

1 Planting a landscape: cultivation and reform in Ireland

The earl of his own free will
Surrendered the city to the king:
To the king he surrendered Waterford
Of his own will and agreement.
Homage for Leinster
He did to the king of England:
The earl of great worth
Did homage for Leinster
He did to the king of England:
The earl of great worth
Did homage to his lord.
The rich king granted to him
Leinster in fee.¹

This passage from *The Song of Dermot and the Earl* is an early example of the dense cloud of unknowing that came to characterize relations between England and Ireland. Henry II spent only six months in Ireland laying claim to the lordship granted him by Pope Adrian. But when the “rich king” received the City of Waterford and others from Strongbow – “the earl of great worth” – and granted him Leinster in return, he demonstrated a crucial failure to understand the distinction between English and Irish landholding, and sowed the dragons’ teeth of centuries of conflict. On the one hand, Strongbow’s homage to Henry meant that he now held his lands from the king, extending feudal tenure and the king’s authority to the kingdom of Leinster. On the other hand, such homage entirely transformed the original agreement in which Dermot, the exiled king, had agreed to marry his only child and heir, Aoife, to Strongbow in exchange for armed support in recovering his lands. Most important of all, whatever the extent of the ignorance of Henry and his vassals, according to Irish inheritance customs, Dermot had no (Irish) legal right to grant or promise lands to Strongbow or anyone else. For the invaders, a wife brought land and

¹ *The Song of Dermot and the Earl*, ll. 2613–25.

titles, but for the Irish the land belonged to the group, and the kingship was elective: it is this fundamental difference about landholding, inheritance, and tenure that will bedevil relations between the two cultures from the outset. Indeed, English assumptions about the social, economic, and cultural implications of the absence of feudal tenures, primogeniture, and individual property rights in Ireland can provide an ideal perspective from which to view English efforts to civilize, to settle, and to govern Ireland.

Writing about Ireland during the zenith of English imperial power, J. A. Froude noted that “there are many ways in which a conquered but still reluctant people may be dealt with, when the interest of the conquerors is rather in the country itself than in the inhabitants who occupy it.”² By distinguishing the territory from the inhabitants Froude draws attention to the central role that land played from the earliest invasion to the present day. The conflict over property was by no means new to Ireland in the 1500s, far from it, but the links between land and people, between landscape and culture, and between land use and society came increasingly to the fore after 1550. In the words of Richard Drayton, “agriculture, as it embraced the government of land and people, provided a language through which Classical concerns about the nature of the state found new inflection.” Keith Thomas has shown how Europeans associated wilderness with chaos and disorder, thereby making cultivation a duty or even a moral imperative. Similarly, in England Renaissance ideas originating in Italy helped gardens to emerge as “theatres for the demonstration of wealth and civility.”³ Gardens and an ordered landscape became key manifestations of a tamed wilderness, places of peace and order representing the ideal state of a nation. Similarly, pruning, weeding, grafting, bending, and shaping all represent strength and the ability to produce order and uniformity out of a disorderly nature.⁴ At a time when both a strategy and a justification for subduing the wild Irish were needed, new thinking about cultivation, about order, and about civility emerged to provide English ministers and administrators in Dublin with an ideological instrument to help them tame the “barbarous” natives who continued to resist the civilizing influence of English culture. The

² Froude, *English in Ireland*, I:14.

³ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, pp. 54, 31; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 254; Leslie, “Gardens of Eloquence”; Henderson, “A Shared Passion,” 103, 116; Christianson, *Riverside Gardens*, pp. 180, 197; Mignolo, *Darker Side of the Renaissance*, chap. 6.

⁴ Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, p. 97.

renewed interest in farming and husbandry during the Renaissance also meant that an agricultural economy and society were increasingly regarded as the primary signifiers of civilized culture. In the context of the ongoing efforts for the conquest and domination of Ireland, these views opened the door for additional condemnatory anthropological judgments, and also pointed the way towards a possible solution to England's Irish problem.

Raymond Williams has written of culture as a signifying system that allows social order to be communicated, as a process in which people live in and create places that give meanings to their lives. After 1500 English officials viewed the civil, urban, agricultural society of England as a regulated world, an ideal that might "replace the difference and instability represented by Irish barbarism with the uniformity of English rule."⁵ In the same way, the built environment can serve to communicate cultural meaning to those who build it as well as to others. It is particularly important for the arguments of this work that one of the most central ideas emerging from Renaissance culture is the way notions of civility were often associated with cultivation and husbandry.⁶ Along the same lines, scholars of cartography have said much about the meaning and ambiguity of land depicted on maps, and Brian Graham has written of landscape as "a medium in expressing feelings, ideas and values" and also as a site "where cultures are contested."⁷ So if land use does in fact transform nature into a cultural realm of meaning, then it can also be a place where cultures are contested. Accordingly, the distinctive landscapes of England and Ireland in 1500 provide a key basis for the incompatible cultural differences shaping the policies of plantation over the succeeding century and a half.

On one side, demesnes, big houses, gardens, enclosed fields, ditches, hedges, fences, and improved towns and villages increasingly characterized the lowland English landscape in the 1500s.⁸ Conversely, a pastoral economy in which mobility was an important characteristic existed in Wales and the north of England, and predominated in Ireland. Increasingly, such pastoral or mixed economies were considered "darker, shadow copies of life in arable areas . . . [a]n inferior form

⁵ Williams, *Keywords*, "Culture"; Fogarty, "Colonization of Language," 91.

⁶ Although concerned with a slightly later period, there is much to be drawn from McRae, *God Speed the Plough*.

⁷ Graham, "Ireland and Irishness," 3. On maps see chap. 4 below, and Harley, "Meaning and Ambiguity"; Harley, "Text and Contexts"; MacMillan, "Sovereignty 'More Plainly Described.'"

⁸ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, x, 258. Ellis discusses the important distinctions between the Tudor successes in lowland England and the various upland "borderlands" in the north of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

of life . . . supporting a poorer and more miserable people.”⁹ Owing to the valorization of agriculture in this period, uncultivated lands and the unspoiled nature so prized by Romantics and today’s naturalists were a sign of barrenness and infertility that evoked only hunger and privation. With this in mind, it is not surprising that open countryside in Ireland often caused English and European observers to see pastoralists in general, and the Irish and Irish landscape in particular, as wild and untamed, neglected by the barbarous natives, and subjected to little ordered settlement.¹⁰

While the Anglo-Norman settlers had tried to extend demesne farming and agriculture in Ireland after 1170,¹¹ by the fifteenth century localized power had reasserted itself, and urbanized settlements – beyond the handful of port towns – remained rare. Furthermore, the fragmented geography of bogs, lowlands, mountains and forest refuges helped contribute to a landscape in which common surnames served as the most audible, though unmarked, borders. Worse still, as the divisions of the Wars of the Roses spilled over into Ireland and as the victorious Tudor state sought to assert its authority there under Henry VII, the importance of extending English law and civility outward from Dublin and the Pale became the principal goal for officials both there and in London. It was in this context that the need to replace one culture with another, one type of untamed landscape with a civilized, rational one, provided a focus, a battleground, even a language for the conflict associated with the strategies for civilizing or establishing plantations in Ireland. The winner is easily recognizable: by the Restoration, the openness of the sixteenth-century Irish landscape had disappeared, and in its place appeared the regimented, ordered, cultivated, and urbanized landscape so valued by the English.¹² The aim in this book is to concentrate on the various meanings of land use and landscape in Ireland, and in so doing to develop a new instrument that will clarify our understanding of Tudor policies in Ireland as well as the strategies of early English colonialism.

A central theme of this chapter is the way that land, and in particular the manner in which people use it, comes to signify a particular definition of civility. In a sense, many of those who came to Ireland

⁹ Thirsk, “Horn and Thorn,” 2–3; Youngs, *Sixteenth-Century England*, chaps. 4–5.

¹⁰ Once again, the accuracy of such observations is not being argued here, rather an analysis of the all-too-common habit of travelers, observers, and cultural commentators seeing exactly what they came to see.

¹¹ Empey, “Conquest and Settlement,” 10–11, 20–21.

¹² This paragraph on Irish geography relies on Smyth, “A Plurality of Irelands.”

anticipated Simon Pugh's idea that landscape is "‘readable’ like any other cultural form." The physical transformation of land – or lack thereof – can serve as a medium to encode cultural values, a means of communication rooted in symbols and materials capable of expressing meanings and values.¹³ For the English in Ireland, the contrast between the agricultural landscape of England and the pastoral one in Ireland became an important distinguishing feature between the two cultures. From the outset, commentators from England and Wales viewed the Irish landscape as wild and untamed, pejorative terms indicating that the land was in fact neglected or "waste." In turn, they read this as a sign that the inhabitants were primitive, savages, or barbarians, categories defined in opposition to the civilized societies of the commentators. This negative formula for defining the barbarian was central in the early anthropological thinking of the 1500s. Typically, it was derived from classical writers such as Hesiod, who laments the lack of farming in *Works and Days* and valorizes it in the *Theogony*. For Mary Hodgen, the conventional description was necessary "to deal descriptively with the qualities and behavior of barbarous, uncivil, or primitive man." For her, one of the key elements of the formula was the absence of husbandry, agriculture, tillage, vineyards, sowing, planting, boundaries or roads, and "living without houses, townes, [and] cities."¹⁴ For many, lack of discipline – that is, the failure to plant or till their lands – was a key marker in determining the primitive or barbarous nature of a people, especially when, as in Ireland, it was combined with mobility and Hodgen's key marker of "living without houses, townes, [and] cities."

Throughout the sixteenth century writers on the manners and fashions of other nations condemned the "Scythians and their offshoot ... because they 'neither possessed any grounds, nor had any seats or houses to dwell in, but wandered through wilderness and desert places driving their flockes and herdes of beasts before them.'"¹⁵ In another work from 1555, Boemus condemned the barbarian disdain for riches and the way they (like their animals?) wander "the wilde fieldes ... Not then environed with walles, ne pente up with rampers and diches of deapthe, but walking at free scope ... without knowledge of civillesy ... roiling and rowmyng ... without place of abode." Twenty years later, Louis le Roy (Regius) claimed that nomadic and pastoral peoples were "not civil

¹³ Pugh, "Introduction," 2–3; Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," 14.

¹⁴ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 38–46; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 47; Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 196–99; Carey, "Neither Good English nor Good Irish," 45. By the 1650s, one characteristic of Hobbes' state of nature was an absence of tillage brought on by insecurity.

¹⁵ Boemus, *Manners, Lawes, and Customes*, p. 106.

by nature . . . nor conjoined in habitacions, neither doe they sowe nor plant . . . but living without houses, townes, cities . . . [and] dwelling in fieldes of Champaignes infinitely large . . . without wayes or bounds.”¹⁶ Here we see the lack of tillage and the absence of urban life, or even houses, joined together as the markers of incivility and savagery. Cultivation and husbandry were to be the primary vehicles for the introduction of a settled and ordered society in Ireland, with permanent houses made of appropriate materials emerging as the essential manifestation of the developing civility in Ireland.

Indeed, the idea that civility existed in cities – the locus of civic life and achievement – was central to the model of civility in classical and Christian thought, a model that defined itself against the barbarian and the wild man lacking civil language, a slave to nature, “mobile, shifting, confused, chaotic . . . incapable of sedentary existence, of self-discipline, and of sustained labor.”¹⁷ In this way, William of Malmesbury did little but reiterate the received wisdom when he contrasted the Irish of his day with his more civilized English and French readers: “What would Ireland be without the goods that come in by sea from England? The soil lacks all advantages, and so poor, or rather unskillful, are its cultivators that it can produce only a ragged mob of rustic Irishmen outside the towns; the English and French, with their more civilized way of life, live in towns, and carry on trade and commerce.”¹⁸ According to R. R. Davies, this was exactly the sort of superior attitude of dominant cultures that led them to categorize lesser cultures as inferior, since “such categorization is itself an act of domination; indeed, it provides an invaluable insight into the thought-world of the dominating elite.”¹⁹ From here it was but one small step to see the expansion, even the imposition, of a civilized landscape on to the waste lands of Ireland as part of the process of spreading culture and civility so dear to the emerging states of Renaissance Europe.

¹⁶ Boemus, *Fardle of Facions*; Le Roy, *De la Vicissitude*.

¹⁷ Coughlan, “Some Secret Scourge,” 50–54; Shaw, “Meat Eaters,” 6–8, 30; White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 164–72; White, “Forms of Wildness,” 20.

¹⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, I:739. For William of Malmesbury’s contribution to the idea of English history as a progress from barbarism to civility, see Gillingham, “Beginnings of English Imperialism,” 394, 397–402; Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, pp. 53–59.

¹⁹ Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 20. Davies characterizes the invaders of Ireland as a dynamic new force in Europe: “In terms of the exploitation of resources, the marketing of produce, and availability of money as a unit of exchange, the centrality of the town in the exchange and distribution of surpluses and the ability to sustain a . . . large and socially differentiated population the Anglo-Normans surely belonged to a new world . . . [Their memorials were not just mottes and forts, but] more importantly towns, manors, villages, fields, mills, limekilns, and bridges,” 10.

The Angevin “empire” reached its fullest extent under Henry II, largely thanks to his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine. The constant demands to defend his territory – often from his own sons – took up much of Henry’s reign, but the urgent need to occupy and to reward his many and bellicose vassals was a significant reason for allowing Strongbow and others to aid Dermot in Ireland. The king’s mounted knights soon drove the enemies of Dermot-Aoife-Strongbow-Henry from Leinster, but victory in the field seemed like a suspiciously Irish *mode* for acquiring authority by the strong hand. Similarly, claiming lands by the right of the strong hand was seen as the primary reason for the endemic violence and disorder in Ireland and consequently beneath the dignity of so great a monarch as Henry II. “For a king who saw himself as a civilized ruler of a civilized world, brute force was not enough. Henry, therefore, had to fall back on the highly unusual sorts of justification enshrined in *Laudabiliter*.”²⁰ Accordingly, he happily resorted to the fifteen-year-old grant of the lordship of Ireland from Pope Adrian IV. The papal *bull*a from 1155 not only granted Henry the lordship of Ireland, it also foreshadowed the agricultural theme seen in so much later commentary on Ireland and the Irish. Indeed, the ambiguity about the distinction between Ireland and the Irish will prove a key factor in developing theories about the relationship between cultivation and civility.

Neither the authenticity of nor the inspiration for *Laudabiliter* concerns us here.²¹ What is of interest is the imagery of the *bull*a. To begin with, the Holy Father rejects the metaphor of the shepherd and flock in favor of the more georgic imagery of the farmer and plants. The expansion of civility can be achieved by clearing the fields of weeds and preparing them to be properly sown. Henry is encouraged to “enlarge the bounds of the church, to declare the truth of the Christian faith to ignorant and barbarous nations, and to extirpate the plants of evil from the field of the Lord.”²² Beyond the agricultural images, one sees the use of *nations* and *plants* and *field* in place of words like *Irish*, or *natives* or *people*. *Laudabiliter* hints at a mindset that sees land and the nations or people inhabiting it as so closely intertwined that the terms for improving or ordering the former can readily be applied to the latter. The imagery and language appear repeatedly in accounts of Ireland, increasing dramatically as urbanization and the reclamation

²⁰ Gillingham, “English Invasion of Ireland,” 36.

²¹ For the reasons behind the papacy’s concern over the disordered or uncivilized nature of the Irish church, particularly the prevalence of hereditary clerical families within it, see Orway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, chap. 4.

²² *Laudabiliter* (1155).

of lands spread throughout Europe.²³ Likewise, when combined with a discourse of difference that emphasizes the barbarism and incivility of the Irish, the duty to transform, to settle, and to order the landscape is readily conflated with the obligation to reform, settle, and order the people as well.²⁴

By the 1500s, population growth and rising grain prices in England made agricultural improvement and the georgic writings from antiquity familiar to humanist officials and reformers in England and Ireland. It is worthy of note that the English valorization of agriculture and the industrious husbandman came at a time when a new breed of “patriotic antiquaries” like Camden extolled the many improvements in the landscape and the extension of cultivation and the plough. Writing in 1577, Camden lamented the uncultivated areas in Wales, but reported that “the diligence and industry of the husbandmen hath long since begun to conquer the barrenness of the land.”²⁵ Despite the many accounts of foreign visitors who saw Tudor England as a land filled with indolent peasants relying on sheep and cattle, preferring to hunt rather than cultivate their land, Camden and others promulgated the commonplace assumption that “the test of a country’s worthiness was the abundance of its cornfields; cornfields, indeed, were the passport to salvation.”²⁶ While it is possible that English officials feared sameness as much as they feared difference, improvement was becoming the order of the day, and the more it came to define English civility and progress, the more it informed the demands and strategies for reform in Ireland. Indeed, the association of agriculture with reform in Ireland will play an increasingly important role in formulating government policy in the same years that commercial farming and husbandry manuals begin to flourish in England. In the words of Thirsk, “to men looking for signs of a bounteous corn harvest which would assure them of bread for the coming year, a green countryside was a barren waste, which filled them with foreboding.”²⁷

Returning to *Laudabiliter*, after establishing that all islands are in his power to donate at will, the pope is much more willing to grant Ireland

²³ Otway-Ruthven, “Character of Norman Settlement,” 77.

²⁴ Bhabha argues that the objective of colonialist discourse “is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types . . . in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instructions,” “The Other Question.” Bhabha’s theories are applied to Ireland in Baker, “Wildeheirishsheman.”

²⁵ Camden, *Britannia*, 679. Camden offers an example of the disjunction between reforming ideals and reality as well as how assumptions about England and Ireland, no matter how far divorced from actual conditions, informed the reforming strategies.

²⁶ Thirsk, *Agrarian History of England*, xxx–xxxvi.

²⁷ For Tudor reform strategies linked to cultivation, see chap. 2 below. Thirsk, “Horn and Thorn,” 10–12; Thirsk, “Plough and Pen,” 297–302.

to Henry so “that the right faith and the seed grateful to God may be planted.” Although the papal grant does mention “the people” in order to acknowledge the need to subject them “to the laws and to extirpate the vices that have there taken root,” it nonetheless concludes that if Henry truly wishes to instill morality in Ireland he may appoint those he sees fit so “that the church may there be adorned, the Christian religion planted and made to grow.”²⁸ It is religion that will be “planted” and “made to grow” in *Ireland*, while the people are “subjected” and vice “extirpated.” Apparently Ireland would receive the enhancements on offer from the king and pope while the Irish are reduced to the direct objects of the most vigorous verbs available.

Pope Adrian’s language may fit well for the arguments to be advanced here, but the fact remains that he – like so many future commentators on Ireland and the Irish – never visited nor had he any other experience of the land or people there. The same, however, cannot be said of Giraldus Cambrensis, Gerald of Wales, author of the seminal work *The History and Topography of Ireland* that Clare Carroll aptly refers to as a Foucault-like foundational text; in fact his views were so influential that the enlarged edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* in 1587 included a translation of Gerald’s *Expugnatio*.²⁹ Gerald spent a handful of years in Ireland, making four visits to the island. He probably wrote his *History* after 1185, and delivered it as a three-part lecture at Oxford in 1188, providing the earliest version of the invaders’ perceptions of the land and people; based on his work’s title, he apparently viewed Ireland’s history and topography as distinct, but related in some important way. More importantly, his views were to influence, if not determine, most future descriptions of Ireland and its culture. For Kathy Lavezzo, the *Topography* and *Conquest* “render Gerald the prime apologist of the invasion of Ireland and, moreover, a writer who inaugurated conceptions of Irishness that would inform English discourses well after the Middle Ages.”³⁰ Furthermore, Gerald’s writings show his belief that landscape could reveal how transforming the natural world allowed people to create cultural meaning through land use. For him, the Irish way of life and land use expressed their ideas, their culture, and their values; thus, it would not be long before the attitudes expressed in

²⁸ *Laudabiliter*.

²⁹ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*; Carroll, *Circe’s Cup*, 14–15.

³⁰ Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 53. See Keating’s remarks about the Galls who write “in imitation of Cambrensis,” *History of Ireland*, I:53. Keating, of course, was no unbiased observer, but the claim quoted here is not without merit. On Spenser’s use of Gerald and other sources see Covington, “Spenser’s Use of History,” 7–12 and *passim*.

the *History and Topography* became what one scholar calls “part of the realm of discourse and action where cultures are contested.”³¹ Indeed, Gerald’s views were parroted, and in a modern sense plagiarized, in *The Book of Howth*, Thomas Bray’s *Conquest of Ireland*, and a host of later writers denounced by both Keating and John Lynch in his *Cambrensis Eversus*.³²

One of the first things to demonstrate the validity of Keating’s claims about Gerald of Wales as the source of all future (unreliable) accounts of Ireland is his ability to contradict his own descriptions of the land. One of his earliest claims in Part I is that the “land is fruitful and rich in its fertile soil and plentiful harvests. Crops abound in the fields, flocks on the mountains and wild animals in the woods. The island is, however, richer in pastures than in crops, and in grass than in grain.”³³ Before getting too carried away in praising the fertility of the land, the profusion of wildlife, and the abundance of crops, Cambrensis managed to rein in his enthusiasm with a hint about the excess of grass and pasture land. The primary reason for doing so is his hostility to pastoral life, something he views as primitive and wild. In the same way that the church reforms associated with *Laudabiliter* and the Normans used “continental norms” that distanced them from native culture and institutions, Gerald of Wales created or at least revived a classical set of norms associating pastoral life and transhumance with a primitive, even savage rejection of progress and civility.³⁴ As a result, when he comes to *The nature, customs and characteristics of the people*, Cambrensis ignores his earlier claims about the crops abounding and denounces the people as a “wild and inhospitable people. They live on beasts only, and live like beasts. They have not progressed at all from the primitive habits of pastoral living.” Here we see Gerald adopting the geographic march of history found in Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* and what Anthony Pagden calls

³¹ Graham, “Ireland and Irishness,” 4. For a full account of the roots of the assumptions about Irish barbarism see Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fior-ghael*, pp. 32–49.

³² Keating, *History of Ireland*; John Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*.

³³ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, p. 34 (Part I, chap. 2). Aalen notes the same inconsistency, arguing that “when justification is needed for an invasion or confiscation the Irish are readily described as barbarous and the land as wild and uncared for. If on the other hand the intention is to attract English settlers to Ireland then the country is presented in a favorable light.” Aalen, *Man and the Landscape*, p. 137.

³⁴ Davies argues that stereotyping the Irish as barbarous, lazy, and wild speaks “to us of a Europe where a set of international norms was being established on acceptable social and sexual morality, political organization and relationships, economic structures and forms of exploitation and even on matters such as clothes, food, housing, and the forms of settlement,” Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, 22. Homer’s account of Cyclopean society in the *Odyssey* is eerily similar to Gerald’s account of Ireland. For pastoralists and the Cyclopes as barbarians see Shaw, “Meat Eaters,” 20–24.

the “teleology of progress” from animal to man of reason, from barbarian to civilized man. Categorized as *sylvestres hominess* or wild men, the wild or *mere* Irish were viewed as far removed from the culture and activities of civilized man, “an ever-present threat to the civilization of those who lived in cities.”³⁵

This is a perfect example of the land or natural world becoming a place where cultures are contested: the perpetuation of a pastoral lifestyle in which animals are moved from pasture land to pasture land according to the season is condemned as primitive by Gerald of Wales, but it is even more meaningfully interpreted as the failure or inability to progress towards civility at the same pace as the English, Welsh, or Normans Cambrensis claims to represent. “Particular marks of civility had been identified as serving to distinguish between civil and primitive man ... [and] beginning with Gerald of Wales ... a stereotyped vocabulary had been developed to describe them.” Furthermore, “English culture was perceived as lowland culture, and any departures from English norms were construed as cultural degeneracy.”³⁶ Drawing on both agricultural and Christian imagery, Gerald of Wales and other later commentators argued that civil men must remain active and hard-working in order to avoid slipping backwards down the slippery slope of progress, for decay was a result of the Fall and decay was a part of the nature of things; therefore, civil man needed to weed, prune, and regulate the world to avoid the degeneration inherent in nature. More particularly, Erasmus wrote that the farmer must never cease to cultivate his fields, for recently plowed land required constant attention and cultivation; otherwise it would produce weeds and thistles. In other words, without the husbandmen, the land itself will degenerate and revert to its wild state, the state where people become savage and beastly once more.³⁷ So, implicit in the view of Cambrensis is the idea that cultivation and agriculture signify progress and civilization and that the primitive people who had yet to progress to the point of civility must be rescued from barbarism. Rooted in antiquity and Christianity and following its revival during the Renaissance, this idea was to have a very lengthy shelflife.

It is significant that in *The History* Cambrensis attacks the pastoral society of the Irish in terms of progress or evolution. Edith Hall argues

³⁵ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, p. 101; Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, pp. 277–82; Pagden, *Fall of Natural Man*, pp. 17–21. For a fine discussion of transhumance see Graham, “Rural Society in Connacht.”

³⁶ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, pp. 60, 74.

³⁷ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, pp. 21–25. For Erasmus, see Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, p. 98.

that ideas like those of Gerald of Wales about social development and people progressing to higher levels of culture and achievement are rooted in the notion of a past, a chaos from which society arose and is progressing beyond. For Hall the discovery of a past is not only an essential component of a culture's quest for identity but also a means of defining one's identity in contrast to one's former self.³⁸ We can use this argument to try to better understand the views of Cambrensis, particularly when recalling Richard Helgerson's claim that in order to constitute itself as a nation, a community must "distinguish itself not only from its neighbors but also from its former self or selves."³⁹ In one sense, Ireland might serve as a necessary reflection of England's savage past as well as a threatening – and adjacent – other. In a wonderful image from *Representing Ireland*, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley call Ireland "both a mirror and a hammer – reflecting and fragmenting images of England." In other words, "Ireland was read in this period as a series of negative images of Englishness. Ireland, in this respect, as well as being a text, is a negative of a photograph of English identity which never comes into view; we have only the negative, not the original print."⁴⁰ In particular, as the English elaborated a discourse of difference, I believe they emphasized many aspects of Irish culture and customs, but that Irish pastoralism became the key factor in explaining why the Irish had failed to match the English in their progress down the teleological path towards agriculture and civility.

English efforts to distinguish themselves from the Irish by noting England's progress from barbarous pastoralists to civil husbandmen were by no means novel or particular to England or Europe. Even the Akkadians accepted that agriculture and urban institutions were evidence of their superiority over those who "knew not grain ... [and] had never known a city." The Chinese justified their conquest of the Uyghurs by claiming that their "barbarous land ... was transformed into a vegetarian state, and this land of slaughter became a land devoted to good works."⁴¹ Likewise, many English theorists readily admitted that Brutus and the Romans found England a barbarous place and had

³⁸ Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, p. 51. The same argument was advanced by Locke in his *Second Treatise*: he believed that agricultural society was the final phase of civilized development, meaning that farming and the rational use of land had a "quasi-sacral significance, in that by tilling and 'improving' the land men were not merely ameliorating their own condition, but were fulfilling their ends as men," Pagden, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 46; Laslett, ed., *Locke's Two Treatises*, pp. 32, 309.

³⁹ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 22.

⁴⁰ Bradshaw *et al.*, eds., *Representing Ireland*, pp. 15, 7.

⁴¹ The material on the Akkadians and Uyghurs is drawn from Jones, "Image of the Barbarian," 376–77.

introduced agriculture, urban life, and civility. Yet despite the arrival of Anglo-Norman lords (from Wales) and their efforts to establish a settled and more orderly society, the natives persisted in their barbarous ways and unremitting belligerence.

For English observers, Irish intractability as well as their savage culture was a product of their Scythian ancestry. Hadfield argues that the Scythian roots of the Irish served to reclaim the classical dialogue of civilized England versus barbarian Ireland, which in turn “involves brutally suppressing the savage native.” In seeking a past that no longer included the papacy’s granting of Ireland to Henry II, the English turned to the Arthurian conquest as well as the Scythian ancestors of the Irish. “In other words, land and people were firmly separated, Irish land forming part of an ancient British unity and Irish people cast in the role of the intractable ‘otherness’ which must be removed, voices which must be silenced, if that unity is to be recovered.”⁴² Consequently, from the time of Gerald of Wales until the 1500s, the “tribal, pastoral, politically decentralized and economically marginal societies of oats-and-barley-growing, meat-eating, and milk-drinking cattle-raider stood in marked contrast with the agrarian, feudalized, town and village-dwelling, politically consolidated, and more affluent society of wheat-growing and wine-drinking Englishmen.”⁴³ Not surprisingly, the anthropological views of the Renaissance added few novel ideas to the discourse of barbarism and difference.

But if Gerald of Wales is willing to define his own society’s civility in contrast to Irish society’s primitive barbarity, the question for him remains: why have the Irish failed to progress at the same pace as the English and Normans? Once again, the answer can be found in the Irish attitude towards the land and the characteristics these attitudes naturally generate. In one sense, there is a distinct lack of character that prevents the Irish from progressing down the road to civilization alongside their Welsh neighbors:

While man usually progresses from the woods to the fields, and from the fields to settlements and communities of citizens, this people despises work on the land, has little use for the money-making of towns, contemns the rights and privileges of citizenship, and desires neither to abandon, nor lose respect for, the life which it has been accustomed to lead in the woods and countryside.⁴⁴

⁴² Hadfield, “Briton and Scythian,” 403–05.

⁴³ Jones, “England against the Celtic Fringe,” 155; Palmer, *Language and Conquest*, p. 16; Spenser, *A View*, pp. 55–59. For a contemporary defense of the Irish descending from the Scythians, see the always reliable www.biblebelievers.org.au account.

⁴⁴ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, pp. 101–02 (Part 3, chap. 93).

Civility, most appropriately associated with *civitas* or civic life, is neatly traced backwards from citizenship to money-making to cultivation to communities to settlements to the fields and woods where one finds the savage or primitive man. Cambrensis found it deeply disturbing that “while man usually progresses from the woods to the fields” the Irish have mulishly refused to do so. Not only do they reject the civil attractions of urban life, but this determination is also based on a conscious decision not to abandon their customary woods and countryside. Worst of all, in the passage from Gerald of Wales the rejection of civility and the fealty to pastoral living is based on one simple fact: “this people despises work on the land.” By rejecting agriculture and cultivation, the Irish have declared themselves opponents to progress, urban life, commercial activity, hard work, and the rights and privileges of citizenship: like the Cyclops Polyphemus, opponents to civilization itself.

Gerald of Wales’ imprecations against the Irish should in no way be seen as a blanket censure of the people. Naturally, one might expect a grandson of Nesta⁴⁵ to be keenly aware of the social distinctions and hierarchy in any society. As a result, while readily denouncing the slovenly qualities of the multitude, he insists it was the duty of the Irish lords to adopt a more appropriately noble outlook towards civility and cultivation. It should come as no surprise that he is offended and disheartened by those who ought to know better:

[The Irish] use the fields generally as pasture, but pasture in poor condition. Little is cultivated, and even less sown. The fields cultivated are so few because of the neglect of those who should cultivate them. But many of them are naturally very fertile and productive. The wealth of the soil is lost, not through the fault of the soil, but because there are no farmers to cultivate even the best land: “the fields demand but there are no hands”⁴⁶ . . . The nature of the soils is not to be blamed, but rather the want of industry on the part of the cultivator. He is too lazy to plant the foreign types of trees that would grow very well here.⁴⁷

The soil is exonerated again and the lack of industry, now bluntly expressed as laziness, is decried as before.⁴⁸ But now the lack of cultivation

⁴⁵ Nesta was the mistress of Henry I who was later married to Gerald de Windsor, Castellan of Pembroke. Her sons – the writer’s uncles – arrived in Ireland before Strongbow and are the ancestors of the Geraldines, the most famous of whom established the families of Fitzgerald and Fitzmaurice: they will appear regularly in later chapters.

⁴⁶ This is a quotation from Lucan, demonstrating Cambrensis’ classical education but also associating his views with the greatest of civilizing empires. As in Homer, the soil itself is both praised and acquitted.

⁴⁷ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, p. 102 (Part 3, chap. 93).

⁴⁸ “For given only to leisure, and devoted only to laziness, they think that the greatest pleasure is not to work, and the greatest wealth is to enjoy liberty,” *ibid.*

is blamed on “those who should cultivate them”: in other words, the lords themselves who claim possession. Leaving aside how this might disqualify them from possession or lordship, by using the verb “should” Gerald of Wales is claiming that lordship is defined by cultivation of the land and that cultivation is undeniably a sign of civility. If the lords – the proper cultivators of the land – allow the wealth of the soil to go to waste and prove too lazy to perform their social responsibility, then what hope is there for the progress of Ireland?

Gerald of Wales’ critical views of the Irish and their landscape will survive and inform many of the *Accounts*, *Views*, *Descriptions*, and *Plots* of Ireland to be considered in later chapters. But if landscapes are indeed “signifiers of culture for those who made them,” if they are to “mesh with social, economic and political institutions to underpin the coherence of society,” then the English hostility to the Irish landscape and the culture that created it will require sweeping changes. If the barbaric Irish culture is a product of the disordered Irish landscape, the one solution is to change the latter in order to eliminate the former.⁴⁹ And as English officials under the Tudors move to subdue more and more of Ireland, they need to create a landscape that provides an expression of the values and ideals of their coherent view of society – a landscape that validates and legitimates their power in Ireland.

In the decades that preceded and followed Cambrensis’ visits to Ireland, William of Malmesbury decries Ireland for having such poor, unskillful “cultivators that it can produce only a ragged mob of rustic Irishmen outside the towns,” and William of Newburgh – another commentator with no experience of Ireland – asserts that the country “abounds wonderfully in pasturage and fish, and possesses a soil sufficiently fruitful, when aided by the industry of a skilful cultivator; but its natives are uncivilized, and barbarous in their manners, almost totally ignorant of laws and order; slothful in agriculture, and consequently, subsisting more on milk than corn.”⁵⁰ More than a century later, an anonymous biographer of Edward II states emphatically that the “Irish are woodland people and dwell in the mountains and forests of their country: they do not cultivate the land, but live on their flocks and the milk thereof; and if from time to time they need bread, they come down to the English towns on the coast, selling livestock and buying corn.”⁵¹ It is not just the predictability of the accounts but

⁴⁹ Graham, “Ireland and Irishness,” 4, 6.

⁵⁰ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, I:739; Stevenson, *History of William of Newburgh*, 481.

⁵¹ Edward’s biographer is quoted in Jones, “England against the Celtic Fringe,” 163–64.

the way that cultivation is situated at the center of the discourse that matters most here.

The willingness of medieval and later commentators to ignore the many glories of Ireland and to adopt Gerald of Wales' views caused Geoffrey Keating to compare them to the dung beetle, refusing "to stoop towards any delicate flower that may be in the field or any blossom in the garden though they be all roses or lilies, but it keeps bustling about until it meets with the dung of horse or cow, and proceeds to roll itself therein."⁵² For Keating, the selective emphasis on the conditions of the poorest people in Ireland means the accounts of the country up to 1620s are not really history. Nonetheless, in the end Gerald of Wales' conclusions about the Irish contain an ominous portent of the direction of future policies: "This people, then, is a barbarous people, literally barbarous. Judged according to modern ideas, they are uncultivated, not only in the external appearance of their dress, but also in the flowing hair and beards. All their habits are the habits of barbarians."⁵³ It was the concept of the barbarian, recovered from old texts during the Renaissance, that contributed to the assumption of cultural superiority, reinforced implications of the very word *barbarian* and helped to revive "the classical image of civilized man's degenerate, deceitful, and deadly antagonist."⁵⁴ Indeed, viewed from the comfort of southern England, or Wales or even the Pale marches, "differences between upland and lowland were largely subsumed in the wider *Kulturkampf* between English and Gaelic ... The civil Englishman was readily distinguishable from the wild Irish by his appearance, dress, language, manners and customs."⁵⁵ And the one custom the English increasingly condemned as the root of the problems was the native refusal to live the settled, orderly life of the cultivator, to remain, themselves, "uncultivated."

Within a generation, Henry distributed large portions of Ireland to his leading vassals, with the de Lacys, de Burgos, Fitzgeralds, Fitzmaurices, and Butlers receiving the lion's share by the late thirteenth century. Following the battle of Callan in 1262 and the annihilation of the O'Connors outside Athenry in 1316, the English forces subdued much

⁵² Keating, *History of Ireland*, I:5, 35, 55. Speaking of Moryson, Keating insists that "the dignity of history cannot be allowed to his composition," 57.

⁵³ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, p. 102 (Part III, chap. 93).

⁵⁴ Jones, "Image of the Barbarian," 406. Shaw shows that the longstanding tradition of the nomad or pastoralist as a barbarian predates written philosophy, see Shaw, "Meat Eaters," 19–20.

⁵⁵ Ellis, *Tudor Frontier*, p. 74.

of Ireland.⁵⁶ As a result, the newcomers established pockets of settlement around strongholds with the attendant villages and manorial systems. This in turn led to peasants of English, Norman, and Irish origin being absorbed into a rudimentary feudal structure.⁵⁷ Where the Norman settlement was dense, much land had been cleared and cultivated, and by 1500 most of the Pale was treeless. Nonetheless, the absence of hedges and fences was remarked on by all, and enclosed fields were almost unknown; there is only the most limited information of any kind on the existence of roads or even tracks. To their great vexation, the Norman and English immigrants soon realized that the Irish geography and weather meant that their imported forms of agriculture were problematic and offered a dangerously narrow margin for profit. Worst of all, the inability to attract Irish laborers only drew attention to the insufficient number of settlers. To complicate matters further, any reduction in the level of stability meant that the immigrant population dwindled as well, making it “hardly surprising that tillage declined and that the traditional Irish emphasis on the pastoral reasserted itself.”⁵⁸

The pastoral revival accelerated throughout the fourteenth century as the coherence and unity of the original settlements began to break down. Ellis has argued that the English in Ireland rejected any form of Irish identity well into the seventeenth century, seeing themselves only as loyal English lieges. But Nicholls has pointed out that while the English in Ireland never became Gaedheal, there were many that became monoglot Irish speakers who generally followed Irish customs. Outside the Pale, the local lords’ authority was paramount, and many areas became heavily influenced by Gaelic laws, traditions, and customs.⁵⁹ Likewise, the disappearance of the great marcher lords amplified the escalating disorder: the de Lacys of Meath and Ulster, the Marshals of Leinster, the de Clares of Kilkenny, the de Vescys of Kildare, the de Valences of Wexford, the de Verdons of Meath, and the Bigods of Carlow all died off by the mid-1300s, undermining the order their presence had sustained. These losses opened the door for

⁵⁶ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, I:69–72; Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland*, pp. 14–19.

⁵⁷ Empey, “Conquest and Settlement”; Otway-Ruthven, “Norman Settlement”; Otway-Ruthven, “Organisation of Anglo-Irish Agriculture.”

⁵⁸ The previous paragraph is based on Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland*, pp. 5–21; Lydon, *Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 2–17.

⁵⁹ Ellis, “More Irish than the Irish Themselves?” 22–24; Ellis, “Nationalist Historiography”; Nicholls, “Worlds Apart?” 23–24. Nicholls notes that being Gael or Gaedheal was a genealogical concept, so *becoming* either was, strictly speaking, impossible.

the Geraldines and Butlers to come to the fore, and these two great families were increasingly allowed to maintain order as they saw fit, usually in complicated alliances with several of the sixty or so lords who also had private forces of their own, all the while paying lip service to the idea of “one war and one peace”⁶⁰ for the entire lordship. Each of the two great families developed its own methods for working with the Gaelic community, ensuring the widespread maintenance of private armies that effectively eliminated the state’s desire to monopolize the use of violence and force.

The private forces maintained by most lords in Ireland were necessary to defend their interests and to exhibit their power and status. They are also an obvious example of the way in which gaelicization affected the most powerful allies of the king in the lordship. While the lands of the Earl of Ormond were nominally English, the White Earl used *brehons* in his liberty (granted by the king), clear evidence that English Ireland was not coterminous with the areas governed by those claiming English descent. Nicholls helpfully draws a distinction between the uniformity of royal authority in England and the fragmented nature of central power in the Holy Roman Empire to help us understand the diversity of arrangements in Ireland. Viewed in this light, English lords might easily become gaelicized without abandoning their English allegiance or culture, regularly making use of both when it served their interests. Indeed, there was no reason to object to an English king’s authority in Ireland so long as it remained largely distant and entirely nominal. In the event, the king’s two most important allies in Ireland both relied heavily on Gaelic customs: the earls of Kildare and Ormond illustrate how effortlessly one could operate in the two different worlds of Irish and English customs.⁶¹

Additionally, the government’s willingness to grant authority, and often autonomy, to these and other lords in the marches also allowed for a variety of local jurisdictions – Palatine, common law, and the arbitration of Irish *brehons* – which created another level of distinction between the Irish and the settlers.⁶² Beyond the Pale, the so-called land of peace, the Irish were subject to the *brehon* laws and treated as aliens; within the land of peace, they were excluded from the royal courts and reduced to unfree status.⁶³ Such distinctions were an essential part of the growing

⁶⁰ “That is, that only the government should declare war or make peace and that all local communities must abide by this,” Lydon, *Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 50. For conditions on the marches see Maginn, “English Marcher Lineages,” 129–35.

⁶¹ This paragraph follows the arguments in Nicholls, “Worlds Apart?”

⁶² Otway-Ruthven, “Native Irish and English Law.”

⁶³ Lydon, *Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 44, 49–50.

cultural divisions in Ireland, and “to overlook them is to ignore an essential element in the psychology and ideology of domination.”⁶⁴ Perhaps the following represents the most glaring example of the emphasis on legal inequality: to call a man an Irishman who was not one was a defamatory statement actionable at law.

In the end, the variety of legal systems, the incongruous legal status of the Irish, the divergent manners, habits, and customs, all came to be viewed by officials in the Pale as products of the differing attitudes to land use. A growing number of officers in Dublin came to view pastoralism, elective succession, and redistribution of lands rather than primogeniture as signs of an island divided by two separate cultures. When the government sought ways to resolve the problems of Ireland, the primitive or less evolved culture described by Gerald of Wales provided a ready explanation for the unsettled nature of Irish society and – of course – for the civil and superior state of England. Consequently, as violence and disorder worsened, many considered the gulf between the two cultures to be so great that the only viable solution was to separate the two.

As we shall see, a recurring problem for those wishing to colonize Ireland in the sixteenth century was the inability to draw in a sufficient population to inhabit and to work the land. Outside the four counties surrounding Dublin, the early settlements of the Normans and English were most often scattered areas of refuge, symbols of the difficulty of defending the colony beyond the walls of the fortifications. Worse still, in times of peace, cultural interactions and borrowings were impossible to prevent, a problem exacerbated by the widely dispersed settlers having “no common culture of their own.” As a result, “in many areas the colony was ultimately assimilated rather than decisively overthrown.”⁶⁵ While the government had no objection to the Irish being governed by their own customs and laws, the use of *brehon* law by the settlers was so common by the fourteenth century that the government began issuing a series of ordinances aimed at halting the adoption of barbarous customs so roundly condemned by Cambrensis.⁶⁶ The introduction of a cultivated landscape as an instrument of progress and modernity was not only failing, it was positively backfiring. Rather than the salutary effect of helping the Irish to develop from their barbaric and “primitive habits of pastoral living,”⁶⁷ the settlement in Ireland was leading people the wrong way down the evolutionary path: instead of improving the

⁶⁴ Davies, *Domination and Conquest*, p. 118.

⁶⁵ Empey, “Conquest and Settlement”; Aalen, *Man and the Landscape*, p. 113.

⁶⁶ Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland*, pp. 53–54.

⁶⁷ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*.

primitive natives, the English in Ireland were degenerating by frequently relying on Irish customs.⁶⁸

According to James Lydon, the term *degeneres* first appears in an ordinance of 1297. When it entered the language, it was a manifestation of the fears that the English in Ireland were renouncing the common law and English customs in order to embrace Irish laws and their barbarous customs. Some of the worst fears included the English in Ireland taking preys, holding parleys in the Irish fashion (in the open air on ceremonial *raths* or hills rather than in stately buildings), and fostering their children “so that they may drink in, love and use the Irish language.”⁶⁹ In spite of the ordinance, the degeneration apparently continued, leading to the well-known Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366. Not only are these the most famous of regulations aimed at halting further degeneration through cultural contact, they also established the framework for all future efforts to prohibit the cultural contagion resulting from contact between the two cultures.

Clearly, the statutes were intended to keep the peoples apart, but apparently every custom or activity was a potential carrier of inferiority. The statutes outlawed all marriage, fostering, and concubinage between English and Irish;⁷⁰ no Irish were to be admitted to the professions or religious houses; no Irish dress, riding style, or language was permitted to the English or anyone else while in the Pale; the English were to avoid “the game which men call ‘hurlings’ with great clubs at ball upon the ground,” and were to keep no minstrels or other Irish entertainers; notably, the English were to avoid “giving of pasturage on lands to Irish (a significant indication of how the Irish were continually pressing in on the land of peace).”⁷¹ Of course, one reason the Irish were continually bearing down on the lands of the Pale was the forsaking of cultivated land by immigrants and settlers – land which then could revert to pasture. Here we see the recurring problems to be found on the marches and borders of the Pale: inadequately defended borderlands were as good as worthless to their owners. For any such lands, “every appearance of a troublous worlde” led to the abandonment of any township where “there is nether tower barmekyn nor other

⁶⁸ Several examples of “loyal English lieges” relying on Irish customs can be found in Maginn, “English Marcher Lineages,” 124–33.

⁶⁹ Lydon, *Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 57. For the importance of *raths*, hills, inauguration sites, and other key places in the Irish landscape, see FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration*.

⁷⁰ The details of these various forms of alliance are given in Fitzsimons, “Fosterage and Gossipred,” 139–44.

⁷¹ Lydon, *Ireland in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 94; Hardiman, “Statutes of Kilkenny,” 11–51.

fortresse yn yt wherein the tenents may be releved in tyme of war. And then yt is a greatt tyme after or it can be replenyshed againe.”⁷²

The Statutes of Kilkenny were largely concerned with the problem most feared by Gerald of Wales, one he had hoped a culture of cultivation would forestall. In fulminating against the treacherous nature of the Irish, Cambrensis was forced to admit that “habits are influenced by one’s associates, and he who touches pitch will be defiled by it; the foreigners coming to this country almost inevitably are contaminated.”⁷³ But just as a cultivated landscape was to have only a limited effect, the laws passed in 1297, the Statutes of Kilkenny, and the repeatedly reissued versions over the next three hundred years were to prove as powerless as Canute at Bosham.

Consequently, by the mid-fifteenth century, the various strategies to separate the two cultures had only served to muddy the waters further. The traditional view was that “the English, in trying to become perfectly English, had shrunk almost to nothing; and the Irish, by being held always at arms length, had become more Irish and less civilized than ever;” but more recent debates about the “two nations” in Ireland have helped to show that whatever loyalty many had to their English identity and heritage, there remained a willingness amongst the king’s loyal subjects to make use of many aspects of Gaelic society when they served to increase their power, authority, and status.⁷⁴ As the Gaelic influence continued to expand, the area governed by the common law shrank, but soon this was the least of the problems facing officials in Dublin and London. The greatest Anglo-Irish families of the fifteenth century, the Fitzgeralds and the Butlers, were – quite naturally – to line up on different sides in the Wars of the Roses. The battle of Towton witnessed the destruction of the Butlers alongside their Lancastrian allies. Not only would the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare dominate Ireland until the accession of the Tudors, they were miraculously able to survive the reign of Henry VII despite being involved in – if not the head of – the rebellions of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck.⁷⁵ While Henry VII was willing to bide his time as he steadily built support for his regime, his restoration of royal power could not avoid the issue of Ireland forever. Indeed, it was the growing reliance on humanist officials that Henry

⁷² Quoted in Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 94.

⁷³ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography*, p. 109 (Part 3, chap. 101).

⁷⁴ Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, I:93. For the exchange between Ellis and Nicholls that spells out their differences, see Ellis, “More Irish than the Irish Themselves?”; Nicholls, “Worlds Apart?”; Maginn, “English Marcher Lineages,” 128–33.

⁷⁵ Palmer, *Problem of Ireland*, pp. 6–18; Butler, “Descendants of James, Ninth Earl of Ormond”; Bryan, *Gerald Earl of Kildare*, pp. 85–142; Hayden, “Lambert Simnel in Ireland,” 625–30; Ellis, “Henry VII and Ireland.”

bequeathed his son and grandchildren along with the new commitment to centralize authority that would sustain the idea of bringing order to Ireland by using landscape as an instrument of cultural change.

The potent admixture of the Renaissance and the centralization of authority that intoxicated the great states of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had its effects on Ireland as well. Nearly all of the officials who would shape the policies in Ireland (whether they ever visited or not) were either humanists or well versed in humanist thought. Most importantly, all of Henry VII's Tudor successors were given humanist educations, with Henry VIII and Elizabeth being committed to the new ways of thought. For Jonathan Dollimore, humanism served as a specific cultural identity that was soon universalized in the defense of "one cultural formation, one conception of what it is to be truly human, to the corresponding exclusion of others." Additionally, a humanist education – and, in my view, the attendant devotion to personal as well as agricultural cultivation – provided the elite with "an indelible cultural seal of superiority ... [and] offered everyone a model of true culture as something given, absolute, to be mastered, not questioned – and thus fostered in its initiates a properly docile attitude towards authority."⁷⁶ In the event, it was the certainty that came with repeating and echoing the judgments and assumptions of antiquity that gave so many officials in England so much confidence in their cultural superiority and their reforming ideas for Ireland. Quite possibly, it was the conservative nature of the ideas informing reform that made them attractive to successive Tudor monarchs; in any case, demonstrating devotion to traditional views was the surest way to insulate oneself from criticism in Tudor England.

One of the most essential texts of the Renaissance is Pico della Mirandola's 1485 essay, *The Dignity of Man*.⁷⁷ In it, he argues for renewed faith in the potential of man, in particular in favor of humankind's essential rationality and goodness. Mirandola argues that man – and only man – had no fixed place in the hierarchy of creation nor any fixed nature; thus only man can choose his own nature, meaning that man has the opportunity to create himself. According to Anthony Low,

⁷⁶ Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, pp. 9–28; Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, xii.

⁷⁷ *Ioannes Picus Mirandulanus comes concordiae Oratio de hominis dignitate*. On humanism and education, see Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII*, chaps. 3–4; Caspari, *Humanism and the Social Order*, pp. 2–32; Fubini, *Humanism and Secularization*; Gersh, ed., *Medieval and Renaissance Humanism*. An excellent account of Mirandola is in Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture*, pp. 74–80.

more and more writers were “determined to persuade their readers to take hold of events in order to transform their individual and collective futures.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, the printing press and increasing literacy during the Renaissance helped to promulgate Mirandola’s view that humans were in fact a unique creative force, one that was no longer part of nature, but in control of it.⁷⁹ These very attitudes would inform the agenda of officials concerned with the ongoing problems in Ireland. From the time of Henry VIII’s break with Rome, if not before, this positive view of man’s abilities would blend with the growing emphasis on the cultivation of land yet again to form the key factor in determining the best strategy for making Ireland part of the civilized world.

Among other things, humanism was a transformation in the style and subject matter of education. On the one hand, humanists were committed to the study of original texts and devoted to the writings and ideas of classical antiquity.⁸⁰ At the same time, however, civic humanism insisted on preparing people (admittedly, almost exclusively men) for a life of service to the common weal or state and to utilizing the gift of reason to understand and to improve the world around them. Suddenly, the autonomy and passion of the knight errant faced a unique new rival in the resourceful and efficient public servant. Humanists were willing to attribute honor and to esteem trade and farming in place of valor and warfare; humanism no longer sought to inspire daring knights, it strove instead for “competent governors, and obedient productive citizens.” In particular, farming was now represented as a heroic activity, “a kind of constructive warfare in which farmer and ox may labor together as fellow soldiers.”⁸¹ The new model heroes did not immediately displace the ancient nobility or *la noblesse d’épée* – of course, the two ideals overlapped and influenced each other increasingly – but their influence through their discourses, treatises, opinions, and “plots” came to dominate the official correspondence

⁷⁸ Low, *Georgic Revolution*. Low is discussing Spenser and Milton here, but I believe his ideas can be applied to earlier writers as well. He does mention Raleigh and Sidney as men who wrote poems on their own lives. Low goes on to say that “a fundamental characteristic of the Renaissance was the determination of many to remake their lives,” a mode of self-fashioning famously examined in Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*.

⁷⁹ Coates, *Nature*, p. 67; Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture*, pp. 61–73.

⁸⁰ The importance of a humanist education – “the classicization of politics” – was recognized as early as 1531 by Thomas Elyot, who recommended a steady diet of Greek and Latin for all future leaders. See Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, pp. 7–76; Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to Humanities*; Fox and Guy, eds., *Reassessing the Henrician Age*; Cormack, *Charting an Empire*, pp. 20–23; Alford, *Early Elizabethan Polity*, p. 15; Hudson, *Cambridge Connection*, pp. 3, 34–43.

⁸¹ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 43; Low, *Georgic Revolution*, p. 7.

and state papers of the period. And two of their favorite topics turned out to be agriculture and Ireland.

Despite the apparent novelties of humanist thought, its dedication to classical antiquity guaranteed that any suggestion of innovation had to be situated in a bed of precedent and antique legitimacy. Markku Peltonen has written about the prevalence of classical texts and classical learning in these years, and Lisa Jardine has offered powerful evidence of the way Elizabethan officials involved in Irish colonial projects were holding debates on Livy in the hope of applying lessons from Roman history to the problems they faced in Ireland.⁸² In particular, Sir Thomas Smith, Edmund Spenser, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and Gabriel Harvey were discussing Machiavelli's *Discourses* on Livy in 1571, and Harvey noted in the margins of his copy that they considered Machiavelli's "Councils of State very fit to be annexed to our principall councils & souerain decisions." For Jardine, Harvey's marginalia are an example of the habits of thought and ideas from antiquity being used pragmatically to support projects for colonization in Ireland.⁸³

But no matter the antiquity of the writings by Pliny and others, the English elite still considered agrarian innovations – and the amoral ideas of Machiavelli – to be a threat to the harmonious manorial community valorized for so long in England. Were agricultural improvements an instrument of national expansion through a growing competitive market economy or simply a means by which greedy enclosers destroyed communities?⁸⁴ One of the earliest defenders of improvements through innovation was one of the leaders of the Athenians, Sir Thomas Smith. The Athenians are a perfect example of the intersection between humanism and power. Smith was the first Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge and along with John Cheke an early (1535) convert to the controversially innovative pronunciation of Greek advocated by Erasmus. Two of the earliest students to fall under the influence of Smith and Cheke were Roger Ascham and his young prodigy in Greek, William Cecil. By the end of Henry's reign, the Athenians were numerous and powerful enough to dominate much of Cambridge, holding "a near monopoly of University posts . . . as well as the Mastership of most of the colleges."⁸⁵ Ascham would remain at Cambridge and eventually serve as tutor to Princess Elizabeth while Cecil moved on to the Inns

⁸² Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, pp. 9–11, chaps. 1–2.

⁸³ Jardine, "Mastering the Uncouth," 70–75, 81. Carroll says that the first English texts to use Machiavelli were works on the colonization of Ireland, Carroll, *Circe's Cup*, pp. 4–11.

⁸⁴ Jardine, "Mastering the Uncouth," 70–74; McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, chap. 1.

⁸⁵ Hudson, *Cambridge Connection*, pp. 3, 13.

of Court where he befriended Thomas Seckford, the future Master of the Court of Wards, an early student of cartography, and patron of Christopher Sackford's first atlas of English county maps. While Cheke and Smith overshadowed Cecil under Edward VI, the last-named served as the Surveyor of Elizabeth's estates after 1550 and rose to prominence soon after her accession.⁸⁶

In his *Discourse of the Commonweal of this Realm*, written in 1549 and published in 1551, Smith advocated a more dynamic society, one in which self-interest and economic forces might contribute to national prosperity and the common good.⁸⁷ Others who supported "conservative solutions to poverty" initially served Protector Somerset around 1550. The *commonwealthsmen* focused their greatest hopes on agricultural improvement, looking to reclaim wastes, parks, and forests as smallholdings for the increasing numbers of the landless poor. Somerset's key advisors on these issues were Smith, the author of the *Discourse*, and William Cecil, two men who would provide a "continuous chain of influence running from Henry VIII's reign, promoting all the projects that were enumerated in 1549, and continually searching for new ones."⁸⁸ Furthermore, from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, Cecil and the Athenians formed what Wallace MacCaffrey calls a "new establishment," one that was "for the first time, staffed wholly by laymen. Equally striking was the fact that the dominant figures were university-trained laymen," meaning that the government was increasingly dominated by a group of young men trained at Cambridge, familiar with classical texts and dedicated to applying them to politics and society.⁸⁹ Among those associated with Cheke, Smith, and Cecil were Gilbert Gerard, Sir Thomas Gresham, Sir Walter Mildmay, Sir Thomas Seckford, Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, and Sir Francis Knollys, an impressive lineup of Elizabethan officials.

Most important for the argument here, Cecil proved to be a loyal patron to those interested in agricultural improvements, staying informed on foreign developments and maintaining advisors and fact-finders to help with a plethora of feasibility studies. We have already noticed how landscape can serve as a key metaphor at the intersection of individual and national identity, and this metaphor was to be resurrected during the Renaissance and given its "most powerful configuration in the

⁸⁶ Alford, *Early Elizabethan Polity*, pp. 7–16. On surveying, cartography, and records see chapter 4 below.

⁸⁷ *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, xvi; Dewar, *Sir Thomas Smith*.

⁸⁸ Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, pp. 17, 139, 33.

⁸⁹ MacCaffrey, *Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, pp. 34–35; Hudson, *Cambridge Connection*, pp. 25, 37; Alford, *Early Elizabethan Polity*, p. 16.

cultivation of the human spirit.”⁹⁰ As *cultivation* became a word that was applied regularly both to the individual and to the land during the Renaissance, and as these two meanings became conflated, devoting oneself to cultivation became an imperative for many. An important consequence of this trend was the emergence of the desire to bring civility and cultivation to Ireland and the Irish, a desire that informed all later strategies of officials in London and Dublin.⁹¹

The appeal of cultivation was very much amplified by the surge of classical texts glorifying the georgic virtues of hard work on the land in lieu of the corrupting influence of the city and court. Virgil’s *Georgics* were first and foremost about the merits of labor, with farming portrayed as “a cultural and civilizing activity, a means of building up the state and ensuring its peaceful prosperity.”⁹² It is also noteworthy that regular puns on the word *cultus*, meaning both tilled and civilized, permeate Virgil’s poem. Furthermore, the idealization of hard work arose alongside the development of new meanings for words like *profit*, *thrift*, *waste*, and *improvement*: the old static notion of a society based on the patriarchal community and the manor was being challenged by a new agrarian discourse that was more concerned with the individual and private property. Increasingly, a different society was emerging where some people were willing to defend self-interest and a market economy, and these social innovations were “justified largely through the new idea that self-interest could work for the public benefit.” According to Thirsk, by 1600 English writers accepted the argument that “the cultivation of land was the most honourable of labours, virtually the only one in which innocence still prevailed, where most contentment could be found, and the irksome vexations of a more sophisticated world forgotten.”⁹³ In the end, the amalgamation of the public good, cultivation, and civility would produce the strong medicine to be prescribed for Ireland’s ills.

Andrew McRae reminds us of the need to attend to the processes by which meaning is constructed and the changing ways people seek to ascribe meaning and order to the land in the context of social and economic upheaval.⁹⁴ While the fascination with classical texts was surely related to the wave of unknown texts from Constantinople and Muslim

⁹⁰ Leslie and Raylor, eds., *Culture and Cultivation*, p. 4.

⁹¹ Beyond the London group discussed by Hudson, another set emerged in Dublin in the 1580s that included Spenser, Bryskett, and others, see Plomer and Peete, eds., *Life of Lodowick Bryskett*, chap. 1; Canny, *Making Ireland British*, pp. 1–14, 24–57.

⁹² Low, *Georgic Revolution*, 7; Virgil, *Georgics*.

⁹³ Leslie and Raylor, eds., *Culture and Cultivation*, p. 7; Thirsk, “Plough and Pen,” 297.

⁹⁴ McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, pp. 1, 5.

Spain, the rise of urban markets first in Italy and eventually the rest of Europe provided the requisite demand. Indeed, the concern over land and land use in Ireland was not simply the obsession of a handful of humanists in positions of power. It has been asserted that the interest in Irish land was a “by-product of specific political and economic developments within England ... [and] the colonization of Ireland is comprehensible, and ... it occurred because of identifiable forces within English society.”⁹⁵ The interest in land use increased in the late medieval period as both Europe and England experienced considerable social and economic change. The devastation of wars and disease had ravaged continental Europe in the 1300s, and by 1400 plagues and other factors had reduced the number of people in Ireland by half. It is not insignificant that epidemic diseases devastated the concentrated arable and urban populations in much higher numbers than the more dispersed population in the pastoral areas.⁹⁶ Before long, much of public and official opinion was turning in favor of cultivation and improvement, with more and more observers by 1500 condemning any and all open landscape as waste, for waste land was a concept that filled men with dread in these years.⁹⁷

Still, the rapid demographic growth in both England and Ireland was one of the most important changes in the sixteenth century. The Irish population increased by more than 40 percent during the century, and a similar demographic burst caused novel and little understood social woes in England. One aspect of the escalating numbers of people was increased urbanization, and this in turn created the social and economic changes that contributed to the rise of the marketplace, a development that manifested itself most importantly for our purposes in the rise of commercial farming. Population growth led to pressure on natural resources and a steady rise in food prices from the beginning

⁹⁵ Bottigheimer, *English Money and Irish Land*, p. 2. My emphasis on land and cultivation is not intended to argue that the Irish economy was entirely stilted or backward. The exploitation of land and resources was taking place throughout areas other than the Pale. Cf., Edwards, *Ormond Lordship*, chap. 1; Breen, *Lordship of the O'Sullivan Beare*, pp. 106–16, 135.

⁹⁶ Kelly, *History of the Black Death*, chaps. 4–5; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 20. Ellis argues that the precondition of Norman expansion was the “ability to attract tenants ... to till the lands which they had conquered and organized into manors.” The declining population resulted in a scarcity of tenants and the inability of the state to defend them or the border areas. This in turn led to the abandoning of holdings and the land reverting to waste in the century before the Tudors.

⁹⁷ Thirsk, “Horn and Thorn,” 10. Empey argues that even the Norman settlements that preceded the plague were “related to the buoyant conditions of an expanding European economy,” and that rising prices for food “resulted in a sustained development of demesne farming on an unprecedented scale,” Empey, “Conquest and Settlement,” 20, 25.

of Henry VIII's reign.⁹⁸ Growing urbanization meant that there was money to be made from the production and sale of surplus foodstuffs, and the work of Joan Thirsk shows how the soaring index of food prices in the sixteenth century indicates why a landowner would wish to farm his own estate in order to profit from the rising commercial market.⁹⁹ In sum, the economic recovery combined with population growth throughout the Tudor state to produce rising food prices, hunger for land, and reduced labor costs, "so tilting the economics of farming back towards agriculture and prompting a renewed interest in colonization schemes for Ireland."¹⁰⁰

The social and economic developments outlined above coincided with the rise of humanism, the valorization of the ideas of classical antiquity, and a new outlook on humankind's relationship to the natural world.¹⁰¹ And if there was money to be made while improving oneself and contributing to the common weal, it came as no surprise that the "waste" lands of Ireland became the target of Renaissance man's wandering entrepreneurial eye. Better still, there soon appeared a host of precedents from classical antiquity to legitimate the transformation of the idle and uncultivated soil described by Gerald of Wales and others into productive and profitable land. In fact, so enthralled were the English with all things Roman that one of the earliest propagandists of English empire insisted that "no greater glory can be handed down than to conquer the barbarian, to recall the savage and the pagan to civility."¹⁰²

Looking for precedents from classical antiquity, the English found inspiration in the most eloquent voice of the early Roman Empire. Virgil was well known to all those with a humanist education, and his *Georgics* were admired for their exaltation of the life of the cultivating – and

⁹⁸ Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, p. 160; *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, x; Gillespie, *Transformation of the Irish Economy*, p. 12. Thirsk provides a food index increasing from 100 in 1508 to 191 by 1545 and – following a debasement of the coinage – to 248 by 1546. Worse still, the index for laborers' wages was halved in the same years.

⁹⁹ Thirsk, "Making a Fresh Start," 17.

¹⁰⁰ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 253. The importance of Renaissance ideas for early colonial theory was first examined in Quinn, "Renaissance Influences in English Colonization."

¹⁰¹ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*. Thomas shows how the ideas sketched above represented one form of individualism that persuaded people of their ability and their duty to improve themselves and the world around them. He also traces the advent of the view that individual profit was in fact beneficial to the public good, and shows how the improvement of the land was considered the most noble, the most profitable, and the most civilized endeavor.

¹⁰² Hakluyt to Raleigh, quoted in Pagden, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 34.

cultivated – landlord. In his recent book on the anglicization of Ireland, Nicholas Canny searches for the literary antecedents of the policies adopted. He argues that the regular interaction of administrators in Ireland means the “more articulate administrators in Ireland were brought to focus their minds on common problems even if they did not arrive at common solutions.”¹⁰³ Canny’s chapter delimiting the connections between writers and the officials in London and Dublin from Lodowick Bryskett to Edmund Spenser is titled “Spenser Sets the Agenda.” The influence of such writers and administrators is undeniable, but if one were to look for similar influences around the time of Henry VIII’s accession, another window might show a different view of the common problems and even the common solutions that were sought: looking at the ways in which Virgil may have set the agenda provides one more instrument for understanding the origins of the plantation policies in Tudor and Stuart Ireland.

In addition to the *Histories* and the epic poems of antiquity, humanists were regularly inspired by classical texts on agriculture. The most popular work was Virgil’s *Georgics* – which gave the name to the entire genre – but the writings of several others were also available. Varro himself refers to more than fifty writers on agriculture who predate his own work, and Columella’s *Book XI* on husbandry declared it a limitless topic and an important science, meaning that the authorizing interest of the ancients was well established by 1500.¹⁰⁴ If in fact one mark of the transition from the medieval period to the Renaissance was the construction of a new type of heroic figure, then the *Georgics* of Virgil was the ideal place to begin. According to Anthony Low:

georgic is a mode that stresses the value of intensive and persistent *labor* against hardships and difficulties; that it differs from pastoral because it emphasizes *work* instead of ease; and that it differs from epic because it emphasizes *planting* and *building* instead of killing and destruction; and that is preeminently the mode suited to the establishment of *civilization* and the founding of nations.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, p. 1. An excellent account of Virgil’s importance can be found in the early sections of Waswo, *Founding Legend*.

¹⁰⁴ Virgil, *Georgics*, 31; Thirsk, “Making a Fresh Start,” 19–24; Columella, *On Agriculture*, III:51–59.

¹⁰⁵ Low, *Georgic Revolution*, p. 12. The italics are mine. Low goes on to say that Virgil might readily be Christianized if one were willing to see the prelapsarian state as pastoral and the postlapsarian state as georgic. This in turn would transform work from a curse into a blessing. It is worth remarking that the patron saint of England, and so many other countries, is George, the Greek word for husbandman used by Virgil when writing the *Georgics*. For an examination of planting and building civilizations in Virgil’s epic, see Waswo, *Founding Legend*, pp. 1–42.

These are the very attitudes that will allow the ideas of cultivation and improvement to be deemed heroic, but which will also allow for heroism to be related to planting and the extension of civility. Once this combination is established, then improving becomes a glorious activity and one that can easily become the source of the civilizing process. If in the process the same ideas might facilitate the final conquest of Ireland, then so much the better.

Virgil, having completed his epic on Aeneas, was both willing and able to depict agricultural activity in glorious, even bellicose, terms. His georgic heroes wage war against the degenerative forces of nature; Virgil portrays his farming instruments as weapons, with the husbandman bringing a much-needed discipline to the acres he commands, deploying his crops as though they were troops. Most telling of all perhaps, Virgil utilizes heroic hexameters to deal with the quotidian matters of farming, lending them an extraordinary dignity in the process.¹⁰⁶ Early on, Virgil establishes the claim that farming and hard work were divinely ordained to train man's reason and to prevent the sort of laziness Gerald and the English associated with the Irish:

The father himself
 Willed that the path of tillage be not smooth,
 And first ordained that skill should cultivate
 The land, by care sharpening the wits of mortals,
 Nor let his kingdom laze in torpid sloth.

(*Georgics*, I:122–26)

The dark side of Virgil's claims in favor of incessant work and vigilance is made repeatedly in the poem. The apparently passive nature of pastoral life might be seen as akin to the indolence and sloth that Virgil felt led to social and cultural regression:

So it is: for everything by nature's law
 Tends to the worse, slips ever backward, backward.
 As with a man who scarce propels his boat
 Against the stream: if once his arms relax,
 The current sweeps it headlong down the rapids.

(*Georgics*, I:200–05)

Not only is degeneration established as one of nature's unviable laws, but any remittance in the constant labor needed to improve the land will equally invariably send the boat, the man, (the nation?) sweeping

¹⁰⁶ The previous discussion, and especially my (feigned) recognition of the heroic hexameters, is based on the introduction to Virgil, *Georgics*, p. 38.

towards the rapids and unavoidable ruin. As we shall see, English officials viewed Virgil's warnings about the ruin resulting from indolence and lack of cultivation to be relevant to Ireland after 1500. Not only were civil Anglo-Norman settlers slipping "ever backward, backward" through their cultural contacts with primitive or barbarous Irish natives, but their degeneration too often took the form of adopting the customs associated with inferior pastoral society. For this reason, English accounts of the seemingly abandoned or uncultivated or waste lands of Ireland provided not only a legitimization for settling the lands but even a moral imperative for doing so. In addition, Virgilian ideals allowed the English to view themselves as an agricultural and commercial people, rather than as greedy conquerors and tyrants. For, like the Romans of the Augustan age, the English preferred to legitimize their actions by appeal to some law or precedent and to believe that their actions were undertaken for peaceful reasons.¹⁰⁷

The popularity of Virgil and other agricultural writers was related to the changing social and economic realities in England. The sixteenth century saw the continuation of the demographic recovery following the plagues of the previous centuries, a development that caused the prices of commodities to soar and thousands of acres of unused land (in England) to be subjected to cultivation. In the words of Joan Thirsk, "men made war upon the forests and fens with a zeal which they had not felt for some three hundred years."¹⁰⁸ Increasingly, Englishmen were voting with their spades and ignoring whatever moral concerns may have inhibited the cultivation of waste or common lands in generations past. With unparalleled amounts to be gained from the burgeoning market in agricultural products, the devotion to cultivation and improvement became more common amongst landowners; indeed, improvement was to emerge as one the new forms of nationhood¹⁰⁹ or

¹⁰⁷ Pagden, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 36–37. The popularity of Virgil during the Renaissance meant that alternative views of nature were often obscured. Ovid, for instance, described the Golden Age as a time when "the earth itself, without compulsion, untouched by the hoe, unfurrowed by any share, produced things spontaneously, and men were content with foods that grew without cultivation . . . In time the earth, though untilled, produced corn too, and fields that never lay fallow whitened with heavy ears of grain," Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, pp. 31–32.

¹⁰⁸ Thirsk, "The Farming Regions of England," 2. For commodities prices and demographic figures see the figures in note 98 above, and Clay, *Economic Expansion*.

¹⁰⁹ Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, pp. 1–5, is concerned with how such forms are constituted and how they are concerned with the "excluding or inclusion of various groups for privileged participation in the national community." Later in the century, Harrison was to catalogue the many luxuries to be expected from farming: "A farmer will thinke his gaines very small towards the ende of his terme if he have not six

national identity, particularly in its utility as a means to distinguish the English cultivators from the savage pastoralists in Ireland.

Thirsk, the most influential and prolific writer on English agriculture, has stated these “economic realities have to be set against the background of a mounting bookish interest in classical agriculture.”¹¹⁰ According to Andrew McRae, Columella, Varro, Virgil, and others were available after 1470. If we accept that commercial farming was a response to the economic realities of the market, then it should come as no surprise that a number of new works on agricultural topics began to appear in English at this time. The most famous of these was Fitzherbert’s *Boke of Husbandry*, which first appeared in 1523. Fitzherbert’s work filled a gaping hole in English agricultural knowledge and the paucity of agricultural works in English remained an issue worthy of remark a generation later: in 1549 Smith has the Doctor in his *Discourse* suggest that all sorts of books for learning appear in English, for instance “for your good husbandmen, Columella.”¹¹¹ Without any real rival in the vernacular, the *Boke of Husbandry* proved to be one of the earliest bestsellers, appearing in twelve editions in the first thirty years after its debut, followed by six more in the years before the death of Elizabeth. Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* appeared in six editions from 1532 to 1573, evidence of the demand for manuals and advice.¹¹² Not only did these works contribute to the changing attitudes towards improvement and cultivation, but their views also shaped the many *plans* and *plots* for Ireland pouring from the pens of the officials in London and Dublin after 1500.

Fitzherbert’s *Boke of Husbandry*, published in combination with his *Boke of Surveying and Improvements*, made clear the intimate relationship between husbandry and improvement. The humanist commitment to the husbandman can be further seen in the *Discourse of the Commonweal*, where Sir Thomas Smith insists that the husbandman,

for the perfection of the knowledge of husbandry, had need of some knowledge in astronomy, as under what aspect of the planets and in the entry of what sign

or seven yeares rent lying by him, therewith to purchase a new lease, beside a faire garnish of pewter on his cupboard, with much more in odd vessels going about the house; three or four feather beds, so many coverlets and carpets of tapestrie, a silver salt, a bowle for wine, if not a . . . dozen spoones to furnish owte the suite,” quoted in MacDonald, *Agricultural Writers*, p. 37.

¹¹⁰ Thirsk, “Making a Fresh Start,” 19.

¹¹¹ *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, p. 28; Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, p. 88, notes that most of the popular manuals were designed for a Mediterranean climate, and thus not always helpful when applied to English and Irish conditions. Columella’s twelve-volume *De Rustica* was admired as much as Pliny and Xenophon.

¹¹² McRae, *God Speed the Plough*, pp. 136–37. For a discussion of the availability, costs, and editions of husbandry books between 1532 and 1598, see Bushnell, *Green Desire*, pp. 37–40.

by the sun and moon it is time to ear, to dung, to sow, to reap, to set, to graft, to cut your wood, your timber; yes, to have some judgment of the weather that is like to come for inning of your corn and grass, and housing of your cattle . . . Then for true measuring of land had you need of some knowledge in geometry to be a perfect husband.¹¹³

Surveying will play a much larger role in a later chapter, but its proximity to geometry and cartography and their claims to accuracy and precision in measuring are significant here. By offering an exact survey or view of the land it helped to create a certain distance from the land, allowing it to be evaluated as a commodity or space or field ready to receive the altogether honorable and improving intentions of the cultivator. More importantly, wherever uncultivated lands were discovered, the improvers' objectives were authorized – demanded even – by no less an authority than Xenophon, who claimed that it is “better to cultivate neglected land rather than that which had been well-tilled, for the latter would cost more and the effort prove less pleasurable.”¹¹⁴ Ominously, the authority of the antique world was helping to place the seeds in the ground necessary for the confiscation and cultivation of Irish land.

The importance of the *Boke of Husbandry* cannot be overestimated. It did more to popularize ideas about husbandry and improvement than any previous work, and the many editions and imitators in the rest of the century attest to its significance throughout society. Fitzherbert's *Boke* was extremely popular and remarkably brief – issues that may well be connected. The 1540 octavo, only ninety pages, is devoted to promoting the efficient use of natural resources.¹¹⁵ Fitzherbert returns repeatedly to the concept of “improvement,” a word he uses in the sense of enclosing, cultivating, and increasing the value of land. Indeed, the verb “manure” was often used to mean “improve,” and in the 1500s the primary definition was “to till or cultivate land.” Furthermore, the first meaning of “improve” was to put to profit, to enclose, and the bringing into cultivation of waste land.¹¹⁶ Fitzherbert was committed to the notion of cultivating waste land in order to “improve” it, to make it better, to increase its value. The rash of editions that followed into Elizabeth's reign demonstrates the extent to which these ideas found a captive audience among the literate husbandmen, yeoman, and gentry. We have already seen how the new ideas about profit, improvement, and

¹¹³ *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, p. 28.

¹¹⁴ This passage from Xenophon is discussed in Thirsk, “Making a Fresh Start,” 24.

¹¹⁵ Fitzherbert, *Boke of Husbandry*.

¹¹⁶ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 51. Douglas' 1522 translation of the *Aeneid* uses manure this way, reading, “one woman . . . quham to we, For to manure gave the strand of the sea.”

learning appeared in the *Discourse of the Commonweal* in mid-century. Smith's call for other husbandry manuals "like Columella" to appear in the vernacular eventually produced a response. Beginning in 1557 with the first edition of Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Pointes of good husbandrie*, the ideas of agrarian improvement began to make their way beyond the gentry and humanists. Tusser's manual was nearly as popular as Fitzherbert's, going through thirteen editions before 1600. Still more significant was Tusser's decision to write his agricultural advice in verse, perhaps as a mnemonic device for the less literate devotees of husbandry manuals. In the process of delivering a wide range of suggestions, Tusser also reiterates several of the opinions encountered in Cambrensis, Virgil, and others.

Early on he questions the wisdom of uncultivated, unoccupied, or waste lands: "No dwellers, what profiteth house for to stand? What goodnes, unoccupied, bringeth the land?"¹¹⁷ He goes on to demonstrate the absolute social and economic necessity of husbandry and the husbandman by asking, "in woodland, in Champion, Citie or towne, / If I be long absent, what falleth not downe? / If I long be present, what goodnes can want?"¹¹⁸ Furthermore, after establishing the importance of the farmer and cultivation, Tusser offers a final denunciation of the consequences for an ordered landscape and polity if animals and rootless men are allowed to shape the topography: "What footpathes are made, and how brode! / annoiance too much to be borne: / With horse and with cattle what rode / is made thorow evrie mans corne! / Where champions ruleth the roste, / there dailie disorder is moste." Here the non-husbanding people are not only condemned as a threat to "evrie mans corne," but also represented as the source of social and political disorder.¹¹⁹ The ordered landscape, the sedentary lifestyle, and the stable and permanent dwelling are associated once more with a culture of husbandry and cultivation. Even more significantly, the language of agrarian civility was reaching a wider audience with each new husbandry manual that appeared, meaning that its conventions, its assumptions, and its images will be found in the discourse about the reform of Ireland.

The next great book of husbandry to appear was *Foure Bookes of Husbandrie*, perhaps a sign of the increasing demand for such works. Neither single minded about improvement nor written in verse, this

¹¹⁷ Tusser, *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, 15, chap. 6.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19, chap. 7, "In Praise of Husbandrie."

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 144, chap. 52, no. 19. On the disordered and threatening nature of the unsettled, mobile, and noncultivating wild man, see White, "Forms of Wildness," 7–16.

was in fact a translation of a manual written in Germany by Conrad Heresbach, “Newly Englished and Increased by Barnabe Googe” in 1577.¹²⁰ The primary addition to this work was a weighty emphasis on religion, with husbandry related to godliness, prayer, discipline, and a distinct lack of idleness. Heresbach and Googe describe husbandry as the calling of Jesus and the early saints as well as most great biblical figures: “it was Noah who first began to be a husbandman, and planted a vineyard,” Tertullian who wrote that in all accessible places “farms have replaced wastes, cultivated fields have subdued forests,” while Ambrose credited the cultivator with improving the earth, for when the “farmer began to rule the fields and to clothe the shapeless soil with vines, she [earth] put away her wild dispositions, being softened by domestic cultivation.” Similarly, St. Bernard considered untilled land to be in a state of original sin, “but once it has become fertile and purposeful, it takes on the utmost significance.”¹²¹ In addition to being the “most innocent” knowledge, the “gaine that herof ariseth is most godly, and lest [least] subject to envie, for it hath to deal with the earth, [which] restoreth with gaine such things as is committed unto hir.”¹²² Profit here is almost the free gift of nature and a result of godliness and its attendant discipline. But for all his puritan enhancements, Googe does stick closely to the original text, and here we find once again themes straight out of Virgil, Xenophon, and Gerald of Wales.

As noted earlier, Renaissance thinkers often found it easier to repeat than to reexamine or reformulate, to endorse old ideas rather than to offer new ones. C. S. Lewis condemns humanists for engaging in empty copying, weighed down by an excessive admiration of “order and discipline,” while Lauro Martines insists that they all “made a candid alliance with power. They plumped for the ruling classes, empires and luminaries of past civil times; they also wrote in unashamed praise of their own cities, rulers, and patrons.”¹²³ In fact, Googe and his colleagues needed to situate their ideas within the authorized texts of antiquity in order to avoid the damning criticism that they were proposing dangerously innovative ideas in a static and conservative world.

In Googe’s translation there are passages on the Romans’ devotion to husbandry, the farmer’s importance to the invincibility of the

¹²⁰ Heresbach, *Four Bookes*.

¹²¹ Genesis 9:20; Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, pp. 296–303.

¹²² Heresbach, *Four Bookes*, p. 6. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, p. 293, also notes that the writings of Merovingian monks were filled with tales of their agricultural labors.

¹²³ Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, pp. 167–68; Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, p. 13; Martines, *Power and Imagination*, p. 271.

legionaries, and the views of Varro, Columella, and others on the hierarchy of various types of dung. But following these passages on the relationship between husbandry and the glories of Rome, the *Foure Bookes* turns its attentions to the type of early anthropological conjectures adopted by Gerald of Wales. In the *Third Booke* we learn that the ancients believed that “at the beginning, men lived only by breeding and feeding of cattel, not having as yet the skill of plowing and tilling the ground.”¹²⁴ Happily, many societies had progressed from this primitive state, though a few fringe groups on the edge of Europe ignorantly clung to their archaic habits. They continued to live a nomadic and unsettled life, following their herds from pasture to pasture without moving forward along the developmental path to an ordered and sedentary agrarian society. They seemed unable to advance to the point where others had

found out the manner of tilling of the ground ... [so that keeping] cattel for plowing, carriage, dunging of our ground ... and on the other side to till the ground for feeding and maintenance of our cattell, it comes to passe, that though the manner of occupying in tillage, & keeping of cattel be divers, yet one of them so serveth the tune of ye other, that (as it seemeth) they cannot well be asunder.¹²⁵

Cambrensis' assumptions about the distinctions between arable and pastoral societies are repeated and given the additional cachet of being founded on the beliefs of classical antiquity. Heresbach (and Googe) were reinforcing the views about the primitive nature of living by cattle-rearing alone.¹²⁶ The failure of certain societies to progress from pastoral to agricultural life here served as both a warning and a source of pride. Neither the ancients nor Heresbach denied the importance of “keeping of cattle,” but a civilized society has its pastoral elements carefully under control, reduced to serving the needs of a sedentary community of farmers, a secondary part of a settled landscape.¹²⁷

In another passage strikingly similar to Xenophon, we hear of the advice that one “shoulde never buie a piece of ground that had benee skilfully or curiously husbanded before, but rather such ground as

¹²⁴ Heresbach, *Foure Bookes*, p. 111.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*; Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, pp. 196–200, describes the conventions of the “negative formula” of the early anthropologists, showing how it developed from Hesiod to Cambrensis to Boemus and beyond.

¹²⁶ For the tropes concerning barbarians and flesh-eating, usually raw, see Shaw, “Meat Eaters.”

¹²⁷ Thirsk, “Horn and Thorn,” 5–10. Thirsk notes that all travelers in the Tudor era condemned open landscape as waste, while White, “Forms of Wildness,” 20, describes the noncultivating “wild man” as lacking civil language, existing only outside the city, enslaved to nature, and unable to control his passions.

by the slouthfulness and poverty of the master hath lien untilled and neglected, and yet seeme to be very good grounde ... A well-ordered piece of lande is helde deere, and yieldees noo great increase, and therefore is neither so pleasant nor so profitable, as that which by a good husbandry may be made better."¹²⁸ Once more untilled or neglected land is held to be the wisest choice. Moreover, if a primitive people were passively neglecting their land, if they had yet to progress to a level of civility capable of plowing and tilling, then it seems that discovering and improving waste lands or land that "by the slouthfulness and poverty of the master hath lien untilled and neglected" is imperative. Indeed, we have seen already how Raleigh was advised that "no greater glory can be handed down than to conquer the barbarian, to recall the savage and the pagan to civility, to draw the ignorant within the orbit of reason."¹²⁹ By making use of the waste lands or by persuading primitive pastoralists to progress to the point where they might participate in the civilized and cultivated society above them, the English in Ireland wished to follow Hakluyt's evolutionary verbal path: to conquer, to recall, and eventually to draw them to reason. In fact, in light of the book's dedication to Sir William Fitzwilliam, a longstanding and senior official in Ireland, the lord deputy at the time of the dedication, and a leading proponent of the confiscation and plantation of Irish land, the opportunity for applying these theories is readily apparent.¹³⁰

It is my contention that the language of agrarian improvement, the ideas that linked cultivation and civility, were increasingly part of the commonplace assumptions that informed the thinking of intellectuals and policymakers throughout the Tudor state. Whether the ideas came from popular writers such as Thomas Tusser or were sponsored by leading figures such as Sir William Fitzwilliam or Lord Burghley, the point remains the same: the desire "to order the landscape according to sophisticated intellectual motive ... had spread widely through the English gentry."¹³¹ Barnabe Googe provides a perfect example of the links between education, translation, concerns about cultivation, and officials in England and Ireland. He was part of the Cambridge circle that followed Cecil to Whitehall; he knew John Cheke, Roger Ascham, and Sir Thomas Smith – secretary of state and early Irish

¹²⁸ Heresbach, *Foure Bookes*, 46–46v.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Pagden, "Struggle for Legitimacy," 34.

¹³⁰ Fitzwilliam had served as vice treasurer, lord justice, and lord deputy, and was closely allied to Cecil and his circle, one more link joining those interested in husbandry, cultivation, and Ireland.

¹³¹ Leslie and Raylor, eds., *Culture and Cultivation*, p. 3.

planter. Googe was also a distant relative of Cecil, who found him a seat in Parliament in 1571, sent him as an observer with the 1st Earl of Essex's expedition to Ireland, and later appointed him Provost Marshal of Connacht. Among his close friends were Sir Henry Sidney and Sir William Fitzwilliam (to whom the *Foure Bookes* was dedicated), and he contributed the Preface to Barnabe Rich's *Alarme to England*. Finally, Googe was part of the "translation movement" that included early colonist Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and in addition to his translation of Heresbach he dedicated another on *Gout* to Cecil. His devotional work, *Spiritual Husbandry*, offers a final example of the pervasiveness of agricultural language and imagery in these years.¹³²

More importantly, we will see the way that ideas about land and land use were associated with interpretations about society and culture in Ireland to provide a possible solution to the persistent problems of governing and settling the country. The many ills in Irish society, Irish law, Irish culture, Irish landholding, and Irish politics might all be resolved by altering – by improving – the way the land was used. Indeed, by replacing the primitive pastoralism of the Irish with the civilized cultivation, manurance, and agriculture of the English, England would be more secure as the Irish disorders abated. This, of course, would prove a growing concern following the break with Rome and the increased tensions with Spain under Elizabeth. Lastly, and surely most attractively for officials, a cultivated Ireland would finally yield revenue to England rather than draining resources away, making England more prosperous than at any time in its past.

By the end of Henry VIII's reign these attitudes were advocated by many of the most influential men on the fringes of government, men who were poised to take significant positions in Edward's reign, and more important ones under his sisters. Foremost among these were Sir William Cecil, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir William Fitzwilliam, and Sir Henry Sidney, each playing a central role in conceiving, planning, and carrying out the policy of plantation in Ireland. Just as Nicholas Canny has traced the connections between Bryskett, Spenser, and others in Dublin, a similar concatenation of men was involved in both Ireland and the efforts to improve the Tudor commonwealth through husbandry and other projects. The significance of the circle revolving around Sir William Cecil – secretary of state and later lord treasurer and Lord Burghley – has already been noticed. Cecil patronized and promoted many men he had known while at Cambridge. Originally a

¹³² Pinkerton, "Barnaby Googe"; Sir Humphrey Gilbert, "Queene Elizabethes Achademy"; O'Sullivan, "Barnabe Googe."

protégé of Protector Somerset, Cecil worked with the tutor of Edward VI (John Cheke), and had studied with the same tutor as Elizabeth (Roger Ascham).¹³³ Cecil's interest in gardening and agriculture may have started in the 1540s while he was in the employ of the Duke of Somerset where he worked alongside Dr. William Turner, "the father of English botany and creator of the botanical garden at Syon House." And a recent account of the Cecils and their gardens reminds us that "Burghley's correspondence and papers attest to his life-long interest in plants, with references to the purchase of seeds and exotic plants from agents in all parts of the rapidly expanding world."¹³⁴

Cecil himself served as the patron for the botanist John Gerard, the polymath John Dee, and others, and two of the most important books on the subject of plants were dedicated to him: *The Gardener's Labyrinth* (1577) and Gerard's *Herball* (1597).¹³⁵ Gerard, who served as the Keeper of the Physic Garden at the Royal College of Physicians, also acted as superintendent of Cecil's own gardens from 1577 until the latter's death in 1598. Last but not least, Cecil's wife, Mildred, was herself an avid gardener, even writing a poem describing the transformation of the earth from disorder to cultivation in reference to Bartholo Sylva's *Il Giordan cosmographico coltivato*. In all the works on gardens, the pursuit of gardening is moralized, "just as the reformist husbandry had moralized agricultural work."¹³⁶

One common aspect of the garden and the cultivated field was that each could be viewed as an example of a tamed wilderness, a place of order and peace, a perfect symbol of the transformed landscape, and an ideal means to understand the possible reformation of Ireland. Thus, the garden was not only a symbol of social and natural order but also an example of the benefits of subduing the landscape,

¹³³ Alford, *Early Elizabethan Polity*, pp. 7, 16; Hudson, *Cambridge Connection*, p. 25.

¹³⁴ Henderson, "A Shared Passion," 99; Henderson, *Tudor House and Garden*, pp. 97–119. It is worth noting that one of the earliest manuals on gardening, Hill's *Profitable Art of Gardening* (1568), is filled with references to classical texts, particularly Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

¹³⁵ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 31; Henderson, "A Shared Passion," 99, 116. Cecil was famous for his devotion to his own garden, often riding his donkey there to contemplate various matters: "He greatly delighted in making gardens, fountains, and walks, which at Theobalds were perfected, most costly, beautifully, and pleasantly, where one might walk two miles in the walks before he came to the ends," Smith, *Anonymous Life of William Cecil*, p. 94. He also passed this love on to his son Robert, who had the elder Tradescant as his gardener.

¹³⁶ Bushnell, *Green Desire*, p. 101. Several poems by Mildred Cecil and her sister addressed to Sylva can be found in the Cambridge University Library, MS Ii 5.37. On Mildred's love of gardening see Croft, ed., *Patronage, Culture and Power*, p. 285.

“which else would grow wilde, and like a wilderness, brambles and weeds choaking up better Plants, and nothing remaining but a Chaos of confusednesse.”¹³⁷ While officials and other gentlemen agreed that husbandry and gardening had the potential to serve as a means to improve the English land and the English people, as Rebecca Bushnell remarks, they always felt it was better to improve others first.¹³⁸ So while the English humanist might tend to his garden, the wild Irishman needed to reconfigure the Irish landscape, alter indigenous land use, and throw off the customs, traditions, and culture that native practices produced.

Moving beyond the influence of books and ideas, another colleague from the Athenian Group was Sir Thomas Smith, author of the *Discourse*, future secretary of state, and promoter of plantations in Ireland: indeed, he sent his illegitimate son to settle the Ards Peninsula, where he was murdered by his tenants, boiled, and fed to dogs. Barnabe Googe’s service in Ireland, before and after dedicating his translation of Heresbach to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, coincided with his interest in translation.¹³⁹ Another translator was Sir Humphrey Gilbert who had accompanied Sidney to Ireland in 1565 and was both soldier and proponent of colonies in Ireland and the New World. In fact, Gilbert proposed that the queen establish an academy to train men who might serve her in the changing circumstances of the late sixteenth century. An important role of the academy would have been the translation of works relevant to agriculture and colonizing adventures.¹⁴⁰ Gilbert was related to the first wave of Irish colonial entrepreneurs, including the Carews, Arthur Champernoun, Richard Grenville, and Warham St. Leger, and was also half-brother

¹³⁷ Christianson, *Riverside Gardens*, p. 180; Henderson, *Tudor House and Garden*, p. 31, quoting Gervase Markham.

¹³⁸ Bushnell, *Green Desire*, p. 29. One illustration of how easy it was to move from agricultural imagery to politics can be seen in a letter from Cecil to the queen: “I could prove it a mystery not mechanical . . . how good clerks told me that moles in fields are like ill subjects in a commonwealth, which are always turning up in the place in which they are bred. But I will not trouble your majesty, but every day pray on my knees that all those that be beavers at your state may come to a mole’s blessing – a knock on the pate and a swing on a tree,” Henderson, “A Shared Passion,” 171.

¹³⁹ Pinkerton, “Barnaby Googe”; Barnabe Googe, *Eclogues, Epitaphs and Sonnets*, Introduction. For the debate on colonies involving Spenser, Smith, Gilbert, and Harvey, see Jardine, “Mastering the Uncouth.”

¹⁴⁰ Gilbert, “Queene Elizabethes Achademy.” See Chidsey, *Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, p. 41. See also Gilbert’s “Discourse on Ireland,” presented to Sir John Perrot in 1572, “Sir Humfrey Gylberte’s Report, 1572; Discourse on Ireland.”

to Raleigh, who would receive thousands of acres in Munster, and sell them off to Richard Boyle, helping to found his prodigious fortune as Earl of Cork.¹⁴¹

A similar tentacle can be traced back to the Earl of Leicester through his brother-in-law Sir Henry Sidney, who had one sister married to the Earl of Sussex and another married to Sir William Fitzwilliam; the latter was cousin to William Cecil's wife, Mildred, and also related to the Fitzwalter earls of Sussex;¹⁴² this in turn brings us full circle back to Spenser and Bryskett, and all these connections are only a tiny sample of the web of men involved in formulating Irish policy under Elizabeth. Surely the views and interests of these influential patrons were well known, so it should come as no surprise that of the torrent of *plots, plats, plans, and discourses* that would soon flood the desks of these officials in London and Dublin, the majority relied on the language of agrarian improvement and looked to a cultivated landscape as the key metaphor for the ordering, civilizing, and improving of Ireland and the Irish. One is reminded of Richard Drayton's claim that "agriculture, as it embraced the government of land and people, provided a language through which Classical concerns about the nature of the state found new inflection."¹⁴³ One of the things that Virgil's *Georgics*, the husbandry manuals, and Gerald of Wales had done was to provide a "cultural yardstick" with which to measure and to condemn pastoral society. According to Robert Bartlett, what pastoralism represented was a *mode*, "a way of life, not an extraneous and unconnected fact about the people" being described. What Gerald of Wales and others saw when they observed Ireland was political fragmentation, incessant strife and violence, immorality, and the "lack of an ordered polity."¹⁴⁴ And if this barbaric way of life were in fact a product of pastoral society, then the introduction of husbandry, cultivation, and an agricultural society might prove to be the key that unlocked the door to the final conquest, the necessary reform of Ireland. The face of the barbarian created by Gerald of Wales and others proved to be an enduring image in English

¹⁴¹ Raleigh sponsored two failed settlements in Roanoke before being executed for actions while seeking El Dorado on his second voyage to Guiana – "a countrey that hath yet her maidenhead . . . the face of the earth hath not been torne, nor the virtue and salt of the soyle spent by manurance," Raleigh's account in Hakluyt, *Principall Navigations*, 2:347; Smyth, "Western Isle of Ireland," 1; Montrose, "Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery."

¹⁴² Sidney went to Ireland with Sussex and served as his deputy for long periods in 1557–59; following the accession of Elizabeth he soon switched patrons, looking to his other brother-in-law, the future Earl of Leicester, for support. Naturally, joining the Leicester faction frequently put him at odds with Sussex.

¹⁴³ Drayton, *Nature's Government*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁴ Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 161, 164.

history, and many humanist officials agreed on the importance of the need for an agricultural makeover in Ireland. The images of husbandry, cultivation, tillage, and civility permeated the many reform proposals for eliminating the barbarism and incivility of Ireland's people, culture, and landscape, informing the reform strategies to be examined in succeeding chapters.