Translating St. Patrick: Political Ethnicity, Ulster, and the Early Modern Anglo-Irish

'The north of Ireland,' Willy Maley has recently argued, 'is intimately bound up with the beginnings of modern Britishness'.[1] Indeed it is: and there are few places where 'Britishness' is proclaimed more loudly, and, of course, resisted more fiercely, than in the contemporary 'province' of Northern Ireland. Maley is right, furthermore, to trace the construction of a very *modern* sense of British identity to the circumstances of seventeenth-century Ulster: 'the plantation of Ulster is intimately bound up with the historical foundations of Britishness'.[2] The plantation of Ulster – the early seventeenth-century colonial project whereby planned Anglo-Scottish settlement, under the watchful eye of the new king of 'Great Britain', James VI and I, aimed to pacify and secure what had been the most rebellious area of Elizabethan Ireland – plays a crucial role in the emergence of modern British and Irish identities. As John Kerrigan has recently asserted, 'Britishness was projected into Ulster, a feature of what many would call colonial identity'.[3] Yet the plantation, and the texts produced to promote, support and interrogate it, have been unjustly overlooked both by historians of ethnicity, and by theorists of nationality. For example, Colin Kidd's seminal *British Identities Before Nationalism* (1999) divides its consideration of 'Irish identities' in the seventeenth and eighteenth century into a familiar pattern: 'Catholic ethnogenesis', 'Protestant ethnogenesis', and 'Comparisons'.[4] Kidd's is, of course, a highly subtle and sophisticated study, and its division of Irish identities along confessional lines certainly speaks to a sense of how those identities are constructed and experienced; but it is strangely silent on the plantation, on the cultural impact of large numbers of Protestant Scottish settlers, and on the textual debate which erupts around the political and religious construction of ethnic identities in the period.

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Maley, on the other hand, reacting against what he sees as 'an "Anglo-Irish" problematic' which excludes discussion of 'Scottishness' from 'the problem of identity and difference in a multi-nation state', nevertheless uncharacteristically ignores the contested nature of the terminology which he employs: to borrow Kidd's formulation of 'Anglo-Irish' identity: 'The New English […] post-Reformation settlers of Ireland […] would appropriate the Anglo-Irish identity of their medieval colonial predecessors, though without using this particular terminology: rather they defined themselves as the Protestant Irish nation'.[5] This is, unfortunately, about as simple as it gets.

This essay aims to further our understanding of the complexity of the role of textual transmission and reception in the construction of 'ethnic' identities in seventeenth-century Ulster, and in so doing, to contribute to the process of understanding both modern Britishness and modern Irishness. In particular, it will focus on textual representations of the legendary-historical figure of St. Patrick in Anglophone writing of the first half of the century: both Protestant and Catholic writers in this period claim Patrick as a legitimating authority. For example, in 1625, an English translation of a twelfth-century *Life* of Patrick, originally composed in Latin by the Scottish bishop Jocelin, was published at St. Omer, claiming to be the work of one '*Fr. B.B. one of the Irish Franciscan Friars at Louain*'.[6] Catholic writers such as Fr B.B. stress either the elements of the Patrician narratives which align themselves with the popular devotional practices of late medieval affective piety, or with the teachings of the post-Tridentine Catholic church. On the other hand, James Ussher, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, argues in *A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and Brittish* (1631) that the religion practised by Patrick and the earliest Irish Christians was identical to early modern

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Protestantism.[7] At stake in this debate are emergent discourses of ethnic and cultural identity, significantly allied to institutional ecclesiastical structures. Whereas Ussher's writings, it has been suggested, crystallise a developing Protestant 'Anglo-Irishness', the translation of Jocelin appears to espouse a proto-nationalism which links 'Irishness' directly to Catholicism. However, as this article argues, care must be taken to avoid ascribing anachronistic cultural identities to the period: rather, a multiplicity of performative ethnicities is in circulation in English-language Irish writing of the period.

The early modern Anglo-Irish

Almost a decade ago, Christopher Ivic outlined a pressing need 'to construct an early modern or early colonial literary history attentive to the heterogeneous writers and readers throughout the British Isles'.[8] While much work has taken place in the intervening years, including a systematic challenge to the geographical-ideological terminology ('*British* Isles') employed by Ivic, nevertheless, as I have already suggested, some of the most significant areas of enquiry have barely had their surfaces scratched.[9] I will return to the plantation of Ulster in due course; at this moment I want to consider the (not-unrelated) apparent development of a distinctive 'Anglo-Irish' identity in the early modern period, and to examine why this has caught the attention of so few of the New British Historians. The Irish section of Holinshed's *Chronicle* is a key text in this regard; whereas Ivic reads the Irish *Chronicle* as enacting 'a discursive struggle for English identity in Ireland', other critics have stressed less the *struggle*, than the (assumed) *success*; Alison Taufer, for example, claims that the 'primary interest' of Holinshed's Irish history 'lies in the portrayal of

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an Anglo-Irish identity independent of English influence'.[10] Quite what Taufer means by 'Anglo-Irish' in this context is not clear, nor is it clear how any conception of *Anglo*-Irishness could consider it 'independent of English influence'. The problem is by no means restricted to critics of sixteenth-century writing; Jonathan Pritchard, in a recent discussion of Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century milieu, acknowledges that 'to identify [a writer] … as Anglo-Irish … is … to touch on a contentious issue', but goes on to claim that 'the Anglo-Irish of Swift's day were the most recent descendants of a political genealogy that stretched back five centuries to the first Anglo-Norman colonies in Ireland and whose inheritance can best be described as rootlessness'.[11] Such a claim makes a number of problematic assumptions. For example, few early modern writers use the term 'Anglo-Irish' to describe themselves; Richard Stanihurst, an Old English Catholic, is one of the few to use the term, albeit in the Latinised form '*Anglo-Hiberni*'.[12] But, as the quotation from Kidd analysed above shows, the 'Anglo-Irish' of the eighteenth century were descended from the 'New English' of the sixteenth century, manipulating and appropriating the Old English ('Anglo-Hiberni') heritage for clear ideological purposes (that is, to legitimise both their presence on the island, and their particular cultural, legal and ecclesiastical institutions). By the time of Swift, the descendants of the 'Anglo-Norman coloni[sts]', by virtue of their Catholicism, had been subsumed into the mass of 'Gaelic Ireland' against which the Anglo-Irish defined themselves. Even if the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish elite did see Stanihurst and his compatriots as their cultural predecessors (and I think this is far from certain), the picture is certainly less clear from a sixteenth-century perspective. What may appear in hindsight as a progressive development of cultural and ethnic identity manifests itself in an early modern context less as a clear progression, and more as a series of elective choices, deriving from a more fluid sense of Irish

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ethnicity. That the former proved more historically enduring should not detract from the historical significance of the latter.

Even Stanihurst's self-definition ('*Anglo-Hiberni*') and external definition ('Old English Catholic', as this essay has referred to him) demand to be read as elective, rather than essential, identities. Stanihurst is, as Richard McCabe has noted, 'the first commentator to present English readers with a review of Irish literature – or rather of literature written in Ireland – from the time of Saint Patrick to his own day', and this first Irish canon is already constructed in terms of ethnic and linguistic exclusivity: 'the vast majority of the writers mentioned post-date 1169 [the date of the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland] and write in English or Latin'.[13] In other words, both linguistic and 'ethnic' Gaelicism are under-represented in Stanihurst's canon. Such self-conscious processes of inclusion and exclusion apply to almost all formulations of textual identity in early modern Irish writing. The 1625 *Life* of Jocelin, for example, is forthright in its acknowledgement that it is not a faithful re-creation of the twelfth-century work, but rather 'a summary abridgement of the matters, that are most remarkable, and best befitting our tymes'.[14] Ostensibly two different criteria for selection are enunciated here: the passages that are most 'remarkable' (presumably including the fantastic miracles and visions ascribed to Patrick) will be included, as will those that are 'befitting our tymes', that is, those passages which support a Catholic and/or proto-nationalist interpretation of Patrick. But, as will become clear in the course of this essay, the two are not mutually exclusive: to show Patrick as performing miracles and receiving angelic visitations is also to represent Patrick in terms beneficial to those who wish to construct a coherent 'Irish Catholic' identity. And, of course, other texts work in different ways; as McCabe has argued, the work of Stanihurst *et al*. 'established the template for writing

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Irish history from [a] predominantly Anglocentric perspective', a perspective which 'betrays the continuance of fundamentally colonial attitudes towards the Gaelic population'.[15]

What is more, of course, the gradual reification of such distinctive identities is ultimately inseparable from the wider colonial discourse also developing in the period. As Graham Pechey has recently reminded us, it is at this historical moment that John Dee famously conjoins the words 'Brytish' and 'Impire'; however, Pechey's sense that 'the (British) empire of which Dee dreamed only began to be realised in land terms … [with] the Jamestown settlement in Virginia' surely overlooks the history of late medieval Anglo-Norman and early modern Anglo-Scottish settlement in Ireland, and the resultant conflicting cultural heritages; one recent critic puts the case more forcefully, asserting that 'Ireland is the first and the last colony of the British Empire'. [16] When the translator of Jocelin's *Life*, identifying himself as 'one of the Irish Franciscan Friars', asks 'who were the founders of the vniversityes of Oxford, Landesfarne, and Malemsbury in Englande? […] Irishmen, as auerreth *Cambden*', this may not quite be the empire writing back, but it certainly resembles a colonised identity rejecting the subordinate position it has been granted.[17]

St. Patrick for Dublin: Shirley's Rejection of Armagh

I have suggested, then, that a considerable heterogeneity of political and cultural concerns is apparent in early modern Anglophone treatments of St. Patrick. The Patrick with whom literary scholars have been most familiar is that of James Shirley, whose dramatic romance *St. Patrick for Ireland* was performed in Dublin in the late 1630s, and printed in London in 1640.[18] Although Shirley's Patrick engages with the

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ongoing debates surrounding textual representations of the figure, it is extremely atypical in its despecification of Patrick's geographical milieu; whereas other texts constantly draw attention to the northern context of the saint's mission, Shirley's play, as befits both its generic status and its metropolitan site of performance, ignores this crucial aspect of Patrick.

Nevertheless, despite Michael Neill's sense that *St. Patrick for Ireland* 'carefully confined itself to the mythical past' in order to avoid contemporary political resonance, many of the concerns which animate early modern representations of Patrick are also present in Shirley's play.[19] Patrick is inscribed in a variety of conflicts, both religious (between the 'pagan' inhabitants of the island and the Christianity of Patrick and his followers), as in Archimagus's assertion that 'every Altar [shall] Breathe incense to our gods, and shine with flames, To strike this Christian blinde', and 'colonial', as in the same character's claim that 'the Spirits shall obey to drowne This stragler, and secure this threatned Island'.[20] The play has been largely overlooked, dismissed as an old-fashioned attempt at theatrical spectacle, but without the sophistication of either Shakespearean or Fletcherian romance; and it is not hard to see how Archimagus and Patrick are versions of Sycorax/Caliban and Prospero, one a native magus aligned with 'ancient' and evil magic, and the other a new magus from across the seas, bringing miracles of a higher order. But Shirley's Patrick betrays his London roots in other ways, as when the play's prophecy suggests that '*in the East* [he will] *his table stand*', not settling in the northern city of Armagh, but instead suggesting in an audience's mind the metropolis of Dublin, home to both the military and cultural representatives of 'Englishness' in the island.[21] Although, of course, Patrick is certainly not straightforwardly 'English': 'We are of Britaine, Sir', he says to the Gaelic king, drawing on a strain of readings which see the saint as a

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representative of the ancient Britons, and his role in Ireland as giving credence to one or another of the contemporary 'British projects'.[22]

The Catholic Patrick

It is crucial to be aware, however, of the nature of the source material which Shirley is using, and of the significance of the changes he makes; for Shirley's main source for the play, as Hugh MacMullan noted in the 1930s, is the very edition of Jocelin translated by Fr B.B., and published at St Omer in 1625.[23] And if, as I have suggested, Fr B.B. identifies himself and his text as both Irish (if displaced) and Catholic, then it is important that the 1625 Jocelin is much more secure in its identification of Patrick with Armagh than is Shirley. Identifying Patrick's captivity as taking place 'in the North' of Ireland, the saint is strongly identified with what in the seventeenth century would have been the province of Ulster (even as that proto-province is represented as itself politically divided);[24] the text reiterates the conventional association of Patrick with Downpatrick – '*Domnach Phadraig*, that is, *Saint Patrickes* citty' – and with '*Dalnardia* in the North'.[25] The establishment of the Church of Armagh, moreover, is claimed as a result of divine providence: 'as Saint *Patricke* and *Micheus* were in spirituall conference, an Angell tendered them a letter, wherin S. *Patricke* was commaunded … to erect his Archepiscopall sea at *Ardmach*'.[26] Not only is the institution of the church on the 'faire, pleasant, and delightfull piece of ground, antiently called *Druimsallae*, and now *Ardmuch*' divinely ordained; so too is the very plan of the city: 'the saint saw the Angells squaring the forme and compass of a faire Citty, that was to be built, in that pleasant, and delightful field'.[27] In keeping with the

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Catholic sympathies of the text, Patrick is even portrayed as establishing the practice of relic-veneration at the church of Armagh .[28]

Indeed, such identifiably 'Catholic' concerns as the veneration of relics and the celebration of saintly miracles are present in many early modern accounts of the life of Patrick. Stanihurst relates in his *Description* the unlikely observation that '[t]he towne of Armagh is said to be enemie to rats, and if anie be brought thither, presentlie it dieth. Which the inhabitants impute to the praiers of saint Patricke'.[29] As late as the twentieth century, Catholic narratives of early modern Ulster takes pains to emphasise the significance of Patrick's relics, particularly the crozier known as the *Bachall Isu* (Staff of Jesus).[30] More recent scholarship has emphasised how the movement of the *bachall* from Armagh to Dublin under Norman rule had a significant impact on how Patrick could be read, ensuring that 'the cult of St. Patrick would be promoted in those parts of Ireland held by the English, as well as within Irish-held areas';[31] in other words, the forced removal of the relic permits the veneration of Patrick within different ethnic and, later, religious groupings. Of course, for early modern Catholics, the claim of the staff to be Christic is to be taken seriously: in Jocelin's version, 'the holy man *Iustus*, deliuered to S.*Patricke* a little staffe, which he sayd he receaued out of our Sauiours owne handes'.[32]

If the St. Omer *Life* has a recognisably Catholic approach to relics, so too its representation of the body of Patrick may recall the affective devotion of late medieval popular piety.[33] This can be seen in the emphasis on the body of Patrick, which is both superhuman – 'from his sacred fingers, it seemed to thē that stood by … sparckles of fire to issue forth' – and recognisably subject to the temptations and pangs of human bodily existence: 'His tender body he so chastised with fastings,

watchinges, and other exercises of deuotion'.[34] Patrick is shown undertaking penitential exercises which focus on the frailty of the body:

> The nyght tyme, which he deuided into three partes, he spent after a most heauenly manner; the former part he imployed in reciting twice fifty Pslames, and in making two hundred genuflexions: the second part he spent in saying of the third quinquagenary of psalms, and other prayers, all which time he stood immersed cold water: the third part he allotted to his sleep, hauing for his bed a bare stone, & another stone in steede of a bolster, giuing himselfe in this manner to his rest, he would girde his loines with a roughe, and course haire cloath steeped in cold watter, to keepe his body in due subiection, fearing it should stir vp any dishonest motions against the spirit.[35]

There can be little doubt that, in the post-plantation context of the 1620s, passages like this aim to effect a retrospective 'Catholicization' of Patrick and, by extension, to present both Ulster and Ireland as historically Catholic territories. Patrick's body is also typologically linked to that of Christ both by his intense interest in leprosy – he 'kept alwaies in his company some leaper or other, whom himself tended most carefully. washing with his owne hands his vlcerous sores' – and his ability to raise the dead: he 'brought to life againe men, whose bodyes were resolued into cinders many years before'.[36] The repeated insistence on the frailty of the body, and on the Patrician ability to heal such frailty, may be wroth considering in the light of 'the Renaissance image of the body as reflective of the commonwealth', as Taufer puts it in her study of Holinshed's Irish *Chronicle*.[37] For if that text's Anglocentric perspective sees Ireland as 'a man altogether infected with sores and biles, and in

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whose bodie from the crowne of the head to the sole of the foot there is no health,' then the *Life*'s insistence on the capacity of (the Catholic) Patrick to heal such a 'man' – 'It was in a manner a dayly exercise with him to cleanse lepers, cripels, deafe, dumbe, to cure palseies, lethargies, lunatickes, epileptics, to erect cripls, to restore sight to the blind' – may well carry a political charge in a seventeenth-century Irish context.[38]

However, if the 1625 *Life* may seem to effect a conventional equation of Catholicism and the body, nevertheless its very existence as a printed text complicates the equally conventional association of Protestantism and the book. The text, significantly, not only *embodies* Patrick; it also *textualises* him. The saint's initial calling encapsulates this conflation of body and text:

> … he saw in a vision as it were a man in a comely countenance, and cariage, bringing many letters from Ireland, and giuing him one to reade: which when he began to reade, he founde written in the very beginning: *Hoc est vox Hibernigenarum*. This is the voyce of the Irish nation. Hauing read the beginning, and intending to go on with the rest, it seemed to him that he saw in spirit, the Irish infants shut vp yet in their mothers wombs, crying to him with a loud voice.[39]

It is a text – a Latin epistle – which confirms Patrick's calling. But that text is simultaneously a bodily phenomenon, the cry of the unborn: both images, of course, are biblically derived, the latter recalling the prophet Isaiah, the former the epistolary communications of the early Christian churches. A 'textual', even a 'literary', Patrick recurs throughout the *Life*: on one occasion, on entering the palace of an Irish king,

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‘none did exhibite him any honor, or reuerence, excepting the Kings Poet, who with great submission saluted him’.[40] And if the linguistic exuberance of a poet is to be praised, so too are the linguistic scholarly skills of the saint himself: ‘he was wel seene in foure languages, the English, Irish, French & Latin, & attained to good insight in the Greeke’.[41]

Yet in early modern Protestant circles, the scholarship here attributed to Patrick is turned against him by humanist-inspired readers; in such readings, it is the lack of textual authority pointing towards such a ‘Catholic’ Patrick which is explicitly castigated. For example, John Spottiswood, seeking to deny the link between the historical Patrick and the pilgrimage site in the north-west of Ulster known as ‘Saint Patrick’s Purgatory’, asserts that ‘we finde neither credible *Authors*, nor any *Author* at all, that for more than 700 yeares after *S.Patrick*, doth write one word of this *Purgatory*’.[42] Spottiswood pays particular attention to those writers ‘who have proposed to themselves to write of *S.Patrickes* life’ and, indeed, to ‘*Iocelin esteemed a most exact writer*’; the last phrase, as Spottiswood’s italics indicate, is ironic: Spottiswood takes Jocelin’s failure to mention the purgatory as decisive, ‘especially so many leaves being stuffed with such matters as will be there met withal’.[43]

Spottiswood, of course, is not antithetical to interest in Patrician narratives, or dismissive of the relevance of those narratives; rather, he objects to the particular religio-political uses to which such narratives are put in an early modern context. Patrick’s life, clearly, could be appropriated to both Catholic and Protestant viewpoints in early modern Ireland, and in the wider British and European debates which impact directly on the island. As Clare Stancliffe has argued, Protestant writers such as Meredith Hanmer and James Ussher saw Patrician practices as a continuation of apostolic tradition (to which early modern Protestantism was self-consciously

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returning), while writers who identified themselves with Catholicism stressed the aspects of the inherited hagiography which emphasised either popular Catholicism, or post-Tridentine doctrine. Beyond the scope of this article are the non-anglophone lives of Patrick: Richard Stanihurst, for example, was the author of an influential Latin life of the saint.[44] In the Anglophone texts, the clearest signs of the sectarian conflict over the legacy of Patrick often are found not in the narratives themselves, but rather in their paratextual apparatus. The polemic preface of the St. Omer *Life* aims to 'stirre vp in your breasts the zeale of Catholike religion,' and does so by self-consciously employing the emotive language of an Irish proto-nationalism, promising to 'offer vnto your intellectuall view, S. Patricke the Abraham from whome you descended, and Irland the Sara, by whome you were borne'.[45] The preface engages in the standard Counter-Reformation strategy of binarism, taking aim at 'the refined Ritualists of Geneua,' contrasting Patrick's 'short and broken sleeps taken all alone' with Calvinism's 'libidinous Ministers, who lie immersed in beds of downe, not alone, but embracing their sweet harts with greater deuotion, than euer any Genua Bible'.[46] The extremity of the rhetoric is most obvious in the claim that 'the Antimony or opposition of the fift ghospell [that is, Protestantism], and S. Patrickes religion, is rendred so … manifest, that the proudest Achilles of the Protestant side … will neuer presume to accept of the combat on the open playne of S. Patrickes life'.[47] Of course, despite this rhetoric, Protestants did accept just such a challenge. Indeed, Spottiswood's Protestant refutation of Saint Patrick's Purgatory characterises such a rhetorically inflated argument as typical of Catholicism: 'the thing (I confesse) do not deserve so much inke, but I have the rather observed it, that the *confidence* of these men may be seen, imposing for undeniable certainties, matters doubtful & most

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uncertain'. For this author, Catholicism resolutely resists logic: 'a *Vision* [is] an *Argument* in that church, not inferior to any other'.[48]

If Anglophone textual versions of Patrick in the early modern period rehearse the religious controversies of their day, so too do they bear witness to the impact of colonial and proto-colonial discourse. The concise summary of Patrick in Holinshed's *Chronicles* establishes a familiar colonial paradigm: 'He travelled thirtie yeares in preaching through the land, planting in places conuenient bishops and priests, whose learning and vertuous conuersation by the speciall grace and fauor of God, established the faith in that rude nation'.[49] Patrick – who, of course, is not an indigene of Ireland, and who is presented by many early modern sources as ethnically 'English' or 'Scottish' – is here a proto-colonial *planter*, and the appearance of that term is very possibly significant. In contrast to the rudeness of the natives, Patrick brings 'learning and vertuous conuersation': civilization, in other words. Ethnic discord, of course, or political discord imagined as such, has a long history in the Atlantic archipelago: the ninth- or tenth-century *Tripartite Life* ascribes to Patrick the claim that 'the English should not dwell in Ireland, by consent or force, so long as I abide in heaven'.[50] It may not be surprising, then, that Fr B.B. is wary of identifying Patrick as ethnically English:

> I would haue thee know, that in severall Chapters and passages, I haue for the latin word *Brittánia*, translated *England*, whereof I would haue none to take aduantage. I know the English lay clayme to / *S.Patricke*, so doe the French, so doe the Moderne Scots. Therefore it was not in my minde, or meaning to giue a decisiue verdict or suffrage in a matter so disputable on all sides, or to depriue any of the former nations of the right, or title they haue to him.[51]

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The translation of Britain to England here may well be of interest to the New British Historians; more important for the purposes of this essay is the colonial anxiety present, as ancient Ireland is imagined as penetrable from a variety of nations, all of which can be resolved into *Brittánia*. The colonial anxiety of the text can also be seen through the ways in which it reverses colonial relationships, imagining Ireland as the source, rather than the object, of colonial power: the monastery in Bangor (in Ulster, the site of course of the contemporary Stuart plantation) 'did extend its branches to the sea, and its plantes beyond the sea; for it filled Ireland, Scotland, and many other Ilandes with perfect Monkes, and monasteries, as also forraine Countryes'.[52]

The Anglo-Irish Patrick?

If Fr B.B.'s Catholic colonial anxiety sends monks outwards from Ulster, a useful comparison can be drawn with the emerging 'Anglo-Irish' Protestantism of James Ussher: 'In [the meditation of the scriptures] … our ancient *Scottish* and *Irish* did thrive so well, that many worthy personages in forraine parts were content to undergoe a voluntarie exile from their own Country; that they might more freely trafficke here for so excellent a commodity'.[53] The mercantile imagery of the final phrase locates Ussher firmly within the imperialist discourses of his time, but perhaps more interesting is the conflation of Scottish and Irish ethnicities, and the presentation of 'Ireland' as a destination for exiles. If Fr B.B. is a proto-nationalist, Ussher – on the strength of phrases like these – is perhaps a 'Unionist' *avant la lettre*, with all the complexity that that term should suggest in an early modern context. As recent scholarship is beginning to emphasise, Ussher is a central figure in the development

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of a modern 'Anglo-Irish' political ethnicity.[54] 'History' has certainly played its part here: the absorption of Ussher's extensive collection of books into the library of Trinity College, Dublin, helped to establish the archbishop posthumously as a spokesperson and representative of 'Anglo-Irish' Protestantism.[55] Ussher viewed Irish Catholicism as a degeneration of the pure religion practised by early Irish Christians, and saw the medieval saints' lives (*à la* Jocelin) as an accretion of falsehoods and exaggerations:

> The woefull experience whereof, wee may see daily before our eyes in this poore nation: where, such as are slow of heart to beleeve the saving truth of God delivered by the Prophets and Apostles, doe with all greedinesse imbrace, and with a most strange kinde of incredulitie entertaine these lying Legends, wherewith their Monkes and Friars in these latter daies have polluted the religion and lives of our ancient Saints.[56]

There is a telling uncertainty here as to the position which Ussher occupies in relation to the 'poore nation' of Ireland: portrayed as a corrupt and retrograde people, given to the sins of greed and to the failings of intellectual incapacity, the Catholics of Ireland nevertheless venerate the same figure as does Ussher (albeit, the archbishop might argue, in a very different way): they remain 'our ancient Saints,' no matter how much the narratives have been 'polluted'.

Of particular interest here is Ussher's insistence on the capacity of *texts* to contribute to the processes of identity-formation in early modern Ireland. Within his writings, Ussher draws attention to his own bibliophilia: his assertion that 'the religion professed by the ancient … [Irish] Christians' is the same as early modern

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Protestantism is derived from his study of 'such records of the former ages as have come into my hands (eyther *manuscript* or *printed*)'.[57] This privileging of the textual transmission of knowledge applies also to the scriptures, described by Ussher as 'holy documents'.[58] Ussher's hostility to the Catholicism of both the 'Gaelic' and 'Old Irish' inhabitants of the island mark him out as a key figure in developing notions not just of 'Irish' Protestantism but also, to use the term in its current historiographical sense, of 'British' Protestantism also:

> And whereas it is knowne […] that the name of *Scoti* was common to the inhabitants of the *greater* and the *lesser* Scotland […] that is to say, of *Ireland*, and the famous colonie deduced from thence into *Albania*: I will not follow the example of those that have of late laboured to make dissension betwixt the daughter and the mother, but account of them both, as the same people […] The religion doubtlesse received by both, was the selfe same; and differed little or nothing from that which was maintained by their neighbours the *Britons*.[59]

In a rhetorical move which is nothing if not ambitious, Ussher argues that the inhabitants of early modern Ireland and Scotland are not ethnically distinct; this is, of course, one of a number of competing claims about origins in the period, but one which has the important function of legitimising the presence of Scottish planters in Ulster. Moreover, Ussher claims, the inhabitants of England (and Wales, if the ancient Welsh are included among the *Britons*), Scotland and Ireland all *originally* practised a form of Christianity identical to that of the seventeenth-century English church (and, of course, the seventeenth-century Church of Ireland, which needs to be defended as

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both a Reformed – hence non-Roman – and native – hence originary – church from Ussher's viewpoint). This is, of course, a mystificatory view, as are most claims of ethnic origins in the early modern period and beyond: consciously or otherwise, Ussher's claim attempts to obscure the conflicts which arise from historical encounters and disagreements between disparate ethno-religious groupings. But Ussher's claim, of course, is also crucial to any sense of 'Anglo-Irish' hybridity in the period.

It is more important than has been previously noted, certainly in recent years, that the development of 'Anglo-Irishness' is based on claims of religious origins as much as ethnic foundations, and that these claims are all to some extent strategic and provisional in the early modern period. In particular, it remains imperative to resist the political simplification of religious identities in an intellectual climate where an influential theorist like Darko Suvin can attempt to reinvigorate 'Weber's disenchantment' in such stark terms as these:

> From the oceanic depths of the capitalist mode of production there monstrously appear new religions and sects, from Lutheranism and post-Tridentine Catholicism to Methodism and the newly aggressive churches of today.[60]

Such overly simplistic views of the relationship between social change and the emergence of forms of (religious, political, ethnic) identity are of course to be resisted; nevertheless, as I have suggested, it remains equally important to be aware of the rhetorical uses to which such identities can be employed, particularly when circulated textually. For example, McCabe's sense that 'the insistent emphasis upon

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the religious [i.e. Protestant] character of figures' in Holinshed's Irish *Chronicle* is 'highly functional' in political debates, 'rather than purely pious', is valuable.[61] Claims like that of Fr B.B., to demonstrate 'the sympathy between vs moderne Catholikes and S. *Patricke*, & betweene S. *Patricke* and the Primitiue Christiãs', similarly need to be read with an ear attuned to early modern controversy.[62] The same is true of the proto-racial discourses of ethnicity which appear in the period, whether those be of racial superiority – 'I haue exhibited Ireland […] giuing you rather a transitory sight, than a full view of the beauty, and maiesty, the finger of the Almighty hath imprinted on her face' – or inferiority, as in the familiar narratives of the new world.[63]

Indeed, the existence of such 'racial' claims should alert us to the more general condition of 'ethnic anxiety', as McCabe terms it, in Anglophone writing of the period. Moreover, it should be clear that, despite their rhetorical claims to the contrary, such identifications were (and are) not, in the words of Pritchard, 'static religious or political constructions'.[64] In addition to religion and politics, language is significant here too, as even within Ireland's early modern Anglophone communities, differences in dialect and pronunciation have the capacity to affect conceptions of identity. As Pritchard has made clear, 'forms of English, preserving […] many of the pronunciations of the Middle English' survived in parts of Ireland 'until the end of the eighteenth century and … into the nineteenth'.[65] Ulster, of course, represents an even more complex situation:

> The policy of confiscation introduced Scots-speaking planters, mostly from Ayrshire and Renfrewshire, to the north and east of the province (central and southern Ulster were settled by planters from northern England): Ulster Scots,

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> as the tongue is now known, came to be heard in Antrim, the northeast of County Down, and parts of Counties Londonderry and Donegal. The history of the language spoken in Ulster deserves a lengthier account than is possible here (Irish, for example, was spoken not only by Catholic Gaels but also by some Protestant settlers from western Scotland).[66]

Ulster is not a monoglot culture in the early modern period; English and Irish are both spoken widely. But even within Anglophone communities there is considerable linguistic variation, sometimes concretely tied to an ethnic or religious identity, sometimes much less so. All of the attempts, then, to imagine Patrick as variously Irish, English, Catholic, or Protestant, become extremely precarious: such identities remain fragile and always potentially mutable. Yet if Pritchard's aim is 'to locate where Swift's Anglo-Irish identity and his literary craft meet', and if Maley's problem with Anglo-Irishness is that it excludes Scottishness, then it seems that a way of reconciling the objectives of both of these critics is to begin with seventeenth-century Ulster.[67] In so doing, we may also learn something about the contingent nature of both modern Irishness and modern Britishness.

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[1] Willy Maley, *Nation, State and Empire in English Renaissance Literature: Shakespeare to Milton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p.110.

[2] Maley, *Nation, State and Empire*, p. 112.

[3] John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603-1707* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p. 24.

[4] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the British Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), pp. 151-62, 162-77, 177-81.

[5] Maley, *Nation, State and Empire*, p. 100; Kidd, *British Identities*, p. 146.

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[6] Jocelin, *The Life of the Glorious Bishop S. Patricke Apostle and Primate of Ireland* (St. Omer, 1625), p. xvj.

[7] James Ussher, *A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and Brittish* (London, 1631).

[8] Christopher Ivic, 'Incorporating Ireland: Cultural Conflict in Holinshed's Irish *Chronicles*,' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29 (1999): 473-98, p. 477.

[9] See, for example, David J. Baker and Willy Maley, eds., *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Matter of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004); Maley, *Nation, State and Empire*; Simon Mealor and Philip Schwyzer, eds., *Archipelagic Identities: Literature and Identity in the Atlantic Archipelago, 1550-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

[10] Alison Taufer, *Holinshed's Chronicles* (New York: Twayne, 1999), p. 91.

[11] Jonathan Pritchard, 'Swift's Irish Rhymes,' *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 123-58, pp. 153, 155.

[12] Quoted in Richard A. McCabe, 'Making History: Holinshed's Irish *Chronicles*, 1577 and 1587,' in Baker and Maley, *British Identities*, 51-67, p. 55.

[13] McCabe, 'Making History', p. 57.

[14] Jocelin, *Life*, p. xvij.

[15] McCabe, 'Making History', pp. 51, 54.

[16] Graham Pechey, '"Empire laid up in heaven": Postcoloniality and Eternity', *Critical Quarterly* 49 (2007): 1-30, p. 3; Luz Mar González Arias, 'Ireland', in John McLeod, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 108-118, p. 109.

[17] Jocelin, *Life*, p. v.

[18] James Shirley, *St. Patrick for Ireland* (London, 1640).

[19] Michael Neill, 'Broken English and Broken Irish: Nation, Language, and the Optic of Power in Shakespeare's Histories', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 (1994), pp. 1-32, p. 10.

[20] Shirley, *St. Patrick*, pp. A3^{r}-A3^{v}.

[21] Shirley, *St. Patrick*, p. A4^{r}.

[22] Shirley, *St. Patrick*, p. B2^{r}; see Clare Stancliffe, 'Patrick (*fl.* 5th cent.)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP, 2004), accessed 22 August 2007,

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<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/215627>, in particular the claim that Patrick 'paved the way for large scale British involvement in Ireland's Christianization'.

[23] Hugh MacMullan, 'The Sources of Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland*', *PMLA*, 48 (1933), pp. 806-814.

[24] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 32.

[25] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. 32, 39.

[26] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 72.

[27] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 82.

[28] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. 84-5.

[29] Richard Stanihurst, *A Treatise Conteining a Plaine and Perfect Description of Ireland, with an Introduction to the Better Vnderstanding of the Histories Appertaining to that Iland: Compiled by Richard Stanihurst* (London, 1586), p. 31.

[30] Ambrose Coleman, 'Armagh', *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. I* (New York: Robert Appleton Co, 1907), electronic edition, accessed 21 August 2007 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01729a.html>; see also Nicholas Donnelly, 'Dublin', *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. V* (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1909), electronic edition, accessed 21 August 2007 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05151a.htm>.

[31] Stancliffe, 'Patrick', par. 40.

[32] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 13.

[33] On affective piety, see David Aers, ed., *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

[34] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. 3, 6.

[35] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 97.

[36] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. 62, 51.

[37] Taufer, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 106.

[38] Taufer, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, p. 106; Jocelin, *Life*, p. 100.

[39] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 11.

[40] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 14.

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[41] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 98.

[42] John Spottiswood, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory* (Dublin, 1632), p. 21.

[43] Spottiswood, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 23-4.

[44] Richard Stanihurst, *De Vita S. Patricii Hiberniae Apostoli Libri II* (Antwerp, 1587).

[45] Jocelin, *Life*, p. iij.

[46] Jocelin, *Life*, p. viij.

[47] Jocelin, *Life*. P. xij.

[48] Spottiswood, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, p. 19.

[49] Raphael Holinshed. *The Second Volume of Chronicles* (London, 1586), p. 53.

[50] Quoted in Stancliffe, 'Patrick', par. 36.

[51] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. xvij-xviij.

[52] Jocelin, *Life*, p. 38.

[53] Ussher, *Discourse*, p. 4.

[54] Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

[55] See Coleman, 'Armagh', par. 10.

[56] Ussher, *Discourse*, p. A2^{v}.

[57] Ussher, *Discourse*, pp. A2^{v}-A3$^{r.}$

[58] Ussher, *Discourse*, p. 4.

[59] Ussher, *Discourse*, pp. A3^{r}-A4^{v}.

[60] Darko Suvin, 'Inside the Whale, or *Esti Communismus Non Daretur*: Reflections on How to Live when a Truly Just Society is a Necessity but Nowhere on the Horizon', *Critical Quarterly*, 49 (2007), pp. 119-37, p. 124.

[61] McCabe, 'Making History', p. 65.

[62] Jocelin, *Life*, p. xiiij.

[63] Jocelin, *Life*, pp. vij-viij.

[64] Pritchard, 'Swift's Irish Rhymes', p. 156.

[65] Pritchard, 'Swift's Irish Rhymes', p. 128.

[66] Pritchard, 'Swift's Irish Rhymes', p. 129.

[67] Pritchard, 'Swift's Irish Rhymes', p. 126.

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