after the Great Famine in Ireland of the 1840s were occasionally confronted with the attribution of specific stereotypes, many of which carried a strongly defamatory character. These verbal and figurative stereotypes, which circulated in journals and magazines, for example, frequently attributed animal characteristics to Irish workers. In some contexts, at least, these animal features were linked with the notion of a distinct 'Celtic race', purportedly demonstrated by the shape of the skull [1].

[1] Dale T. Knobel, "Celtic Exodus". The Famine Irish, Ethnic Stereotypes, and the Cultivation of American Racial Nationalism, in: Radharc 2, 2001, pp. 3–25; Kevin Kenny, Race, Violence, and Anti-Irish Sentiment in the Nineteenth Century, in: J. J. Lee – Marion R. Casey (eds.), Making the Irish American. History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States, New York 2006, pp. 364–380; Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color. European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race, Cambridge (MA) 1998; D. G. Paz, Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Irish Stereotyping, and Anti-Celtic Racism in Mid-Victorian Working-Class Periodicals, in: Albion. A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British

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That these representations were at least partially intertwined with contemporary discourses of 'scientific racism' is shown by works such as the study 'The Races of Britain' by the British anthropologist John Beddoe (d. 1911) of 1885 [2]. "Persons of thoroughly Gaelic aspect", he asserts, were characterised by "dark brown hair, gray eyes, long heads, flat in the temporal and prominent in the upper occipital region; with cheek-bones prominent rather than broad; jaws often prominent, but somewhat narrow." [3] However, in the epistemic order in which Beddoe's statements were inserted, a prominent jaw, for instance, was considered as a mark of a special proximity of certain races to animals and, above all, to apes. The famous depictions by the physician Peter Camper (d. 1789) about "Facial angles", which show different levels of skull shape between humans and animals, illustrate the craniometrical and phrenological discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries which lies in the background of these assumptions [4]. In this context, John Beddoe also coined the term of the "Africanoid Celts", based on a specific shape of the skull that he located primarily in Ireland [5]. The figurative stereotypes of the Irish workers which circulated in British and American magazines of the 19th century reflected certain patterns of this discourse, as they also represented a certain animalisation of the Irish, who were often depicted as apes with a characteristic skull shape [6].

Against this background, we may be inclined to see these attributions as an invention of the modern racist discourses of the 19th century. However, this article will attempt to draw some analogies while also pointing to significant differences in earlier centuries. On the one hand, the aim will be to identify similar forms of ethnic stereotyping, in particular of 'animalisation' of the Irish, that emerged in the later Middle Ages in the aftermath of the English conquest of Ireland of the 12th century. On the other hand, the aim is to outline more precisely the specificity of the discursive orders behind these attributions. As will be shown, after the English conquest and partial colonisation of Ireland [7], a specific concept of 'race' emerged in the late Middle Ages

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Studies 18, 1986, pp. 601–616; L. Perry Curtis, Apes and Angels. The Irishman in Victorian Caricature, Washington 1997.

2 John Beddoe, The Races of Britain. A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe, London 1885.

3 Beddoe, Races of Britain (as note 2), p. 27.

4 The Works of the Late Professor Camper on the Connection between the Science of Anatomy and the Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, etc., London 1821, Tab. I–X.

5 "While Ireland is apparently its present centre, most of its lineaments are such as lead us to think of Africa as its possible birthplace; and it may be well, provisionally, to call it Africanoid […]. Though I believe this Africanoid type to have been of very high antiquity, it must be acknowledged that we have no evidence carrying back its presence, in any of the British Isles, beyond the polished stone period. But the best authenticated ancient skulls from Ireland may have belonged to it." (Beddoe, Races of Britain [as note 2], p. 11).

6 Paz, Anti-Catholicism (as note 1); Curtis, Apes and Angels (as note 1).

7 The term 'colonisation', which has long been used in English-language research for the contexts to be discussed here (for example: Brendan Smith, Colonisation and Conquest in Medieval Ireland. The

and early modern period that has some similarities, but also decisive differences to the concept of race in 19th-century discourses. The characteristics of this concept, in turn, were intrinsically linked to particular ideas of cultural adoption, which from certain perspectives can be understood as 'cultural appropriations'. Contemporary observers, it will be shown, registered the adoption of cultural phenomena from one group by another very attentively and related this process to ethnic stereotypes. The extent to which this is linked to a specific contemporary concept of race will be discussed at the end of the article, which thus makes a contribution to the current discussions on 'racism' in the pre-modern era. The debates about whether or to what extent forms of proto-racism already existed in the Middle Ages also dealt with the question of the extent to which the attribution and essentialisation of collective characteristics to certain human groups went hand in hand with the assumption of stable, permanent and unchangeable dispositions, or whether such collective characteristics were perceived as conditioned by environmental factors and thus as changeable [8]. This article will address this question with regard to a specific case study.

AFTER THE CONQUEST: BETWEEN DEMARCATION AND ACCULTURATION

The English conquest of Ireland in 1169/1171 was by no means the result of a planned invasion, but was due to a complex series of circumstances. A few introductory remarks about this process may therefore be appropriate [9]. The intervention

English in Louth 1170–1330, Cambridge 1999; Robin Frame, Colonial Ireland, 1169–1369, Dublin 2012), is applied in the following primarily to describe the settlement of Anglo-Norman families in the conquered territories of Ireland from the 12th century onwards. Analogies and differences to modern forms of colonialism, which exist in certain respects, are not discussed further in this article.

[8] On these discussions: Geraldine Heng, The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages, Cambridge 2018; David Nirenberg, Rassedenken und Religion im Mittelalter. Über Ideen zur somatischen Reproduktion von Ähnlichkeit und Differenz, Göttingen 2023; Noémie Ndiaye, Seeing Race Before Race. Visual Culture and the Racial Matrix in the Premodern World, Tempe (AZ) 2023; Karl Ubl, Rasse und Rassismus im Mittelalter. Potential und Grenzen eines aktuellen Forschungsparadigmas, in: Historische Zeitschrift 316, 2023, pp. 306–341; Cordelia Hess, Margaretas periphere Visionen. Mission, Kolonisierung und "race" im Spätmittelalter am Beispiel der Saami, in: Historische Zeitschrift 316, 2023, pp. 1–26; Pamela Anne Patton, What Did Medieval Slavery Look Like? Color, Race, and Unfreedom in Later Medieval Iberia, in: Speculum 97, 2022, pp. 649–697; William Trent Foley, Bede and the Beginnings of English Racism, Turnhout 2022; Christian Hoffarth, Like Marvels, like Monsters. Experiences of Otherness and the Emergence of Racial Thought in Medieval European Travel Writing, in: Julian Gärtner – Malin Wilckens (eds.), Racializing Humankind. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Practices of "Race" and Racism, Cologne 2022, pp. 191–211; M. Lindsay Kaplan, Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity, New York 2019; Miryam Eliav-Feldon (ed.), The Origins of Racism in the West, Cambridge 2009; Robert J. Bartlett, Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity, in: The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 31, 2001, pp. 39–56.

[9] On the English Conquest of Ireland in general: Marie-Thérèse Flanagan, Strongbow, Henry II and Anglo-Norman Intervention in Ireland, in: James Muldoon (ed.), The North Atlantic Frontier of Medieval Europe. Vikings and Celts, Farnham 2009, pp. 195–210; Marie-Thérèse Flanagan, Art. Anglo-Norman Invasion, in: Seán Duffy – Ailbhe MacShamhráin – James Moynes (eds.),

was initially encouraged at the instigation of the Irish King of Leinster, Diarmait mac Murchada (d. 1171), who had asked for support against his enemies in Ireland [10]. After kidnapping the daughter of the Irish overlord Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair (d. 1198) and being expelled from Leinster as a result, Diarmait travelled to Henry II of England (d. 1189), who did not promise him any help of his own, but gave him permission to seek support among his entourage. He was to find this above all from Anglo-Norman nobles of Wales: initially from Maurice Fitz-Gerald (d. 1176) and Robert Fitz-Stephen (d. after 1182), who followed him to Ireland in 1169, and finally from Richard de Clare (d. 1176), better known as Strongbow, who arrived in Ireland in 1170 [11]. After the conquest of Dublin and Waterford by the Anglo-Norman armies, Richard de Clare succeeded in rapidly expanding his power in the east of Ireland.

Due to his marriage to Aoife (d. 1188), the daughter of Diarmait mac Murchada, Strongbow was able to claim his succession as ruler of Leinster after Diarmait's death in 1171 [12]. When Henry II of England went to Ireland on 17 October 1171 in order to counteract Strongbow's excessive increase in power and to grant him his Irish territories as fiefdoms, the main steps of the conquest had already been taken by other actors. Further Anglo-Norman invaders, such as John de Courcy (d. 1219) or Hugh de Lacy (d. 1242) (and his father of the same name), were to continue this work in the coming decades and conquer large areas, mostly in the east and south of Ireland, by the middle of the 13th century [13].

Although only parts of the island were thus effectively conquered in the course of the English invasion of Ireland in 1169/1171, the event was subsequently perceived by contemporaries as a profound turn of events. Irish writers of the 13th century, for

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Medieval Ireland. An Encyclopedia (Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages 19), London 2005, pp. 17–19; Francis Xavier Martin, Diarmait Mac Murchada and the Coming of the Anglo-Normans, in: Art Cosgrove et al. (eds.), A New History of Ireland, vol. 2: Medieval Ireland, 1169–1534, Oxford 2008, pp. 43–66; Michael Richter, Irland im Mittelalter. Kultur und Geschichte, Münster 2003, pp. 133–138; see also: Marcel Bubert, Fremdes Blut, heilige Rache und die Invasion im Schafspelz. Die anglonormannische Eroberung Irlands und die Strategien ihrer Delegitimation, in: Rike Szill – Andreas Bihrer (eds.), Eroberte im Mittelalter. Umbruchssituationen erleben, bewältigen, gestalten (Europa im Mittelalter 39), Berlin 2023, pp. 375–409.

10 Martin, Diarmait Mac Murchada (as note 9); Flanagan, Art. Anglo-Norman Invasion (as note 9); Marie-Thérèse Flanagan, Irish Society, Anglo Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship. Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century, Oxford 1989; Richter, Irland im Mittelalter (as note 9), pp. 133–138.

11 Flanagan, Strongbow (as note 9); Martin, Diarmait Mac Murchada (as note 9).

12 Marie-Thérèse Flanagan, Negotiating Across Legal and Cultural Borders. Aife, Daughter of Diarmait Mac Murchada, King of Leinster, and Marriage, Motherhood and Widowhood in Twelfth- Century Ireland and England, in: Peritia 30, 2019, pp. 71–95.

13 James Francis Lydon, The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215–54, in: A New History of Ireland 2 (as note 9), pp. 156–178; Seán Duffy, The First Ulster Planation. John de Courcy and the Men of Cumbria, in: Terence Bernard Barry – Robin Frame – Katharine Simms (eds.), Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland. Essays Presented to J.F. Lydon, London 1995, pp. 1–27; Smith, Colonisation and Conquest (as note 7).

example, referred to the "arrival of the English" (*introitus Anglicorum*) to mark this political turning point in their history [14]. The new political map and the new power structures on the island, however, demanded specific interpretative patterns and categories to cope with the changed situation. In the perception of social reality, processes of mutual demarcation and othering took place, which operated with collective identities, through which the complex network of relationships in political practice could be ordered. In the period that followed, contemporary observers made a precise distinction between the "Irish" and the "English", the *hibernici* and the *anglici*, in Ireland, which were profiled against each other as social categories [15]. By the former were meant the native Gaelic-speaking families, by the latter the Anglo-Normans, who had settled in Ireland from the 12th century onwards. In the decades following the conquest, this categorical distinction became perpetuated in the legal status of the groups: in the English dominated areas of Ireland, English law applied, with few exceptions, only to the *anglici*, not to the native *hibernici* who lived there [16].

In many respects, however, this distinction of legal categories very soon no longer corresponded to the cultural practices of the groups. Although the Anglo-Norman colonists who settled in the conquered lands of Ireland in the 13th and 14th centuries defined themselves as a separate group with their own affiliation [17], they quickly adapted to local practices and customs, such as speaking the Gaelic language and entering into marriages with local families [18]. In particular, Anglo-Norman families increasingly employed native poets and historians to preserve the traditional Gaelic lore of Ireland. In fact, the scribes and poets who wrote works in Gaelic on behalf of

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[14] For example, a petition from the Archbishop of Armagh, Nicholas Mac Maol Iosa (d. 1303), to King Edward I of England from the year 1278, in: Documents Relating to the Medieval Diocese of Armagh, ed. Aubrey Gwynn, in: Archivium Hibernicum 13, 1947, pp. 1–26, here p. 10.

[15] Sparky Booker, Cultural Exchange and Identity in Late Medieval Ireland. The English and Irish of the Four Obedient Shires, Cambridge 2018; Eve Campbell – Elizabeth FitzPatrick – Audrey Horning (eds.), Becoming and Belonging in Ireland, AD ca. 1200–1600. Essays on Identity and Cultural Practice, Cork 2018; James Muldoon, Identity on the Medieval Irish Frontier. Degenerate Englishmen, Wild Irishmen, Middle Nations, Gainesville (FL) 2003; David Beers Quinn, 'Irish' Ireland and 'English' Ireland, in: A New History of Ireland 2 (as note 9), pp. 619–637; James Francis Lydon, Nation and Race in Medieval Ireland, in: Simon N. Forde – Leslie Peter Johnson – Alan V. Murray (eds.), Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages, Leeds 1995, pp. 103–124; John A. Watt, The Church and the Two Nations in Medieval Ireland, Cambridge 1970; see also Heng, Invention of Race (as note 8), pp. 36–41.

[16] Frame, Colonial Ireland (as note 7); Geoffrey Joseph Hand, English Law in Ireland, 1290–1324, Cambridge 1967; Geoffrey Joseph Hand, The Status of the Native Irish in the Lordship of Ireland, 1272–1331, in: The Irish Jurist 1, 1966, pp. 93–115; Annette Joycelyn Otway-Ruthven, The Native Irish and English Law in Medieval Ireland, in: Irish Historical Studies 7, 1951, pp. 1–16.

[17] Robin Frame, 'Les Engleys Nées en Irlande'. The English Political Identity on Medieval Ireland, in: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 3, 1993, pp. 83–103; Stephen Ellis, 'More Irish than the Irish themselves'? The 'Anglo-Irish' in Tudor Ireland, in: History Ireland 7, 1999, pp. 22–26.

[18] Sparky Booker, Intermarriage in Fifteenth-Century Ireland. The English and Irish in the 'Four Obedient Shires', in: Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy 113, 2013, pp. 219–250.

their Anglo-Norman patrons drew almost exclusively from the traditional repertoire of the Irish bardic schools [19]. Much of the Irish-language tradition of historiography, poetry, hagiography, legal texts, and translational literature of the late Middle Ages is preserved in manuscripts, such as the 'Book of Fermoy', which were commissioned by Anglo-Norman families, and did not differ in content from those compiled for native Gaelic patrons [20]. As Katharine Simms has argued, however, these "bards did not influence their patrons' culture and politics, they reflected them." [21]

The 'Book of Fermoy', for instance, was composed mostly in the 15th century for the family of the Roche, who held one of the great lordships of Munster, in the south of Ireland, since the 13th century [22]. The main patron who commissioned central parts of the manuscript is Lord David Roche [23], who is called "Dábhidh Mór" (David the Great) in the text [24]. In the early modern period, the book was probably known as 'Leabhar na Róisteach' (Book of the Roche) [25]. The manuscript contains a collection of poems and prose material dedicated to the Roche family, as well as saints' lives, historical tracts, genealogies and mythological prose tales, beginning, significantly, with the famous 'Leabhar Gabhála Érenn', the mythological origin tale of the Irish [26]. This book tells the story of how the Gaels once took possession of the island [27]. The compilation of the manuscript clearly shows an antiquarian interest in the history and literature of Ireland. For Cathinka Hambro, the 'Book of Fermoy' is a pertinent example that demonstrates "how a family of Anglo-Norman descent were assimilated in Irish society and had absorbed Irish cultural memory." [28]

While this assessment of the degree to which the Anglo-Irish had acculturated and appropriated local practices and traditions is made from today's observational perspective, however, it is of course an entirely different question whether this practice

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19 Katharine Simms, Bards and Barons. The Anglo-Irish Aristocracy and the Native Culture, in: Robert J. Bartlett – Angus MacKay (eds.), Medieval Frontier Societies, Oxford 1989, pp. 177–197.

20 Cathinka Dahl Hambro, 'Hiberniores ipsis hibernis'. The Book of Fermoy as Text-Carrier of Anglo-Irish Identity, in: Nordic Irish Studies 14, 2015, pp. 95–110.

21 Simms, Bards and Barons (as note 19), p. 187.

22 See the Manuscript RIA MS 23 E 29: https://www.isos.dias.ie/RIA/RIA_MS_23_E_29.html (last accessed: 23/07/2024).

23 Vicary Gibbs – H. A. Doubleday (eds.), The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, vol. 5, London 1926, p. 297.

24 RIA MS 23 E 29 (as note 22), p. 153.

25 Hambro, Book of Fermoy (as note 20).

26 James Henthorn Todd, Descriptive Catalogue of the Contents of the Irish Manuscript Commonly Called "The Book of Fermoy", Dublin 1868.

27 R. A. Stewart Macalister (ed.), Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the Taking of Ireland, 5 vols. (Irish Texts Society), Dublin 1938–1956; see: John Carey (ed.), Lebor Gabála Érenn. Textual History and Pseudohistory (Irish Text Society. Subsidiary Series 20), London 2009; John Carey, A New Introduction to Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the Taking of Ireland (Irish Text Society. Subsidiary Series 1), London 1993; R. Mark Scowcroft, Leabhar Gabhála, part 2: The Growth of the Tradition, in: Ériu 39, 1988, p. 1–66.

28 Hambro, Book of Fermoy (as note 20), p. 104.

of appropriation was also observed and described as such by contemporaries. Notably, such contemporary observations were expressed very early after the English conquest of Ireland and reached a particular intensity from the 14th century onwards. These observations will be the focus of my paper. As a historian of knowledge, I am less interested in the question of whether or to what extent the actors were 'really' culturally assimilated, but rather in how practices of adaptation were observed, interpreted, and communicated by contemporaries. In this way, we can avoid some of the epistemological pitfalls that inevitably arise when we claim to be the registering authority that establishes that a cultural object has been appropriated and adopted from a 'foreign' side, i. e. across a postulated cultural boundary that is sometimes only produced as such in the act of our observation. The focus on contemporary perceptions of such adoptions, on the other hand, allows for an examination of the cultural boundaries (and their transgression) constructed in the discursive orders of the time [29].

CROSSING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: CONTEMPORARY OBSERVATIONS

The perception that the settlers of Anglo-Norman descent in Ireland were, in terms of their belonging and affiliation, actually not perfectly or entirely English, but rather somewhere between the Irish and the English, emerged immediately after the conquest of Ireland in 1169. Already Gerald of Wales, in his contemporary account of the conquest of the late 12th century, had put into the mouth of one of the first colonists on the island, namely Maurice Fitz-Gerald, the words that "to the Irish we are English, but to the English we are Irish." [30]

Such an intermediate status was, in fact, attributed to the Anglo-Irish several times in the following period and seems to reflect, at least in part, also their own self-perception [31]. An Irish document from 1317, for example, known as the 'Remonstrance of the Irish Princes' [32], speaks of the English in Ireland as a "middle nation"

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[29] Due to the source situation, I will focus primarily on the act of cultural adoption as such (in the sense of a border crossing) in contemporary perception. The evaluation of this act in terms of unlawful appropriation in the context of asymmetrical power relations, as is often implied in current uses of the concept of cultural appropriation, will only play a marginal role. However, as will be shown, there are indeed decidedly contemporary judgements with regard to the adoption of cultural practices that take on a somewhat different profile than in current debates.

[30] *Ea jam lege tenemur, ut sicut Hibernicis Angli, sic et Anglis Hibernici simus* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Expugnatio Hibernica, ed. James F. Dimock [Giraldi Cambrensis Opera 5], London 1867, repr. 1964, book I, chap. XXIII, p. 267).

[31] Robin Frame, Exporting State and Nation. Being English in Medieval Ireland, in: Len Scales – Oliver Zimmer (eds.), Power and the Nation in European History, Cambridge 2005, pp. 143–165; Frame, 'Les Engleys Nées en Irlande' (as note 17).

[32] On this document: Maeve B. Callan, Making Monsters Out of One Another in the Early Fourteenth-Century British Isles. The Irish Remonstrance, the Declaration of Arbroath, and the Anglo-Irish Counter-Remonstrance, in: Eolas. The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies 12, 2019, pp. 43–63; J. R. Seymour Phillips, The Remonstrance Revisited. England and Ireland in the

(*natio media*) and indicates that this group would call itself such. Since this source comes from the circle of the Irish king Domnall Uí Néill, however, who complained to Pope John XXII about the misbehaviour of the English in Ireland, this attribution of the status of a "middle nation" is framed in a highly negative way. Nevertheless, the passage is significant for the way in which the native Irish saw the English settlers:

> For the English inhabiting our land, who call themselves of the middle nation [*qui se vocant mediae nationis*], are so different in character from the English of England and from other nations that with the greatest propriety they should not be called a nation of the 'middle', but rather a nation of the utmost perfidy [33].

While this attribution is polemical in nature and remains rather vague, other sources were much more explicit. Significant for the contexts discussed here is the fact that the appropriation of local practices by English settlers in Ireland was viewed with disfavour by the English crown. In particular, the adoption of Gaelic language and tradition was observed with suspicion. In 1366, therefore, the Irish Parliament, chaired by the son of King Edward III, namely Lionel, Duke of Clarence, passed a series of ordinances known as the 'Statutes of Kilkenny' [34]. These statutes begin with a very explicit reflection on the change in behaviour of the English in Ireland, which they describe as an adaptation of native cultural practices:

> Whereas at the conquest of the land of Ireland, and for a long time after, the English of the said land used the English language, mode of riding and apparel, and were governed and ruled, and their subjects called Betaghes, by the English law, in which time God and Holy Church, and their franchises according to their conditions were maintained [and themselves lived] in subjection; but now many English of the said land forsaking the English language, fashion, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion, and language of the Irish enemies (*lang des Irrois enemies*); and also have made divers marriages and alliances between themselves and the Irish enemies aforesaid; whereby the said land and the liege people thereof, the English language, the allegiance due to our lord the King, and the English laws there, are put in subjection and decayed, and the Irish enemies exalted and raised up, contrary to right (*encontre reson*) [35].

Early Fourteenth Century, in: Thomas G. Fraser – Keith Jeffrey (eds.), Men, Women and War. Papers Read Before the XX[th] Irish Conference of Historians, Dublin 1993, pp. 13–27; Seán Duffy, The Remonstrance of the Irish Princes to Pope John XXII, 1317, in: Seán Duffy (ed.), Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars, Stroud 2002, pp. 179–186.

33 *Anglici enim nostram inhabitantes terram, qui se vocant mediae nationis, sic sunt ab Anglicorum de Anglia ceterarumque nationum moribus alieni, quod non media, sed extremae perfidae natio propriissime possint appellari* (Remonstrance of the Irish Princes, in: Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon, cum Supplementis ac Continuitatione Walteri Boweri, vol. 2, ed. Walter Goodall, Edinburgh 1759, pp. 259–267, here p. 263).

34 Statutes of Kilkenny, in: Statutes and Ordinances and Acts of the Parliament of Ireland, vol. 1: King John to Henry V, ed. Henry F. Berry, Dublin 1907, pp. 341–469; see Charles S. Paine, Kilkenny, Statutes of (1366), in: Ronald H. Fritze – William Baxter Robison (eds.), Historical Dictionary of Late Medieval England, 1272–1485, Westport 2002, pp. 300–301.

35 *Come a la conquest de la terre dirland et long temps apres les Engleis de la dit terre vserent la lang morture et vesture Engleis et furent governez et reulez et lor subjits appellez Betaghez par le lei Engleis en quell temps Dieu et st. Esglise et lor franchises solonc lor conditions tenuz en subiection et ore plusors Engleis de la dit terre gueppissant la lang gis monture leys et vsages Engleis vyuent et se government as maners guise et lang des Irrois enemies et auxiant out fait diuers mariages*

Consistent with this assessment, the statues' ordinances hereafter set out to prohibit the use of the Irish language, the employment of Irish bards, and the adoption of other cultural practices, such as sports, under penalty of law. About the language it says, for example:

> Also, it is ordained and established, that every Englishman use the English language, and be named by an English name, leaving off entirely the manner of naming used by the Irish; and that every Englishman use the English custom, fashion, mode of riding and apparel, according to his estate; and if any English, or Irish living amongst the English, use the Irish language amongst themselves, contrary to this ordinance, and thereof be attaint, that his lands and tenements, if he have any, be seized into the hands of his immediate lord [36].

The statutes are very clear in their prohibition of specific individual practices perceived as 'Irish' and inappropriate for the English. Anyone who does not ride in the saddle in the specifically English fashion may henceforth expect imprisonment:

> And that no Englishman […] ride otherwise than on a saddle in the English fashion, and he that shall do the contrary and be thereof attaint, that his horse be forfeited to our lord the King, and his body committed to prison [37].

The specific way of riding or 'sitting in the saddle' is obviously perceived here as a distinctive cultural practice that marks a decisive difference in belonging. Equally, the Irish sport of hurling, which is portrayed as specifically dangerous, is forbidden under penalty of imprisonment:

> [It is forbidden] to use the plays which men call hurlings, with great sticks and a ball upon the ground, from which great evils and maims have arisen (*dont graundes males et maymes sont auenuz*) […]. And if any do or practice the contrary, and of this be attaint, that he be taken and imprisoned (*soit pris et enprison*), and fined at the will of our lord the King [38].

Language in particular, but also cultural practices such as horse riding and sport, were seen here as markers of difference that constituted a boundary, the crossing of which

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et aliaunces enter eux et les Irroies enemyes auantditz dont la dit terre et le lieg people de icelle la lang Engloies ligeance notre seignor de Roy due et lez leis Engleis illoeq. sont mis en subjection et retretz et les enemyes Irroies enhanser et releuez encontre reson (Statutes of Kilkenny [as note 34], p. 430). The English translation here is also taken from Henry Berry's edition.

36 *Item ordine est et estabile que chescun Engleys vse la lang Englies et soit nome par nome Engleys enterlessant oulterm la manere de nome use per Irroies et que chescun Engleys vse la manere guise monture et appeill Engleis solonc son estat et si nul Engleis ou Irroies conusant entre Engleys use la lang Irroies entre eux-mesmes encontre ceste ordinance et de ceo soit attaint soint sez terres et Tenementz sil eit seisiz en les maines son senior immediate tanque quil veigne a vn des places notre senior le Roy et trove sufficient seurtee de prendre et vser la lang Engleis et adonqes eit restitucion de sez ditz terres par breve aissir hors de la dit place* (Statutes of Kilkenny [as note 34], p. 434).

37 *Et que nul Engleis mache autrement que en seale en guyse de Engleis et celluy que fera le contraere et de ceo soit attaint soit son chivall fortait a notre seignor le Roy et son corpus a la prison tanque quil face fine a la volunte de Roy par le contempt suisdit* […] (Statutes of Kilkenny [as note 34], p. 434).

38 […] *ne vsent de sormes les Jues que home appelle horling oue graundz bastons a pilot sur la terre dont graundes males et maymes sont auenuz* […] *Et si auscun face ou vse le contrarie et de ceo soit attaint, soit pris et enprison et reint a la volunte notre seinior le Roy* (Statutes of Kilkenny [as note 34], p. 438).

appeared undesirable. The adoption of cultural phenomena that were considered specifically 'Irish' was obviously perceived as a threat by the English crown. There are several explanations for these sometimes drastic measures taken by the English crown to prevent the appropriation of Irish cultural practices. On the one hand, there was a manifest concern on the English side for the loyalty of the English colonists in Ireland. The largely acculturated 'Anglo-Irish', who had adopted the Irish language and were related to native Gaelic families, had sometimes aroused the suspicion from the crown's point of view that they had lost their 'Englishness' and thus also their loyalty. With regard to the occasional alliances between Anglo-Norman and Gaelic rulers in Ireland, this suspicion was not even unfounded [39]. In fact, in the 14th century, *anglici* from Ireland were repeatedly suspected of being accomplices of the *hibernici inimici domini regis*. In the context of Irish rebellions, it could therefore happen that an *anglicus proditor* was also accused of treason [40].

In addition, however, there was the fear that Anglo-Irish families were being spied on by the Irish enemies of the English crown. The employment of Irish bards, as seen with the Roche family in Munster in the 15th century, was therefore perceived as a direct threat. Consequently, the statutes prohibited these employments of Irish bards as well:

> Also, whereas the Irish minstrels, coming among the English, spy out the secrets (*espient lez priuetz*), customs and policies of the English, whereby great evils have often happened, it is agreed and forbidden that any Irish minstrels, that is to say, tympanours, pipers, story tellers, babblers, rhymers, harpers, or any other Irish minstrels, come amongst the English; and that no English receive them or make gifts to them. And that he who does so, and thereof be attaint, be taken and imprisoned, as well the Irish minstrels as the English that receive them or give them anything, and that afterwards they be fined at the King's will, and the instruments of their minstrelsy be forfeited to our lord the King [41].

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[39] On these alliances: Frame, Colonial Ireland (as note 7); Robin Frame, War and Peace in the Medieval Lordship of Ireland, in: Robin Frame (ed.), Ireland and Britain 1170–1450, London 1998, pp. 221–239; Terence Bernard Barry – Robin Frame – Katharine Simms (eds.), Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland. Essays Presented to J. F. Lydon, London 1995; Flanagan, Irish Society, Anglo Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship (as note 10); Katharine Simms, 'The King's Friend'. O'Neill, the Crown and the Earldom of Ulster, in: James Lydon (ed.), England and Ireland in the Later Middle Ages, Dublin 1981, pp. 214–236; Katharine Simms, Late Medieval Tír nEógain. The Kingdom of 'the Great Ua Néill', in: Charles Dillon – Henry A. Jefferies (eds.), Tyrone. History and Society, Dublin 2000, pp. 127–162; Daniel Brown, Hugh de Lacy, First Earl of Ulster. Rising and Falling in Angevin Ireland (Irish Historical Monographs 17), Woodbridge 2016; Duffy, The First Ulster Plantation (as note 13).

[40] William Gerrard, Lord Chancellor Gerrard's Notes of His Report on Ireland, in: Analecta Hibernica 2, 1931, pp. 93–291, here p. 245.

[41] *Item que les ministrels Irroies venantz entre Engleis espient lez priuetz maners et Comyn des Englises dont graunz males sovent ad este venz, Accorde est et defende que nulls ministers Irroies, cestascavoi Tympanors, fferdanes, skelaghes, Bablers Rymors, clerecz ne nullez autres minstrels Irrois veignent entre les Engleis et que nul Engleis les resceiue ou don face a eux et que le face et de ceo soit attaint soit pris et imprison sibn lez Irroies ministreles come les Engleis que les resceiuement ou donent riens et puis soint reyntes a la volunte de Roy et les instrumentz de lor minstraeltees forfaitz a notre seignor le Roy* (Statutes of Kilkenny [as note 34], p. 446).

Nevertheless, despite the understandable concern about guarding state secrets, the question arises whether it was not other factors that also motivated the suppression of Gaelicisation of the English colonists in Ireland. Why, for example, was it so important to ban the sport of hurling, or to insist, under threat of punishment, that Englishmen ride in the English style? These measures can only be explained by looking at the larger context of how Irish practices were perceived from the English side. The background of these circumstances is a discourse about the cultural inferiority of the Irish, who had been portrayed as barbaric and wild by the English since the 12th century in order to legitimise the conquest of Ireland. From the outset, the conquest of the island was framed by the English as a kind of 'civilising mission', through which the customs and laws in Ireland were to be improved and the church promoted.

PERCEPTIONS OF INFERIORITY: JUSTIFYING A 'CIVILISING MISSION'

The aims of this undertaking had already been defined accordingly in the bull 'Laudabiliter', in which Pope Hadrian IV (d. 1159) authorised King Henry II of England to intervene in Ireland [42]. The enterprise was to be carried out, as it says, "to extend the boundaries of the Church and curb the spread of vices, to improve morals and promote virtue, to increase the Christian faith". To this end, Henry II was to go to Ireland and do everything there that would contribute "to the honour of God and the welfare of this land" (*ad honorem Dei et salutem illius terrae*) [43]. Significantly, in the immediate aftermath of the conquest, depictions emerged that illustrated the barbarism and depravity of the Irish, making the English mission seem all the more justified. Against the background of this discourse, the use of the Gaelic language and other cultural practices that were considered specifically Irish were not only understood as markers of identity that characterised the Irish as a 'foreign' ethnic group. Rather, since Irish cultural practices were portrayed as decidedly barbaric, the adoption of Irish cultural phenomena by the Anglo-Irish following the conquest, had to appear all the more problematic from the English point of view.

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[42] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, The Irish Church, its Reform, and the English Invasion, Dublin 2017; Maurice P. Sheehy, The Bull 'Laudabiliter'. A Problem in Medieval Diplomatics and History, in: Journal of the Galway Archeological and Historical Society 29, 1961, pp. 45–70; Anne J. Duggan, The Making of a Myth. Giraldus Cambrensis, Laudabiliter, and Henry II's Lordship of Ireland, in: Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History 4, 2007, pp. 249–312.

[43] The bull has been passed down in the 'Expugnatio Hibernica' by Gerald of Wales: *Significasti siquidem nobis, fili in Christo carissime, te Hiberniae insulam, ad subdendum illum populum legibus, et vitiorum plantaria inde exstirpanda, velle intrare; et de singulis domibus annuam unius denarii beato Petro velle solvere pensionem; et jura ecclesiarum illius terrae illibata et integra conservare. Nos itaque, pium et laudabile desiderium tuum cum favore congruo prosequentes, et petitioni tuae benignum impendentes assensum, gratum et acceptum habemus, ut pro dilatandis ecclesiae terminis, pro vitiorum restringendo decursu, pro corrigendis moribus et virtutibus inserendis, pro Christianae religionis augmento, insulam illam ingrediaris, et quae ad honorem Dei et salutem illius terrae spectaverint exequaris* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Expugnatio Hibernica [as note 30], book II, chap. V, pp. 317–318).

Among the most pertinent sources testifying to this perception of Irish cultural inferiority and 'barbarism' are the writings of Gerald of Wales, written shortly after the conquest in the late 12th century [44]. Especially in his 'Topography of Ireland' ('Topographia Hibernica') from 1188, Gerald, who was a nephew of Maurice Fitz-Gerald, one of the first colonists of Ireland, comes to speak of the cultural practices of the Irish [45]. Only some particularly significant examples are given here, where Gerald is especially horrified and enraged by the behaviour of the Irish. Some of these passages are well known, but are suitable for emphasising certain aspects that are relevant to the questions pursued in later parts of this paper. All of them concern, among other things, violence and deviant sexual practices. Thus it is said in one passage, where Gerald describes the 'usual Irish way of doing things':

> From an ancient and wicked custom, they always carry an axe in their hands instead of a staff, that they may be ready promptly to execute whatever iniquity their minds suggest. Wherever they go they carry this weapon with them, and watching their opportunity as occasion offers, it has not to be unsheathed like a sword, nor bent like a bow, or thrust out like a spear. Raised a little, without any preparation, it deals a deadly wound. They have, therefore, always at hand, nay, in their hands, that which is sufficient to inflict death. From these axes there is no security: While you fancy yourself secure, you will feel the axe. You put yourself heedlessly in danger, if you permit the axe, and omit to take precautions for your security. This race is inconstant, changeable, wily, and cunning. It is an unstable race, stable only in its instability, faithful only in its unfaithfulness [46].

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[44] Robert Bartlett, Gerald of Wales and the Ethnographic Imagination, Cambridge 2013; on Gerald of Wales in general: George Henley – Albert Joseph McMullen (eds.), Gerald of Wales. New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic, Cardiff 2018.

[45] Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica, ed. James F. Dimock (Giraldi Cambrensis Opera 5), London 1867, repr. 1964; see Bartlett, Gerald of Wales (as note 44); Derek Newman-Stille, Morality and Monstrous Disability in Topographia Hibernica, in: Wendy J. Turner – Tory Vandeventer Pearman (eds.), The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe. Examining Disability in the Historical, Legal, Literary, Medical, and Religious Discourse of the Middle Ages, Lewiston (NY) 2010, pp. 231–258; Rhonda Knight, Werewolves, Monsters, and Miracles. Representing Colonial Fantasies in Gerald of Wales's Topographia Hibernica, in: Studies in Iconography 22, 2001, pp. 55–86; David Rollo, Gerald of Wales' Topographia Hibernica. Sex and the Irish Nation, in: Romanic Review 86, 1995, pp. 169–190; Fabienne Schwizer, Beards and Barbarians. Marginal Illustrations in Gerald of Wales' "Topographia Hibernica", in: Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium 38, 2018, pp. 216–230.

[46] *De antiqua, immo iniqua consuetudine, semper in manu quasi pro baculo securim bajulant; ut iniquitatis affectum facilius perduxerint ad effectum. Quocunque se vertant, hanc praevectant. Visa igitur opportunitate, et occasione captata, non haec ut gladius evaginatur, non ut arcus tenditur, non ut lancea protenditur. Citra omnem praeparatum parum elevate letale vulnus infligit. Ad manum igitur, immo in manu semper et in promptu est, quod ad mortem sat est. A securibus itaque nulla securitas: si securum te reputes, securim senties. Te sponte in periculum mittis, si securim admittis, et securitatem amittis. Cum igitur exercendae malitiae locum adviderint, utinam vel non ividerint, vel potius nihil viderint. Est etenim gens inconstans, gens varia, gens versipellis et versuta: gens sola instabilitate stabilis, sola infidelitate fidelis* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], pp. 165–166); the English translation is taken from: Giraldus Cambrensis, The Topography of Ireland, translated by Thomas Forester, revised and edited with additional notes by Thomas Wright, Cambridge 2000, p. 76. Note the play upon words: *A securibus itaque nulla securitas: si securum te reputes, securim senties*, which does not work in English.

While these remarks already reference the unbridled savagery and brutality of the Irish, linking these traits to a propensity for violence, Gerald elsewhere associates the cultural inferiority of the Irish more strongly with other practices. Here, in particular, the relation to animals comes into play. This already becomes clear in the description of a ritual for consecrating the king, allegedly practiced in the north of Ireland. The scene that Gerald describes not only contains an interaction with animals, but brings about an approximation of human actors to animal behaviour, thereby animalising the Irish. Gerald relates:

> There is, then, in the northern and most remote part of Ulster, namely, at Kenel Cunil, a nation which practices a most barbarous and abominable rite in creating their king. The whole people of that country being gathered in one place, a white mare is led into the midst of them, and he who is to be inaugurated, not as a prince but as a brute, not as a king but as an outlaw, comes before the people on all fours, confessing himself a beast with no less impudence than imprudence. The mare being immediately killed, and cut in pieces and boiled, a bath is prepared for him from the broth. Sitting in this, he eats of the flesh which is brought to him, the people standing round and partaking of it also. He is also required to drink of the broth in which he is bathed, not drawing it in any vessel, nor even in his hand, but lapping it with his mouth. These unrighteous rites being duly accomplished, his royal authority and dominion are ratified [47].

The resolution expressed by Gerald at the beginning of this passage, not to keep quiet about the heinous acts he had allegedly witnessed in Ireland, he apparently took very seriously. Less seriously, however, he took the requirement to always express himself in discreet words, as he had claimed in the same breath [48]. Elsewhere, Gerald is even more explicit about what supposedly went on in Ireland and what one has to think about it. Once again, he is particularly concerned with 'inappropriate' contacts between humans and animals. At the core of Gerald's concerns are therefore again human-animal relations. The author refers to an alleged sexual relationship between an Irish woman and a goat that belonged to the King of Connacht and had been entrusted to the woman's care. While the passage denounces the animalistic behaviour of the woman, who has subordinated her rationality to sensuality (*O quam enormiter sensualitati succumbit ratio*), Gerald's indignation is directed at the fact that a human being, who is actually the ruler

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[47] *Est igitur in boreali et ulteriori Ultoniae parte, scilicet apud Kenelcunnil, gens quaedam, quae barbaro nimis et abominabili ritu sic sibi regem creare solet. Collecto in unum universe terrae illius populo, in medium producitur jumentum candidum. Ad quod sublimandus ille non in principem sed in beluam, non in regem sed exlegem, coram omnibus bestialiter accedens, non minus impudenter quam imprudenter se quoque bestiam profitetur. Et statim jumento interfecto, et frustatim in aqua decoct, in eadem aqua balneum ei paratur. Cui insidens, de carnibus illis sibi allatis, circumstante populo suo et convescente, comedit ipse. De jure quoque quo lavatur, non vase aliquo, non manu, sed ore tantum circumquaque haurit et bibit. Quibus ita rite, non recte completis, regnum illius et dominium est confirmatum* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], p. 169); English translation from: Giraldus Cambrensis, The Topography of Ireland (as note 46), pp. 77–78.

[48] *Sunt et quaedam, quae, nisi materiae cursus expeteret, pudor reticenda persuaderet. Turpis enim rei gestae narratio, quanquam praeferat Artem, devenustare tamen videtur artificem. Verumtamen, quoniam historiae severitas nec veritati parcere novit nec verecundiae, circumcisis labiis res inhonesta poterit venusta verborum vernulitate depromi* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], p. 169).

of the animals (*bestiarum dominator*), disregards his natural privilege (*degenerante naturae privilegio*) and engages in such shameful dealings with a wild animal [49]. The discrediting of the Irish woman, who is paling towards animalistic behaviour, declares the woman's misstep to be an act unworthy of a rational being that should actually dominate the animals due to its natural privilege. The Irish woman thus appears as an only partially rational creature and is thus brought closer to the domain of animals.

There are significant analogies to this form of defamation in other contexts of the 12th century. Peter the Venerable, for instance, denied the humanity of Jews by arguing that they did not possess human reason (*ratio*), as they did not understand the truth of Christ [50]. Consequently, according to Peter, they were devoid of what distinguishes humans from animals and beasts. Therefore, there would be no reason, in his view, why a Jew should not be called *animal brutum*, *bestia* or *iumentum* [51]. In principle, at least, the polemical stance of Gerald of Wales adopts a similar polemic, as he diminishes the humanity of the Irish in a comparable fashion by questioning their rationality and thus approximating them to wild animals [52].

At first glance, this appears to be a striking parallel to the racist discourses of the 19th century, in which the Irish were discredited as apes and characterised by animalistic behaviour. At second glance, however, there is a significant difference insofar as the particular 'biologisation' that characterised many of the racist attributions to the Irish in the 19th century is absent in Gerald of Wales. The phrenological or craniological discourse, as manifest in 'The Races of Britain' by John Beddoe, sought to prove the supposed animal resemblance of certain human races through the shape of their skulls. For Beddoe, the 'Africanoid' type, which he claimed could be identified in Ireland based on skull shape and other physical characteristics, was a biologically de-

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[49] *Rothericus, rex Connactiae, hircum habebat domesticum album, tam pilositate praelonga quam cornuum elation suo in genere conspicuum. Hic mulierem quondam, cujus custodiae deputatus fuerat, bestialiter adamabat. Cui miserrima, et potius se bestiam patiendo, quam ille agendo probans, se etiam ad abusum supponebat. O indignum facinus et nefandum! O quam enormiter sensualitati succumbit ratio! Quam degenerante naturae privilegio in bestiam bruscit bestiarum dominator, cum bruto animali tam turpi commercio rationale se submittit. Quamvis enim utrunque detestabile nimis sit et abominabile, longe tamen minus est bruta rationalibus in omnibus esse subjecta; et quia bruta, et quoniam naturaliter servire parata; licet tamen non ad abusum sed ad usum creata* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], p. 110).

[50] *Hominem enim te profiteri, ne forte mentiar, non audeo, quia in te extinctam, immo sepultam, quae hominem a caeteris animalibus uel bestiis separat eisque praefert rationem agnosco* (Peter the Venerable, Adversus Iudeorum inveteratam duritiem, ed. Yvonne Friedman [Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 58], Turnhout 1985, V, p. 125).

[51] […] *in quo omnis ratio obruta est, dictum esse negare non potes. Cur enim non dicaris animal brutum, cur non bestia, cur non iumentum?* […] *Audiet nec intelliget asinus, audiet nex intelliget Iudaeus* (Peter the Venerable, Adversus Iudeorum [as note 50], V, p. 125); on this passage see also: Hans-Werner Goetz, Die Wahrnehmung anderer Religionen und christlich-abendländisches Selbstverständnis im frühen und hohen Mittelalter (5.–12. Jahrhundert), Berlin 2013, pp. 499–500.

[52] On this strategy of defamation in general: Marcel Bubert, The Order of Creatures. Conflicting Demarcations between Humans and Animals in the European Middle Ages, in: Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte 23, 2023, pp. 11–36.

termined, and therefore immutable, trait passed down through heredity. Consequently, he assumed that the 'Africanoid' features of the Irish of his own time must have an equivalent in the earliest skeletal finds from Ireland.

Gerald of Wales, on the other hand, attributes the animalisation of the Irish exclusively to cultural phenomena, to forms of behaviour, and practices. In his view, the Irish are animal-like because they perform bestial rites and display forms of behaviour unworthy of rational creatures. By having sex with a goat, the Irish woman in question subjugates her reason (*ratio*) to sensuality, as Gerald stated. In doing so, she condescends to animalistic behaviour that calls her humanity into question. However, if the animalisation of the Irish, which at first glance is reminiscent of the racialisation in modern discourses, is based entirely on cultural practices, and not on physical characteristics, it suggests that Gerald's supposed 'racial' attributions are not biologically determined, but are in principle changeable. Given that these 'racial' characteristics are 'unstable' and therefore changeable, the question arises under what specific circumstances racial dispositions emerge and how it is possible to change them. We will come back to this point at the end of the paper.

With his detailed account of the catastrophic conditions that are said to have prevailed in Ireland, Gerald of Wales provided the enterprise of English conquest with a profound basis of legitimacy, which centuries later was still being used to support the English rule over the island [53]. As late as the 15th century, the Dublin author James Yonge drew his justification for the rule of the English king in Ireland from Gerald of Wales [54], whose 'Expugnatio Hibernica' was widely read in the late Middle Ages and had also been translated into Irish [55]. In the 14th century, the English monk Ranulf Higden cited Gerald's 'Topography' repeatedly in the passages on Ireland of his 'Polychronicon'. There he not only states that Ireland had been incorporated into the lordship of Britain since ancient times [56], but also pictured the Irish as backward,

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53 Duggan, Making of a Myth (as note 42); Sarah E. McKibben, In their "owne countre". Deriding and Defending the Early Modern Irish Nation after Gerald of Wales, in: Eolas. The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies 8, 2015, pp. 39–70.

54 Katharine Simms, The Relationship between History Writing and Politics in Medieval Ireland, in: Marcel Bubert (ed.), Aneignungen der Geschichte. Narrative Evidenzstrategien und politische Legitimation im europäischen Mittelalter, Cologne 2024, pp. 157–174.

55 Caoimhe Whelan, The Transmission of the Expugnatio Hibernica in Fifteenth-Century Ireland, in: George Henley – A. Joseph McMullen (eds.), Gerald of Wales. New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic, Cardiff 2018, pp. 243–258; Aisling Byrne, Family, Locality, and Nationality. Vernacular Adaptations of the Expugnatio Hibernica, in: Medium Aevum 82, 2013, pp. 101–118; Whitley Stokes, The Irish Abridgement of the 'Expugnatio Hibernica', in: The English Historical Review 20, 1905, pp. 77–115.

56 *Erat Hibernia ab olim Britanniae jure dominii concorporata, quam, duce Giraldo in sua Topographia* (Ranulph Higden, Polychronicon, ed. Churchhill Babington, together with the English Translation of John Trevisa, vol. 1, London 1865, p. 328); see the English translation of John Trevisa from the 14th century: *HIBERNIA, that is Irlond, and was of olde tyme incorporat in to the lordschippe of Bretayne, so seith Giraldus in sua Topographia* (ibid., p. 329).

brutal, treacherous, and wicked in their manners, relying heavily on Gerald or citing him explicitly. Thus, Ranulf references Gerald's description that the Irish always carried an axe instead of a staff in order to illustrate their violent behaviour. And in very similar wording to Gerald, Ranulf emphasises the volatility and inconstancy of the Irish people (*Gens ista versipellis et inconstans*) [57].

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF NATURE: THE EMERGENCE OF AN "EVIL RACE"

Although Gerald's writings thus consistently remained topical in the discourse on Irish inferiority, they gained a new and intensified relevance especially in the context of the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the 16th century [58]. English influence in Ireland had declined noticeably in the course of the 14th and 15th centuries, partly due to the Hundred Years' War between England and France. Under King Henry VIII, however, the English crown set about strengthening its authority on the island again [59]. In 1542, Ireland was declared a kingdom and Henry VIII was crowned King of Ireland. From then on, attempts were made to enforce English rule not only through military subjugation of the native princes, but also, since the reigns of Mary I (d. 1558) and Elizabeth I (d. 1603), through a renewed policy of settlement, the so-called plantations [60]. In contrast to the colonisation of Ireland in the 12th and 13th centuries, this process increasingly assumed a confessional dimension. It was in this 16th century context that the distinction between the predominantly Catholic 'Old English', as descendants of the earlier Anglo-Norman colonists, and the Protestant 'New English', who now came to the island, emerged [61]. In any case, the changed situation created both a renewed

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57 […] *securim, id est sparth, in manu quasi pro baculo bajulant, qua sibi confidentes praeoccupant. Gens ista versipellis et inconstans, varia et versuta, cujus magis timenda ars quam Mars, pax quam fax, mel quam fel, militia quam militia; cujus mores sunt, quod nec in bello fortes, nec in pace fideles inveniuntur* (Ranulph Higden, Polychronicon [as note 56], p. 356); compare the last passage to Gerald: *Est etenim gens inconstans, gens varia, gens versipellis et versuta: gens sola instabilitate stabilis, sola infidelitate fidelis* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], pp. 165–166).

58 Hiram Morgan, Giraldus Cambrensis and the Tudor Conquest of Ireland, in: Hiram Morgan (ed.), Political Ideology in Ireland, 1541–1641, Dublin 1999, pp. 22–44.

59 Steven G. Ellis, Ireland's English Pale, 1470–1550. The Making of a Tudor Region, Martlesham 2021; Christopher Maginn – Steven G. Ellis, The Tudor Discovery of Ireland, Dublin 2015; Christopher Maginn, "Beyond the Pale". Regional Government and the Tudor Conquest of Ireland, in: Raingard Esser – Steven G. Ellis (eds.), Frontier and Border Regions in Early Modern Europe, Hanover 2013, pp. 39–56; Gerald Power, The English Pale as a Region in Later Tudor Ireland, 1541–1603, in: ibid., pp. 77–96.

60 Nicholas Canny, Making Ireland British, 1580–1650, Oxford 2001; Nicholas Canny, Early Modern Ireland c. 1500–1700, in: Robert F. Foster (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland, Oxford 1989, pp. 104–160; Nicholas Canny, The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland. A Pattern Established, 1565–76, New York 1976.

61 Nicholas Canny, Protestants, Planters and Apartheid in Early Modern Ireland, in: Irish Historical Studies 25, 1986, pp. 105–115.

focus on the political and social situation in Ireland and a renewed need for the English to legitimise the conquest.

Protestant authors like Edmund Spenser (d. 1599) and John Hooker (d. 1601) not only extensively read the writings of Gerald of Wales, but also drew on his ideas. In his 'A View of the Present State of Ireland' of 1596, Spenser attributed the alleged evils of the Irish to their wicked laws, customs and religion [62]. In particular, he saw the use of the Irish language as dangerous, as the Statutes of Kilkenny had done in the 14th century. Edmund Spenser, known not least as the poet of 'The Faerie Queene', in which Elizabeth I is praised, had grown up in England but moved to Ireland in 1580 to serve the royal Lord Deputy of Ireland Arthur Grey (d. 1593). In Ireland, Spenser was involved in the plantations in the south of the island, in the course of which he himself acquired land near Cork [63].

In addition to the conventional polemics against the native Irish population, which Spenser reproduced in the tradition of Gerald of Wales and Ranulf Higden, he as well as John Hooker went even one step further. In 'A View on the Present State of Ireland' Spenser now attributed the disturbed condition of the country in the first place to the recalcitrance of the (mainly Catholic) Old English lords in Ireland. For Spenser, as well as for Hooker, it was the Irish population of English descent that was primarily in need of reform [64]. This view was, in any case, not least a reflection of the Desmond Rebellions of the 1570s and 1580s in which the Catholic (and to large degree Gaelic speaking) dynasty of the FitzGeralds had taken up arms against the extension of the English government over their province. In 1569–1573 and again in 1579–1583, when Spenser lived in Ireland, the FitzGerald dynasty, whose head was the Earl of Desmond in southern Ireland, rose up against the expansion of English rule on the island, as it was being promoted under Elizabeth I [65]. The aim of the FitzGeralds, who, like other Old English families, had acculturated to their Gaelic environment

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62 Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland, in: Complete Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. R. Morris, London 1897, pp. 609–633; see Andrew Hadfield, Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience. Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl, Oxford 1997.

63 Richard Rambuss, Spenser's Life and Career, in: Andrew Hadfield (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Spenser, Cambridge 2001, pp. 13–36; Andrew Hadfield, "Secrets and Lies". The Life of Edmund Spenser, in: Kevin Sharpe (ed.), Writing Lives. Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation, Oxford 2008, pp. 55–74; Andrew Hadfield, Edmund Spenser. A Life, Oxford 2012; Hadfield, Edmund Spenser's Irish Experience (as note 62).

64 Nicholas Canny, Edmund Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity, in: Yearbook of English Studies 13, 1983, pp. 1–19; McKibben, Deriding and Defending (as note 53).

65 David Edwards, Geraldine Endgame. Reassessing the Origins of the Desmond Rebellion, 1573–79, in: Peter Crooks – Seán Duffy (eds.), The Geraldines and Medieval Ireland. The Making of a Myth, Dublin 2016, pp. 341–378; Robin Frame, Rebellion and Rehabilitation. The First Earl of Desmond and the English Scene, in: ibid., pp. 194–222; Canny, Making Ireland British (as note 60); Canny, The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland (as note 60).

in a paradigmatic way [66], was to defend their independence from the English crown. It was in the course of the suppression of this rebellion, however, that the plantations in the south of Ireland, in which Spenser participated, were significantly advanced.

It might be seen in this context that Spenser and other Protestant English authors effectively turned the old criticism of the native Gaelic population, inaugurated to a large degree by Gerald of Wales, against the communities of the 'Old English' in Ireland, stating, for example, that the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman conquerors of the island had become *much more lawless and licentious than the very wild Irish*. The motifs and topoi of 'barbarism' that Gerald of Wales had used to illustrate the inferiority of the native Irish are recalled by Spenser and applied to the 'English' of 16th-century Ireland, from whom the *cheifest abuses which are nowe in that realme* emanated [67]. It was they who now made reform in Ireland necessary through English intervention [68].

Significantly, Spenser leaves no doubt as to the specific reasons why the Old English, who are repeatedly described as *very brute and uncivill* [69] or *very badd and barbarous* [70], have themselves become savage and barbaric over time. Spenser explicitly raises this question as a problem in need of explanation in order to formulate a definite answer to it. In his treatise, which is conceived as a dialogue between a certain Eudoxus and an Irenaeus, Eudoxus wonders with regard to the Old English in Ireland how it is possible that people could change their 'nature' so much: *That seemeth very straunge which you say, that men should soe much degenerate from theyr first natures as to growe wilde* [71]. Irenaeus then explains how this change in nature came about: This process is due to the fact that the once honourable English, who came to Ireland, have over time adopted the language, customs and manners of their Irish environment. The noble families from England had, as is stated, lost their ancient dignity *through licentious conversing with the Irish*. As a result of this cultural adoption, the Old English, who are henceforth born in Ireland, were somehow nurtured 'as Irish':

> *Other greate howses there be of the old English in Ireland, which through licentious conversing with the Irish, or marrying, or fostering them, or lacke of good nurture, or other such unhappye occasions, have degenerated from theyr auncient dignitye, and are nowe growen as Irish* […] [72].

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66 Katharine Simms, The Geraldines and Gaelic Culture, in: The Geraldines and Medieval Ireland (as note 65), pp. 264–277; Sparky Booker, The Geraldines and the Irish. Intermarriage, Ecclesiastical Patronage and Status, in: ibid., pp. 292–324.

67 *For the cheifest abuses which are nowe in that realme, are growen from the English that were, but are nowe much more lawless and licentious then the very wild Irish* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 636).

68 *Soe that as much are as was then by them had to reforme the Irish, soe much and more must nowe be used to reform them; soe much time doth alter the manners of men* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 636).

69 *You cannot but thinke them sure to be very brute and uncivill* […] (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638).

70 Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 637.

71 Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 636.

72 Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 637.

Thus, Spenser makes it abundantly clear that he sees the change in the nature of the Old English as a direct result of the fact that the descendants of the former conquerors had appropriated the cultural practices of the Irish. The *evill customs* which he regards as *very badd and barbarous* had been, as he explicitly states, *borrowed from the Irish*. Among these cultural phenomena he counts, similar to the observations of the 'Statutes of Kilkenny', particularly *theyr apparel, theyr language, theyr riding, and many other the like*[73]. However, while Spenser also considers the way of riding as a culturally distinctive practice specifically associated to be 'Irish', he emphasises that it is above all the adoption of the Irish language that is responsible for the colonists' transformation. Spenser speaks of the *abuse of language* and condemns the fact that the Old English would love a foreign language more than *theyr owne*[74]. In a significant passage, which he puts into Irenaeus' mouth, Spenser explains that it was the adoption of the Irish language by the conquerors which primarily brought about the changes in their character.

He begins by explaining that the adoption of the Irish language was brought about by marriage to the Irish and the children growing up under the supervision of Irish nurses. As a result, the children would inevitably learn their first language from the nursemaid. At the same time, however, this would entail the adoption of customs and attitudes. Because, along with the milk and the language the children receive from the nurses, they would also absorb their *nature and disposition*[75]. Spenser then explains in more detail how this process of 'internalisation' of nature and disposition takes place. This has something to do with the relationship between language and mind. Words, it is said, are images of the mind. Therefore, the mind is shaped by words. This, however, is the reason why the adoption of the Irish language simultaneously moulds the entire character of the children. For if the language is Irish, then the heart must also become Irish. The tongue, it is said, speaks from the fullness of the heart[76].

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[73] *And hereby sure you have made a fayre way unto your self to lay open the abuses of theyr evill customes, which you are nowe nexte to declare, the which, noe doubt, are very badd and barbarous, being borrowed from the Irish, as theyr apparel, theyr language, theyr riding, and many other the like* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], pp. 637–638).

[74] *And first I have to finde fault with the abuse of language, that is, for the speaking of Irish amongst the English, which as it is unnaturall that any people should love anothers language more the theyr owne, soe it is very inconvenient, and the cause of many other evills* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638).

[75] *I suppose that the cheifest cause of the bringing in of the Irish language, amongst them, was specially theyr fostering, and marrying with the Irish, the which are two most dangerous infections: for the first the child that sucketh the milke of the nurse, must of necessitye learne his first speache of her, the which being the first that is entered to his tongue* […]; *and not onely of the speache, but also of the manners and conditions. For besides that yong children be like apes, which will affect and imitate what they see done afore them, specially of theyr nurses whom they love soe well, they moreover drawe unto themselves, together with theyr sucke, even the nature and disposition of theyr nurses* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638).

[76] […] *and also the woordes are the Image of the mynd, the mynd must needs be affected with the woordes. Soe that the speache being Irish, the harte must needs be Irish; for out of the aboundaunce of the harte, the tonge speaketh* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638).

If a child receives *most of his nature* from its mother through the adoption of language, behaviour and inclinations, by which it is *framed and fashioned*, Spenser asks, how could anything other than an *evill race* emerge from this?[77] The model Spenser creates here to explain the colonists' change of character towards an "evil race" has far-reaching implications. Spenser explicitly rejects the idea of innate characteristics of an ethnic group, but sees children as creatures who receive their 'nature' in the course of socialisation and education. Children are regarded as little apes who imitate everything they see before them. Above all, however, it is the acquisition of a specific language that shapes the mind and the heart of the child. If the language is Irish, then, according to this explanatory model, the *nature and disposition* also become Irish. Consequently, in the logic of Spenser's explanation of the emergence of an *evill race*, it is the appropriation of foreign cultural practices that brings about a fundamental change in racial dispositions.

Against this background, it is only consistent that Spenser also assumes that the racial transformation of the Old English through which they lost their *auncient dignitye* could be reversed again. By identifying the main causes of the problem, namely the nurturing of the children in an Irish speaking environment, he can finally also propose solutions, calling for these procedures to be carefully forbidden under threat of penalty[78]. If this would be accomplished, Spenser presupposes, the Old English of Ireland could change their nature again and regain their ancient dignity. The *evill race* of Spenser, therefore, is also an "unstable race".

CONCLUSIONS

As is clear from Spenser and others at the latest, the anti-Irish stereotypes that had been shaped by Gerald of Wales and his reception in the late Middle Ages and early modern period also influenced perceptions of the Old English in Ireland, who had adopted local practices. Admittedly, in the 16th century the religious component played a much larger role in this perception than in the 14th century. But the fact that the adoption of cultural practices perceived as specifically 'Irish' was viewed with great concern and resentment in the Statutes of Kilkenny of 1366 is undoubtedly related to the discourse of Irish cultural inferiority fashioned by Gerald and others.

However, what these thinking patterns above all encouraged was the perception of differences. For the fact that the appropriation, adoption or adaptation (whichever concept we use) of particular practices by a certain group could be observed by contemporaries at all presupposes a perception of difference at the time. The discourses

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[77] *And indeede how can such matching but bring foorth an evill race, seeing that commonly the child taketh most of his nature of the mother, besides speache, manners, and inclinations, which are* (*for the most part*) *agreable to the conditions of theyr mothers? For by them they are first framed and fashioned, soe as what they receave once from them, they will hardly ever after forgoe* (Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638).

[78] Edmund Spenser, A View on the Present State of Ireland [as note 62], p. 638.

presented in this paper were instrumental in the construction of such a difference that makes the observation of cultural practices and their appropriation as such possible in the first place. Whether it is, therefore, appropriate to speak of 'cultural appropriation' in this specific context is certainly a different question. The reasons of late medieval and early modern observers to judge the adoption of 'Irish' cultural phenomena by the English colonists as illegitimate or inappropriate were very different from the reasons that are brought forward by the critics of 'cultural appropriation' in current debates. However, the fact that late medieval and early modern observers regarded specific practices as culturally distinctive markers that originally belonged to a certain group and could be taken over by another group (with significant effects on their perceived nature) provides important insights into the discursive orders of contemporary constructions of identities.

The question whether this order of discourse was 'racist' depends, finally, on the specific concepts of race and racism on which the analysis is based. Karl Ubl has argued with good reason in favour of choosing a narrow definition of the terms, only speaking of race where physical characteristics based on ancestry are attributed to certain groups [79]. In contrast, in her 2018 monograph on 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages', which Ubl critically examines, Geraldine Heng used a rather broad concept of race that refers to very different forms of cultural essentialisations [80]. With regard to Ubl's definition, the attributions encountered in the context analysed here could only be regarded as 'racist' to a very limited extent and at best in rudimentary ways. Stereotyping here referred primarily to cultural practices and behaviour, not to biological features, as claimed in the portrayal of the Irish in the 19th century. A basic analogy to modern racist discourses could then at most be seen, if at all, in the animalisation of the Irish. Gerald of Wales and his later recipients endeavoured to place the Irish near animals and thus clearly in the lower range of the scale of rational creatures. Even if they were not excluded from the group of rational creatures, they were thus placed on an inferior rank of human beings. A similarity to modern patterns of racial thinking could be found at most in this respect, although this form of animalisation was not justified craniologically or phrenologically, with regard to the skull shape, as in 19th-century discourses.

Nevertheless, one must take into account that some contemporaries speak explicitly of 'race' with regard to specific groups. For Edmund Spenser, the descendants of English colonists in Ireland represented an "evil race". The reason he gave for this is revealing for the specific concept of race that the contemporary observer himself assumed. In his understanding, this attribution was based on the fact that the Old English in Ireland had turned into an evil race because their *nature and disposition* had changed over time. For Spenser, the characteristics of this race were not based on innate and hereditary features. The reason for the change in character of the once

[79] Ubl, Rasse und Rassismus im Mittelalter (as note 8).
[80] Heng, Invention of Race (as note 8).

honourable English colonists was that they had adopted the cultural practices, customs and traditions of their Irish environment. Spenser is actually developing a theory of racial transformation, which is based on the assumption that the adaption of a language has decisive effects on the mind and heart of human beings. As the Old English had adopted the Irish language, which they were taught by their Irish nursemaids, from whom they received *most of their nature*, their mind and heart had become Irish as well. It is for this reason that their customs and forms of behaviours are judged *badd and barbarous* in the tradition of Gerald of Wales.

Within the framework of this order of discourse, however, there are in fact clearly distinct 'races' which are marked off by well delineated characteristics. But these races are not biologically determined or stable in any way. This concept of race is "stable only in its instability", as Gerald of Wales had claimed in an entirely different sense, referring to the alleged fickleness and volatility of the Irish [81]. For Spenser and others, however, it was possible to change a racial nature by 'appropriating' foreign cultural practices. In this sense, he promoted a concept of "unstable races" that was intrinsically connected to a specific notion of cultural appropriation.

[81] […] *gens sola instabilitate stabilis* (Giraldus Cambrensis, Topographia Hibernica [as note 45], p. 166).