To my father, my mother,
and my daughter, Alessandra

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Camilla Loro

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FOREWORD

This thesis sets out to examine literally Ireland in early modern period, in particular it analyses the dynamics which links Elizabethan colonialist England, two main English authors of the time – William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser - and their perceptions of Ireland as the Other. To begin, I wish to underline that an objective historiography of early modern Ireland was not so easy to find, mainly for two reason: firstly, direct sources such as reports, letters, and written texts, belong only to English writers. Hence, the point of view is the one of the New English who, around the half of the 16th century, moved to Ireland with aims of colonization. Secondly, 15th and 16th century Ireland is seen as a black hole in Irish historiography, because the country heavy suffered the continuous rebellions, initially among the Irish counties, secondly among the Old Irish lords and the New English settlers. This lack of information and sources about the historical period that I was going to study, encouraged however my interest in these dark century of Irish history and the link between Renaissance English literature and Ireland. After having absorbed the historical background, I wanted to work with the sources. I noticed that my curiosity and my will in analisying Anglo-Irish Renaissance period, increased when I started reading reports and proves such as Fynes Moryson's *Itinerary*, Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa*, and Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Therefore, I decided to carry on reading these kinds of texts together with more refined and polished literally texts as Shakespeare's histories and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. I spent two months in Cork attending two courses at University College Cork – one about ancient Ireland and the other about an historical view of Cork city and the Irish landscape in Anglo-Irish literature - where I read some texts, saw some early modern maps, and visited museums and sites which are symbols of English colonization in Ireland. For example, the port of Kinsale, where any hope of freedom for Ireland was definitively erased by England, and where it is possible to visit the Cromwellian Charles Fort where an exhibition about the Battle of Kinsale and the Cromwellian plantations in Munster has been fitted; in Kinsale, there is also the Desmond's Castle, the house of one of the most arduous

enemy of the other main family in County Munster, the Ormond, for whom Edmund Spenser took pride in working; by visiting both Desmond's Castle and Ormond's Castle in Kilkenny, which was the medieval capital of Ireland, I could perceive what early modern English writes meant for the rude habits of the wild Irish and the refinement of Old English chiefs in Ireland, who gained advantages from the English monarchy. I was particularly impressed by the shape and the decorations of the Picture Gallery Wing in Kilkenny Castle, because it reminds me of a room of another important building that Queen Elizabeth wanted in Dublin to 'stop Ireland being infected by popery and other ill qualities'[1]: the Trinity College's Long Room, where the famous Book of Kells is proudly safeguarded. Finally, I wanted to see Spenser's Kilcolman Castle, which is currently a ruin and it is difficult to reach. It stands in the green, sometimes mystical, Irish landscape, which is so different from the English one. Going back to the idea that 15th and 16th centuries in Ireland are 'dark' and information and sources of that time are very few, I want to specify that in thematic areas of both Cork Public Museum and the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, items, objects, and well preserved texts are almost totally absent.

With the first chapter, the thesis begins from the darkest and difficult historical event in early modern Ireland: the Battle of Kinsale, after which the ancient Celtic world started to vanishing gradually. However, from that moment in 1601, Ireland began to be considered both as being the first colony of English worldwide empire, the perfect fellow of Spain, and a promoter of the Counter-Reformation. After having described the social situation in Ireland where three main groups – the Old English, the New English, and the 'meer Irish' - coexisted, I carried on compare literal voices among the New English with one of the Old English. Thanks to the analysis of some passages of Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa as Eirinn*, where the Old English poet, by reproducing the spirit of the old Gaelic bards, writes a history about Celtic Ireland to find a link between the early Catholicism in Ireland and the Counter-Reformation, a new militant Irish spirit against the new English 'invaders' emerges. The famous 'Flight of the Earls',

[1] Cited in R. Killeen, *Historical Atlas of Dublin*, (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 2011), p.54.

during which the main representatives of the ancient bardic poetry on Ireland migrated to continental Europe to slip away from the prosecutions of the Catholics in Ireland with the arrival of the English Protestants, was important for the survival of ancient texts and to build an embryonic idea of Irish identity: Catholic not-English.

Moreover, in his works, Keating criticises all those New English who wrote 'a false history of Ireland'[2]. It is interesting to see how Keating demolishes all English common convictions about the Irish, beginning from the medieval reporter Gerald of Wales, carrying on with Raphael Holinshed, till the Dubliner Old English Richard Stanihurst.

Irish identity as anti-English sentiment had been shaping also within the country: the New English which arrived from the half of the 15th century to colonise the land and civilise the rude and barbarous population of Ireland, found many difficulties in managing the social and political situation. It is important to remember that the New English wanted to impose their Englishness over all the populations of their colonies, but, in Ireland, they found a lot of difficulties to do this. On one hand, to control a territory, they needed a clear and detailed map, but the Irish, by changing physical borderlines of their counties and natural point of references, minimised the aims of the English; on the other, the new settlers perceived the Irish as being completely different from the English, and this fact was another difficulty for Ireland's colonization. Fynes Moryson and Raphael Holinshed's travel literature about the Irish landscape, social and political situation, and the habits of the wild Irish, helps us to understand that Ireland would not be so easy to undermine, and above all, that the Irish would not replace their traditional customs and Gaelic identity with those of the English. At the end of the chapter, thanks to the reading of the texts, three keywords – identity, Englishness, and the Other – have to be kept in mind for the following chapters.

If the first chapter deals mainly with the Irish social and political situation, which is functional to know why the Irish and Ireland are considered and represented as the Other in the following chapters, the second chapter is focused on England and new historical, cultural, and literal events were developing during

[2] Cited in C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 9.

the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Humanism, Renaissance, Reformation, and transatlantic voyages, were early modern phenomena which were spreading through European powers and Tudors' England. The developing of these movements simultaneously allowed the English to shape a concept of their own identity by mirroring that of the Others. It is interesting to analyse how the concept of 'Other' is linked to that of race, social group, and self-perception. The purpose of the chapter to explain how Englishness had been shaped and which important facts had led England and the English to become so proud of their Englishness among other European powers and the colonies. Once having understood that England needed a mirrored image of itself to define the identity of its own and that the Others could be many entities, such as new discovered lands, people of different religion, of different skin colour, and simply 'outsiders' who came from another nation but who live within England's boundaries, the analysis carries on explaining how these categories of Others were represented on Elizabethan stages. Mentioning shortly William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* and concentrating on Ben Jonson's Irish character Captain Whit in *Bartholomew Fair*, I wanted to demonstrate that by representing on stage foreigner characters through stereotypes, for example, typical clothes, habits, or language, and by showing nationalistic and colonial attitudes, on one hand, the English undermined different racial groups an social categories, on the other, they were starting to perceive that other identities could become a threat and a real problem for the English monarchy and the Englishness.

The first half of the thesis tries to define the early modern Irish background and the dynamics which were happening in England and among the English and the Others, with particular reference to the Irish. The second half concerns the representations of the Irish and of the Irish context that were provided by two main Elizabethans writers: William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser. By keeping in mind that Spenser was directly involved in Elizabethan Irish expeditions at the end of the 16th century, and that nobody can say that Shakespeare had never visited Ireland in his life, I wanted to report how Ireland and its inhabitants are represented on stage and literally in a direct, sometimes hidden, refined way. What links each representation is that everything that was

not considered to be English – the Irish and Ireland – is something Other, which could help in self-defining and threat a nation or identities self.

The third chapter analyses how the history plays in Elizabethan period were functional to describe England's political, economic, and cultural situation, by staging ancient English Kings, Roman emperors, and past settings. On one hand, history plays were a powerful method to show the Englishness and Elizabethan empire proud nationalism to an audience which were going to become more and more various, well-educated, and refined; on the other, the playwrights could stage indirectly what was the weaknesses of the British nation and of its Queen's policies, by bypassing the censorship system which Elizabeth intensely wanted to protect her monarchy. By choosing the three Shakespearean history plays which partially concern with Ireland – *Henry V*, *Richard II*, and *2 Henry VI* – I wanted to explain how the Irish otherness corresponds both to different kinds of alterities and to many English worries and problems with the censored and undefined situation in Ireland. The Irish Captain Macmorris will be the signal for the English about identities uncertainty; *Richard II* will be functional to explain the way to self-defining through knowing and assimilating the Other; and finally, the ambiguous character of Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI* will be the Other which frightens England both from inside and from outside national boundaries. At the end, it is important to underline that the represented dynamics between England and Ireland, the English and the Irish, and Englishness and Otherness, reflect that masculinised world, which was ruled by a powerful woman, where Shakespeare lived and work.

In an excessively masculinised Ireland, where only male English men were sent by the Queen to rule and where they felt free to show their masculinity and their Englishness with violence against the native Irish, Spenser produced his main work, *The Faerie Queen*, between the 1591 and 1596. Spenser wanted to 'double' up the idea of difference. Not only does he represent Ireland as the Other by using figures of alterity, such as degenerate mothers, amazons, and witches, he also uses women as symbols of the 'Others'. After a short explanation about the difference of gender in Renaissance England, and English perceptions about 15th and 16th century Irish women, the chapter carries of with the analysis of some

female figures of *The Faerie Queen* – Errour, Charissa, Radigund, Acrasia, Irena, and Diana – who are functional to describe what the New English perceived in Ireland in relation to the native 'others' and their female Queen. Freedom in ruling a savaged and lawless country, will of impose their identity, threat for the cruel and rebellious inhabitants, and fear of the Queen's opinion about their actions, were English settlers' sentiments, which Spenser cleverly represents through female figures. Moreover, at the end of the chapter, Spenser's idea about a never-ending matter of Ireland can be read through the final analysis of the wasted Irish landscape, which condemn the wrong and sometimes absurd policy of the English monarchy in Ireland.

To conclude, the title *Ireland as the Other in Shakespeare and Spenser* for this thesis ideally unites all chapters with their focus on early modern Ireland, a developing conception of the Other in early modern England, and the representations of Irish otherness in Shakespeare and Spenser.

CHAPTER 1

1. Keating and the 'false history of Ireland'

> Where is my Chief, my Master, this bleak night, mavrone!
> O, cold, cold, miserably cold is this bleak night for Hugh;
> Its showery, arrowy, speary, sleet pierceth one through and through,
> Pierceth one to the very bone.[3]

In James Clarence Mangan's translation of *O' Hissey's Ode to the Maguire* belonging to Eochaıdh Ó hEoghusa's poems of the Irish bardic school, the lament for the difficult situation of the warrior Hugh Maguire of Fermanagh, marching with O'Neill to Kinsale, marks the beginning of the end of classical Irish literature. In 1601, the English army of Lord Mountjoy defeated the Irish force under Hugh O'Neill; Spanish efforts against England failed and Ireland was completely conquered by the Tudors. The leaders of Gaelic Ireland, in the famous Flight of the Earls, moved to the continent and reached the most famous seminaries throughout Europe leaving their country with no political leadership. The Irish leaders, through their polemical literature, helped the Catholics continental powers and 'Ireland became a perfect battleground of the European Counter-Reformation'.[4] The estates owned by the Old Gaelic and Anglo-Irish leaders were confiscated by the English, and their political independence was considerably reduced; English authority spread over the entire island and the Gaelic Ireland with its social structure was completely undermined. On one hand, England was shaping Ireland as its first colony of its empire, which expanded over the centuries, on the other hand, Ireland was only a geographical entity without any political structure. After having begun with popular discontent in England, the Reformation was further strengthened under the Tudor dynasty, not without persecution, danger and death everywhere, and reached Ireland with the arrival of the 'New English'. According to Highley's

[3] Cited in S. Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame press, 1994), p. 18.
[4] T. W. Moody, 'Introduction: early modern Ireland' in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (ed.), *Eearly Modern Ireland: 1534 – 1691*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. xxxix – lxiii.

classification of Irish society, in the 16th century, three main groups of people existed: the Old English (*Sean Ghaill*), the New English (*Nua Ghaill*) and the 'meer' Gaelic Irish (*Gaedhil*). The first group included the descendants of Anglo-Norman families who had started to travel to Ireland from the 12th century; they lived in a small area surrounding Dublin called 'The Pale', where they resisted Gaelicization and considered themselves as being representatives of the English Crown and superior to the 'meer' Irish. After the Reformation, the political independence of the Old English was definitively destroyed with the arrival of the New English, 'the newcomers', a heterogeneous group of men from Protestant England who were administrators, soldiers, planters, churchmen but also intellectuals and writers[5]. The New English imposed their faith to all Irish population; however the Old English, after having seen their lands confiscated, sustained the common cause of Counter-Reformation and independence of the nation with the Gaelic Irish during the rebellion of 1641 against the English monarchy. The idea of a united catholic Ireland, supported by the motto '*pro deo, pro rege, pro patria Hibernia unanimis'*,[6] was wiped out, after the final defeat of Charles I in 1649 and Oliver Cromwell's creation of a Puritan commonwealth, whose task was to reconquer Ireland with violence and death and carrying out the most catastrophic land-confiscation.

In the 17th century, Ireland's language, religion and society were completely dominated by the English, old bardic poets survived only among the people and their poetry became mostly oral. However, in continental Europe, the Gaelic 'Earls' who had fled from their country, began pondering about Irish political situation, and their Catholic Reformation against the Protestant enemy. The old Irish poets embodied, in their poems, a 'new militant Irish spirit'[7] conforming to their most ancient poetry, literature and traditions and reflected in theological, historical and literary publications that national feeling which was divulged all around modern Europe.

[5] C. Highley, '*Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*', (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1997), p.4.
[6] T. W. Moody, 'Introduction: early modern Ireland', p. xxxix – lxiii.
[7] S. Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 18.

The most remarkable among this group of poets, revisionists and historians was Geoffrey Keating, Seathrún Céitinn (*c*. 1570 – *c*. 1650), who collected a vast amount of material over Ireland, such as ancient manuscripts and annals during his priesthood in France; with his best known *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (*The History of Ireland*), he aspired to provide a millenarian hopeful history for the Gael by explaining the defeat of Catholic and Gaelic civilisation. Two features of *The History* are very interesting: Keating's spirit in writing his 'critically naïve and back-working compilation' [8] and the polemic against foreign, mainly English, commentators' view of Ireland, to reveal 'the truth of the state of the country, and the condition of the people who inhabit it'. [9]

Keating was a proud representative of the Old English community in Ireland, descendant of the Anglo-Norman dynasty who came from England in the 12th century. In *The History*, Keating personifies an ancient Irish medieval poet with his values and traditions, however writing in a critical humanistic style. In the VIth and VIIth centuries, Irish poets were mainly monastic scribes and their aim was to preserve traditional lore (*senchas*) in relation to the system of Christian belief, and to the pride of their pagan history linked to the great sagas. As a result, their works were a perfect mixture of pagan and Christian elements. These kinds of works survived the arrival of the Normans in 1169, and the traditional themes were combined with a closer intimacy with the natural world and solitude. In conclusion, the Irish poets' function in the Middle Ages was to preserve ancient traditions, both pagan and Christian, through literature and poetry. In a completely different contest, during the years of the Counter-Reformation, spreading around the continent, Keating worked in the same way as the ancient bardic poets: he wrote down a millenarian history of Ireland to establish a historical continuity between Early Irish Christianity and the Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation, and to shape Irish nationality rhetoric against English conquerors. Keating, in considering the Northern-European national monarchies' ideologies, imagined Ireland as being a unitary political

[8] B. Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland', in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield, and W. Maley (ed.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict: 1534 – 1660*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 166.

[9] Seathrún Céitinn, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (*c*. 1634), ed. and trans. Edward Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen, (Ex-classics Project: www.exclassics.com, 2009), p. 34.

realm, whose mainstays are *res publica/maitheas puiblí* (the commonwealth), *patria/tír athardha* (fatherland) and *regnum/ríocht* (the kingdom). These ideas developed from Renaissance humanism philosophies and from the revival of classical antiquity. There were three chronological ages in Irish history within origin-legend. Firstly, there was the late antiquity period when the Celts settled in Ireland, where lived ancient Irish heroes such as *Fianna*, *Cu Chulain* and the Gaelic patriarch *Mil*;[10] secondly, at the beginning of the early medieval period, the pope sent Saint Patrick to evangelise Ireland, and during the island's conversion, the Celtic Church, mirroring tribal Celtic society, developed into monastic federalism. The third phase, the Anglo-Norman Settlement, was a radical turning-point in the course of Irish history: the Anglo-Normans, who reached Ireland in 1170, were not 'foreigner *conquistadores*': they were 'lieges of the island's legitimate overlord duly authorized to go to the defence of his first native vassal', who was Henry II, King of England.[11] Describing the features of the Anglo-Norman conquest, and proud of his family's Old English origins, Keating showed, by contrast, the different elements of the 'new pagan' conquest of Ireland: the invasion of the foreign Protestant English in the 16th century. Keating underlined a distinction between the pagan and Christian method of conquest. On one hand, the Christian conquest, which was the Anglo-Norman conquest, was perceived as a being respectful and civil coexistence of conquerors and natives; on the other, the pagan invasion, where all the elements refer to Tudor newcomers, ' the natives are forcibly expelled, their language is suppressed and the territory is repopulated by colonists from the metropolis'.[12]

While Keating's aim of building and preserving a new perception Ireland, with the material from the past, was perfectly coherent with the function of ancient Irish poets and the rising ideologies of national identities, the distinction between the two conquests of Ireland, over the centuries, appeared as a clear polemical attack against 'all those who have written on Ireland [and] continuously sought to cast reproach and blame both on the old foreign settlers

[10] B. Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland', pp. 168 – 171.
[11] B. Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland', p. 177.
[12] B. Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland', p. 183.

and on the native Irish'.[13] In the long preface to his work, Keating denounced all the testimonies of 'the false history of Ireland'[14] given by English historians and writers, and he mainly attacked the work of Gerald of Wales, Giraldus Cambrensis in Latin (*c*. 1146 – *c*. 1223). In his *Topographia Hibernica* and *Expugnatio Hibernica*, Gerald of Wales described his journey in Ireland between the years 1183 – 1185, dealing with the Irish landscape, the island's inhabitants, and the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. In spite of an objective style of writing, careful research among documents and annals of the period, Gerald of Wales was unable to hide his anti-Irish sentiment. Not only was he the first man who represented the Irish population and their habits in a very detailed and disdainful way, but he was also the first who coined the distinction between the Anglo-Normans rulers of the Pale and the rude 'meer' Irish living in 'another world, and are thus excluded from civilized nations, they learn nothing and practice nothing, but the barbarism in which they are born and bred and which sticks to them like a second nature'[15]. Gerald's distinction between the 'civil' English and the 'barbarous' Celts was the most influential general idea on Ireland circulating in the Middle Ages, which endured into the Early Modern period among 'the new foreigners who have written concerning Ireland'[16]. Keating, by contrast, in the preface of his *History*, often accused Gerald of being a liar, because 'there is not a lay nor a letter, of old record or of an ancient text, chronicle or annals, supporting him in his lie'[17]. For example, according to an episode written by Gerald about wonders and miracles of Ireland, there was a well both in Munster and in Ulster which made men grey when they washed their hair or bread in its water; Keating's comment on these prodigious events was ironic: 'there are not the like of these wells in Ireland now, and I do not think there were in the time of Cambrensis, but these wonders were (merely) set forth as a colouring for his lies'[18].

[13] *Foras Feasa*, 'The author to the reader', p. 34.
[14] Cited in C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 9.
[15] Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica*, (c. 1187), ed. and trans. Thomas Forester and Thomas Wright, (Parenthesis Publications Medieval Latin Series: Cambridge, Ontario, 2000), III, X, p. 70.
[16] *Foras Feasa*, p. 36.
[17] *Foras Feasa*, p. 37.
[18] *Foras Feasa*, p. 37.

It might be noted that Keating, in his *History*, was extremely polemic not only against English writers but also against his compatriot Richard Stanihurst (1547 - 1618) and his contribution to Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Although Stanihurst was a member of an influential Catholic family of the Pale, and shared the same Old English background as Keating[19] – even if Keating's provenance was East Munster - , in Keating's *History*, Stanihurst was described as being an arrogant young prig 'without knowledge of this matter, since he had never seen the records of Ireland, from which he might have known her previous condition' and full of prejudices against Gaelic natives[20]. In Keating's opinion it was not enough to describe Ireland as a land of abundant resources and natural wonders, and to censure the terms of 'mere Irish' and 'rude people', as Stanihurst did in his *A Plaine and Perfect Description of Ireland* [21] within Holinshed's *Chronicles*; the heart of Keating's polemical against Stanihurst was the phenomenon of Gaelicisation. It is argued that in 1366, the Irish parliament in Dublin and the Duke of Clarence, who had been sent in Ireland by Edward III, drafted the Statutes of Kilkenny which forbade intermarriages among Gaelic natives and Anglo-Normans of the Pale, so that the English settlers could preserve their cultural and intellectual purity. It could perhaps be argued that Stanihurst was influenced by this old racial prejudice when he wrote a passage about the introduction of the Irish language into the Pale: '[…] this canker took such deep root, as the body that before was hole and sound was by little festered and in a manner wholly putrified […]'[22]. Stanihurst's idea of conversion of the Irish to English civilty had to be reached by means of a peaceable education policy.[23] On one hand, Stanihurst's patriotism corresponded to the Anglicization of natives, that is to say that Gaelic elements in Ireland had to disappear over the centuries; on the other, according to Keating's view, the millenarian history and traditions preserved through the Gaelic language, culture and literature were the basis for an independent Catholic Ireland against the Protestant England.

[19] B. Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating: Apologist of Irish Ireland', p. 179.
[20] *Foras Feasa*, p. 40.
[21] C. Highley, '*Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*', p. 10.
[22] Cited in S. Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 16.
[23] S. Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 19.

2. Cartography in early modern Ireland: a way to mark identities

When in 1534 King Henry III exchanged his title of 'lord' into 'King of Ireland' and English administrators had been sent to govern that 'nightmare terrain'[24] which was populated by wild rebels, official cartography began developing both in England and in Ireland. It is argued that maps showed useful information about boundaries, location of castles and forts, strategic river crossings, harbors, forests and bogs; that is to say that maps were usually made by English officials to control a particular dangerous area inhabited by a likewise irksome population.

However, 'the Realm of Irelande'[25] - as Edmund Spenser and Sir Henry Sidney usually referred to Ireland - , could never find a fixed image of itself. English administrators in Ireland, during their governance, usually made periodic expeditions to inspect the surroundings of the main coastal towns, and by trying to map unknown lands, they imposed their spatial elements, which sometimes remained nebulous and incomprehensible. The work of mapping Ireland resulted especially difficult for the Queen's officials because of two reasons. Firstly, a detailed map of Ireland could not be made by English officials without the collaboration of Irish natives who, however, resulted completely useless because they could speak only Gaelic. Sir Henry Sidney, twice Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1566-71 and in 1575-8, from his tenure in the town of Youghall in the province of Munster, described Irish countryside as 'remote Places, where the *English* Tongue is not understood'[26] and showed justifiable frustration which was typical of English colonizers who felt 'outsiders' in a strange country without a map. The second reason of the inability of the English in establishing a definite map of Irish colony was the presence of Irish rebels who populated the majority of the country. English administrators' disorientation, which was triggered by ambiguous spatial coordinates, was registered in officials documents. These kind of reports about destroyed castles,

[24] D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield, and W. Maley (ed.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict: 1534 – 1660*, p. 84.
[25] Cited in D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', p. 81.
[26] Cited in D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', p. 84.

burned villages, and changed borderlines proved English fear for the rebels. For example, Sir Henry Sideney writes:

> […] horrible and lamentable Spectacles there are to beholde, as the Burninge of Villages, the Ruyn of Churches, the Wasting of such as have ben good Towns and Castells: Yea, the view of the Bones and Sculles of the ded Subjectes.[27]

The Irish rebels continually destroyed the borderlines created by the English, denying their sporadic and local cartography and leaving them without a detailed representation of Ireland. [28]

This long and continuous English research – therefore, without results - of fixed spatial elements and the consequent Irish denial, reflected what was the endless 'Matter' [29] of Ireland for English monarchy. By trying to produce a complete and clear cartography of Ireland, the English wanted to impose their ideology of conquest and to satisfy their colonial needs which were modelled upon the concept of nationhood. The lack of maps, which were necessary to the English for their administrative structure, corresponded to a failure of English aims in Ireland. Therefore, the English emphasized social and cultural identities' formation, by marking the existence of political and cultural differences. However, the common view of Ireland as a fluctuating colony without a detailed cartography was the result of an incomplete English nationalism in Ireland which led to an endless Irish question.

3. Rebellious enemies in a dangerous land

Paradoxically, the name of Ireland has always been linked to that of England. The Greek geographer Ptolemy, in his treatise *Almagest*, mentioned Ireland as *Mikra Bretannia*, in contrast to *Megale Britannia* which was Great Britain. Likewise, Holinshed in his *Chronicles* (1587) claimed that a famous schoolman born in Ireland, 'Iohannes', was supposed to be born in Scotland, for

[27] Cited in D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', p. 84.
[28] D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', p. 83.
[29] Cited in D.F. Baker, 'Off the map: charting uncertainty in Renaissance Ireland', p. 77.

actual Scotland's name was *Scotia minor* and Ireland was called *Scotia maior* [30]. Moreover, Holinshed supposed that the Ireland's Roman name, according to ancient writers, was 'Hiberinia, as to saie, the Winterland'[31]; however, Holinshed affirmed that thinking about Ireland as a Winterland was an error, because the name Hibernia derived from the

> Hispaniards (the founders of the Irish) for deuotion towards Hispaine, called then Iberia of Iberus the sonne of Iuball […]. And from Ibernia, procéedeth Iberland, or Iuerland; from Iuerland, by contraction Ireland.[32]

Therefore, the name of Ireland seemed to be a prelude to the country's history, for its everlasting contrast with nearby England and its bond with Spain's Catholic faith.

In reading different descriptions of Ireland of the 16th century, such as those of Stanihurst and Moryson, richness in resources and natural wonders were typical elements of Ireland; similarly, Spenser described Ireland as 'a most beautiful and sweet country as any is under heaven' full of natural beauties that 'if some princes in the world had them, they would soon hope to be lords of all the seas, and ere long of all the world'[33]. At the same time, in each descriptions, Ireland was described as being a dangerous country both for its natural geography and for its inhabitants. According to Moryson, "Ireland is uneven, mountainous, soft, watry, woody, and open to windes and flouds of raine", full of bogs over the country, which were very "dangerous to passe" [34]. Moreover, Ireland was considered as being a risky land, for its rough sea and for its coasts, which were always covered with mist. Irish natural elements were often described by contrast to the English ones: for example, Irish winter was considered milder than in England, therefore pastures in Ireland were greener and, for cloudy weather and watery land, fruits and flowers were rarer in Ireland

[30] Rafael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, (1587), ed. The Holinshed Project, http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/index.shtml, vol. 3, I.
[31] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, I.
[32] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, I.
[33] Cited in A. Loomba, 'Outsiders in Shakespeare's England', in M. de Grazia and S. Wells (ed.), T*he Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 162.
[34] Fynes Moryson, *The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson in Four Volumes: Volume IV*, (1617), ed. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, (Toronto: Victoria University), vol. IV, p. 191.

than in England. However, Moryson in his *Itinerary* (1617) didn't hesitate to have a go at Ireland's inhabitants with relation to their soils:

> Also I observed that the best sort of flowers and fruits are much rarer in Ireland than in England, which notwithstanding is more to bee attributed to the inhabitants than to the ayre. For Ireland being oft troubled with rebellions, and the rebels not only being idle themselves, but in natural malice destroying the labours of other men, and cutting up the very trees of fruit for the same cause, or else to burn them: for these reasons the inhabitants take lesse pleasure to till their grounds or plant trees, content to live for the day in continuall feare of like mischiefes.[35]

At the same time, 'inhabitants barbarousnes and slothfulnesse'[36] hindered the public good, because 'rude inhabitants of Ireland', so called by Holinshed, were 'unwilling to enrich their princes and country'[37]; therefore, in the 16th century, Ireland was very rich in metals and marble, especially near Dublin, Kilkenny, and Cork, but all this raw material was not exploited in a proper way.

Thus, by taking inspiration only from material belonging to English writers, because reports from the Irish of the 16th century were destroyed during following rebellions, it is worthwhile to sketch a geographical description of Ireland in Elizabethan period.

Ireland appeared as being a country very rich in mountains, even if they were not very high, in uplands, in rivers and in lakes. Mountains were considered as being a zone of refuge for the rebels, in particular the mountain chains of Connacht, Munster and Ulster, or those mountains surrounding Dublin and the Pale: the 'Irish mountains', or 'mountains rebels'[38], as these mountains were called, were supposed to be very dangerous for the presence of the rebels who could attack the city from the surroundings. River Shannon, by making many lakes along his course, was the longest river flowing in Ireland, and was very rich in fishes such as salmons and other species of freshwater fishes. It is generally agreed that maps of 16th and 17th century were lacking in names of rivers and lakes, and the only names which were reported by English administrators were in Gaelic: Lough Erne and Lough Neagh in the North of

[35] *Itinerary*, p. 192.
[36] *Itinerary*, p. 195.
[37] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, II.
[38] Cited in R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (ed.), *Eearly Modern Ireland: 1534 – 1691*, p. 145.

Ireland were generally mentioned.[39] Likewise, mountains, rivers and lakes were obstacles for the English and, at the same time, elements of protection for rebels. This was suggested in Moryson's *Itinerary*:

> Ulster and the western part of Mounster yeeld vast woods, in which the Rebels, cutting up trees and casting them on heaps, used to stop the passages, and therein, as also upon fenny & Boggy places, to fight with the English.[40]

This may indicate that the nature of Ireland was a constant threat for the English, and helpful for Irish inhabitants. Ireland was mainly covered with woodlands, except in Leinster, in the Pale and in north-west Kildare, which were boggy areas. The dominant species of trees were hardwoods for examples oak, especially in Cork and Kerry valleys (called 'Glinnes' by the inhabitants)[41], ash, hazel, birch, and willow, whose timber were useful in building hogsheads, barrel staves, and pipe-staves, which were exported to England, Scotland, France, and the Low Countries [42].

Natural bogs, mainly in the East coast, interchanged with non-natural waste lands set up by military campaigns between the English and the Irish in the 16th and 17th centuries. This may indicate that, in this period, Ireland was like a battlefield, where towns, villages, and soils were incessantly devastated, and settlements and castles were brutally burned and ruined. Most regions and towns of Ireland from the North to the South, in particular County Galway, Meath, the Pale, and Munster were entirely devastated, and the Irish landscape was completely naked and totally spoiled. As Holinshed in his *Chronicles* observed,

> The aire is verie holesome, not generallie so cleare and subtill as that of England. The weather is more temperate, being not so warme in summer, nor cold in winter, as it is in England and Flanders.[43]

In 1600, weather in Ireland was supposed to be rainy and mild, because of the dangerous Irish Sea, and it allowed inhabitants to grow good harvests and to

[39] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 145.
[40] *Itinerary*, p. 195.
[41] *Itinerary*, p. 195.
[42] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 164.
[43] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, II.

breed ‘infinite multitudes of cattle’[44]. Pastoralism was practiced by ‘very vagabond rebels’[45], who at the end of the day, generally brought their cows within castle walls. The Irish neither consumed their cattle meat, nor earned anything by their hides, however, tables in the English administrators’ halls were always rich in selected meat, for instance venison. Moryson, in his *Itinerary*, seemed to underline that the Irish habits were completely different from the English ones. For example, he observed many red deer and fallow deer in parks of the Earl of Ormond in Munster and the Earl of Kildare in Leister: ‘the inhabitants used not then to hunt them, but onely the Governours and Commanders had them sometimes killed with the piece’[46].

In carrying on his description of Irish fauna, Moryson suggested also that Ireland was very rich in birds and fowls, and commented upon species of eagles and hawks, for example gross-hawks, which didn’t live in England, and stressed little skills in birding of the Irish, in spite of those of the English. Moreover, he pointed out that Irish horses, called hobbies, ‘are much more inferior to our geldings in strength to endure long journies’ [47]. All these things considered, both Holinshed and Moryson perceived Ireland as being a country different from England, and in describing Ireland’s natural characteristics they drew some England’s elements; in other words, they were defining England by contrast from Ireland, like a country whose natural elements, people and creatures living in it, were different in their habits and physical peculiarities.

Ireland’s main output in the 17th century came from wool, which was shorn from Irish ‘flocks of Sheepe’[48] and linen yarn. The inhabitants worn typical clothes, called ‘rugs – which the best were produced in Waterford -, mantles and linen clothes ‘as the wild Irish used to weare 30 of 40 ells in a shirt all gathered and wrinkled, and washed in Saffron because they never put them off till they were worne out’[49].

[44] *Itinerary*, p. 193.
[45] *Itinerary*, p. 193.
[46] *Itinerary*, p. 193.
[47] *Itinerary*, p. 194.
[48] *Itinerary*, p. 194.
[49] *Itinerary*, p. 194.

3.1 Political division: a mosaic of counties

'This Ireland, according to the inhabitants, is divided into two parts, the wild Irish, and the English-Irish, living in the English pale. But of the old kingdoms, five in number, it is divided into five parts'[50]. Political boundaries of Ireland in the 17th century, seemed to be an incessantly changing mosaic of regions, called counties, whose borders where not fixed and clearly defined. There were both extraneous administrative units, which had been settled by the Anglo-Normans in the 12th century, and indigenous units, which were mostly governed by Irish chiefs and, generally, these regions were named both in English and in Gaelic. Munster, which the Irish called Mowne, was the first part of Ireland and it was subdued into six counties: Kerry, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary, Holy Cross and Waterford, in addition to the seventh county of Desmond. In Munster both native Irish and Anglo-Irish lived, even if the latter inhabited mainly in port towns and benefited of great privileges from English monarchy, because they 'long faithfully helped the English in subduing Ireland'[51]. Leinster, was the second part of Ireland, where Dublin, 'called Divelin by the English, and Balacleigh (as seated upon hurdles) by the Irish'[52], was settled, and it was Ireland's chief city and English administrative centre. In Leinster there were also the counties of Catherlough, Kilkenny, Wexford, Dublin, Kildare, King's County, Queen's County, Longford, Ferns and Wicklow. The third part was the English Meath (*Midia* or *Media* in Irish), which was next to the English Pale; Meath was supposed to be the most devastated region because of the continuing movement of armies. In the North-West, there were the region of Connacht, which were divided into six counties called Clare, Leintrim, Galway – 'lying upon the sea, is frequently inhabited with civil people, and fairely built'[53] -, Roscommon, Mayo and Sligo. The fifth part, was Ulster, in the North-East of the country, whose counties were Lowth, mainly inhabited by

[50] *Itinerary*, pp. 185 – 186.
[51] *Itinerary*, p. 187.
[52] *Itinerary*, p. 188.
[53] *Itinerary*, p. 190.

the Anglo-Irish, Down, 'seate of a bishop, and famous for the burial of St. Patrick, St. Bridget, and St. Columb'[54], Antrim and the rebellious Tyrone.

The oldest towns of Ireland, such as Dublin and Cork, were perceived as being civilized by the English, and as being always in contrast with the wild and warring countryside. Although communication system was very poor, because transfers took place by small ships through havens and rivers, English administration allowed Ireland to establish a network throughout all island. A sort of 'wheel-less slide-car'[55] were used to reach the main towns through few roads upon a boggy soil. However, as soon as the English tried to impose a new kind of administrative method, as the plantations in Munster, the opposition of the natives was not long in coming.

In Elizabethan Ireland, there were three kinds of settlements, whose style was a mixture of past and present forms. Hamlets and villages were generally set outside the walls of the towns, where there were castles and tower houses which were built in the later medieval period and decorated following the fashion English style. The Old English and the Irish lords' houses were adorned with colored walls, windows and chimneys, that is to say that chiefs and lords had a great need of exhibit their power and privileges[56]. Holinshed, in his *Chronicles*, sketched a description of the castle of Dublin and wrote that 'this castle hath béene of late much beautified with sundrie and gorgeous buildings in the time of sir Henrie Sideneie, sometimes lord deputie of Ireland'[57]. In the countryside, it was easy to find some isolated dwellings, especially in Munster, which were much exposed to rebels' attacks and ambushes. Moreover, there were some scattered gentlemen' residences in typical raths, a sort of fortified ringforts, and crannogs, which were settlements very similar to pile dwellings which were generally set on the coasts of the lakes.

[54] *Itinerary*, p. 190.
[55] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 163.
[56] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 156 – 157.
[57] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, III.

3.2 The 'meer' Irish: wild people with barbarous habits

After having analysed a geo-political division of Ireland, it is worthwhile to consider different dispositions about social categories in Ireland and some habits of the inhabitants, by trying to find a useful conclusion according to perceptions and opinions about Ireland of the English writers.

> There is also another diuision of Ireland, into the English pale, and the Irishrie. For when Ireland was subdued by the English, diuerse of the conquerors planted themselues néere to Dublin, and […] they feazed awaie the Irish; insomuch as the countrie became méere English, and there of it was termed the English pale. […] The inhabitants of the English pale haue béene in old time so much addicted to their ciuiltie, and so farre sequesered from barbarous sauagenesse, as their onelie mother tongue was English.[58]

Holinshed's words mark a clear distinction between what belonged to the English and the English Pale and what was 'anything else' than English, that is to say what was considered as being 'meer Irish'. Likewise, Stanihurst made a social division of Ireland, splitting the New English, seen as being foreigners, and Gaelic world. This separation derived both from the Statutes of Kilkenny (1366), which was considered the first effort against intermarriages among Anglo-Irish noble families and Gaelic lords, and English perception of the Irish as an inferior uncivilized people.

The first clear difference between an Anglo-Irish and an Irish man was language. On one hand, English was spoken within the English Pale and among of New English settlers, on the other, the majority of the population, both within the Pale and in whole country, spoke the Irish tongue, 'sacred as the Hebrue, as learned as the Gréeke, as fluent as the Latine, as amarous as the Italian, as corteus as the Spanish, as courtlike as the Fench'.[59] English writers were aware of this distinction; however, they noticed that English language was gradually infected by Gaelic, and this mixture, which could be noticed in strange phrase structure, in curious pronunciation, and in varied lexicon, was perceived as being a canker for the noble English tongue and a worry for the monarchy's aims over Ireland. The conquest of Ireland had to take place at different levels - political,

[58] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, I.
[59] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, I.

social, cultural and linguistic - because the English couldn't rule a country where the people couldn't understand the language which the laws were written in.

The Gaelic way of life, 'gavelkind' in English, had its roots in prehistory, and belonged to the majority of population, mainly in south and west Leinster, Connacht, Ulster, west Meath and south-west Munster. However, with the arrival of English military forces and their colonial policy, the Gaelic system started to be violently destroyed, and the Irish were subdued not without difficulties for the English. For example, considering rural landscape of Ireland in the 16th century, it would appear that the traditional Gaelic tillage, which had been settled in the Pale, Leinster and Munster by the Anglo-Normans and their descendants, with the arrival of the New English, was replaced by enclosed lands. The tillage tradition could have been practiced in two different methods: the first one concerned a nomadic way of life of farmers, who used seasonal hills and mountains' fields for their pastures and practiced transhumance usually from May to autumn; this pastoral tradition was typical in north-western Europe, and it was highly widespread in north lands and in the remote areas of Ireland. Secondly, in the Pale, Leinster and Munster, there was a so called 'lowland' economy, whose models were European lowlands, and it was a sedentary kind of tillage. Feudal land tenures and villages produced natural goods, which were destined to the nearest port towns in the coasts. As soon the Irish perceived the danger of English colonization, they began building boundaries arounds their fields and tenures, by erecting stone walls and amassing turf.[60] This change was seen by the English as being a way to prevent Anglicization, and the English soldiers were constantly bothered by the behavior their new host, who was not going to leave his secular way of life.

Considering the medieval descriptions of Ireland, where Gerald of Wales' work was the main reference, customs and habits concerned military sphere. According to Gerald, in the medieval period, Irish warriors had three kinds of weapons - short spears, darts and axes of iron bought from the Norwegians – and didn't wear any hamlet as protection of their heads. However, if their 'weapons fail, they hurl stones against the enemy in battle with such

[60] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 148 – 149.

quickness and dexterity, that they do more execution than the slingers of any other nation'[61]. In reading Gerald's *Topography*, King Henry II found the adjective *barbarous* a lot of times in reference to everything which was Irish, such as their bodies, mentality, habits, way of fighting and fashion. This barbarousness, as Gerald claimed, came from Irish mothers' habit of leaving their kids to nature, without tenderly nursing them,[62] so the Irish grew wild in their lifestyle, that meant drinking with their mouths as dogs, eating without cutlery, wearing barbarous clothes such as 'small, close- fitting hoods, hanging below the shoulders a cubit's length' and 'woollen rugs instead of cloaks',[63] and marrying wives of their brothers after their death. [64] Although Gerald described the Irish 'tall and handsome in person, and with agreeable and ruddy countenances' and 'richly endowed with the gift of nature',[65] their image perceived by the English in the 16th and 17th centuries was that of a rude people, living as beasts, in an inhospitable nation, where 'the place is better than the inhabitants'.[66]

Gerald claimed that the Irish were not keen on leaving their traditional habits, and as matter of fact, when Elizabethan administrators and writers moved to Ireland found the same customs of four centuries before. In discovering Ireland outside the Pale, the New English perceived inhabitants as being primitive, as being rebel and rude human species living in a filthy nation. In Moryson's *Itinerary* there were some details of rooms in Irish dwellings:

> These wild Irish never set any candles upon tables. What do I speak of Tables? Since indeede they have no tables, but set their meate upon a bundle of grasse, and use the same Grasse for napkins to wipe their hands.[67]

In the cities there were soft and feather beds, in the countryside there were only 'nastie filthinesse'[68] and lousy dusty chambers. Not only supposed dirty Irish

[61] *Topographia*, III. X. p. 70.
[62] *Topographia*, III. X. p. 68.
[63] *Topographia*, III. X. p. 69.
[64] *Foras Feasa*, p. 37.
[65] *Topographia*, III. X. p. 68.
[66] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, II.
[67] *Itinerary*, p. 202.
[68] *Itinerary*, p. 198.

houses, but also inhabitants' diet, and the fact that 'many English-Irish have by little and little been infected with the Irish filthinesse' really worried the English.[69]

Natural products were at the bottom of Irish diet: the Irish in the 17th century ate unsalted beef, cakes of oats, anise-seeds and baked bread, fish and cheese and butter, that they called 'whitemeat'.[70] What shocked the English visitors was the inhabitants' drunkenness, and above all, this attitude among the women:

> Some Gentlewomen were so free in this excesse, as they would kneeling upon the knee and otherwise garausse health after health with men; not to speak of the wives of Irish Lords or to referre it to the due place, who often drinke till they be drunken, or, at least, till they voide urine in full assemblies of men.[71]

The common Irish drinks in the 17th century were milk, which was drunken as nectar, ale, which was a kind of beer stronger than the English one made of malt and hops, Spanish and French wines in the taverns, and miraculous *usquebagh*, the aqua vitae, which was sometimes imported from Scotland. Moryson claimed that Irish *usquebagh* was better than English aqua vitae because 'the mingling of Raysons, Fennel seede, and other things mitigating the heate, and making the taste pleasant, makes it lesse inflame'[72]; the Irish aqua vitae, which was largely drunken both by men and women, was also used as a natural general remedy for health: 'it helpeth digestion, it cutteth flegme, it abandoneth melancholie, it relisheth the heart, it lighteneth the mind, it quickneth the spirits, […]'[73] and it has a lot of properties for each part of body and soul. Irish clothes in Tudor period were not so much different than medieval ones, for both Irish man and women were supposed to wear rugs and mantles, which would be singular elements to represent Irish characters on Elizabethan stages.

If on one hand, reports about fashion and diet of the Irish in the 17th century were very detailed and truthful, on the other, there were a lot of statements on some habits concerning 'wild Irish' magic powers, which seemed

[69] *Itinerary*, p. 196 - 197.
[70] R.A. Butlin, 'Land and people, c. 1600', p. 153.
[71] *Itinerary*, p. 197 - 198.
[72] *Itinerary*, p. 197.
[73] *Chronicles*, vol. 3, II.

not to be so plausible. For instance, sometimes visitors and inhabitants of Ireland got sick of Irish ague, which was nursed not by physicians, but by Irish women, with 'milke, and some vulgarly knowne remedies at their hand'[74]; and, when the Irish were in war and suffered of hungry, they opened a vein of a cow and drunk its blood; finally, they considered English soap like meat and ate it. In spite of this kind of coloured and funny descriptions of the Irish, eating shamrocks and telling fairy tales, which were provided by Moryson and his contemporaries, there were narrow positive reports, which were contrasting with those mentioned before. Stanihurst and Mr. Good, 'an English priest who was directing a school in Limerick',[75] praised hospitality, gratitude and generosity, especially in regard to food, endurance in labour, and 'acute intellect'[76] of the Irish people.

In conclusion, it might be suggested that Moryson's omissions,[77] and the wide range of centennial descriptions about Irish rudeness, barbarousness and drunkenness, were written not only according to Elizabethan writers' objective experience, but also according to a specific aim of the English, who were linked to the monarchy as being followers of their Queen's proud nationalism.

4. Conclusion

After the 1603 Ireland's submission to King James at Mellifont, England owned a colony where it could impose its colonial aims with violence and terror. The concept of nationalism, which was developing in the 16th century among the greatest European powers, such as Spain, France, and the Law Countries, was strictly linked to the idea of superiority of each nation over other countries. This desire to prevail over others nations verified at different levels: political, social, cultural and racial. The expansive England's goals over Ireland and how the English monarchy managed the Irish 'Matter', were pertinent examples of what Elizabethan nationalism meant. Firstly, England reduced Ireland under its authority and Old Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords' independence was definitively

[74] *Itinerary*, p. 192.
[75] *Foras Feasa*, p. 47.
[76] Cited in Seathrún Céitinn, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, p. 47
[77] Geoffrey Keating in his *Foras Feasa* considerably criticised Moryson because 'he had omitted to notice anything good of the Irish'. Cited in Seathrún Céitinn, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, p. 45.

destroyed by means of the most catastrophic confiscation of their estates; secondly, with the growth of the absolute monarchy, where English monarch was supposed to directly derive from God, conquerors' religion had to be the same of the dominated country: after Martin Luther's Ninety-five Thesis, England and the Low Countries had been growing the main powers supporting Protestant Reformation against Catholic Spain. When Queen Elizabeth imposed Protestant faith in Ireland according to the maxim '*cuious regio, eius religio*', Ireland became a perfect battlefield of Counter-Reformation and the Irish began struggling in defense of their Catholic faith and their Gaelic tradition.

The New English settlers, who had been sent in Ireland to govern that 'wicked, effremated, barbarous, and unfaithful nation'[78], such as Sir John Davies, Fynes Moryson, Sir Henry Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and Richard Stanihurst, were interested in Irish historiography, especially in annals and genealogies, and geography for two specific reasons: the first one, was their need to control a country where only a ten pro cent of its land was known and safe; this purpose was linked to the second English monarchy's aim, that was to impose English superiority on the Irish and to apply a New English social and political establishment. The image of the Irish, which the New English in travelling to Ireland during the Tudor period had, derived from medieval reports on Ireland by Gerald of Wales, who represented Irish people like a primitive community, living as beasts, who had been making progresses from forests, to fields and finally to towns.[79] However, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Irish were described by the Elizabethan writers in the same way in which Gerald drew them, and the old Gaelic bardic poets, in moving to the continent after the imposition of the Reform in Ireland, denied these Ireland's false images. Among these scattered poets, Geoffrey Keating stood out, and with his millenarian history of Ireland defended Irish culture, language and literature. All this thing considered, on one hand, Keating and others bardic poets' 'militant spirit' would be resulted fundamental for the birth and the development of the Celtic Revival in the following centuries and Yeats and for Lady Gregory's works, whose characters were modern figures modelled on ancient Gaelic heroes; on the other,

[78] Cited in C. Highley, '*Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*', p. 11.
[79] *Topographia*, III. X. p. 70.

Irish resistance at cultural level in the continent was a clear mirror of political and religious situation in Ireland: England would find in Ireland a difficult enemy to struggle and could never impose its Protestant faith. Fynes Moryson sustained that 'the problem of Ireland is the rebelliousness of its inhabitants', which could be true in considering the physical geography of Ireland and its natural elements – mountains, rivers, and natural bogs –, which were used by the Irish as protection against English invaders; however, Moryson's position, which was the same of a lot of English writes on Ireland, could be seen as general English fear for an incomplete control of Irish enemies. Although the English administrators testified that English structures, which had been applied in Ireland, worked with great success, Irish threat was still present and the English perceived continuously disorientation and danger.

To conclude, English frustration and difficulties in governing Ireland might suggest that Ireland had never been a perfect colony of England, even if it was the former: in Elizabethan period, Ireland could be considered as being both a geographical entity without a political structure where English monarchy could plan its political goals linked to nationhood and colonialism, and a colony of Catholic Spain, by embodying the spirit of Counter-Reformation, which would have been developed into an everlasting contrast between England and Ireland during the centuries.

CHAPTER 2

1. England's geographical discoveries

Early modern English literature has to be considered in its multinational dimension after the encounter with the New World. In 1492, Christopher Columbus 'discovered' American coasts, after that a new era was going to begin: the modern era, which, in England, began with the first travels beyond the ocean and the known borderlines. Between 1577 and 1580, Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe on his ship *The Golden Hind*; later, Sir Walter Raleigh attempted to colonize a new land whose name would have alluded to that of its Queen, Virginia, and many other English adventurers were sent to discover new regions in Asia and North America; consequently, in England, the sense of national identity was little more than xenophobia.[80] After the official expulsion of Jews in 1290, the 15th century riots against foreigners, in particular against Flemings and Italians, and the first black people deportations, which saw British empire involved in slave trade, the English were perceived by the foreigners in England as being extremely proud of themselves, strictly convinced that there are no other powerful men like them, and aware that everything in the whole world could belong to them. In Medieval Ages, English travelers and merchants, who visited and traded with the most economically powerful countries, such as France, Spain, Flanders and the city of Venice, were obliged to speak French, Spanish and Italian; in Tudor era, thanks to an increasing activity of translation into English, many ancient, humanistic and religious texts could be read by numerous literate English people. The translation of Thomas More's *Utopia* in the 1550s, the publication of the first translated Bible by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale in 1539, which was divulged in every church of the kingdom, and the translation of the greatest Italian and classical authors' works, such as Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, gave English

[80] D. Loades, 'Literature and National Identity', in D. Loewenstein, J. Mueller (ed), *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 201 – 225.

language a European dimension which had never been reached before. As a consequence of this, the English began to be aware of the concepts of identity, nationhood and self-definition. Moreover, these ideas came from travel literature, which consisted in reports and comments about unknown exotic lands which had been just discovered by Elizabethan English adventurers. Generally, among books of early modern English literature, very few pages were dedicated to travel literature, because it was considered too simple, not poetical and sometimes not true, and, in Elizabethan period, travel books were not valued as literal works. These texts consisted in records of voyages, geographical and ethnical descriptions of lands and of their inhabitants, which sometimes were reported in too extravagant and exaggerate terms;[81] however, travel literature results compulsory for a detailed analysis of some concepts, such as race, nation and colonialism, which were elaborated and represented in more sophisticated works by much more celebrated Elizabethan authors such as Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson. In Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, [82] the desire to show England's greatest achievements at sea, and a deep patriotism emerged among pages of detailed descriptions about English ships and navigation principles. At the same time, during his first voyage to Guiana, Sir Walter Raleigh, an ambitious courtier[83] who earnt royal favors under Elizabeth I, wrote his experience recorded in his *Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Beautiful Empire of Guiana*, which testified the effort to bring England, its discoveries and its increasing power to the attention of Europe. However, it is important to consider that England was crossing two different kinds of borderlines: it was discovering very far and different lands, which fashioned English adventurers, but at the same time, it was shaping its own identity in contrast to its nearest, and oldest colonies: Scotland, Wales and, above all, Ireland.

[81] M.H. Abrams, S. Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English literature: vol. 1*, (New York; Lomdon: Norton, 2000), p. 927.
[82] The complete title of Hakluyt's is '*The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation, made by Sea or ouerland, to the remote and farthest distant quarterts of the Earth, at any time within the compass of these 1600 years'*. It firstly appeared in 1589 and then expanded in three-volume edition in 1598 – 1600.
[83] M. Payne, J. Hunter (ed.), *Renaissance Literature: an Anthology*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ldt, 2003), p. 481.

1.1 Englishness and other British isles' identities

In considering Ireland, Wales and, Scotland from an ethnographic point of view in Tudor era, they shared not only language and culture, which derived from common Celtic roots, but also hostility against the English, which was one of the key elements in building their identities. Scotland maintained a precarious independence, which was based on half of the population Gaelic-speaking clans, who were far less to be unified to England, as they felt linked to the Scottish Crown, and had political and cultural independent institutions.

Wales was considered as a part of the kingdom, and its population was composed by Anglo-Normans and English invaders. It was completely under English rule already before 1485, and it should have been the 'model colony' for Ireland, therefore English attitudes toward the Welsh were both superior and condescending.[84] However, Wales and Ireland's political histories were completely different. As mentioned in the first chapter, Irish population was divided into two main groups, the Old Irish, limited in a small area around Dublin and some 'so-called 'obedient lands'[85] – Wexford, Galway, and Cork - , and the 'wild Irish' who peopled the rest of the island. Irish identity initially had not been shaping in contrast to an increasing tension against the English, but it was founded upon Gaelic culture, which was linked to the *Annals of Ulster*. However, as soon as new settlers were sent in Ireland to govern the country directly from Westminster, the 'Old English' felt their privileges under threat and the idea of a throbbing opposition against the English was shaped. The result was a rebellion led by 'Silken Thomas', Lord Ossory, in 1534-1535: both wild Irish tribes and the Pale's noblemen began to identify themselves as being anti-English. With the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, the institution of the plantation in Ireland, and the imposition of Protestant Reformation, the Irish, as the Scots and the Welsh, defined themselves as not English, therefore they moved to a more aware national identity. However, this idea of identity had not to be considered as being

[84] D. B. Quinn, 'England over All' in D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell U.P.: 1996), p. 9.
[85] D. Loades, 'Literature and National Identity', p. 222.

explicitly nationalism, which, on the other hand, was typical of Elizabethan England.

From Elizabeth's ascension to throne, England started looking both inside its own country, by considering its national past and culture, religion, and ethnicity, and outside its boundaries, by confronting itself with other European powers, such as Spain and France after the Hundred Years' War, and with its colonies. John Foxe's *Acts and monuments* and Andrew Borde's *The First Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* [86] analysed the question of nationhood, and explain that the 'realm of England' was elected directly by God as the greatest servant of His truth, and as consequence, had a higher position than other countries in God's preferences. Between 1560 and 1660, England lived fundamental changes such as Reformation, a new colonial empire, the beginning of capitalism which produced and increasing wealth and following social changes; moreover, ancient ecclesiastical education was replaced by laic grammar schools which allowed students of poor origin – for example, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe - to have formal education and to know English literature, law, treatises, poems and travel writings which fed a feeling of new national pride. According to Loomba, after the breaking of King Henry VIII with the Roman Church in 1534, the medieval idea of a pan-European nation was substituted by the idea of English state-nation as an 'imagined community' in which 'the ruling elite bonded across national or linguistic boundaries, and […] in which people of different classes are supposedly united within a more bounded geography'.[87] The meaning of this 'imagined community' might be that the English perceived themselves as projected in a 'geography' of cultural aspects – religion, society and literature – , which were linked to English nation, before that the state had been realized. Now, it could be important to consider that Englishness was shaped in opposition to non-Englishness within and outside England: Spain was Catholic, by contrast, England had to be Protestant; on one hand, England was known and perfect, on the other, others were alien and strange; the English ate well roasted beef, and wore fashionable, comforting shoes, on the contrary, foreigners fed on only

[86] D. Loades, 'Literature and National Identity', pp. 203 - 227.
[87] A. Loomba, 'Outsiders in Shakespeare's England', in M. De Grazie, S. Wells (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, pp. 147 - 166.

vegetables and bread and wore wool cloaks. To sum up, English nationalism and nationhood, which had been developed before the end of the 16th century, were a re-making of other identities existing both inside and outside the country.

English attitudes towards Scotland were ambivalent. On one hand, the English language had been divulged among the Gaelic-speaking Scottish lands, and the Protestant religion was imposed by Tudor England; on the other, Scotland was shaping and reinforcing its identity following the Scots monarch instead of the English one. At the same time, Wales was considered as being the perfect social model of the relations with England, because Welsh people completely accepted their subordination – except for some Catholic refuges - by considering themselves as being 'privileged recipients of English rules'[88]. Finally, Ireland was perceived by the English as being a possible point of mooring for continental enemies, and the Irish were considered mainly pagan and dangerous. Their identity was - according to English writers of this period - barbarian, because they derived from the ancient Schytians – and their society backward, which, at the same time, seemed to be a failure of English efforts in civilizing Ireland, rather than cultural, religious and linguistic difference. As a consequence, Ireland's images were the mirror of England's images: alien and barbarous Irish culture was the opposite of the superb, refined, and civilized English one. However, England was aware that a 'matter' of Ireland could be a future problem to consider.

At the beginning of the Stuart era, in 1603, King James VI of Scotland received the throne of England, and his aim was to create 'a united British nation'.[89] Even if England and Scotland were two different nations, they lived in the same island with the Welsh. Moreover, the Irish had an extremely high necessity to be civilized, therefore, King James' dream was to build an English nation which could lead the others four regions. The introduction of a new coin, which was called 'unit', was a practical example of King James' goal, but the problem to solve was that the concept of national identity was strictly linked to religion: Scotland and England were protestant, whereas the Irish identified their nation with Catholicism. A complete pacific union was never reached: although,

[88] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 71.
[89] Cited in J. P. Sommerville, 'Literature and National Identity'', in D. Loewenstein, J. Mueller (ed), *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, p. 459.

Wales was different from England in language; it had not a national identity which could lead them to the independence, but Scottish laws seemed to be more similar to those French, and Scottish language and culture were still very closer to the Celtic tradition of Ireland that to English language. However, the English were strictly convicted that liberties and privileges of English society could be a favour for borderlines countries, and national success for England.

In conclusion, Englishness was built upon three main historical facts: firstly, the plantations and the submission of borderlines countries, secondly, the government of the English West Indies, and finally, many wars abroad such as the Thirty Years' War and other continental conflicts.[90] However, England's relationships with its nearest countries showed that the idea of a united British nation was yet to be constructed.

1.2 England and its travelers

In considering Elizabethan England, London might be considered the city who perfectly represented English society and its values and who embodied the monarchy's aims of powers. According to Manley's report,[91] in 1500, London counted 50,000 inhabitants, and 250,000 in 1600, and this growth was triggered by the affluence of people from the countryside and from abroad. In London there lived people of many different cultures and community. On one side, hopeful merchants, artisans, criminals, labourers, male and female domestic servants, and foreigners, which were attracted by the new humanist schools, came from the countryside; on the other side traders, immigrants and entire new communities such as the French and the Flams, reached London from continental Europe and from the Orient. London appeared extremely heterogeneous, innovative, and humanist, and after the ascension to the throne of Elizabeth, it became the perfect field where Reformation could be divulged. However, in spite of a great majority of population coming to London, there was a part of English society which tended to leave London and British borderlines: the new travelers.

[90] J. P. Sommerville, 'Literature and National Identity', p. 465 - 466.
[91] L. Manley, 'Literature and London', in in D. Loewenstein, J. Mueller (ed), *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, p. 399.

After classical period, where geography were well developed and Greek and image of the world was bounded to their geographic 'home' and borderlines,[92] the concept of 'traveler' changed with the beginning of the Medieval Ages. As reality had been shaped and governed by God, who gave the Bible to humankind through the prophets' writing, medieval travelers were pilgrims, whose only goal was reaching the holy and eternal place: Jerusalem. Christ ruled everything, and all creatures' life was considered a 'journey' to salvation. Racial differences were seen as God's will to divide the world into three parts - as three is the number of the divine trinity - among His three descendants: Japhet, Europeans' forefather, Shem, that of the Asians, and Hem, that of the Africans.

With the discoveries of new lands, at the end of 15th century, and increasing trade contacts, the medieval idea of 'journey' started to change, and travelers' imagined world, which was thought thanks to classical maps and reports, was physically explored and rationalized, however, it was not culturally known.[93] The early modern traveler's task was not a good behavior during their life following biblical *exempla*, but rather the observation and the knowledge of the difference, the exploration of the others. Initially, travelers were surprised and at the same time frightened by the richness of new countries in nature; astonished by the magnificence of these savage landscapes, Elizabethan adventurers thought that New World was the Christian earthly Paradise, which was populated by strange semi-hominids and unknown flora and fauna. In considering the first descriptions of the Celts, for example, which were provided during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. by the first Classical geographers and philosophers, such as Herodotus, Plato, and Aristotle, many details are similar to those features that Elizabethan travelers reports. For instance, in analyzing three different classical texts, Herodotus wrote:

[92] J. Gillies, 'Mapping the Other: Vico, Shakespeare and the geography of difference', in J. Gillies *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 5 - 24.

[93] G.K. Hunter, 'Elizabethan and Foreigners', in G.K. Hunter *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition: Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries,* English Texts and Studies (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), p. 40 - 41.

> The Celts lived beyond the Pillars of Hercules [Straits of Gibraltar] and border on the through all of Europe and empties into the Euxine [Black Sea] at Istria, which colonists from Miletus inhabit.[94]

Aristotle, at the same time, argued that the Celts had different habits from the common Greek customs, explaining that 'the Celts and certain other groups who openly approve of sexual relations between men'[95]. At the same time, in reading the description of 'the breast of Irish woman' by John Bulwer's *Antropomorphoses*, (1653), where there is an image of an Irish woman feeding her child with a breast which is thrown over her shoulder,[96] it is possible to perceive the same sense of monstrous and strangeness that classic writers felt. Common feelings, which were trigged by the idea of borderline between what was known and what was unknown, what was safe an what was dangerous, what was native and what was foreign, have been perceived by travelers for millenniums, and in each new discoveries period, anxiety about identity increased by pondering about inner and outer nation. In the early modern period, even if in a developing overseas empire the ideology of ethnic difference was not compulsory, with the beginning of the enslavement, a new fluid, multiform, complex, and at the same time very dangerous, idea was developing from perception of differences in climate, places, customs, and national characteristics: the concept of race.

2. 'Race': a new word in English vocabulary

In early modern period, national monarchies wanted to define their state within geographical boundaries, but, at the same time, they defined people who lived inside the circumscribed territory. People living inside a definite national perimeter, and sharing a common culture, bloodline and religion could be considered as a 'race', therefore the English could belong to Anglo-Saxon

[94] Herodotus, *History, 2.33,* (c. 440 BC), trans. by P. Freeman in 'Ancient Celtic Europe', in J.T. Koch, J. Carey (ed.), *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe & Early Ireland & Wales*, (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications; Oakville, CT: Distributed by David Brown Book Co., 2003), p. 5.
[95] Aristotle, *Politics 2.6.6*. (c. 300 BC), trans. By P. Feeman in 'Ancient Celtic Europe', p. 6.
[96] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', in A. Loomba *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 43 - 44.

national group.[97] However, since Medieval Ages, the term race had always been difficult to define for many reasons. 'The Medieval terminology of race was no more straightforward than our own. Some of the key terms of medieval Latin usage, such as *gens* and *natio*, imply, etymologically, a concept of races as descendent group'.[98] That is to say that 'race' was a synonym of stock and blood and it was defined by biological belonging to a group with same customs, law and language, and above all religion. For example, in feudal society, Spanish nobility was supposed to have 'blue blood', which meant that the Spanish noble class was pure, and its economic power was transmitted biologically to each descendant. At the same time, lower classes were considered biologically different from nobility, and therefore, they were inferior, rude, unrefined and without any chance to change their social class, because their blood was not 'blue'. This assumption was well rooted in medieval people minds: as a consequence, lower classes had no reason to change their position and in subverting the order which was given by God. In other words, the difference of class, which categorised nobles as being superior to lower classes, did not mark an additional difference of religion, as it would happen in the following centuries. However, at the half of the 15th century, in early modern Spain, the statue of the '*limpieza de sangre*', the 'blood laws', was introduced, by trying to distinguish two cultural categories – religious and biological – because of an increasing intermingling with foreigners in the country. This element, testified that, on one side, Spain was afraid of all social mixtures among people which had begun coming to the country with the Crusades; on the other one, structures of power had to be legitimate and strengthen. It might be noticed that the meaning of 'race' changed as soon a different religion was introduced in a country: it happened both in Spain, with religious wars, the Crusades, and in early modern England, with the arrival of foreigners' religion, such as Islam and Hebraism, and of Protestantism. The Crusades are considered early colonies in Europe,[99] because they embodied the spirit of the colonialism: in their period, conversions of faith were considered as a Christian victory against

[97] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', p. 24.
[98] R. Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity', in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, (St. Andrews, Scotland: University of St. Andrews, 2001), p. 42.
[99] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', p. 25.

infidels, where Christians powers could exercise their power over another different religious group, that is to say that superiority and power dynamics were limited to the religious sphere.

In Shakespeare's time, the meaning of 'race' in England had been changing, because of the many socio-political and cultural events, therefore, it was very difficult to provide a proper definition. Race could be considered as being a stock, a pedigree, a lineage. Race seemed to be a stable category which consisted in overlapping worries about civilty, nation, religion, and lineage, and was related to particular phenotypic elements: skin colour and body structure.[100] In the early modern period, the concept of race was not very clear and was used with many different meanings: race was the most powerful, and at the same time, the most fragile maker of social difference, [101] because it was linked to features such as, skin, gender, religion and ethnicity that were changing their meaning after discovers of new lands and, as consequence, of their inhabitants. It might be supposed that the concept of race had been exotised in early modern period, because it did not depend only on religious and class difference, which derived from a biological 'blood' alteration, but also on different social groups with physical nature and habits of their own. This change triggered two main consequences in racial thinking: on one side, the differences of colour, nationality, ethnicity, and religion would become the pillars of new concept of 'scientific racism', whose main idea is that humankind could be examined and classified according to natural different groups – this concept could had been developed by Montaigne's concept of race, who defined a race like a family[102] - on the other, 'race' had been becoming mutable, hybrid and mysterious, and triggered anxieties to modern people.

In conclusion, it could be argued that Loomba's definition of race, as 'humankind as a whole […] or different sections of humanity, grouped according

[100] V. Traub, 'Mapping the Global Body', in P. Erickson, C. Hulse (ed.), *Early Modern Visual Vulture: Representation, Race and Empire in Renaissance England,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 44.
[101] M. Hendricks, 'Surveying 'race' in Shakespeare', in C.M.S. Alexander, S. Wells (ed.), *Shakespeare and Race*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 12.
[102] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', p. 23.

to divisions of family, class, gender, nation, religion, or morality',[103] could be considered the clearest in reference to early modern period, but perhaps not the only one.

2.1 Difference of religion, skin colour, and their representations

As previously explained, the concept of race was complicated by religion and by the increasing scientific attention to skin colour, from the Medieval Ages till today. Now, it might be important to see how foreigners were represented during the century, in particular on the early modern English stage.

Foreigners were literary figures since classical period, and had particular meanings linked to men's perceptions of them; they were generally represented in both their 'spiritual and material' nature through stereotypes, according to Hendricks' thought about representations of the foreigners.[104] That is to say, that 'stereotyping' could be considered as the first step towards racialized characters in medieval and early modern stages. In medieval stages typical foreigners were non-Christian, infidel, and always linked to the devil, whose physical sign was his blackness. The Vice, which tempted medieval believers during their life, was exemplified in the Devil, and represented as a black man, with black face, and it reminded about infidel black Moors, who were the main threat for Christendom. This 'racist' association of the Devil with dark-skinned people',[105] caused religious prejudices against Jews and Muslims in medieval European society: as politically and culturally speaking Christianity had to fight Judaism and Islam, as a consequence, on stage, the white God had to destroy the black Devil. In the early modern period, the stereotype of the Devil's black face was complicated both by increasing religious conflicts and by the advent of new kinds of 'foreigners' in modern societies, which tended to overlap with these two ideas. Medieval thought about God's punishment over the Africans, whose forefather was Ham, developing scientific racism ideas about exotic people who need to be known and studied as objects for their strange nature and habits, and the

[103] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', p. 24.
[104] M. Hendricks, 'Surveying 'race' in Shakespeare', p. 4.
[105] A. Loomba, 'The Vucabularies of Race', p. 27.

increasing nationalism of European powers, overlapped for early modern European people, whose conclusion was that black people and others were different, inferior human beings. The others were inserted in a hierarchy which was compulsory to define what was known: God was opposite to the Devil, Christians fought against Anti-Christians (the enemy of the Church), and the English were not non-English, that is to say that the English were different from the blacks, the Indians, the Scottish, the Welsh and the Irish. The English nationhood was defined in terms of antithesis, and Englishness was the mirror of what non-Englishness was. As Foucault noted, the idea of defining English qualities, by simultaneously expressing those of not-Englishness, argued that, 'prior to the 16th century, the pre-classical episteme, or mode of acquiring knowledge, was based upon resemblance and finding affinities and similarities'.[106] To sum up, the second key element, after usage of stereotypes, in defining and representing English race, was the negation of what was alien to the English race.

Before analyzing representations of some typical outsiders in early modern English drama, it might be important to underline the difference in meaning of the words 'foreigner' and 'stranger' in Elizabethan England. 'Foreigners' were people coming from the countryside, because they came from out the city, and, for example, Shakespeare was a foreigner when he arrived in London, in the late 17th century, from Strafford-upon-Avon; 'strangers', or 'alien', were non-English people, or non-European people, such as Turks or Indians.[107] However, in considering this distinction, two problems could rise: how could one define people living in Europe - and very frequently, living inside the same English borderlines - but believing in a different faith, such as the Moors and the Jews, or having different culture and habits, such as the Scottish or the Irish? They could be considered as 'outsiders', however, as they were seen as living in a sort of 'limbo' between foreigners and strangers. As the outsiders were not a delimited and clear category, or race, and their identity was therefore ambiguous and difficult to define, they were perceived as a threat for England and English identity: danger

[106] D. Cairns and S. Richards, 'What ish my nation?', in D. Cairns and S. Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1988), p. 2.
[107] A. Loomba, 'Outsiders in Shakespeare's England', p. 154.

was not coming from outside the boundaries, because foreigner working people enriched London and the monarchy, but it was still inside, because strangers' identity incertitude needed an additional effort in observing, in analysing the difference, and in limiting others' acting power. Perception of threat coming from inside was witnessed by two Elizabeth's edicts in 1596 and 1601 against outsiders in England, when she declared that the 'black moors' had to be traded as slaves, and because the general poverty was supposed to be caused by the influx of aliens.[108] Moreover, with the fragmentation of faith after the Reformation, in 17th century England, there were more than one group of believers: Catholic-Christians, Protestant-Christians, Jews, even if they were expelled in 1290, Muslims, and other growing new religious orders. For example, after the conversion, Jews and Muslims didn't have any physical signs that showed exteriorly their religious faith; they still had a hooked nose, but now they believed in Jesus. In conclusion, outsiders started to be seen by the English with increasing suspect, because a black man could have a white soul, and vice versa. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is a clear example of this incertitude about national identity after conversions. For example, in the second scene of the first act, firstly Portia does not know yet how Shylock looks like; she thinks that 'he [might] have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil'[109] , and that the new suitor, who came from Africa, was black, which is the colour of the devil; secondly, both Bassanio and Lancelot refer to him as a devil:

> […] I should be ruled by the fiend who,
> saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly
> the Jew is the very devil incarnation; […][110]

During the centuries, two negative images of the Jews had developed in whole Europe: they had never lived in a fixed place, they were considered living as aliens in each country they had spread, and seen as being outsiders from the entire human race; they were perceived as being completely different from the Turks,

[108] A. Loomba, 'Outsiders in Shakespeare's England', p. 155.
[109] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, (*c.* 1596), Act I.II. 126 - 127.
[110] *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II.II. 23 - 25.

who had a powerful despotic state, even if they were decaying and cruel, but cultured and refined in their clothes. Both in Shakespearean England and in Venice, Jews were reputed as being very sinister in their lifestyle and associated to usury and money-landing: Shylock refers to Antonio: 'You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog'[111]. Venice tolerated the Jews, but they were segregated in the *ghetto*, where through the payment of high taxes they were allowed to live. It might be noticed that the difference between Christian Venetians or English and the Jews was not racial in terms of body characteristics, but religious. The problem of conversion created anxieties in early modern society, and the threat, trigged by the outsiders, who could be black in their body but 'white' in their soul, increased more and more.

English drama between 1576 and 1642[112] embodied the three great changes which happened in early modern Europe: Reformation led to represent spirit individualism, Humanism that of inquiry, and Italian Renaissance to rediscover classical models, in particular Aristotle's *Poetics*. The canons of *place*, *time* and *action* together, were followed in each of English comedy, tragedy, or dramatic satire represented on private or public stages. The research of classical *decorum* and verisimilitude had to be shown to an audience who was not only aware and appealed to ancient times, but also conscious of the newly represented characters' national, religious, racial, and cultural differences. As mentioned before, foreign characters in early modern stages and literature were qualified by recursive stereotypes, which were mainly pejoratives. Outsiders were 'vulgarized' in lower characters, such as villains, servants, and clowns, who appeared more malignant than comic, but more attractive.[113] They intruded on stages as specters coming from another world, and therefore, they represented a different point of view to be shown to the audience. Fantastic objects and new vocabularies came to stages, and English audiences were bewitched by so-called 'trifles' such as 'looking Glasses, Bells, Beads, Bracelets, Chains, or Collar of Bugle, Crystal,

[111] *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I.III. 108.
[112] J.E. Gainor, S.B. Garner Jr, M. Puncher (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Drama: volume 1, Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), p. 38.
[113] G.K. Hunter, 'Elizabethan and Foreigners', p. 46.

Amber, Jet, or Glass'[114]. Mirrors on stages could symbolically testify that what was happening on stage, was the copy of what was happening in the reality: the English were defining themselves through others' images which were reflected in a symbolical mirror. In conclusion, another 'pole', an antagonist, something else was required by the English for a self-definition: represented others were clearly non-English thanks to their non-English features. The outsiders, who were racialized both in their performance and in their visual image on stage, were characters full of social and cultural meanings because of their represented non-Englishness.

3. Representation of the Irish

As mentioned before, England needed an antagonist, which could be found both within and out its borderlines, to shape its own identity and show its power and superiority to the entire world. As soon as Ireland started to think of its own identity linked to Catholic faith, and to Spain rather than England, the English found in Ireland a perfect mirror towards that could reflect and build its own image. On one hand, the Irish were going to disagree with everything was English such as their laws, their persecution, and tyranny; on the other, the English were convinced that God had allowed them– firstly, the Anglo-Normans, and secondly, the New English – to invade Ireland, because its population had to be punished for their cruelty and rudeness.

It might be underlined that perceptions of nations and nationhood had never been fixed; they are concepts which are problematic both to define and to represent. In representing national identities and national characters in literature and drama, cultural products, historical interactions and socio-political context had to be considered to create a proper figure which embodied typical features.[115] This operation could be very difficult in the case of the Irish context: Ireland was

[114] Cited in S. Mullaney, 'Imaginary Conquests: European Material Technologies and Colonial Mirror Stage' in P. Erickson, C. Hulse (ed.), *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, p. 17.
[115] A. Hadfield, J. McVeagh (ed.), 'Introduction' in A. Hadefield, J. McVeagh (ed.), *Strangers to That Land: British Perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine*, (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1994), p. 3.

not a fixed and stable entity, and its population was composed by culturally hybrid people, because of their ethnographic and political internal divisions between native Gaelic Irish, Old English, and New English, and because of their culture and language – English, which was spoken in the Pale and in main coastal towns, and Gaelic, with his millennial tradition. For example, Anglo-Irish literature might be seen as a product of this hybrid culture still present in Ireland, and defined as a English literature branch like American literature. Old ancient Chaucer's English arrived in Ireland with first Anglo-Norman settlers, who mixed their traditions with those of Gaelic natives; then, the New English brought Shakespeare's English to Ireland: a new culture was introduced in the Irish context, which, during the centuries, had been developing in Anglo-Irish literature which is definitively a hybrid literature.[116] Moreover, since Henry VIII declared in 1541 to be the king of Ireland, the land began living a continuous political and religious metamorphosis: the Old English united with old Gaelic elites because they considered the New English as being a threat for their privileges, and Catholic faith became the key distinctive element against the English. Irish history between 1534 and 1641 was the result of the continuing vis-à-vis between natives and newcomers, and this interaction made Ireland so distinctive within English empire.[117] A new conflict, which could be considered very similar to those happening in the New World, was going to begin: the native Irish against the English invaders, and Englishness versus Irishness.

If in Ireland a sense of national identity had been gradually shaping, in England, the sources which came from Ireland were classical works, such as ancient reports and descriptions provided by Herodotus, Strabo, Tacitus, Julius Caesar, and others, translations of Gerald of Wales' *Topographia Hiabernica* and *Expugnatio Hibernica*, which could be considered the main material for representing the Irish, and new English settlers' reports about Ireland. Irish world was represented as being more similar to an American new land, than an European country: it was perceived as being alienated from the rest of the known,

[116] T. Mac Donagh, 'Language and literature' in T. MacDonagh, *Literature in Ireland: Studies Irish & Anglo-Irish,* (Dublin: Talbot, 1916), p. 28.
[117] C. Brady, R. Gillespie (ed.), 'Introduction', in Ciaran (ed), *Natives and Newcomers: the Making of Irish Colonial Society 1534-1641*, (Dublin: Dublin Academic Press, 1986), p. 17.

European, and English world. Ireland was a land which was inhabited by giants, witches, and monsters, and was a perfect fairyland, where cannibalism was practiced by semi-human creatures. For example, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the giant *Grantorto*, which was supposed to belong to Irish Gaelic background, is so described:

> Of staure huge and hideous he was,
> Like to a Giant for his monstrous hight,
> And did in strength most sorts of men surpass,
> Ne euer any found his match in might[118]

However, Ireland varied its being over time and it could be considered a 'constitutional anomaly'[119], because it was neither part of England kingdom, nor a North American colony; that was to say that it was neither so exotic to appeal to English travelers, nor so European to attract England's commercial trade. However, the ambiguous and unclear Irish world could trigger apparent anxieties and discomfort to England, whose perception of Ireland became more and more, a domestic discourse rather than an exotic one, because of growing cruel rebellions during the 17th century.

The English were led by attitudes of superiority towards the Irish, but at the same time, they felt an intense curiosity for them. In Tudor period, as Ireland appeared in ballads, stages, verses of several leading poems, in prose newsletters, in promotion pamphlets of colonization, in descriptive treatises and historical proclamations,[120] it was always present in English consciousness. The aim of describing and taking notes about the Irish was useful to find some anthropologic characteristics, which, therefore, were represented as stereotypes – sometimes object of satire - of Irish people. For example, one of the typical Irish features which were represented was the Irish people's intellectual backwardness, which was linked to their rudeness and savagery. Irish characters were immoderate and uncivilized, because of their divergence from English norms: the English had a

[118] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*, (1590), Book V.XII. 15.
[119] C. Brady, R. Gillespie (ed.), 'Introduction', p. 17.
[120] D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 20.

rationalized and idealized mental form of their state[121], and everything which was different and deviant from their norms was considered barbarian and uncivilized. For instance, English family was ruled by a patriarchal structure thanks to primogeniture, the Irish followed the Brehon Laws, which allowed a free choice for succession. Irenus, in Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, explains that:

> […] there are many wide country in Ireland in which the laws of England were never established, […] the same Brehon law is privily practiced amongst themselves, […] as [they] compound or altogether conceal amongst themselves their own crimes, […];[122]

However, the English view of Ireland seemed to derive more from a nationalistic and proud attitude of the English in general, instead from a scientific intent to describe the Irish. The use of physical characteristic and typical clothes was a common way to represent the others; in particular for the Irish, glibs and Irish mantles were their distinctive elements on stage and in literal works. For example, Spenser, in his *View*, described both the tendency of the Irish to have long moustaches and beards and their habit to wear woolen mantles.

English policy in Ireland was extremely violent against the old Irish society, and many Irish people were beaten, deported, enslaved, and killed off ruthlessly by martial law.[123] Therefore, the route across the Irish Sea was both from England to Ireland, and vice versa: a lot of the Irish came to England to work as servants and, the Queen herself was supposed to have Irish servants at court.[124] In Elizabethan England it might be possible to find Irish singers, jugglers, and beggars walking through English village roads, but they were seen by the English in a suspicious way, because the Irish were supposed to be bounded to Catholicism and Spain, and, as consequence, they started being less welcome in the kingdom. It was difficult for an Irishman to find tolerance and privileges in Elizabethan England; more frequently, the Irish peopled English

[121] A. Hadfield, J. McVeagh, 'Irish society', in A. Hadfield, J. McVeagh (ed.) *Stangers to that Land: British perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine*, p. 73.
[122] Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (c. 1598), in W.L. Renwick (ed.), *Edmund Spenser*, (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 5.
[123] D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 123.
[124] D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 155.

jails, where they were physically punished.[125] However, the Irish had many other roles in the society of Tudor England. As mentioned before, they worked as gentry and nobility servants, and in Elizabethan theatre, they were represented according to their typical mansions and physical elements. For instance, in Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore: Part II*, 1608, Bryan is an Irish footman, who speaks broken English and whose task is to get the hobby-horse ready- which is an Irish small horse – for his chief.[126] In that period, the Irishmen with glibs and long hair, who wore tight trousers, was mostly well skilled in tending horses – generally the white Irish hobbies – dogs, and hawks, which had been imported by Ireland. Moreover, according to reports of that period, it was easy to find Irishmen who swept chimneys in Elizabethan England.[127] In conclusion, Irishmen's roles in English society were very degrading, and typical of the lowest classes, as being servants who brought messages and gifts; they could be represented as fool, comic, wild and unable to speak or understandable in their language, mainly for their different English accent and vocabulary, like the Welsh. However, they embodied what was the main and most dangerous worry against the English: they could be possible allies of Spain against England.

3.1 Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: Captain Whit

Captain Whit in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* is an Irish character represented on stage. He is a venturer who, every Saint Bartholomew's day, reached Smithfield fair. Captain Whit belongs to the reality of the fair: a transitory place, where the relationships are provisional and short, and where reality consists in trivial experiences such as drunkenness, orgasm, aesthetic rapture, and acquisitive bliss.[128] What really emerges in the play, is a deep discrimination of different kind of people: the Londoners were supposed to go to the fair as emotionally distant visitors, and they perceived themselves as foreigners, and

[125] D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 147.
[126] Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore, Part 2*, (1608) in F. Bowers (ed.), *Thomas Dekker: Dramatic Works, VOL.II*, (1953), Act I.I. 183 - 188.
[127] D. B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 152.
[128] L. Engle, K. E. Maus, and E. Rasmussen (ed.), 'Bartholomew Fair' in D. Bevington (ed.), *English Renaissance Drama: a Norton Anthology*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 963.

totally different from the characters at the fair. Therefore, the fair is populated by British Isles' strangers who were in England at that time: the Welsh watchman Bristle, the Scottish clothier Nordern, and the Irish Captain Whit. At the beginning of the Act 3.1., Whit comes on stage speaking in Irish language forms:

> Nay, 'tish all gone, now! Dish 'tish, phen tou vilt not be phitin call, Master Offisher! Phat ish a man te better to lishen out noishes for tee an tou art in an oder 'orld – being very shuffishient noishes and gallantsh too? One o' their brabblesh would have fed ush all dish fortnight; but tou art so bushy about beggersh still, tou hast no leishure to intend shentlement, an 't be.[129]

As in Shakespeare's Captain Macmorris language, many 's' are substituted with 'sh'-'ish', instead of 'is'; 'th' with 't' – 'tou' for 'thou'; 'th' with 'd' – 'oder', instead of 'other'; 'w' with 'v' – 'vise', instead of 'wise'; and, 'wh' with 'ph' – 'phen' for 'when'. Jonson, in reproducing different accents of their 'stranger' characters, for example Nordern pronounces 'eale' instead of 'ale'[130] because he is Scottish, has two aims: firstly, he wants to mark linguistic difference between the English and the others, and stresses the higher position of the English; secondly, he aims to represent each characters in a stereotypical way, because of their language and of their habits. Nordern is a clothier, who was a typical Scottish job, because of the great quantity of wool which was woven in the High Lands; moreover, Knockem refers to Nordern, calling him 'my Galloway nag', which is a kind of Scottish resistant horse. The use of stereotypes is functional to identify characters, but at the same time it is a way to minimize and degrade characters' identities, being these key-objects and language considered as being inferior and different by those of the English. That is to say, the foreign characters' distorted language and those of stereotypes in representing them underline the strangeness of their being, and of their social and cultural position, as well as, a reduction of their intellectual skills.

[129] B. Jonoson, *Bartholomew Fair*, (1614), Act III.I. 1-5.
[130] *Bartholomew Fair*, Act. IV.IV. 3.

While Jonson was writing *Bartholomew Fair,* in *The Irish Masques at Court,* played in the Christmas season 1613-1614, he represented an Irishman who would become Captain Whit's forefather. In *Bartholomew Fair*, With is a 'bawd', a pimp, which was a very dirty and degrading role standing at the bottom of the social ladder. Concerning this, captain Whit defines himself as 'a villain man' twice (4.4.93, 4.4.215-16), who is more confident with the body power than with his intellect – 'Tou shalt speak for me, and vill fight for tee'[131], he refers to Knockem.

At the end of the fifth scene of the fourth act, With pronounces these words:

> I vill do 't myself for dem. 'Do' is the vord, and D is the middle letter of 'Madam'. DD: put 'em together and make deeds, without wich all words are alike, la.[132]

The meaning of these sentences could appear ambiguous: 'Do' could signify 'fornicate', that is Whit's aim, and it is a will continually present in the whole plot, and testified to Jonson's intent in showing a common tendency to exaggerate in the slummy fair reality. However, it is important to underline that Jonson makes a foreign character pronounce this will, which could be Captain Whit's sexual desire. Whit is a foreign character, who is irrational and less measured than refined English men; therefore his instincts are difficult to be controlled. In regard to this, it might be considered that, in the Renaissance period, the idea of a different race was linked with that of a different sexuality. Thinking about Shakespeare's Othello, or about descriptions of the natives of America, the stranger body looked more sexually attractive, because it is different, unknown, therefore it stimulates curiosity and consequent pity. For example, Othello, the black Shakespearean character, embodies, in his tragedy, the dichotomy between black and white, between evil and good, and sexual pity and purity. The Europeans described different sexual practices not only among the Africans, the Indians, the Moors, but also among the Irish, who very often were compared to

[131] *Bartholomew Fair,* 4.4. 93 - 4.
[132] *Bartholomew Fair*, IV.V. 89- 91.

America's natives. According to the idea of antitheses, the English were pure in their sexual behavior, and the others were sinful: Captain Whit is a stranger, and his sexual attitudes are negative, sinister, and they could be masked by word games.

In considering the idea of the 'trip' in *Bartholomew Fair*, it could be supposed that the Londoners who were going to the fair, found a new world, which was peopled by strangers, with identifying objects and habits, prostitutes, and criminals; considering the new world of the fair, and the New World of the strangers, it could be argued that in both places, the English found realities without meaning, because they were 'different' by England's world.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, after Columbus' discovery of the New World, England started enlarging its empire beyond the known borderlines. Early modern travelers explored new lands and found new population; hence they were knowing the Other and the idea of difference. The travels documented in reports dealt with place and inhabitants' descriptions and could be classified as travel literature. The English were shaping their identity by contrast with those of the other new populations, however they were perceiving worries about the identity of their own. The concepts of nationhood, self-definition and Englishness were strengthened and at the same time weakened by discovering and describing the others. It is important to notice that the concept of 'Other' could embody many other sub-categories: the foreigner, the stranger, and the outsider. It is curious to observe that each of these three kinds of others were present in early modern England. Foreigner coming from the countryside to London, aliens, or strangers, such as the Indians and Turks, and outsiders such as the Jews, the Moors, and the Irish peopled and threated England from inside the boundaries.

After the fragmentation of Faith with the Reformation, conversions, and consequently religious prejudices, the concept of race, which in Medieval period was connected to the idea of biological belonging, was gradually changing and becoming more and more difficult to define. Race was a social and religious

difference maker, and it resulted in an useful item for the English in shaping their own Englishness. The representation of the others on stage or in literal texts was functional to define and increase the sense of Englishness and national pride: the others were always stereotyped by using typical features of their own, such as their accent, their typical clothes, or common jobs that they usually did, and they were perceived as being as intruders on the scene. The Irish were a group frequently represented on stage and they were considered by the English as a domestic worry for their political situation, which was strictly linked to that of England mainly at the end of the 16th century. As Ireland was everything that was non-English – the Irish were catholic, rebellious and uncivilized, and spoke Gaelic or broken English – it was a constant point of reference for England which could shape its own identity by ridiculising, and depicting in a comic way its nearest colony population.

However, when England realised that Ireland was not a new discovered land whose inhabitants were backward, but at the same time curious in front of the new conquer, and that the oversea colony was a threat for the monarchy, representations of Irish characters and Irish context started to change. On one hand, Captain Whit in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* was a comic and sleazy Irish man, on the other, Shakespeare's representation of the Irish and Irish question in his history plays – *Henry V*, *Richard II*, and *2 Henry VI* - hid some deeper and more ambiguous meanings. Was Ireland's political situation and socio-political relationship with England so difficult to be clearly represented or is there something that did not allow performances which were related to the Irish question? Were Shakespeare and his contemporaries glorifying the Englishness through the representation of the nation in contrast with other different identities, or were they warning the monarchy about a threating enemy within English borderlines?

CHAPTER 3

In the previous analysis of the texts which concern Ireland and Irish characters, direct references to the historical, geographical, and cultural context are present; for example, in Moryson's *Itinerary*, geographical regions, habits, and historical facts are very specific and clear; in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, typical Irish features are used to represent and stereotype the Irish Captain Whit. If, on one hand, Jonson doesn't depict his only Irish character in an accurate way, because the Captain has a marginal role and what he represents is not so important for the message of the whole work, on the other, Gerald of Wales, Moryson, and Holinshed's reports about Ireland are very detailed, but at the same time, very simple in their style.

Irish question is thought in a completely different way in Shakespeare's histories: there are many historical references to Ireland, which are both direct, for example the only Shakespearean Irish character, Captain Macmorris in *Henry V*, and more hidden, as in *Richard II*, where there are allusions to Essex's campaign in Ireland in 1590s, or in *2 Henry VI*, where O'Neill's rising is cited. However, we need to understand why Shakespeare neglects these references to the Irish political situation exactly in the years of the Nine Years War and in one of the most economically difficult moment for England: what does he want to show through his histories about Ireland? Why does he choose histories to represent the Irish problem? What is the role of the Irish Other in English society and which kind of features typifies him?

1. History plays in Elizabethan England

According to Jacob Burchardt's[133] definition of Renaissance, which the author provided in 1860 in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, the arts' rebirth – in writing, music, philosophy, history, and above all, in arts with Leonardo's discovery of new visual perspectives – which began in Italy in the

[133] M. Payne and J. Hunter (ed.), *Renaissance Literature: an Anthology*, p. xxii.

1390s, was explained as a radical change against the Medieval Ages; Renaissance was considered as being a typical Western-European moment of passage from the childhood of the Medieval Era to the mature Early Modern period. In Florence, in 1490s, Leonardo da Vinci drew a perfect man standing inside a circle, the famous *Vitruvian Man*, giving a different idea of general humanity and providing man with a sense of individual self-consciousness, which would change human self-perception from early modern period till now. Moreover, a sense of patriotism and a perception of self-standing cities as Venice and, in particular Florence, started to be perceived among citizens and intellectuals, who rediscovered their cultural roots in Greek and Roman history; the medieval idea of Faith, as the only meaning of daily life, and medieval man aim of satisfying God's will to be saved, was just an illusion, in contrast to the real truth that was provided by human reason.

Although many critics affirm that the term Renaissance is only linked to the Italian context, because Italy was the country where artists as Leonardo and Michelangelo lived, the expression *early modern* in relation to 16th century England is usually preferred, but that is not to say that Renaissance didn't land in Queen Elizabeth's country. New sense of patriotism, a new faith and a renewed self-fashioning linked to a changing self-perception, were key elements upon which the monarchy shaped itself and the others.

The main feature of the Renaissance was its multiplicity, not only for a rebirth in many different artistic fields, but also because Renaissance period corresponded with three historical movements, which were crucial mostly in the English context: humanism, the birth of the printing press, and Reformation. Humanism, which was well rooted just at the end of the 15th century thanks to King Henry VII (1485 – 1509) who transmitted to his subjects a new awareness of human sciences and Italian canons, saw a return to classical models in literature, language – mainly rhetoric – history, and philosophy, which meant more careful attention to the meaning and shape of the text. For example, during the Medieval Ages, Greek and Hebrew texts were not read in original language, because they were always translated into Latin; therefore, some linguistic, rhetoric and lexical meaning were omitted or lost.

The Renaissance idea of reviewing and re-discovering past and history, where it was possible to find moral examples for a future proper behaviour, is the main notion of Renaissance historical thought. In the Renaissance, the terms 'history' and 'historiography' could be referred to many different kinds of texts, which were both literary and accurate in their shape, such as poems, memorials, and plays, and less refined texts, such as reports of historical events, biographies, annals, and chronicles.[134] In England, the Renaissance idea of the research for origins allowed new methods and innovation in historiography, which developed in the 16th century. For examples, works as Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1st edn. 1577; 2nd edn. 1587) and William Camden's *Britannia* (1586), had been written by consulting public records of the time, ecclesiastical registers, archives, and by travelling; later, these works would become the main information for histories playwrights, Shakespeare included. However, it is important to underline that few people – only highly educated men, who mainly belonged to ecclesiastical sphere - were allowed to understand and to evaluate historical works critically, and that people education were still founded upon medieval concepts. For example, according to Ivo Kamps's explanation, in England, historians, which belonged to the 'antiquarian' school of thoughts, still believed that time was like a spiral which continually rose towards the top where God stayed, and that each human being lived in an ordered world, which was providentially built and led by God till the final judgement. Therefore, their history perception was linear as the time was, and each historical event had a providential meaning. God was the prime mover of history, and historians had to interpret His actions: if a man was unlucky in his life, or a king failing in his purposes, that was because God had decided that destiny for them.[135] The antiquarian wanted to rebuild their own history in a passive way, and by researching material from their mythological past, such as legends - the Celtic King Arthur, for instance - chronicles, and annals. History had an end in itself and no didactical goal, but it explained a providential view of the future. This

[134] I. Kamps, 'The Writing of History in Shakespeare's England', in R. Dutton and J.E. Howard (ed.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Vol. 2: The Histories*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 8.
[135] I. Kamps, 'The Writing of History in Shakespeare's England', p. 4 - 25.

perception of history started to change as soon as Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (1532) began circulating in England. According to Machiavelli, the past was functional for men's success, and human beings were not led by a pre-constructed God's plan with theological value, but they were subjects of their *Fortuna* and *Virtus*. Moreover, the Latin maxim '*Homo faber fortunae suae*' – man creates his destiny - was resumed, and its meaning taught that man had to consider virtuously his previous experience, to learn from his mistakes, and finally to choose the best way to overcome *Fortuna*. Machiavellian *Fortuna* was what governed world rules, and a man, who wanted to be great in his life had to consider everything by using his virtues. After these deliberations, two important changes from previous idea of life, has to be considered: firstly, life was going to become more and more atheist, because both good choices and mistakes came from the rational man, who stayed at the centre of the Universe, and not from a providential God's design; secondly, human past experiences had to be considered as *exempla* – examples - for new better actions. Therefore, history and historical great characters were the main sources which people could draw inspiration from for their future choices and behavior.

From the end of the 16th century, history acquired a didactical meaning, and myths, legends, and chronicles were treated differently from literary works; at the same time, playwrights in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period moved from poetry to histories, by representing great national characters as kings and emperors on stage. Playwrights were searching for *exampla* to show to their audience, both for teaching it moral advices – in taking up late medieval morality plays, which are considered as being 'embryonic' history plays[136] – and for staging what was happening in the present, by using well known national figures. As a large part of audience hadn't a proper education and was illiterate, histories characters had powerful dramatic effects, and actors' performance was not only an instructional and educative, but also they could lead people to reflect about new emerging ideas - nation, national identity, and race – by setting aside old religious teachings. In conclusion, English audiences, thanks to histories plays, became more and more aware of a different English past in reference to that one of other

[136] I. Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama*, (Cambrigde: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 63.

continental countries, and started pondering about their Englishness which was expressed in dramatic form.

Histories were dramatic versions of the past, showing battles and duels, and they were not only represented on stage, but also they 'circulated in manuscript and printed form'[137]. The dramatized past were usually that of medieval England, 15th century France – for example, *Henry V* - republican Rome, even if they were not lacking biblical settings, or set in 16th century Turkey. The foreign location had a particular meaning: by setting plays abroad, there were no direct references to national political or social present, that was to say that playwrights could hide themes that could be dangerous to represent in front of a society where a high level of censorship was effective and where there was not free expression; therefore, audience could perceive ideas which concerned a context that they knew. As Anne Fogarty reports, foreign and distant settings 'create an illusory or fictional space so as to criticize and expose certain aspects of social and political regimes'[138]. Another important history play feature was the lack of beginning and end: they were a sort of current sequels, because long-lasting king's dynasties which generally were not written and staged according to their chronological sequence. In trying to providing a definition of history play, Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin claim that histories are plays, set in a dramatic past and foreign place and which typically focused on the reign of a particular monarch,[139] who represented thoughts of national identity and embodied state ideology. In a theatre which was becoming more and more public, monarchial power had to be shown and theatrically praised through a careful symbolism. Anglocentrism and Englishness had to be acclaimed and displayed in front an audience who was conscious of their glorious past. However, it might be considered that many histories were represented in a period in which England was involved in foreign dangerous affairs, for example the ongoing crisis in Ireland which ended in the cruel Nine Years War.

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[137] P. Kewes, 'The Elizabethan History Play: A True Genre?', in R. Dutton, J.E. Howard (ed.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Vol. 2: The Histories*, p. 189.

[138] A. Fogarthy, 'The Colonisation of Language', in P. Coulghlan and N. Canny, *Spenser and Ireland: and Interdisciplinary Perspective*, (Cork: Cork University, 1989), p. 91.

[139] J. Howard, P. Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 11.

2. Censorship of the Irish context

According to critics, Shakespeare was the promoter of history plays in England at the end of the 16th century; after him, the genre started declining till the 1630. Shakespeare did not composed his histories in a chronological way. In considering his works, it could be useful to separate 'the Roman plays', that are *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Cymbeline*, from the 'English histories' such as *Macbeth*, *Richard II*, *1* and *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*. It might be considered that Shakespeare's theatre had been influenced by the three main changes which had been happening in England between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century. Population in London was growing, and England was expanding its commercial empire. The theatre was becoming public and it had to be available, not only to the monarchs and the nobles, but also to foreigner traders and low social status people: the new audience was heterogeneous and cosmopolitan. It could be argued that Shakespearean theatre was subject to market laws: the monarch offered patronage and protection to new professional companies, as Shakespeare's King's Men was, and playwrights, in return, had to enact monarchy's power in their plays. In monarch-playwright relationship was in force the '*do ut des*' Latin maxim; Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre were dramatized according to the ruler's will. However, theatre was a double-edged sword, which could be dangerous both for the state and for the playwrights. 'Plays in the public, outdoor amphitheaters were performed in the afternoon and therefore drew people, especially the young, away from their work. They were school of idleness, luring apprentices from their trades, law students from their studies, housewives from their kitchens, and potentially pious soul from their sober meditations […]'[140]; thus Stephen Greenblatt describes the new developing public theatre. On one hand, England's working force was tempted by this renewed place of representation and it could be risky for the monarchy; on the other, audiences could be influenced by what happened on stage, be shaken by new ideologies and performed hidden messages, and be led to think and to revolt. As a consequence of this, Queen Elizabeth, in

[140] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), p. 38.

perceiving this threat, which came from one of her favourite creation, the so called 'state theatre', proposed in 1559 a system which reviewed each plays of 'matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonweal shall be handled or treated upon'[141], within her reign. Few years later, in England was instituted the 'Master of Revels', a dramatic censor, whose task was to submit each play to official scrutiny before they had been performed in front a public audience. Unfortunately, many Master of Revel's books had been lost, but in some survived scripts one could note that scenes were censored if they were considered as being provocative against the monarchy, noble influential people, and the church. For this reason, plays were scrutinized twice: from political authorities, and from ecclesiastical censors, who approved or censored works before their prints, according to the Bishop's Order or Bishop's Ban in 1599. In that period, histories plays were obviously reviewed more than other works, but also references for the histories, for instance both editions of Holinshed's *Chronicle*, were censored.

Censorship and Shakespearean state theatre are two subjects which could be strictly linked to Ireland and its representation in the histories, because this kind of drama was frequently performed in a particular historical moment of England: the second Earl of Essex's disastrous invasion of Ireland and consequent crisis in England. Although, in England, Robert Deveraux, second Earl of Essex, was portrayed as court favorite, military hero, and sage counsellor,[142] from the beginning of his task in Ireland, he found difficulties in controlling Irish violent revolts, mainly against Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone. Despite his army's provisioning problems, and the Queen's order to limit his mansions in in the Irish province of Leinster, he adventured in the south of the country. He was criticised for his political and strategic choices in Ireland, both by his enemies, among them Robert Cecil, and by Elizabeth self. The Queen used a sarcastic and annoyed tone in her letters to Deveraux, for example in 1599 she wrote: 'Do you forget that within these seven dayes you made a <…> (hott) demande of 2000 men for this

[141] Cited in S. Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 40.
[142] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 137.

Action, and nowe before you have Answer send us tiding that this huge charge must leave Tyron untouched'[143].

From the beginning of Essex's expedition in Ireland in 1598, England was both suffering from a heavy economic and military loss; it was risky to show an ugly image of itself in terms of foreign policy. Therefore, it was immediately proclaimed that it was forbidden to deal with and to speak about political situation in Ireland and that every single Irish communication had to be secret. An example of censorship of the Irish question is in Shakespeare's *I Henry IV*: Ireland is firstly mentioned in reference to king Richard II, who was 'upon his Irish expedition',[144] which would become 'his unlucky Irish wars'[145] at the end. Few lines of the second scene of the fourth act were submitted to censorship:

> Off all the favorites that the absent King
> In deputation left behind him here
> When he was personal in the Irish war.[146]

Here, the King is the cruel Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, which is an absent figure as he is not directly mentioned. Ireland and the Irish in Shakespearean histories are not negative, stereotyped figures, but they are ambiguous, so they were supposed to be censored, but at the same time, they were dramatized and asking to be carefully analysed to be understood. For example, in the lines mentioned above and in other passages, Hugh O'Neill is a constant point of reference to the Irish subtext: he is an ambiguous figure in the reality, but at the same time he represents Ireland's ambivalence in relation to England. As it is treated as being a 'colony', Ireland is both dependent and in direct conflict with England and 'functions as a recurrent point of reference'[147]

[143] M. Santini, 'Letters to Ireland: Queen Elizabeth to Essex, 1599', in C.M. Bajetta, G. Coatalen, and J. Gibson (ed.), *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric, and Politics,* (New York: Macmillan, 2014), p. 234 – 241.
[144] W. Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, (*c.* 1591), Act. I.III. 149.
[145] *1 Henry IV*, Act. V.I. 53.
[146] *1 Henry IV*, Act. IV.III. 86 - 8.
[147] Cited in W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', in R. Dutton, J.E. Howard (ed.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Vol. 2: The Histories*, p. 97.

Two years before the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Ireland, Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1593), in his history play *Edward II*, displayed, in a hidden way, England's frustration with the Irish affairs:

> LANCASTER: Look for rebellion, look to be depos'd
> Thy garrisons are beaten out of France,
> And, lame and poor, lie groaning at the gates.
> The wild O'Neill, with swarms of Irish kerns,
> Lives uncontroll'd within the English pale.
> Unto the walls of York the Scots made road,
> And unresisted drave away rich spoils.[148]

In Edward II's reign, O'Neill was not an existent Irish chief, but his name were familiar to Elizabethan audience, because many rebellious Irish men were supposed to be called O'Neill. Therefore, in these lines, Marlowe is clearly alluding Essex's campaign and his unsuccessful efforts, to the Tyrone rebellion, and to the long history of English settlement, 'the Pale'. Ireland had never had a role of protagonist in Elizabethan histories plays, but it stood always in the background. However, it is important to underline that the Irish background was not passive and lacking of meanings: Ireland fully personified the idea of the state theatre, and sometimes it concealed a harsh critic to the government. The Irish question was present in English affairs, but Elizabethan dramas tended to avoid Ireland and the Irish. However, Shakespeare's histories, *Henry V*, *Richard II*, and *2 Henry VI*, have a large Irish subtext which needs a more accurate analysis.

3. *Henry V*: the alienated Other

In Shakespeare's works, Ireland appears for the first time in *King John* with a curious and deep meaning which reflects England's colonial aims on the nearby island:

> To this fair island and the territories –

[148] C. Marlowe, *Edward II*, (*c.* 1594), Act II.II. 161 - 67.

> To Ireland, Poitou, Anjou, Touraine, Maine –
> Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
> Which sways usurpingly these several titles[149]

As the Norton Shakespeare's comment remarks, except for Ireland, the cited territories were English in the play, but historically French.[150] Beyond France's history, it is important to underline that Ireland is included among English 'colonies' that King Arthur reclaimed. That is to say, firstly, that Ireland is declared as being an English colony, and perceived as subordinate to England, according to the colonizer-colonized relationship; secondly, that Ireland belongs to England's glorious past, and that it has never been separated by England and its Celtic background.

In his most nationalistic drama, Shakespeare decides to represent his only Irish character, and to make *Henry V* the work which deals with Ireland more than other histories. This character is Captain Macmorris, an Irish officer of Henry V's army, who enters into scene in the third act. Firstly, it could be useful to analyze how he is introduced:

> The Duke of Gloucester, to whom the order of the
> siege is given, is altogether directed by an Irishman, a very
> valiant gentleman, i'faith.[151]

Before examining English Captain Gower's words about Macmorris, it has to be considered that the Irish Captain is introduced by an English man; Gower is on stage with the Welsh Captain Fluellen, that is to say that England with Wales are the main characters on stage, as they are the chief and powerful regions of the British Isles after their alliance. England and Wales are waiting for Ireland and Scotland, that, indeed, enter into scene together: the Irish Captain Macmorris arrives with the Scottish Captain Jamy. The two Captains stay together because of two reasons: the first one, Ireland and Scotland are two very similar country because of their Celtic background, and not only for the Celtic language which is

[149] W. Shakespeare, *King John*, (*c*. 1590), Act I.II. 10 - 13.
[150] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 1107.
[151] W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, (*c*. 1599), Act. III.III. 10-12.

spoken also in Wales; the second one, they are traditionally the most difficult and dangerous England's enemies to undermine, and because of this reason, they are completely different to Wales. For example, during Essex's expedition, there were Scottish mercenaries assisting the Ulster rebels in Ireland, and members of Scottish nobility providing material to Hugh O'Neill.[152] However, in the play, the English Captain, introduces Macmorris with honorable words: "a very valiant gentlemen". This qualities in reference to Macmorris, have ambiguous many meanings, which are difficult to clarify precisely. Glower's words could appear as being as a *captatio benevolentiae* towards Macmorris, because, in reading Macmorris' thoughts about his nation, the Irish character seems to be forced to pronounces 'unionist' words, even if it is very difficult to understand exactly what Macmorris – and Shakespeare – means. Macmorris is provoked by Fluellen's indirect question about nation:

> FLUELLEN: […] there is not many of your nation –
> MACMORRIS: Of my nation? What ish my nation? Ish a villain,
> And a bastard, and a knave, and a rascal? What ish my
> Nation? Who talks of my nation?[153]

Macmorris repeats twice the same question: 'What ish my nation?', and he seems to be incredulous and indignant in front of this kind of question, probably because of two reasons. As Declan Kiberd argues, Macmorris declares his 'unionist' point of view about English nation, by denying his own otherness.[154] Macmorris's unified England, which is composed by England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, might mean that there is no Irish nation, but only England with its 'colonies', therefore an enquiry about the nation is not relevant; moreover, from Macmorris's point of view, this question sounds very strange because a Welsh man is asking it. In regard to this, it might be useful to analyse Irish Macmorris and the Welsh Captain Fluellen's relationship, which is a mirror of England's perspective about Ireland and Wales's political control. If Macmorris is introduced in a positive way

[152] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the crisis in Ireland*, p. 146.
[153] *Henry V*, Act. III.III. 60 - 63.
[154] D. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, (London: Johnatan Cape, 1995), p. 12 - 13.

by the English Captain Gower, on the contrary, Fluellen is very offensive and vulgar:

> [..] he is an ass, as in the world. I will verify
> As much in his beard. He has no more directions in the true
> Disciplines of the wars, look you, of the Roman disciplines,
> Than is a puppy dog.[155]

Derogatory words about Macmorris testify that Wales belongs to England, and that it is in a higher position rather than Ireland, which has to follow it as its model. Captain Fluellen reminds Macmorris that, although he is able to manage 'Roman disciplines', his nation, that is Ireland, is subordinate to English kingdom which Wales belongs to. On the contrary, Macmorris explains that there are no different nations, but only one nation, that is England.

After having considered the Welsh-Irish relationship, it has to be thought that England, and English Shakespeare's audience, are watching this scene in a further higher position. Firstly, 'the four captains scene', as Willy Maley calls it, represents English colonialist attitudes in a stereotyped way: the four captains are representative of their nations, categorized, and subordinate.[156] In considering Captain Macmorris, three main elements define him as being an Irishman: his 'beard', his high skilled 'Roman disciplines', and his accent. According to Fluellen's description of Macmorris, the Irish Captain's face is covered by 'beard', which is a typical defining physical characteristic of the Irish. Firstly, it is argued that Shakespeare related Holinshed and others' reports about Ireland in writing his histories, therefore he read about 'Irish beards and glibs'; secondly, Macmorris excels 'in the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans'[157], which are abilities in war. These skills as warrior could be considered in two different ways: the negative way is that Macomorris represents Ireland, so he embodies Irish traditional violent attitudes towards rebellion and war, mainly against England; he is perceived as being a wild Irish kern who is high skilled in managing axes and swords in resisting to be conquered; the positive way is that

[155] *Henry V*, Act III.III. 15 - 8.
[156] W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', p. 107.
[157] *Henry V*, Act. III.III. 25 - 26.

English heroes and perfect English men can fight and use weapons to be honorable and respectful people, above all if these skills are used in war. When Macmorris says:

> […]. And there is
> Throats to be cut, and works to be done, and there is nothing,
> Done, so Christ sa' me, la.[158]

He looks like a perfect English man who has to cut throats to impose his power and his identity over enemies. On one hand, these lines support the idea of an unionist Macmorris, on the other, Irish language belongs to him, therefore his Irishness is constantly marked in his speeches. For example, broken words such as 'la' and 'sa', or the use of 'ish' rather that 'is' – as also Jonson's Captain Whit says -, are a defining element of Macmorris Irish accent, which categorizes him as being different, and subordinate, from an English man. Through these three elements, Macmorris' identity is clear: non-English. By considering this last Macmorris' element which testifies his Irishness, it might be underlined the contrast between Englishness and Celticism. It is very important to consider that Shakespeare doesn't choose Gaelic language for Macmorris, but his Irish character speaks broken English: in the same scene, language marks the difference between a good speaking English man, as Gower for instance, and an Irish man who testifies his inferiority by speaking broken English language. Moreover, Maley observes that Shakespeare decides to write down only one Celtic line – '*Calin o custore me'* - which, therefore, is pronounced by Pistol, one English soldier.[159] The Irish refrain of a popular ballad[160], which means 'I am a girl from banks of the Suir', testifies Shakespeare's knowledge of different literal traditions, but at the same time, he possibly wants to explain other two ideas which are linked to the theme of nationality. First of all, national dialects, which mark nationalities and are spoken in country periphery, such as Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and France, for Pistol pronounces the Celtic rim while he is in France, are

[158] *Henry V*, Act. III.III. 51 - 53.
[159] W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', p. 110.
[160] The original Irish refrain is: '*Cailín ó cois tsiúire me*', according to Kiberd in D. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 13.

always compared with English language; secondly, as Macmorris, an 'Irishman', speaks broken English, and Pistol, an English soldier, sings in Gaelic, it might be argued that Shakespeare is trying to explain that national identities are very feeble, and that possibly Macmorris' question 'What is my nation?' is not only refereed to the Irish, but also to the English, who are going to intermingle with all the others. In regard to this, and in considering Irish population at Shakespeare's time, Macmorris' 'nation' could be Ireland or England at the same time: Macmorris could be an Old English, a wild Irish, or a New English man. Moreover, by trying to eluding the censorship, Shakespeare represents the Irish Captain as an exemplar English man, who wants to glorify English national identity, and to fight for the English monarchy. However, Shakespeare is making his English audience aware that intermarriages and race mixture could be dangerous for self-definition of English identity, which could degenerate in a lower and subordinate race.

In sum, through the 'four captains scene', Shakespeare is representing the existence of different identities within the English nation; however, he is aware that he has also to promote an unionist powerful English kingdom which is the only true nation. Macmorris is an example of a common foreigner, who lives within the English borders, and who is represented by his typical features, but he should alienate himself and his identity, and deny his own difference. From the analysis of the scene, it might be argued that Ireland, Wales, and Scotland were not considered a part of a multicultural, multiracial, and multinational state, but they were regions of a mere British nation, whose aim is to negate – sometimes through violence - the existence of the others.

At the beginning of every act, Shakespeare uses the chorus to dramatize the plot; this, in the fifth act, emphasizes a supposed hidden Irish context:

> Were now the General of our gracious Empress,
> As in good time he may, from Ireland coming,
> Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
> How many would be peaceful city quit
> To welcome him! Much more, and much more cause,

Did they this Henry.[161]

This is an allusion to the return of 'the General of our gracious Empress', who is Essex, and who did 'much more cause' in Ireland. It is very difficult to interpret these lines, because of Ireland's ambiguous and nebulous political situation, which was not easy to understand also in the Shakespearean period, and because of Queen's will to avoid Irish question in each drama which were represented in her reign, as previously mentioned. However, is this constant double meaning in reference to Irish matter functional to show the ambiguity of Queen Elizabeth's reign self? Concluding with this question, now it could be useful to introduce the analysis of another history play: *Richard II*.

4. *Richard II*: the mirrored Other

Performed at the beginning of Essex's mission, and later censored because the government could not be connected with rebellions which were taking place in one of its most difficult colony to manage, *Richard II* shows political vulnerability of Elizabethan England and its weakness and difficulties in Ireland, with an harsh critic to English Tudor society.

Richard II was the only English king who effectively went to Ireland, as cited in Maley's article,[162] and in the play, he ponders if he should leave England, and personally reach that dangerous country. After Balingbroke has left, Greene, one of king Richard II's followers, advises the king:

> […] the rebels which stand out in Ireland,
> Expedient manage must be made, my liege,
> Ere further leisure yield the further means
> For their advantage and your highness' loss.[163]

According to Greene, Ireland is not only a rebellious country, but it could be also a risky adventure for England's economy. While Greene carries on expressing his

[161] *Henry V*, Act. V.0. 30 - 35.
[162] W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', p. 101.
[163] W. Shakespeare, *Richard II*, (*c.* 1598), Act I.IV. 38 – 41.

preoccupation about the king's mission in Ireland, by saying to the Queen: 'I hope the King is not yet shipped for Ireland', the Duke of York is inquiring about news from Ireland and how much could cost the Irish expedition – 'What, are there posts dispatched for Ireland?/ How shall we do for money for these wars'[164] -; finally, Bushy, another King Richard's II follower, replies to him: 'The winds sits fair for news to go to Ireland,/But none return.'[165] Each of these lines testifies that Ireland is a threat for England, and opinions about an Irish expedition are contrasting: there is a dispute between who is in favour of an Irish war, and who prefers to spend money in another context. As suggested by Maley, it is important to understand the other context and Shakespeare's opinion about it. Could an Irish expedition effectively result very expensive for the Queen's treasure and cause an 'highness loss'? Or was it only a diversion from a more expensive situation at court? In the famous King's anti-Irish discourse after Gaunt's death, an anti-courtly says[166]:

> […] Now for our Irish wars.
> We must supplant those rough rug-headed kerns,
> Which live like venom where no venom else
> But only they have privilege to live.
> And for these great affairs do ask some charge,
> Towards our assistance we do seize to us
> The plate, coin, revenues, and movables
> Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possessed.[167]

In this history play, Shakespeare, as in *Henry V*, demonstrates that he read Holinshed's *Chronicles* in regard to 'rug-headed kerns', who were light armed infantry, who wore at least a metal breastplate,[168] and about non-existence of snakes in Ireland, for St Patrick chased them away, according also to the legend. However, these lines could be read as a King's – or possibly, Shakespeare's -

[164] *Richard II*, Act II.II. 102 - 103.
[165] *Richard II*, Act II.II. 121 - 122.
[166] W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', p. 102.
[167] *Richard II*, Act 2.1. 155 - 162.
[168] D.B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p.97.

surge against the court which spends all money for 'plate, coin, revenues, and movables'. That is to say that the monarchy is squandering all its treasure for visible signs of their status, for instance in refined and precious dresses. Moreover, the allusion to a place in which people live 'like a venom where no venom else', could be representative of illusionistic English Renaissance culture, and of the theatre self. English monarchy is wearing a sort of perfect mask, which covers all its management inability in regard to its colonies, religion, the others who live inside the kingdom. However, this mask, like in all theatrical representations, is an illusion, because the histories are nothing else that dramatized lives of ancient kings who represent the current reality at court in a positive or negative way. Therefore, who is exactly Richard II? Which is his meaning in the plot? Richard's indecision testifies that he is not an idealized king as Henry V, and above all, that he is not a sovereign who shows his masculinity in his government. This could lead to the conclusion that thanks to Richard, Shakespeare is, once again, indirectly criticizing Elizabeth, and, at the same time, he is underlining the paradox of identity in Renaissance English society. According to Greenblatt, a gap between costume and identity is not only a matter of women.[169] In this case, Richard could assume a double meaning: firstly, he could be the mirror of Elizabeth self, and secondly, he could be identified with an Other. After having seen his image in a mirror, he throws it away and his reflection breaks in a thousand pieces. That is to say, that the perfect mask, which covers Elizabethan society, could not always survive when there are hidden problems and weaknesses at the bottom. Richard's doubts and worries about Ireland are something which are going to make the mirror trembling till its break, which testify identities uncertainty and Elizabeth's government weakness. In considering this, Richard could be identified as Elizabeth's reflection: a society, which shows its perfection only through refined and precious clothes at court, could not survive if its soul is impure and corrupted. In regard to this idea, there are other Shakespearean images which are far more impressive: the image of the outsider, for example a Jew, who could have 'the completion of a devil' and 'the

[169] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 62.

condition of a saint'[170] after the conversion, or an Irishman, who is very similar to the English in his aspect, but he is very dangerous inside, as Richard self could be. As mentioned before, he could be an Other in regard to male powerful Renaissance king, but he could be also an Other as being a stranger man without English origins.

> Feed not thy sovereign's foe, my gentle earth,
> Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense;
> But let thy spiders that suck up thy venom
> And heavy-gated toads lie in their way,
> Doing annoyance to the treacherous feet
> Which with usurping steps do trample thee.[171]

Richard's knowledge about popular and obscure habits which are linked to dangerous and devilish methods, could be representative both of his Celtic ancestors,[172] and of his supernatural powers, which classify him as an Other, non-human creature.

In conclusion, Ireland and the outside Irish context in *Richard II* could have different meanings: Ireland could be a victorious experience for Richard, but at the same time it could be an English monarchy's intrepid adventure to show its power. The frequent allusion to 'venom' in reference to Ireland, and the doubts which torment Richard about his expedition to that rebellious country, testify that Irish colony is not so easy to be ruled; moreover, Ireland is described as being different to England, as the description of the land 'beyond the pale' shows:

> […], the whole land,
> Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
> Her fruit trees all unpruned, her hedges ruined,
> Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs
> Swarming with caterpillars?[173]

[170] W. Shakespeare, *The merchant of Venice*, (c. 1596), Act I.II. 111 - 112.
[171] *Richard II*, Act. 3.2. 12 - 17.
[172] L. Hopkins, 'The King's Melting Body: *Richard II*', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works. Vol. 2: The Histories*, p. 409.
[173] *Richard II*, Act III.IV. 43 - 47.

However, this difference to the English 'sea-walled garden'[174], describes Ireland as an Other who, like a mirror, is functional to define England self (Maley's statement 'the English invented Ireland'[175] could be meaningful about it), and whom Shakespeare uses to show weaknesses of a monarchy and a society which are covered by a mask of perfect, but fragile, appearance and self-fashioning.

5. *2 Henry VI:* the devilish Other

York's 'acts in Ireland'[176] are one of many allusion to the Irish context in *2 Henry VI*. Since the beginning, England is represented as an nation which has to rule over its nearest colony, which is peopled by undisciplined men. However, Ireland is a place of protest and rebellion, and as in *Richard II*, it could instill doubts in the minds of who has to be shipped to rule it. If Richard is uncertain about his adventure in dangerous country where he could show both his strength abroad and his weaknesses in fighting against Irish rebels who are led by the 'wild O'Neill', in *2 Henry VI*, the Duke of York and the Duke of Somerset are debating about who has to undermine the Irish. At the end, the Duke of York accepts: 'At Bristol I expect my soldiers,/ For there I'll ship them all for Ireland.'[177] However, Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, adverts him about the current situation in Ireland:

> My Lord of York, try what your fortune is.
> Th'uncivil kerns of Ireland are in arms
> And temper clay with blood of Englishmen.
> To Ireland will you lead a band of men
> Collected choicely, from each county some,
> And try your hap against the Irishmen?[178]

[174] *Richard II*, Act III.IV. 43.
[175] W. Maley, 'The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories', p.108.
[176] W. Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*, (*c.* 1594), Act I.I. 191.
[177] *2 Henry VI*, Act III.I. 228 - 229.
[178] *2 Henry VI*, Act III.I. 309 - 314.

The Cardinal's last question wants the Duke of York to be aware of the two possible consequences in undertaking his expedition in the rebellious Ireland. On one hand, as being a proud Englishman, he could show his ability in managing a difficult and dangerous situation; on the other, he could loose his position at court and damage English treasure. York is going to fight against many Irish 'kerns' - light armed infantry, who wore at least a metal breastplate[179] - who are led by the fearsome Hugh O'Neill. Irish kerns were supposed to fight with 'galloglasses', who Spenser, in his *View*, describes as being men who were 'bought in by the Englishmen first into Ireland, […]. For *Gall-ogla* signifies an English servitour or yeoman'[180]. In spite of Spenser's definition, galloglass (*gallóglaigh*) families were warriors who came originally from Scotland and settled in many Ireland's *tuatha* as 'heavily armed infantrymen, equipped with armor, powerful swords and, handled axes'[181]. From these two descriptions, one might deduce two different ideas: firstly, the English considered Irish soldiers as being inferior and they had to bring them 'to civil discipline'[182]; secondly, according to Christopher Highley, England treated Ireland 'in terms not of some absolute difference, but of dialectical interconnections'[183]. It is possible to add the term 'dangerous' to the term 'interconnections', because of English fear about intermingling with the native Irish. Intermingling with the Irish was not only considered dangerous for the English settlers because they could degenerate their habits and their refined culture, but also because English identity could be far less sure and clear. The problem of identity, fragility and incertitude could be considered as being the main worry for English monarchy during the Elizabethan period. In *2 Henry VI*, Jack Cade could be representative of this problem: Cade is an Englishman, who has been firstly sent to Ireland and 'oppose himself against a troop of kerns'[184], and later 'hath conversed with the enemy'[185] to collect useful information for the Duke of York. Cade is an ambivalent character: on one hand, he reminds a real

[179] D.B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 97.
[180] E. Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, (*c.* 1596), in A. Hadfield and W. Maley (ed.), *Edmund Spenser: A View of the State of Ireland, from the first printed edition, 1633*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 73-74.
[181] D.B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish*, p. 15-16.
[182] *2 Henry VI*, Act. I.I. 192.
[183] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 51-52.
[184] *2 Henry VI*, Act III.I. 361- 363.
[185] *2 Henry VI*, Act III.I. 368.

English spy of that time, Richard mac James, who infiltrated among Irish rebels and revealed Sir John of Desmond's plan, on the other, Cade is represented as being a stereotypical Irish soldier, that is to say that he is an Englishman who becomes an Other. In describing Cade, York uses typical adjectives which were usually said in categorizing the others in Shakespearean period, such as 'devil' and 'wild Morisco,/ shaking the bloody darts as he his bells.[186] Cade's dance not only reminds Gaelic jigs, but also, by defining him as being a devil, testifies the English fear of the Irish and of the others inside the reign. It is relevant to notice how Cade's primitive Celtic rituals are very similar to Richard II's 'supernatural' powers: both Richard and Cade go to Ireland and in that foreign country slowly become 'others'. However, could Cade's behavior be considered as being a tactical Gaelicization[187], or is Shakespeare staging Elizabethans' worries about identity? It could be argued that, Shakespeare decides to represent Cade in a stereotypical way, because by hiding him under an 'Irish masque' – by using a Jonson's term – his original identity becomes fluid, uncertain, and dangerous, but still English. Cade is an Other in his aspect, but not in his initial English identity; therefore, it might be supposed that Shakespeare is criticizing the English society of appearance once again. The problem of identity is present not only in English colonies, but also it has to be considered within the court self, among the English self, who usually masks its real identity under the surface of their fashion dresses and powerful symbols of their richness.

In conclusion, in *2 Henry VI* Ireland is still offstage, but it is functional to show many aspects of Tudor England: at the first sight, Ireland's relationship with England in the 1590s could show how difficult is to govern a colony, and that the only method to prevail is by cancel the Other through violence; in a deeper analysis, Ireland and its inhabitants are the mirror of England self, that is to say both that Englishness is defined by contrast of Irishness and its stereotypes, and that the problem of identity is a threat far more dangerous than the rebellious population of Ireland.

[186] *2 Henry VI*, Act. III.I. 365-366.
[187] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 52-53.

6. Conclusion

The difficulties in representing Ireland in the history plays reflect England's inability in controlling the situation in its first colony. As theatre in Tudor England was becoming more and more public, Elizabeth wanted rules to protect her state image and a strict system of censorship was established. According to O'Neill, Ireland was a 'sensitive subject' in that period, that is to say that Irish situation was treated obliquely: playwrights and authorities were aware over how Ireland and Irish affairs should be represented.[188] In spite of this agreement, Shakespeare decides not to describe Ireland in a detailed way and by adding rediscovered historical events from a glorious and mythical past as many of his contemporaries do, but he tries to elude system of censorship of that period and shows – although in a hidden way – real England's problems, which concern overseas political situation, national identities and the existence of the 'British others' within English empire.

Ireland in Shakespeare's histories has many, but not always clear, different meanings, which are represented both by using physical characters and by staging it behind the scene. It is important to underline that each reference to Ireland and each represented Irish context are performed by an English and Anglocentric perspective, and are built upon a preexistent material about Ireland's history. This colonial and historical British point of view about Ireland is linked to past and present England's problems and worries about ruling an overseas territory. For example, in each of the three analsed histories – *Henry V, Richard II,* and *2 Henry VI* – the English two 'Pales', which are France and Ireland, stand on the background; that is to say that from the 15th century, both France and Ireland are considered perennial problems for England: if on one hand, France could be a perfect example of English worries about foreign policy during the centuries, and it could be a possible allusion to the incoming conflict with Spain, Ireland has always triggered confusion and threat to English monarchy. Ireland has a nebulous status is not only because of its political situation but also because of its controversial identity: it could be considered as being a colony, a part of British

[188] S. O'Neill, *Staging Ireland: Representations in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), p. 13.

kingdom and a new region which aims to find a proper national identity of its own. Macmorris is a clear example of cultural confusion in Ireland from the end of the 16th century: with the 'Scot' and the 'Welshman', he represents a potential 'pan-Celtic alliance'[189] against England, but his relationship with each captains testifies the existence of colonizer-colonized bonds within English colonies; at the same time, from the Irish point of view, Macmorris could be seen as being an Irish Palesman, an Old English, but also as being a wild Irishman, who is fighting in English army, and whose only one 'nation' is England, by considering him from an English perspective.

However, Ireland is always perceived as being a subordinate country to England, and all the Irish are linked to typical stereotypes which are functional to show their difference and inferiority. Among all kinds of Irish features, such as the rug-headed bearded and violent kerns, the Irish endurance at war, and the use of the term 'devil' in reference to the Gaelic traditions, the most discriminating quality is linked to the linguistic prejudice. In speaking broken English, Macmorris testifies his racial inferiority and a different far less refined culture.

Now, other possible meanings of Ireland in Shakespeare's histories could be functional for a comparison with Edmund Spenser's perceptions and representations of the Irish context, by considering that the 'Elizabeth's arse-kissing poet'[190] went and ruled in Ireland as a New English settler. It might be argued that Shakespeare's histories world is mainly for men: English national identity has been built through kings' enterprises at war during the centuries, and it has been legitimate by their dynasties of successful male sovereign. Kings on stage show their masculinity, they remember great historical figures, such as Julio Caesar and Alexander, and they personify what kind of man a king should be and how he should behave. The male, in general, is the ideal 'stereotype' of a proud Englishness, therefore, everything that is not male is different and always it could trigger suspects and worries: for example, the Irish who moved to England, the strangers and all the others within the kingdom, and finally the women. Before dealing with the difference of gender and Spenser's representations of women, it is due to conclude the chapter with a reflection about Ireland as a constant threat

[189] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 146.
[190] Cited in C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 4.

for England. The Irish colony between the 16th and 17th century is represented as being a warning for English monarchy: on one hand, the doubts expressed by the Duke of York in *2 Henry VI* about an overseas expedition and the worries about possible racial intermingling in Ireland, become real in Richard II's suspects about a government in a dangerous country which is far from the fatherland; on the other, Ireland is perceived as a country of exile, where it is possible to build an alternative power which is against the English rules and reflects monarchy corruption and weaknesses which are masked by censorship rules, hypocrisy, and appearance.

CHAPTER 4

1. Difference of gender: women as the Others

As previously mentioned, in Elizabethan England there were at least three categories of others – foreigners, strangers, and outsiders – to which the group 'women' could be added. While outsiders have typical physical features as skin colour and physiognomic characteristics (for example the alleged hooked nose) which categorise them in their difference, women, in their body shape, are completely something 'other' from men. In the early modern period, a possible concept of race could be linked to lineage, branch, and physical alterity, which corresponded 'to inner qualities: woman could be considered as being the first "races" in society'.[191] When no difference of race, colour, and religion existed, man could still define himself in opposition to the female body and temperament.

This former contrast between male and female entities can be visually explained by looking at early modern maps of the English empire. New lands were always represented as women or parts of female body. For example, in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, Dormio of Syracuse defines Ireland, Scotland, and America as different parts of a woman body:

> ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: In what part of her body
> Stands Ireland?
> DORMIO OF SYRACUSE: Marry, sir, in her buttocks. I found out by the bogs.
> ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where Scotland?
> DORMIO OF SYRACUSE: I found it in the barrenness, hard
> In the palm of her hand…
> ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Where America, the Indies?
> DORMIO OF SYRACUSE: O, Sir, upon her nose, all o'er
> Embellished with rubies, earbuncles, sapphires, declining
> Their rich aspect to hot breath of Spain, who
> Sent whole armadas of carracks to be ballast at her nose.[192]

[191] A. Loomba, 'The Vocabularies of Race', p. 27.
[192] W. Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, (*c*. 1594), Act III.II. 118 - 41.

In many early modern texts, new lands are perceived as being women to be conquered, and wild territories and savages natives correspond to the most hidden and attractive parts of female body. Ania Loomba argues that sexual desire 'is figured as a mercantile or colonial relation', therefore women are 'assimilated into a colonial vocabulary'[193]. As colonial lands appear as being women, imaginary sexual contact with them corresponds to colonial possession. It might be deduced that, by using terms such as 'possession', 'desire', and 'mercantile relation', this man-woman, colonisers-colonies dynamics reflects Elizabethan England's dominant male society and underlines its subjects' will in showing their masculinity. Valerie Traub suggests that 'along with the inauguration of new forms of subjectivity and the growth of national consciousness came new terms of intelligibility for the body'[194]; therefore, new ideas and new perception of the world from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, are reflected in a new perception of the body. For example, in the Middle Ages, lands which were outside known borderlines were depicted as being peopled by strange and monstrous creatures such as amazons or cannibals; in the Renaissance period, though the descriptions of unknown lands as being inhabited by 'aliens' still persist, by exploring these territories and getting to know natives, the representations of the Others became more detailed, less scary, aiming to represent racial difference and superiority dynamics.

An important element that has to be considered in the analysis of female literary figures and their meaning is of course the body. The outsider's body is considered as being more libidinous than the European one because of several alleged reasons such as alien, unknown sexual practices ('harems, polygamy, wife-sharing, and occasionally polyandry'[195]), primitive, irrational instincts of those people who were considered as being inferior, and an exotic, different care for the body. For example, practices like colouring, make-up or ear dilating, used by American natives, were perceived as being deviant from common aristocratic European habits. Since women were considered different from men first of all in

[193] A. Loomba, 'The Vocabularies of Race', p. 29 - 30.
[194] V. Traub, 'Mapping the Global Body' in P. Erickson and C. Hulse, *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in renaissance England*, p. 46.
[195] A. Loomba, 'Outsiders in Shakespeare's England', p. 152.

their body shape, it is important to analyse how a foreign female body could be perceived and represented in relation to men's perception of their own country's women. The purpose of this chapter is to present how some English settlers in Ireland perceive and represent Irish women in reference to common English ones, and to analyse some female figure of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, by trying to understand their meaning in the late 16th century Irish context and by keeping in mind the concept of woman as Other.

2. English women and English perceptions of Irish women

In early modern England, society was mainly masculine: since men were deemed rational and measured, they could take up a political or military career, or take delight in visual arts, writing, and philosophy, after having been properly educated. On the contrary, women were supposed to be led only by their passions; even gentlewomen were 'expected to display the virtues of silence and good housekeeping'[196]. However, in Renaissance England, the 'male society' was ruled by a powerful Queen, whose nature was semi-divine, deemed to have been elected directly by God to rule the country: every attack against her and her choices was seen as an accusation against God's will. Men's position between two different groups of women, – the superior monarch and inferior common women – was not so easy to manage. Even if the power of Queen Elizabeth was not completely absolute, she had a large male apparatus of agents, spies, and political administrators, her courtiers were always ready to praise and celebrate her extravagant fashion and to acquiesce her will. Sir Walter Ralegh decided to name 'Virginia' a new discovered land in her honour; Edmund Spenser celebrates Elizabeth's nature mystery by referring to her as a mythical goddess and, in his works, calls her with classical names such as Astera, Diana, Flora, and Phoebe.

When Englishmen were sent to govern a colony outside England, their relationship with their monarch changed and contact and consequent perception of woman became ambiguous. Ireland, like other English colonies, hosted many English settlers who were educated in England to exhibit their male values, yet

[196] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 19.

conscious that 'they were going to a place beyond the sway of the queen'[197]. After having moved to Ireland they could exercise their own power and show their masculinity outside female control. The *Description of Munster* by William Herbert, the undertaker for Munster Plantation in 1586 whose aim was to build a 'Little England' in the south of Ireland, voices a sense of pride and satisfaction for a real possibility to rule and behave properly as a Queen's male administrator:

> Touching the inhabitation of this province's waste and desolate parts (through the attainder of sundry accrued unto Her Majesty) and by reason of the calamities of the late wars void of people to manure and occupy the same, as it hath been with great reason thought meet to be performed by gentlemen of good ability and disposition out of England, that by their good example, direction, and industry, both true religious, sincere justice, and perfect civilty might be here planted, and hence derived and propaganded into the other parts of this realm, so the placing amongst this forward and undisciplined people inhabitants so much differing both in manners, language, and country for them, […][198].

The distance from London's court similarly allowed Spenser to build a personal 'sense of autonomy from the structures of authority in Elizabethan England'[199].

When Elizabethan colonists, who were aware about the low social condition of women in England in contrast with the powerful and perfect Queen, went to Ireland, they found women with different habits and rights and were often shocked. For example, in reference to some young girls in Cork, Moryson writes in his *Itinerary*:

> I have seene with these eyes, young maides starke naked grinding of Corne with certaine stones to make cakes thereof, and striking of into the tub of meale, such reliques thereof as stuck on their belly, thighes, and more unseemely parts.[200]

In the early modern period, the condition of the English women differed from that of the Irish ones: married English women were subjected and protected by

[197] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 111.
[198] Cited in A. Hadfield and J. McVeagh (ed.), *Strangers to That Land: British Perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine*, p. 48.
[199] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 39.
[200] Fynes Moryson, *The Itinerary of Fynes Moryson in Four Volumes: Volume IV*, (1617), vol. IV, p. 197.

the English Common Law thanks to their matrimonial link; they could not possess property, administer lands, or sign contract. Very frequently their husbands died before their male sons could control a property: wives inherited the entire land. This system with a male chief reflected England's royal structure where the Queen ruled over the state.[201] On the contrary, in Ireland married women could administrate a land independently of their husbands, according to the ancient Gaelic Brehon Laws.[202] However, as in Ireland polygamy was allowed, single women and widows were not protected by the Gaelic Law, as the English single women were. Widowed or unmarried women in England had the right to hold and administer properties. When the Common Law was introduced in Ireland with the arrival of the New English settlers, Irish single women gained more security and divorce became rarer.[203]

The social condition of aristocratic Irishwomen was quite different from that in England: English women could wear splendid clothes and go to the theatre, yet they remained always subjected to the orders of their husbands who, in turn, were directly ruled by their Queen; Irish noblewomen had instead a sort of political influence into their husbands and could be 'used' for convenient political marriages. In spite of Moryson's description of some Irish gentlewomen, who are free in drinking and sometimes they 'voide urine in full assemblies of men'[204], some Irish noblewomen acted in a dignified way. For example, according to Christopher Highley, when Spenser went to the Earl of Ormond's residence, for his first visit in 1580 as Lord Grey's secretary, he was astonished by Lady Ormond's refinement and courteousness. Irish noble families who were favoured by the Queen, as the Ormond in Munster were, tended to reproduce London's court life by adorning their residences with Queen Elizabeth's portraits and busts[205].

[201] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 10 - 11.
[202] K. Nicholls, 'Irishwomen and Property in the Sixteenth Century', in M. MacCurtain and D. O'Corrain (ed.), *Women in Irish Society: the Historical Dimension*, (Dublin Arlen House: The Women's Press, 1978), p. 17.
[203] MacCurtain and O'Dowd, 'Introduction', in in M. MacCurtain and D. O'Corrain (ed.), *Women in Irish Society: the Historical Dimension*, p. 4.
[204] *Itinerary*, p. 198.
[205] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 28.

We know that Spenser started writing *The Faerie Queene* before his advent in Ireland. Yet, as Stephen Greenblatt argues, 'Ireland pervades the poem'[206]. Now, it is important to understand which kind of meaning Spenser attributes to some female characters of the poem, how they are related with the Irish context, and which is the relationship between men's excessively masculinised Ireland and their powerful female monarch.

3. Women as the Other in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*

Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* contains many of these topical images of foreign women. It is interesting to analyse them within the Irish context and Spenser's perception of his experience in Ireland. As previously stated, Ireland was perceived by the new settlers as a country where they could exercise their power without the control of the Queen. That is to say that, by standing alone in an uncivilised country which has to be shaped and ruled according to English manners, they had to marginalise and exclude everything that was different and could threaten the political situation in England. The 'Others', as the Irish rebels were, were perceived as dangerous and horrible in their dirty clothes, primitive habits, and obscure laws; the women, who were a different category on principle, and who could not live in a country where free male society could survive, had to be represented sometimes as awful figures, sometimes as threatening characters who embodied the English settlers' worries about Ireland. Resting on classical and Italian Renaissance sources, Spenser depicts female figures in a highly meaningful way. As Patricia Coughlan argues, for Spenser, Ireland is a 'radical alterity' which takes the form of 'those who must have to do with it'[207]; Spenser's female figures are sometimes troublesome to define: it is difficult to depict and understand an alterity, both for the writer and for the reader.

[206] S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 186.
[207] P. Coulghlan and N. Canny, *Spenser and Ireland: and Interdisciplinary Perspective*, (Cork: Cork University, 1989), p. 46.

Thanks to one of the first female characters of the *Faerie Queene*, Spenser introduces the theme of deformity, which is personified by and horrid mother, Errour. Redcrosse Knight is going to penetrate 'the wandring wood, this Errours den,/ a monster vile, whom God and man does hete'[208], where he finds a creature who looks like the mythological Greek echidna:

> […] he saw the vgly moster plaine,
> Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
> But th'other halfe did womans shape retine,
> Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.[209]

According to the majority of the critics, the theme of the horrid and the monstrous is here personified by a female creature who symbolises the false teaching of the Roman Church. The image of this mother with 'her beastly body'[210] backs up their sons who are:

> Ten thousand kindes of creatures, partly male
> And partly female of his fruitful seed;
> Such vgly monstrous shapes elsewhere may no man reed.[211]

Within the allegory, '[h] er fruitfull cursed spawne of serpent'[212], whose stink almost smothers the Knight, symbolically is what Protestants reject: hosts ('lumpes of flesh and gobbets raw'), papal written texts ('books and papers'), and Holy Texts episodes ('loathy fromgs and toades, which eyes did lacke'[213]). At the end of the encounter with Errour, the Knight is horrified 'to see th'vnkindly Impes of heauen accurst,/ deuoure their dam'; Catholic Faith, which is depicted as a monstrous mother and which is an element of difference between Ireland and Protestant England, breeds monstrous sons who eat their mother and finally kill themselves. Spenser, as being an English administrator in Ireland, wanted to

[208] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, (*c.* 1591 – 1596), Book I.I. 13.
[209] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 14.
[210] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 18.
[211] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 21.
[212] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 22.
[213] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 20.

impose Protestant Faith according to his Queen's aims in her colonies. He warns colonised people, the Irish in particular, that they are following a wrong Faith, and prompts them to become a developed and refined society. If they stubbornly carry on following their degenerate Catholic faith, they will have 'well worthy end/ of such as drunke her life, the which them nurst'[214].

According to Fitzpatrick, the image of the monster Errour as a symbol of a negative fertility, linked to the idea of a wrong Faith which generates horrid followers,[215] is opposed, in Book I.X, to 'faerie *Charissa*', an example of a positive mother who is linked to a 'louely fere' and 'by him had many pledges dere'[216]. Also Charissa is a female figure linked to the Faith: she is one of the three theological virtues and is represented with the other two virtues, the virgin *Fidelia* and *Speranza*, in a meaningful ascending climax. Redcrosse meets firstly the two virgins, and secondly the fertile Charissa, because, during the spiritual ascent to God, a man should be educated by Fidelity first, secondly he should trust *Speranza*, and finally he should practice Charity which is the virtue involving the other two ones. 'The ages *Cœlia*, Deare dame'[217], whose name reminds Holy Heaven, is the mother of two virgins and the only one mother, Charissa, who has 'a multitude of babes […]/ playing their sports, that ioyd her to behold'. Charissa's fertility is represented in contrast both with her virgin sisters and with the negative Errour's fertility. Both Errour and Charissa are degenerated mothers: the first one is degenerated in a negative way, and the second one in a positive way. Both of them are the mothers of religious followers.

3.1 Amazons and witches: Radigund and Acrasia

In the first chapter, the Irish sea has been mentioned as being a 'dangerous sea' according to the English reports in the 16th and 17th century. This is linked with the idea of that threatening and alien borderline which separates known

[214] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.I. 26.
[215] J. Fitzpatrick, 'Spenser's Nationalistic Images of Beauty: the Idea and the Other in Relation to Protestant England and Catholic Ireland in *The Faerie Queene Book* 1', (Cahiers Elizabethans: Late Medieval and Renaissance English Studies, 53, 1998), https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/6451, pp. 17 - 19.
[216] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.X. 4.
[217] *The Faerie Queene*, Book I.X. 17.

territories from the unknown world. Through his alter ego in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* (c. 1595), Spenser thus describes the Irish Sea:

> So to the sea we came; the sea? That is
> A world of waters heaped vp on hie,
> Rolling like mountains in wide wildernesse,
> Horrible, hideus, roaring with hoarse crie.
> And is the sea (quoth Corridon) so fearfull?
> Fearful much more (quoth he) then hart can fear:
> Thousand wylde beasts with deep mouthes gaping direfull
> Therein stil wait poore passengers to teare.
> Who life doth loath, and longs death to behold,
> Before he die, already dead with feare,
> And yet as ghastly dreadfull, as it seems,
> Bold men presuming life for gaine to sell,
> Dare tempt that gulf, and in those wandring stremes
> Seek waies vnknowne, waies leading down to hell.[218]

Here, according to pastoral canons, Spenser is representing the sea which is notorious dangerous for the English adventures towards Ireland; however, in *The Faerie Queene* (Book II. XII. 23-26), using both Classical and Nordic sources, – 'The dreadfull Fish, that hath deseru'd the name/ of Death' reminds to the Ragnarok, which is the end of the world in Norse mythology - Spenser sketches out the sea as being an entity peopled by monstrous creatures, which could be an obstacle in reaching a likewise unknown land:

> Most vgly shapes, and horrible aspects,
> Such as Dame Nature selfe mote feare to see,
> Or shame, that euer should fo fowle defects
> From her most cunning hand escaped bee;
> And dreadfull pourtraicts of deformitiee:
> Spring-headed *Hydraes*, and sea-shouldring Whales,
> Great whirlpools, which all fishes make to flee,
> Bright Scolopendraes, arm'd with siluer scales,
> Mightly *Monoceros*, with immisured tayles.

[218] Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouds Come Home Again*, (*c.* 1595), vv. 196 - 211.

The dreadfull Fish, that hath deseru'd the name
Of Death, and like him looks in dreadfull hew,
The grisly Wasserman, that makes his game
The flying ships with swiftnesse to pursew,
The horrible Sea-satyre, that doth shew
His fearefull face in time of greatest storme,
Huge *Ziffius*, whom Mariners eschew
No lesse, then rockes, (as trauellers informe,)
And greedy *Rosmarines* with visages deforme.[219]

The sea is the first obstacle that the New English have to pass before reaching Ireland or any other new land. The idea of a passage, which could be both physical and moral, as an inner improvement to conquest something is, is perceived as being difficult and dangerous and reflects English worries in mapping, defining, and ruling this new land. The dangerous sea is the symbol of what could happen before landing on a foreign, hostile new country. Quite similarly, Sir Guyon and his travel companion Parmer cross a sea peopled by the 'same Monsters [which] are not these in deed, but are into these fearefull shapes disguiz'd/ y that same wicked witch, to worke vs dreed'[220]. These monsters might symbolise the English worries about Ireland and, in general, the adventurers' difficulties in reaching those new lands. The sea is the last borderline that has to be passed before arriving at a new space and, at the same time, the first obstacle in the new territory: Sir Guyon, who belongs to the Britton ancestry like the Renaissance English travelers, is going to discover a new unknown place peopled by a mysterious woman. Sir Guyon's voyage through the sea and his discovery of the Bower of Bliss, and the following episode of Sir Artegall's encounter with the amazon Radigund, as Grenblatt suggests may represent the travelers' adventures in the new lands and their colonialist attempts[221]. The British race of Sir Guyon and Artegall is going to colonise new undiscovered territories peopled by strange and alien female figures, the warrior amazon Radigund and the enchanting witch Acrasia.

[219] *The Faerie Queene*, Book II.XII. 23 - 24.
[220] *The Faerie Queene*, Book II.XI. 26.
[221] S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, p. 181.

Radigund is a female figure who represents both England's difficulties in governing its colonies and the male settlers' dependence in Ireland from their female monarch. Radigund is the amazon queen of 'a troupe of women warlike dight,/ with weapons in their hands, as ready for the fight'[222], perhaps representing that scary borderline that English adventurers had to cross. She firstly represents the unknown and alien side of the colony: Spenser wanted to show this frightening feature of the Other, not only by using a 'grotesque' figure of a warrior, but also a woman who is ready to fight in order to protect her kingdom. Radigund is an obstacle: she is a physical hindrance for Artegall and she is representative of all colonizers' difficulties in knowing the others. Though Radigund is supposed to be a literary creation, Spenser, like many other early modern English colonisers, had read many reports about amazons who lived at the end of the known world. According to thse traditions, the Amazons were women living in a fantastic land which could symbolise undiscovered territories; these deviant female creatures lived like wild men because they decided to become warriors to avenge their husbands' death in fighting; after having won their enemies, they carried on fighting and later built an alternative kingdom for women warriors only. In each historical period, amazons are always collocated in different places, yet constantly supposed to live beyond known and controlled lands. Herodotus argues that they live in Scythia (the place from which the Irish ancestors were thought to have come), some classical writers place them in India; Marco Polo and Pigafetta situate them in Africa, which was considered as being the most remote and dangerous place of that time. Some early modern writers say that they live in America, the new boundary.[223] Amazons' habits are compared to those of the Wild Man, who 'was often portrayed as a dumb or a meaningless babbler, thus as lacking the most essential qualification for civilty, language'[224]. Amazons are threatening because of their incivility and aggressive temperament; being women with masculine attitudes, they resulted more dangerous rather than other creatures. Moreover, in stanza 31, Radigund's practices to win knights

[222] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.IV. 21.
[223] A. Loomba, 'The Vocabularies of Race', p. 28.
[224] P. Coughlan, *Spenser and Ireland: and Interdisciplinary Perspective,* p. 49.

consciously recall Ariosto's *L'Isola delle Donne Omicide* (*Orlando Furioso*, XIX, 57), where women execute horrible and cruel actions because of their blind fury.

> Her name (quoth he) they Radigund do call,
> A Princesse of great power, and greater pride,
> And Queene of Amazons, in armes well tride,
> And sundry battles, which she hat atchieued
> With great successe, that her hath glorifide,
> And made her famous, more then is belieued;[225]

Her temperament in fighting, her cruelty, and her strangeness at Artegall's eyes in being a warrior woman emerge in her description and in her actions. In stanza 37 and 38, Spenser writes that Radigund's 'heart for rage did grate' and for 'vknowen peril of bold women's pride'[226]: these words recall the English settlers' comments on Ireland. Firstly, the use of the adjective 'grate' alludes to the common contemporary English colonial discourse about Ireland as 'Land of Ire'[227] because of the rebels who peopled it; secondly, the 'vnknowen perill' recalls the English difficulties in providing a of Ireland's detailed map which could help them in understanding and governing unknown territories and in avoiding rebels' attacks from the dark Irish hills. The irascible 'halfe like a man'[228] of Radigund and her female army represent all Irish rebels; Artegall's defeat against her might be thought as all human and economic England's losses during the Irish expeditions. Therefore, Radigund's half-man nature alludes both to her being an amazon and, allegorically, the symbol of all the wild Irish; her masculine features recall those early modern Irish women who do not carry out any female occupation in Elizabeth's reign. Piracy was one activity mainly for men, since popular superstitions barred women from ships as a dangerous source of ill omen for the crew and for the expedition: yet, in the early modern period many Irish women 'played a varied role in the

[225] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.IV. 33.
[226] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.IV. 37 - 38.
[227] A. Hadfield, W. Maley, 'Introduction: Irish representations and English alternatives', in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield, and W. Maley (ed.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660*, p. 3.
[228] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.IV. 36.

business of piracy, acting as receivers of stolen plunder or harbouring pirates from the authorities'[229] and practicing prostitution above all in the south-west of Munster. Gráinne O'Malley, the so called 'pirate queen of Connacht', arguably the most famous woman-pirate, was supposed to have been even received at the court of Queen Elizabeth. Even though information about Gráinne O'Malley's activities through sea are not detailed, she is famous for her hostility to the New English settlers and, because of her affinity with Gaelic customs in the west of Ireland in the half part of the 16th century, she is often depicted by poets and historians as an Irish Amazon, sometimes called the 'Diana of the Atlantic'[230].The New English settlers had to rule a country where not only the nature of the men was different, but also where women fulfilled roles in the society perceived as strange and improper in reference to the English women. Because of this 'female alterity', Irish women are perceived as obstacles.

In Highley's conception of Artegall, he could be the representative of an alternative male power that the English administrators wished to build in Ireland, where they wanted to feel free in showing their masculinity against the local Gaelic communities[231]. However, 'bold *Radigund*' is finally defeated by Britomart: the New English settlers were always subjected to their Queen, who called them to order when she was made aware of their cruel methods against the Irish (in the case of Lord Grey) or when she had to send more forces and weapons in Ireland (in the case of Essex).

The episode of stanza 22, where Artegall sees a knight 'groning inwardly,/ that he of womens hands so base a death should dy'[232], may thus reflect the English settlers' frustrating dependence on their Queen: 'Among upper-class males, the will to dominate others was acceptable and indeed admired; the same will in women was condemned as a grotesque and dangerous aberration'[233]. Spenser's Radigund is both a representative of the

[229]J.C. Appleby, 'Women and Piracy in Ireland: from Gráinne O'Malley to Anne Bonny' in M. MacCurtain and D. O'Corrain (ed.), *Women in Irish Society: the Historical Dimension*, p. 55.
[230] J.C. Appleby, 'Women and Piracy in Ireland: from Gráinne O'Malley to Anne Bonny', p. 56.
[231] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 125 - 126.
[232] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.IV. 22.
[233] S. Greenblatt (general ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 19.

Irish dangerous and unknown Other, and as of his dreaded and authoritarian Queen, cleverly depicted and 'condemned' as a cruel warrior amazon.

In Book II, after having crossed the dangerous sea, Sir Guyon is tempted by a beautiful witch: Acrasia, 'clad in faire weeds, but fowle disordered,/ and garments loose, that seemd vnmeet for womanhed'[234]. These few lines mark the fact that this witch is very beautiful, yet at the same time she shows her nature as the Other. Acrasia and her seductive game are perceived as dangerous in reference to events in the episode, to the witch's nature, and to identity definition. Since the beginning of the 16th century, England and Scotland had been afflicted by a rapid population growth and social changes which developed women's social marginalization. Sometimes women, mainly unmarried single women or widows, were considered as an evil part of the society and linked to Satan. Because of this, they were prosecuted as witches, above all in the English countryside and in Scotland, where the percentage of physical violence against witches was the highest. Spenser is probably conscious of these prosecutions in England, because this violent attitude against this group of women was not present in the Irish context, where only few episodes of witchcraft are reported.[235] Spenser avails himself of classical and Italian sources, such as Omero's Circe, Tasso's Armida and Trissino's Actatia. In depicting Acrasia, however, he might be also conscious of the enchanting powers of Irish women in Gaelic traditions; quite probably he was shocked by his contemporary Irish women's nakedness. Fynes Moryson reports that the Irish women are 'all naked, excepting their loose mantels'[236]; Barnabe Riche complains about the Dublin women who work as 'Tavernkeepers' because of their 'idelnesse whoredome and many other vile abhominations'[237]. All these diabolical habits belong to women: Spenser uses a witch to represent all difficulties and worries of the English in a new colony. Ireland, as being a colony

[234] *The Faerie Queene*, Book II.XII. 55.
[235] R. Gillepsie, Women and Crime in Seventeenth-Century Ireland, in M. MacCurtain and D. O'Corrain (ed.), *Women in Irish Society: the Historical Dimension*, p. 45.
[236] Cited in C. Carroll, 'Representations of Women in Some Early Modern English Tracts on the Colonization of Ireland', in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993), p. 387.
[237] Cited in C. Carroll, 'Representations of Women in Some Early Modern English Tracts on the Colonization of Ireland', p. 386.

to be conquered, has to be perceived in its Otherness, and now the 'Other' is a beautiful woman. Irish characters are dangerous, demonic women.

Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, after having been tempted by Acrasia destroys her Bower of Bliss, because 'Temperance – the avoidance of extremes, the "sober government" of the body, the achievement of the Golden Mean – must be constituted paradoxically by a supreme act of destructive excess'[238]. By resisting Acrasia's provocative behaviour, he experiences his self-control and builds his identity as the Knight of Temperance; he finally destroys what made him conscious of his identity: Guyon annihilates the Other who allowed him self-fashioning. Spenser is explaining what is happening to the New English communities in Ireland: as soon as the English colonisers become aware of the difference of the Irish and mirror themselves in their non-identity, they perceive and build the English identity of their own. After mirroring and self-shaping, the item, – the Other - which was necessary for the building of the identity, has to be destroyed, because it could be a possible threat to their newly built identity. Elizabethans in Ireland were conscious 'that many of their most dangerous enemies were Englishmen who had been metamorphosed into "mere Irish".'[239]Those Englishmen had not metaphorically destroyed the Bower and had intermingled with the Irish instead of denying their habits and traditions: they are the most threating enemies for the monarchy. Therefore, intermingling happened through sexual relationship with the Irish women, whose children 'that sucketh the milk of the nurse must of necessity learn his [their] first speech of her" and "the speech being Irish, the heart must need be Irish'[240]. In Spenser's Ireland, women are the most dangerous threat against English identity, because with their sinful female nature they can endanger their male preys' Englishness. As a consequence of this, pure English knights would become horrible creatures, which 'seeming beats are men indeed'[241]. It has to be remarked that, as the majority of English colonists were men who had been sent in Ireland without their wives or

[238] S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, p. 172.
[239] S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, p. 186.
[240] Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (1596), prepared and checked by R.S. Bear, (University of Oregon: Renscence Editions, 1997), http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/veue2.html, Part Two, p. 6.
[241] *The Faerie Queene*, Book II.XII. 85.

family, they tended to intermarry with the natives: 'often in Spenser, the imagery of sexual seduction implies its political equivalent', which was more than allegorical.[242] Therefore, in Spenser's opinion, hybrid creatures, such as the Anglo-Irish, represented a racial regression, because the English race with its values would lose its purity.

To sum up, Acrasia might be the symbol of native Irish women, who brought the New English settlers far from their first aim of imposing their Englishness over colonised people because of English race purity and superiority. Spenser promotes not only the exercise of violence over an undeveloped culture, but also over a specific part of the population, the women. His discourse about Ireland could be thus read in a misogynistic way. Finally, it is important to notice that in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's perception of Irish question was seen through the eyes of a coloniser who in a refined and literally way creates characters to explain violent imperialistic England's aims on Ireland.

3.2 Rescuing Irena and Diana's failure

In the last part of the poem, Spenser seems to change his point of view. His relationship with the colony becomes more intimate and ambiguous, as is shown by the representation of two other female figures, Irena in Book V and Diana in *Cantos of Mutabilitie*. According to Highley, Irena's episode in Book V is the symbol of Anglo-Irish relationship at the end of the 16th century: Artegall's task of rescuing Irena from the tyrant Grantorto is what is in an allegory of England's mission to "free" Ireland from Spanish control.[243]

> Wherefore the Lady, which *Eirena* hight,
> Did to the Faery Queene her way adresse,
> To whom complaying her afflicted plight,
> She her besought of gratious redresse.[244]

[242] R.A. McCabe, 'Ireland: policy, poetics, and parody', in A. Hadfield (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 63.
[243] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 123.
[244] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.I. 4.

Irena's episode belongs to the most political Book in *The Faerie Queene*, where Spenser's opinion about justice in Ireland Irish is clear. On one hand, Aristotle explains that justice has to be distributive and commutative, and that each crime needs to be punished; on the other, Elizabeth's concept of justice is what has to protect state authority and what should be protected from possible internal discord. For Spenser, these two concepts must be balanced to protect citizens against internal and external enemies.[245]

Irena, whose name alludes to the Gaelic name of Ireland, Eire, but at the same time recalls the 'Land of Ire' which was a familiar feature of contemporary English colonial discourse,[246] is the personification of Ireland, which is asking England for help against the Irish rebels. Both Irena and her subjects had been imprisoned by the giant Grantorto, which allegorically might be considered as being Spain. The Faerie Queene wants Artegall, the Knight of Justice, to save 'the heauy Mayd'[247] from the 'proud Tyrants'[248] and 'to reform that ragged common-weale.[249] As Highley points out, the female figure who needs male help and protection, is representative of the Renaissance idea of a colonial land which has to be conquered and ruled according 'just' English rules.[250] It is important to notice that Artegall's path towards Irena was not direct and simple:

> Who hauing left *Mercilla*, straight way went
> On his first quest, the which him forth did call,
> To weet to worke *Irenaes* franchisement,
> And eke *Grantortoes* worthy punishment.[251]

Along his way, Artegall found Radigund and fought first Malengin at the court of Mercilla and then Burbon, through whom Spenser describes the French monarch Henry IV and his nation treason. Artegall's route to Irena is functional 'to trace

[245] A. Hadfield, '*The Faerie Queene*, Book IV – VII', in A. Hadfield (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, p. 130.
[246] A. Hadfield, W. Maley, 'Introduction: Irish representations and English alternatives', in B. Bradshaw, A. Hadfield, and W. Maley (ed.), *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534-1660*, p. 3.
[247] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 11.
[248] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 24
[249] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 26.
[250] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 123.
[251] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XI. 36.

the swerving and uneven course of English policy in late sixteenth-century Ireland'[252]. Artegall's obstacles and difficulties in reaching Irena are the mirror of the England's Irish adventure which could be literally described exactly by the Latinate term 'errant': its double meaning of 'to mistake' and 'to wander' reflects both the ambiguity and uncertainty of Irish situation and continuous surrenders and mistakes in English political choices in Ireland.

From stanza 12 to 15 we find Irena and Grantorto's visual descriptions: Irena wears 'squalid garments […] with dull countenance, and with doleful spright,/ she forth was brought in sorrowfull dismay', and Grantorto 'of stature huge and hideous he was,/ like to a Giant for his monstrous high, […] he had great skill in single fight: […] that wether man or monster one could scarce discerne'[253]. Irena's miserable clothes might be Irish poverty, the devastation of its soil and never-ending rebellions, but also Spenser's perception of cultural deterioration after the advent of the Catholicism and the religious and political influence of Spain. In spite of this, Grantorto is sometimes identified as the Earl of Desmond,[254] who is the most cruel enemy of the refined Old English chief Thomas Butler, the tenth Earl of Ormond and Ossory, Spenser's patron during his permanence in Ireland. After having seen Artegal from afar, Irena's joyful sight is her, and Ireland's, hope to be saved and helped by the masculine England against the 'huge' Spain, because of its political and colonial power ('great skill in single fight') and of the large diffusion of its religion, Catholicism. Grantorto's uncertain nature of 'man or monster'[255] testifies English perception of Spain: could it represent an enemy to fight or could it be an enormous threatening 'monster' by whom England could be defeated?

At the end of the episode, Irena is rescued by Artegall who wins the giant, people around 'shouted of joy of his successe' and the Knight of Justice,

> Who straight her leading with meete maiestie
> Vnto the palace, where their kings did rayne,
> Did her therein establish peaceablie,

[252] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland,* p. 123.
[253] *The Faerie Queene,* Book V.XII. 11 - 15.
[254] R.A. McCabe, R.A. McCabe, 'Ireland: policy, poetics, and parody', p.71.
[255] *The Faerie Queene,* Book V.XII. 15.

And to her kingdoms seat restore agayne;[256]

In the last part of the poem, Spenser is ambiguous about the situation in Ireland: on one hand, he dreams of a land where the ancient kings, who could be the Old English rescued by the Catholicism, were subjected by the Queen's rules and Faith ('he could reform it'[257]), that is to say that Irish sovereignty comes directly from the English Crown. As a consequence of this, the Irish race could be saved and purified by acquiescing New English settlers' plans. On the other hand, he accuses the brutal methods used by the English settlers against the Irish rebels; in reference to this, Talus, who is symbolically Lord Grey, the viceroy in Ireland from 1580 and 1582 and whose secretary was Spenser self, is 'reouke[d] to the right way,/ in which he was that Realme for to redresse'[258]. In early modern Ireland viceroyalty was an unclear role, as the entire Irish political situation was: 'the Irish viceroy could dispense justice and patronage in a way no other comparable official on the continent could'[259]. The New English in Ireland could use violence against the Irish as much they wanted and could live in a sort of second personal court outside the Queen's control. However, according to the events, Lord Grey was recalled by the Queen from Ireland, and executed for treason, because of the embarrassment to the Crown caused by the massacre at Smerwick.[260] Always aware of what was happening in Ireland, Queen Elizabeth condemned everything that could damage the image of her monarchy.

Spenser's ambiguous opinion about English policy in Ireland at the end of the Book V is also represented in the conclusive *Cantos of Mutabilitie* through the female figure of Diana, who is represented along the idealized pastoral canons within an idealised Irish landscape:

Whylome, when IRELAND flourished in fame
Of wealths and godnesse, far aboue the rest
Of all that beare the *British* Ilands name,

[256] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 25.
[257] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 27.
[258] *The Faerie Queene*, Book V.XII. 27.
[259] A. Hadfield and W. Maley, 'Introduction: Irish representations and English alternatives', p. 13
[260] C. Carroll, 'Representations of Women in Some Early Modern English Tracts on the Colonization of Ireland', p. 389.

> The Gods then vs'd (for pleasure and for rest)
> Oft to resort there-to, when seem'd them best:
> But none of all there.in more pleasure found,
> Then *Cynthia*; that is soueraine Queene profest
> Of woods and forests, which therein abound,
> Sprinkled with wholesome waters, more than most on ground.[261]

Ireland is here considered as being a sort of Gods' paradise which is rich in nature and magnificence and as Queen Cynthia's seat. In these lines Cynthia, which another name of Diana according to the opening *Letter to Ralegh*: 'Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana[262]. Diana's description and her association with Cynthia recall the Queen's presentation in Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*: Colin compares Cynthia to the nature 'in which all pure perfection one may see'[263]. In both descriptions female figures are associated with nature and goddesses, as if to say that goddesses have to live in pure and marvelous places like the Irish rivers 'that shepheard *Colin* dearly did console,/ and made he luckesse loues well knowne to be'[264]. Colin is the same protagonist of Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*: 'The shephaerds boy (best knowen bt the name) […] Charming his oaten pipe vnto his peres,/The shepheard swains that did about himplay:'[265]; Colin is often identified with Spenser himself: comparing his mournful song with the last part of *The Faerie Queene*, it is possible to perceive Spenser's final melancholy about his Irish experience and the vain English efforts to 'convert' the Irish in more civil people.

Later, Ireland is described once again in a positive way:

> She choose this *Arlo*; where shee did resort
> With all her Nymphes enranged on a rowe,
> With whom the woody Gods did oft consort:
> For, with the Nymphes, the Satyres loue to play & sport.[266]

[261] *The Faerie Queene*, VII.VI. 38.
[262] *The Faerie Queene, A Letter to the Authors.*
[263] *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, v. 343.
[264] *The Fearie Queene*, Mvutabilitie.VI. 40.
[265] *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, vv. 1 - 6.
[266] *The Faerie Queene*, VII.VI. 39.

Arlo-Hill corresponds to Spenser's tenure at Kilcolman, in Munster countryside, where the landscape properly is suited for pastoral settings. Moreover, Spenser's association of Ireland with the Nymphs seems to become a sort of *topos* in the reports on Munster's landscape. For example, a Jacobean magistrate for the province, Luke Gernon, personifies the country as the 'Nymph of Ireland [who] is very fayre of visage, and hath a smooth skin of tender grasse…her breasts are round hillocks of milkyeelding grasse, and that so fertile, that they conted w(th) the valyes.[267] However, Ireland as gods' *locus amoenus* is not destined to be eternal. Diana-Elizabeth is seen by the foolish god Faunus while she is 'bath[ing] her limbes' in the Irish rivers; therefore, 'Diana, full of indignation'[268], abandons her wonderful kingdom:

> Thence-forth she left; and parting from the place,
> There-on an heauy haplesse curse did lay,
> To weet, that Wolues, where she was wont to space,
> Should harbour'd be, and all those Woods deface,
> And Thieues should rob and spoile that Coast around.
> Since which, those Woods, and all that goodly Chase,
> Doth to this day with Wolues and Thieues abound:
> Which too-too true that lands in-dwellers since haue found.[269]

This last passage unveils many aspects of Spenser's opinion about Ireland, for example the difficulties that the English encountered in changing the Irish rebellious and wild nature, Spenser's sudden, forced return to England after the destruction of his Kilcolman castle by means of the rebels, where his new-born child died, and finally

Queen Elizabeth's failure in Ireland and the consequent desolation of the landscape. According to Highley, Diana's inability to definitively punish Faunus, her vacillations and retreat 'connote not a vindication of royal fiat but a failure of the royal will in Ireland'[270]. Diana-Elizabeth is no longer functional to the

[267] Cited in A. Hadfield and W. Maley, 'Introduction: Irish representations and English alternatives', p. 3.
[268] *The Faerie Queene*, Mvtabilitie.VI. 54.
[269] *The Farie Queene*, Mvtabilitie.VI. 55.
[270] C. Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland*, p. 131.

representation of the Other and of native female creatures. She shows that royal female power, despite her refined effeminate social habits at court and Elizabeth's perfect politic body, is not always possible where the society is historically rude and masculinized: 'the fact that she is seen naked suggests that Ireland is the place where her masks of power slip away and she needs to act more resolutely'[271]. It might be supposed that a possible consequence of the excessively masculinised society in Ireland, according to Spenser, is the waste land mentioned in the *View*: 'that godlie Countrie', as Colin's pastoral 'home', is destined to become 'wasted and left desolate'[272], peopled by Irish 'Wolues and Thieues'. Finally, Spenser's ambiguity appears, because irascible creature in Ireland could be both the Irish rebels and English settlers such as Lord Gray, with their aims of depopulation, displacement, and geographic transformation of Ireland. Spenser's Irish *locus amoenus*, where he hoped to build his personal court to praise his Queen and fulfill his initial purpose 'to fashion a gentlemen, or noble person in vertous and gentle discipline'[273], will be destroyed by that masculinity wished by the Queen but uncontrolled by the female monarch.

4. Conclusion

In the early modern period, female alterity also helped to represent the new lands that Europeans were gradually colonising worldwide. While humanist theories were spreading in Europe, man was becoming more and more conscious of his Self as the opposite of the female Self. Much in the same way, the European adventurers were becoming more conscious of their nation and proud of it when they noticed differences and strangeness in the new lands. After the initial curiosity and fear, the new territories were treated as subjects of the monarchies, and their inhabitants as goods. Women had been always linked to the idea of sin because of the Christian image of Eva; this collective unconscious started being linked to the idea of conquest, and the sinful female body was associated firstly

[271] A. Hadfield, '*The Faerie Queene*, Book IV – VII, p. 138.
[272] E. Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (*c*. 1596), p.13.
[273] *The Faerie Queene, A Letter of the Authors*.

with the undiscovered lands, and secondly with something odd and different that must be known and physically subdued.

Englishmen had always seen their women protected by their husbands and taking care of the family and the house; when the English settlers moved to Ireland to colonise it, they felt themselves in a strange middle position in respect to female figures. On one hand, they found Irish women with different habits rather than those of the English ones, and sometimes they were shocked to see women behaving like men; on the other, they felt free to build a 'second male England' without their Queen's supervision, but Elizabeth was always a worry for all settlers in Ireland.

Edmund Spenser was one of these New English settlers who went to Ireland and re-elaborated the concept of Other as female figures. Thanks to the analysis of Radigund, Acrasia, Irena, and Diana in his main work *The Faerie Queene*, it is possible to understand what the current English worries about Ireland were. The deepest anxieties of the English in Ireland and of the monarchy are not only represented by the rebellious native Irish, but they are cleverly depicted as women, as completely Others. Each type of female alterity – the amazon, the witch, the kidnapped queen and the virgin wonderful Goddess – hides the image of Queen Elizabeth. Radigund is both representative of the rebellious nature of the 'mere Irish' and of the Queen who rules over the settlers in Ireland; Acrasia is both the alterity that has to be destroyed and the image of Elizabeth in her popular refined cult; Irena represents both a land which is kidnapped by the Catholic wrong faith, and the queen of a freed nation, as Elizabeth was in her Protestant England; finally, Diana is both the savage amazing Irish landscape devastated by the rebellions, by the arrival of the English, and by the plantations, and the runaway Elizabeth who could not properly control the Irish situation.

At the end of his work, Spenser seems somehow to partially condemn his Queen's policy and actions in Ireland, as she could never impose the English identity on the Irish. Excessive political violence in Ireland physically results in a desolated and waste landscape which corresponds to a loss of identity: the identity of the Irish, killed and dehumanised in the later Cromwellian genocide; the identity of the poet who was firstly exiled from his own motherland and later from

his ‘personal Irish court’; and finally, the identity of the English, who without their Queen’s control, do not show their Englishness, but instead exhibit their ignorant will to prevail and irrationally to annihilate every single expression of the Other.

CONCLUSION

By reflecting about all the arguments with the thesis deals, I want to consider those which are particularly interesting in my opinion and find a conclusion. Some relevant topics such as the perception of Ireland as alterity and the consequent idea of identity in early modern period, English worries for the Irish Others and for the intermingles with them, need a conclusive comment.

To begin, by experiencing the arrival of other people in their county, the Irish started to build their own identity. It has to be considered that Ireland has always been a land of arrivals and departures since when the Romans docked in the Dublin Bay from England's coasts to trade, later the Vikings arrived in the VIII century followed by the Normans, and finally the English. However, the difference between the first invasions and that of the English is that none attacked the natives so violently as the New English did, as Geoffrey Keating carefully remarks in his *Foras Feasa*. After initial quick fights, each invader found an agreement to live peacefully side by side with the local Irish chiefs; English attacks of Ireland sounded as an act of drastic possession when king Henry VIII declared himself King of Ireland, in a society in which there were more than a single ruler in small counties. About the nature of the ancient Irish, it is impossible to confirm that they were really as Giraldus Cambrensis reports in his descriptions whose the following texts of Moryson, Camden, and Stanihurst seem to be an early modern echo; however the supposed Irish rebellious temperament must have been emphasised by the cruel English invader who wanted lands and to change everything that was not English, such as laws, habits, and territories. For example, it has to be remembered that the English changed all the names of Irish towns, rivers, lakes, streets etc., and named in English every point of reference till the Republic of Ireland's birth in the 20th century. The arrival of the English in Ireland coincides with the beginning of two different future develops in terms of identity for both groups. On one hand, the Irish were forced to change and deny their traditions and roots, but at the same time, they developed that anti-English sentiment which made them conscious of their Irishness. On the other, the English were more conscious of their identity, but they were afraid to lose it. The

difference between the two groups is that the Irish were initially a mosaic of regions without defined identity, which they later found in their antagonism against the English; on the contrary, the English who stayed united under their powerful Queen's control, loose their identity by trying to impose it upon the Others. The scene of 'the four captains' in Shakespeare *Henry V* is emblematic of this: in its attempt to colonise new lands and unify all the British isles, England risked to lose its own identity. On stage, the four captains represent their 'nations', England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, but Macmorris' question 'What ish my nation?' could be translated in 'What ish our identity?', because none of them had a defined one in Elizabethan period: nor the Irish, neither the Scottish, nor the Welsh, neither the English. In my opinion, this is a Shakespeare's attack to the policy of the Queen with the foreign people within and without the English boundaries. English aims in colonising everything and violently impose their Englishness triggered both the birth of self-identification of the Others as separate groups and the mixture with these different people. In reference of this, I want to point out a possible forecast that Shakespeare showed in representing the scene and the characters. By setting history play in an past context and by presenting the characters through stereotypes and typical feature, he wanted to build an absurd scenario. By reading the plays and by trying to imagine the scene of the four captains discussing about their nations, a scene of another more recent play displayed on my eyes: the absurd dialogue between Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot* (1953). In both plays, the characters on scenes are searching and waiting for something: everybody have lost their point of references and certitudes. On one hand, Beckett's characters had lost all their certitudes, such as religion, nation, and identity, after Nietzsche's nihilistic theories and the atomic bomb in Second World War, and they act in a naked setting. At the same time, Shakespeare's characters have lost everything: Macmorris is the symbol of all the early modern Irish who lose their traditions, nation (in reference to the ancient Celtic society), their Gaelic identity, and their landscape. Moreover, not casually, the post-modern absurdist landscapes remind Spenser's Irish landscape which is described at the end of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's Irish 'waste' land might be a perfect setting for a Beckett's play or for a representation of T.S. Eliot's *The*

Waste Land (1922). The loss of both physical and moral points of reference coincides with the loss of the knowledge: the Irish lose their Celtic background, the English their Englishness.

The loss of their Englishness, was exactly what really frightened the English. Elizabeth was terrified by the idea of growing old and by physical decay and she was afraid of the loss of her beauty and identity as being the virgin and perfect Queen, that is to say that she feared the changing of her image; her subjects dreaded the loss of their image of pure and perfect masculine Englishmen. As consequence of this, the Others and the intermingles with them, were the main threats for their Englishness. In considering the Irish context, the intermingles had been always happened from the first invasions of the country. However, only the English were really afraid of this phenomenon and of the Irish melting-pot. The New English citicised negatively not only the native Irish and the intermingling with them, but also the Old English in Ireland who had been degenerated by mixing with the Irish families. From the first chapter till the last one, each chapter deals partially with English fear for the intermingles and degenerations. The fear of being inflected by something different and potentially dangerous for the purity of the Englishness, had been minimised through the use of the violence. The contact with other groups of people, cultures, and different way of thinking was not seen as positive and as a resource for the country and cultural personal development, but it was perceived as something that could damage and destroy something virgin. In trying to prevent the destruction of their identity, the English destroyed those of the Others by using violent methods. I am referring to American communities' hunting and the following genocice, and the drop and partial loss of the Celtic traditions in Ireland. This events sound quite sad when they are compared to some present facts of our supposed open mind society, where everything which is different carries on being considered dangerous and it is always seen with suspect. If on one hand, Shakespeare's representations of the English fear for the intermingles with the others belong to the masculine universe, for instance Richard II's worries and Cade's degeneration, on the other, Spenser wants female figures in representing this fear, because women, mainly foreign women, are the real cause of mixed unions. In considering three analised female

figures, who are Errour, Radigund, and Acrasia, it is relevant to point out their possible meaning according to their appearance in the Books. Firstly, Spenser provides an horrible and deformed figure of degeneration, who is Errour, thank whom he wants to advise that intermingles with native populations, the sharing of habits, and religion, in the case of Errour, might be dangerous for pure identities, as the English one is. Secondly, thanks to Radigund, he takes the alterity on the extreme level: Radigund is a woman, who has been always considered as being a creature living in a distant and unknown world, because she is an amazon, and she fights like the men. Her nature is completely other (in reference to what is known and common). The knowledge and the fight against the Other is a necessary step toward self-definition, hence Spenser makes Artegall become an Other, because he is defeated by Radigund, and secondly he is forced to submit Radigund's orders. Spenser is now explaining that, after having seen how dangerous the Other could be, man has to be aware of it through the direct contact with the other, and finally destroy the alterity, as it happens with Acrasia. The witch and its beautiful garden is the third obstacle that has to be metaphorically won to preserve the English identity. Acrasia is the symbol of all the Irish native women, who could led the English adventurers to intermingle and engender a degenerate offspring. Therefore, the sinful other creatures as the women are and the place where they live have to be destroyed and violently eliminated, as the Britton Sir Guyon does with Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, and as the English did with the Irish.

At the end, Ireland, its inhabitants, and its territories result as a complete alterity for the English. Ireland is an Other which always has raised curiosity and interest in the first colonisers, it has feed New English settlers hopes in building an alternative 'English court' where they could practice their masculinity or where they could fulfill their role of bardic poets like Spenser tried to do; however, Ireland has always been feared by England because of its alterity, and unfortunately it has never been completely known and appreciated by the English who preferred 'to violent', downgrade and blindly annihilate it and all the possible Irish literal, cultural, and human sources.

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Figure 1: Map of Ireland in the 16th century

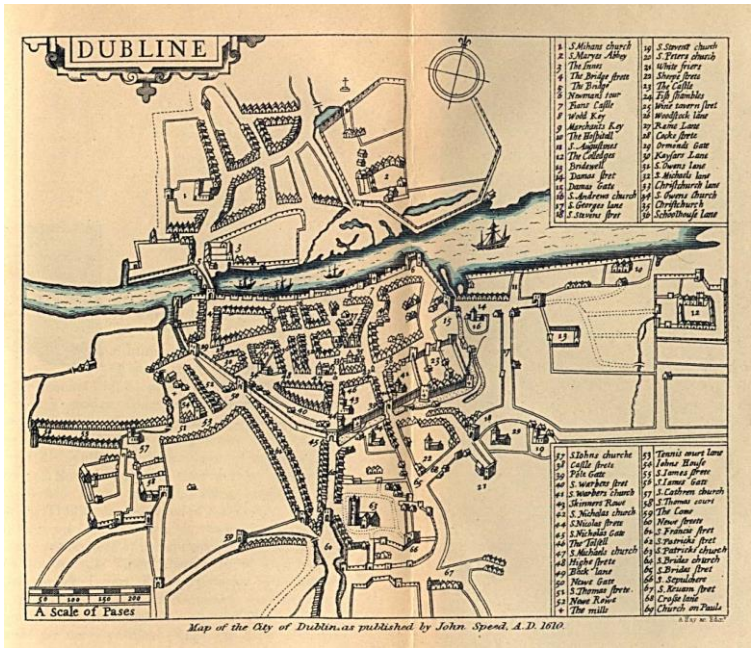

Figure 2: Map of Dublin in 1610

Figure 3: Irish galloglasses with their attendants

Figure 4: Irish kern with a woman and a young piper

Figure 5: Ormond Castle, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny

Figure 6: Edmund Spenser's Kilcolman Castle, Kilcoman, Co. Cork

ABSTRACT

Dopo la definitiva sconfitta dell'Irlanda nel 1603 con la battaglia di Kinsale, l'Inghilterra della regina Elisabetta I sarebbe stata in possesso di una colonia in cui avrebbe potuto imporre le sue mire espansionistiche con terrore e violenza. Durante il sedicesimo secolo in tutta Europa, e principalmente tra i monarchi delle maggiori potenze come Spagna, Francia, Paesi Bassi e Inghilterra appunto, si stavano sviluppando i concetti di nazionalismo ed identità nazionale, i quali erano strettamente legati a quello di superiorità nei confronti delle altre nazioni. Il desiderio di prevalere, si verificava a diversi livelli, a partire da quello politico, a quello sociale, culturale, e soprattutto razziale. Le attitudini degli inglesi, i quali avevano iniziato a sbarcare in Irlanda a partire dal 1534, anno dell'autoproclamazione come Re di Irlanda da parte di Enrico VIII, si sarebbero rivelate un chiaro esempio del nazionalismo britannico della prima età moderna. Gli Inglesi avevano iniziato con la confisca di tutte le terre e i beni degli antichi capi dell'aristocrazia gaelica e della stessa amministrazione anglo-normanna, insediatasi nell'area di Dublino nel corso dell'undicesimo secolo, di conseguenza l'autorità e l'indipendenza di questi capi si sarebbe drasticamente ridotta. Inoltre, con la nascita delle monarchie assolute, dove il re o la regina erano considerati essere stati eletti direttamente da Dio, la religione del loro popolo doveva essere quella del loro sovrano. L'accentramento di potere nelle mani di un unico regnante andava a pari passo con la diffusione della religione protestante dopo la composizione delle novantacinque tesi da parte di Martin Lutero nel 1517. Lo scacchiere politico europeo si rifletteva così su quelle che erano le confessioni religiose di ciascuna nazione: l'Inghilterra protestante si sarebbe schierata contro la Spagna cattolica, e l'Irlanda sarebbe diventata un campo di battaglia perfetto per il diffondersi della Contro Riforma.

I cosiddetti New English, i nuovi invasori inglesi mandati in Irlanda dalla regina Elisabetta dopo il 1534, per governare un territorio considerato ostico per la natura fisica e abitato da una popolazione selvaggia, erano particolarmente interessati non solo alla storiografia irlandese, agli annali e alle genealogie, ma anche alla geografia, per due specifici motivi: da una parte, gli inglesi avrebbero

dovuto governare un territorio di cui solo il dieci per cento era conosciuto, dall'altra, la necessità di conoscere il territorio era legata al fatto che l'obiettivo principale di Elisabetta in Irlanda era quello di amministrare il paese come se fosse una colonia, i cui abitanti avrebbero dovuto seguire il Common Law e i costumi della cosiddetta Englishness. Al momento del loro arrivo in Irlanda, i nuovi colonizzatori inglesi, trovarono un paese frammentato sia dal punto di vista politico-amministrativo che sociale. La popolazione irlandese si divideva tra coloro che appartenevano alle discendenze di famiglie anglonormanne che si erano insediate nell'area circostante Dublino, chiamata "The Pale", e i cosiddetti "irlandesi selvaggi", i quali abitavano tutto il resto del paese, diviso in una miriade di piccoli regni e contee seguendo le antiche tradizioni gaeliche. A questi due gruppi si aggiunsero dunque i New English, di religione Protestante, che avrebbero dovuto conquistare e amministrare la cattolica Irlanda. Le immagini degli irlandesi fornite dai nuovi colonizzatori, provenivano da un patrimonio di racconti del periodo medievale, tra cui si distingue la *Topographia* ed *Expugnatio Hibernica* di Giraldus Cambrensis. Gli irlandesi venivano rappresentati come una comunità primitiva, che vivevano come animali in un territorio selvaggio governati da capi ribelli in continua lotta tra loro. Comparando le testimonianze medievali con quelle della prima età moderna, è facile notare come le descrizioni fisiche, le tradizioni, e le abitudini del popolo irlandese sono tutte simili tra loro, e come l'utilizzo di immagini stereotipiche è molto comune. Tuttavia, nonostante la perdita di moltissimo materiale scritto da parte di voci irlandesi del tempo, alcuni testi di poeti gaelici, che nel frattempo si stavano spostando nel continente dopo l'imposizione della riforma in Irlanda, negavano assolutamente queste false immagini del loro paese e del loro popolo. Tra questi autori, si distingue Geoffrey Keating, il quale con la sua opera *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, fornisce una millenaria storia dell'Irlanda, a partire dalle vicende degli antichi eroi celti fino all'arrivo degli inglesi. Il suo obiettivo è quello di difendere la cultura, la lingua e la preziosa letteratura irlandese, personificando l'antico spirito dei poeti bardi. Keating, puntualizzando il fatto che l'invasione inglese del sedicesimo secolo era stata di gran lunga più violenta rispetto a quelle dei secoli precedenti, testimonia che l'Irlanda sarebbe diventato un avversario ostico per l'Inghilterra e i suoi

obiettivi colonialisti non sarebbero stati facili da raggiungere. Le preoccupazioni degli inglesi di non riuscire a controllare completamente sia il territorio che la popolazione irlandese vengono esplicitate in diversi modi, a partire dalle descrizioni semplicistiche dei primi avventurieri inglesi, come Fynes Moryson, Richard Stanihurst e Willam Camden, agli acuti stratagemmi che Shakespeare utilizza per eludere il sistema di censura istituito dalla regina Elisabetta per proteggere l'immagine del suo stato, fino alle stilisticamente raffinate descrizioni femminili raffinate di Spenser nella sua opera principale, *The Faerie Queene*.

La sensazione di disorientamento nello scoprire e cercare di definire il territorio irlandese con punti di riferimento fisici, la percezione dell'alterità nei costumi e nelle tradizioni di uomini e donne irlandesi e il terrore scaturito dalle costanti ribellioni interne al paese, sono le maggiori caratteristiche dei racconti di viaggio dei primi amministratori inglesi in Irlanda. Sebbene l'Irlanda per gli inglesi sia stata la prima colonia del loro impero coloniale, non si sarebbe mai rivelata facile da gestire, a maggior ragione quando la resistenza al cambiamento da parte della popolazione e dei capi irlandesi, riguardava in campo religioso. A cavallo tra il quindicesimo e sedicesimo secolo, l'Irlanda poteva essere considerata sia come un'entità geografica senza una struttura politica definita, dove la monarchia inglese avrebbe potuto realizzare i suoi obiettivi nazionalisti, che una colonia della Spagna cattolica, per il suo appoggio alla diffusione della controriforma.

L'idea di scoprire nuove terre oltre i confini conosciuti corrispondeva al percepire l'Altro e al venire a conoscenza del concetto di alterità fisica, culturale, e soprattutto razziale. Tramite la letteratura di viaggio, le cui descrizioni si soffermavano sulle differenze tra i territori e le popolazioni scoperte e l'Inghilterra, gli inglesi svilupparono la capacità di definire se stessi attraverso la conoscenza dell'Altro: tutto ciò che differiva dall'essere inglese in termini fisici, politici, culturali etc. veniva considerato come Altro, ovvero non-inglese. Inoltre, a causa del forte senso nazionalistico che l'Inghilterra stava sviluppando, la differenza veniva associata all'idea di inferiorità, ma allo stesso tempo ad una sensazione di paura, scaturita dal fatto che la conoscenza dell'alterità non avveniva mai completamente. Questo significava che i concetti di nazione,

definizione di sé, e di Englishness si stavano gradualmente rafforzando tramite l'imposizione politica e culturale sui nuovi territori scoperti, ma allo stesso tempo andava lentamente ad indebolirsi, per mezzo dell'intrusione degli Altri in Inghilterra e nelle sue colonie. Gli "Altri" che popolavano l'Inghilterra, le sue colonie, e soprattutto la Londra Tudor, appartenevano a diversi gruppi sociali, a partire dalle classi sociali inferiori, le donne e tutti gli stranieri. Se da una parte le caratteristiche fisiche erano il primo elemento che marcava l'alterità, le differenze religiose, soprattutto dopo la riforma e le conversioni, rimanevano difficili da riconoscere e di conseguenza il sospetto nei confronti dell'Altro aumentava sempre di più, come la figura di Shylock dimostra nel *Mercante di Venezia* di Shakespeare. Per quanto riguarda gli irlandesi, coloro che vivevano in Inghilterra, dove praticavano umili occupazioni, venivano spesso denigrati, invece coloro che erano in Irlanda, erano comunque trattati con disprezzo, ma allo stesso tempo temuti come minaccia per gli equilibri politici della monarchia inglese. Se da una parte l'essere irlandese del servo Bryan di Dekker e il Capitano Whit nella *Fiera di San Bartolomeo* di Jonson viene rappresentato tramite stereotipi come i loro abiti, la loro lingua poco raffinata rispetto all'inglese elisabettiano, o come le loro tipiche occupazioni, e sulle scene delle opere teatrali sono percepiti come intrusi, il contesto irlandese in Shakespeare viene rappresentato come un problema e una seria minaccia per i Tudor.

Storicamente parlando, l'Inghilterra stava affrontando in Irlanda una situazione difficile, in quanto la popolazione irlandese si stava dimostrando tutt'altro che semplice da sottomettere. La corrispondenza tra la regina Elisabetta e i suoi rappresentati in Irlanda a partire dalla fine del sedicesimo secolo, testimoniavano quanto fosse difficile per gli inglesi gestire la questione irlandese, e queste incapacità e preoccupazioni non dovevano assolutamente essere riportate in Inghilterra. L'Irlanda nei drammi storici shakespeariani assume molteplici significati, che non sempre risultano facili da definire, ma che tuttavia vengono rappresentati nei dialoghi tra personaggi sulla scena o attraverso elementi chiave a livello di ambientazione. Nel teatro elisabettiano, si stava sviluppando un genere teatrale, quello delle *histories*, ovvero i drammi storici, il cui compito era quello di elogiare le imprese della monarchia tramite la rappresentazione di personaggi

storici realmente esistiti i quali dovevano personificare e promuove i valori della nazione e soprattutto la mascolinità della Englishness. Dunque, viene spontanea una riflessione: la situazione politica in Irlanda e le sue relazioni socio-politiche con l'Inghilterra potevano essere rappresentate nel teatro dello stato, o rischiavano di essere bandite dall'attento sistema di censura che la regina Elisabetta aveva fatto istituire per tutelare l'immagine del suo regno? Shakespeare e i suoi contemporanei glorificavano la Englishness attraverso la rappresentazione della loro nazione che si definiva tramite il confronto con l'Altro, o stavano avvisando la monarchia di una possibile minaccia all'interno degli stessi confini?

Il Capitano Macmorris nell'*Enrico V*, composto attorno al 1599, è l'unico personaggio irlandese delle opere di Shakespeare, e questo già testimonia come fosse difficile rappresentare questioni che potevano risultare scomode alla monarchia. Macmorris è in scena con altri tre capitani militari, ciascuno rappresentante di un possedimento britannico: Inghilterra, Galles, Scozia e Irlanda appunto. Il Capitano Macmorris rappresenta la crisi identitaria che sia Inghilterra che Irlanda stavano vivendo attorno agli anni novanta del sedicesimo secolo, ovvero la domanda chiave a cui viene invitato a rispondere, "What ish my nation?", "Qual è la mia nazione?", testimonia come in quel momento fosse difficile definirsi appartenente ad una nazione. Molteplici sono i significati di questa domanda: l'identità di Macmorris potrebbe essere quella di un anglonormanno di Dublino, ma anche di un "wild Irish", oppure di un nuovo amministratore inglese in Irlanda, se si considera il capitano rappresentato come un irlandese poco chiaro nel linguaggio e abile in battaglia; tuttavia, la scena e i dialoghi tra i quattro capitani, possono alludere all'idea che Macmorris non si senta addosso un'identità diversa da quella degli inglesi stessi, ma che piuttosto miri a celebrare l'unità e la grandezze proprio dell'Inghilterra nell'imporre la propria identità su tutti i possibili gruppi stranieri all'interno del suo regno.

In *Riccardo II*, invece, la questione irlandese è nascosta da acuti dialoghi e da un'ambientazione attentamente costruita. Riccardo II, uno dei pochi monarchi inglesi ad essersi recato in Irlanda, viene avvisato su quelle che potrebbero essere le difficoltà da affrontare nel governare un paese ribelle e bellicoso come l'Irlanda al tempo di Shakespeare si stava rivelando. I dubbi e le preoccupazioni esternate

da Riccardo sono degli spunti di riflessione che Shakespeare utilizza per criticare indirettamente la politica estera in Irlanda da parte di Elisabetta e per stimolare la riflessione della sua audience e della regina stessa sulla questione irlandese. Valeva la pena persistere nei tentativi di sottomettere definitivamente gli irlandesi, o l'idea di un conflitto oltremare era solo un pretesto per spostare l'attenzione da quelli che erano i reali problemi e le difficoltà della corte a Westminster?

Infine, l'analisi di *Enrico VI: Seconda Parte*, evidenzia le reali preoccupazioni degli inglesi in merito al contatto con l'Altro. La paura di una Englishness "infettata" dalle rudi abitudini degli irlandesi, viene personificata dal personaggio Jack Cade, un inglese che dopo essere stato inviato in Irlanda, gradualmente apprende quelle che sono le attitudini degli irlandesi. L'Inghilterra Tudor temeva il contatto con le colonie, perché tramite le unioni con le popolazioni locali, i valori dell'essere inglese sarebbero andati perduti e la Englishness si sarebbe indebolita, il che significa una perdita identitaria per la nazione, a favore di una presa di coscienza di sé da parte della colonia. Di conseguenza, l'Irlanda veniva forse percepita come un paese d'esilio dalla corte, dove era possibile formare un potere alternativo e condannare la corruzione della monarchia e le sue debolezze mascherate dalla censura, dall'ipocrisia, e dalle apparenze dei suoi principali attori?

Il timore del contatto con l'Altro e la conseguente perdita della Englishness è la principale tematica che Edmund Spenser rappresenta tramite alcune figure femminili nella *Faerie Queene*. Se da una parte le rappresentazioni dell'Irlanda come Altro in Shakespeare rimane limitata ad una società prettamente maschile, Spenser, avendo trascorsa parte della sua vita e della sua carriera di scrittore nel sud dell'Irlanda come amministratore inviato dalla regina, individua nella donna il principale ostacolo per l'imposizione e il rafforzamento della Englishness nel contesto irlandese. L'universo femminile è il primo gruppo a cui l'uomo si è contrapposto e riflesso, dunque, se gli stranieri venivano percepiti con sospetto, le donne straniere ne destavano ancora di più, per la loro natura femminile. Il primo elemento di differenza tra essere umano maschile e femminile è per certo il corpo. A questo proposito, risultano brillanti le descrizioni delle terre conquistate dagli avventurieri inglesi della prima età moderna, che vedono le

colonie come figure di donne. Il possesso della colonia, legato al contesto economico-politico, si rifletteva sul linguaggio mercantile con cui si faceva riferimento al possesso della popolazione locale, in particolare al possesso fisico delle donne straniere.

Le figure femminili in Spenser risultano essere ambigue per certi aspetti, ma allo stesso tempo funzionali a descrivere le relazioni tra gli inglesi e le donne delle popolazioni delle colonie, in particolare quelle irlandesi. Quello che è importante tenere presente nell'analisi, è che gli inglesi che giungevano in Irlanda trovavano usi e costumi delle donne completamente diversi da quelli delle loro compatriote. Gli inglesi si inorridivano nel vedere donne ubriacarsi e urinare assieme agli uomini ed rimanevano colpiti, ma allo stesso tempo incuriositi, dalla poca raffinatezza e dalla nudità delle donne irlandesi. La deformità, legata all'idea di degenerazione fisica e morale, e dal conseguente orrore che causa, viene esplicitata nelle figure materne di Errore e Clarissa nel Libro I della *Faerie Queene*. Le due figure di madri degenerate sono contrapposte: Errore rappresenta le possibili conseguenze per la popolazione irlandese, e gli eventuali inglesi che si avvicinano troppo alle abitudini della colonia, nel perseguire la religione cattolica assieme alla Spagna; Clarissa invece è una figura materna positiva, ma comunque degenerata, per la sua quantità di figli che seguono la religione protestante dell'Inghilterra. In queste due figure femminili, l'Altro rappresenta un bivio per gli inglesi in Irlanda: stanno per seguire una strada sbagliata che mira ad indebolire e degenerare la loro natura, o vogliono continuare ad essere puri nell'abbracciare la fede protestante?

La figura dell'amazzone Radegonda, nel Libro V, invece, risulta essere molto più ambigua: da una parte può essere considerata l'espressione massima dell'alterità, ovvero donna e amazzone, guerriera, bellicosa ed iraconda come solo gli uomini, e in particolare i ribelli irlandesi di fine cinquecento, posso essere. Radegonda è l'espressione di quanto fosse difficile la situazione in Irlanda per gli inglesi, i quali senza l'aiuto della loro regina, probabilmente non sarebbero mai riusciti a prevalere sull'Altro, inteso come possibile elemento di contaminazione e conseguente indebolimento della loro identità.

La strega Acrasia, nel Libro II, è la figura femminile che rappresenta sia le problematiche e gli errori dopo il contatto con l'Altro che la possibile soluzione. La strega incantatrice è la figura femminile per eccellenza, la possibile causa della nascita di stirpi degenerate in seguito ad un atto peccaminoso da parte degli inglesi con le donne irlandesi. Tuttavia, la temperanza e la distruzione dell'Altro sono le possibili soluzioni per arginare il problema di essere moralmente degradati e di diventare Altri all'interno dei propri stessi confini tramite le mescolanze con la popolazione locale.

Irena, come il nome stesso testimonia, è la personificazione più palese dell'Irlanda spenseriana. Vestita con vestiti poveri, che simboleggiano la desolazione del paesaggio in seguito alle innumerevoli e costanti ribellioni interne al paese, viene rapita dal gigante Grantorto, simbolo sia della Spagna che del più acerrimo nemico del mecenate di Spenser. Irena, verrà salvata dalla Regina delle Fate, personificazione di Elisabetta e della sua Inghilterra, che libera l'Irlanda dal feroce nemico spagnolo. La figura di Irena e la sua liberazione, ci portano all'ultimo personaggio femminile analizzato, la divinità Diana, rappresentante sia di Elisabetta, che del suo fallimento in Irlanda. La natura di dea di Diana fa ricordare alla presunta semi-divinità della regina Elisabetta: la dea della natura viene vista fare il bagno nuda in uno dei leggendari fiumi irlandesi, e inseguito a questo fatto, presa dall'indignazione, decide di fuggire e lasciare la sua terra alla desolazione. La fuga di Diana esemplifica il fallimento delle politiche di Elisabetta in Irlanda, da cui è costretta ad andarsene, lasciando un vuoto sia fisico, in un paesaggio completamente desolato dai costanti conflitti, che morale, in una popolazione irlandese espropriata delle propria identità e tradizioni e in un gruppo di inglesi in Irlanda costretti a tener conto dei possibili pericoli dovuti ad una convivenza, non sempre facile, con l'Altro.

Al termine dell'analisi risulta interessante vedere come l'Irlanda durante la prima età moderna viene percepita dagli inglesi come una totale alterità, con tutti i conseguenti possibili problemi dovuti alla relazione con questo Altro. La paura del contatto con l'Altro e la possibile degenerazione e perdita della Englishness risulta l'elemento più difficile da gestite oltre alle questioni di politica estera, inoltre, tutte queste dinamiche vengono rappresentate, in maniera più o meno

chiara, nel corso del regno Tudor sia in forma drammatica che letteraria. L'aspetto più curioso è il fatto che le relazioni tra la propria identità e quella degli altri che si sono verificate in Inghilterra tra cinquecento e seicento si sono poi riproposte nel corso dei secoli in svariati contesti e ancora oggi sono spunto di riflessioni critiche per la nostra società contemporanea.