

TOPOGRAPHIA HIBERNIÆ

AMONG the lies that Geoffrey Keating (FF I, 10)¹ ascribes to Solinus is the claim that Ireland lacks bees. To refute it, Keating cites Camden. He does not mention that the first actively to counter Solinus's claim was Giraldus Cambrensis, Gerald of Wales;² Bede in the opening chapter of his *Ecclesiastical history* says simply that Ireland abounds in milk and honey. This is not surprising, given the fact that for Keating, Gerald was, if not the actual Lord of the Flies and the Father of Lies, at any rate the father of the liars about Ireland, or, as he put it famously (FF I, 52), the *tarbh tána . . . le scríobhadh saoihb-sheanchusa ar Éirinn*.

Among the things Keating accused Gerald of lying about in *Topographia Hiberniæ*³ (here abbreviated TH) are certain wondrous wells or fountains (FF I, 19), the source(s) of the rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir (FF I, 21), the identity of an ante-diluvian survivor (FF I, 152–4). He likewise accused him of untruth about various aspects of Irish life and society, most notably marriage norms (FF I, 18), the rite of blood-brotherhood (FF I, 18–20), and the royal inauguration rite among some of the Cenél Conaill (FF I, 20–22). By implication he imputed mendacity to him (FF III, 20–22, 300, 312–14) about the date of the first archbishops in Ireland, and faulted him (FF I, 74) for omitting all mention of the Tuatha Dé Danann. He charges him (FF I, 21) with inaccuracy in his second book about Ireland, the *Expugnatio Hibernica*⁴ about the titles and territorial claims of the husband of the fateful Devorgilla. Some of these – the lesser ones – such as O'Rourke's fluctuating territorial claims,⁵ and the river-sources, involve subtleties which an outsider with only superficial insight into Irish conditions, could not be expected to

¹FF I = Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* I (ed. D. Comyn, Ir. Texts Soc. IV, London 1902 for 1901); FF II = *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* II (ed. P. S. Dinneen, Ir. Texts Soc. VIII, London 1908 for 1905); FF III = *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* III (ed. P. S. Dinneen, Ir. Texts Soc. IX, London 1908 for 1906).

²See Robert Bartlett's biographical study, *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford 1982), with an extensive bibliography.

³John O'Meara's translation of Gerald of Wales, *The history and topography of Ireland* rev. ed. (Penguin Classics 1982), is the only text readily available to the general public of the first version or recension of this work. I refer to it throughout as TH. It is based on the same scholar's edition of the first recension, 'Giraldus Cambrensis in Topographia Hibernie: text of the first recension', *RIA Proc.* 52 C (1948–50) 113–78. This also explains my choice of title, *Topographia Hiberniæ* (with modification of the editor's genitive) rather than the alternative, *Topographia Hibernica*. While based on a study of the original work, my characterisation holds good, I believe, for the expanded form(s) (edited by James F. Dimock in the Rolls Series under the title *Topographia Hibernica* (Giraldi Cambrensis Opera V, London 1861, repr. 1964) – most of the additions being moralisations or confirmatory quotations. For something on the history of the term *topographia* see E. R. Curtius (transl. W. R. Trask), *European literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York 1953) 200; and Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 181.

⁴Ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin 1978).

⁵Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 285 n. 4.

grasp. In none of the instances adduced (and others – involving Irish geography – that might be)⁶ – was Gerald demonstrably lying, his case gaining nothing by his inaccuracy except with regard to Ireland's first archbishops (TH, 105), a matter which also involves some subtleties.⁷

With regard to all the important cases (the inauguration rite excepted) such as the blood-brotherhood (TH, 108–9)⁸ and the esoteric state of Irish marriage⁹ (TH, 106–7), as also in the case of less important matters such as the wells¹⁰ (TH, 62–3), Gerald was demonstrably right (and Keating wrong). As to the inauguration rite of the *gens quaedam* of the Cenél Conaill (TH, 109–110): while it will continue to be debated, the consensus now seems to be that comparative material lends credibility to the essentials of Gerald's account of what looks like a (memory of a) survival in a relict area.¹¹

⁶A. Gwynn's note in TH, 127; also J. Stewart, 'Gleann na nGealt: a twelfth-century Latin account', *Celtica* 17 (1985) 105–111, p. 105, where it is claimed that Gerald, in the expanded TH, shows an awareness of Irish traditions about Gleann na nGealt.

⁷Gerald was right in stating (TH, 105) that 'John Papiro (i.e. Paparo) legate of the Roman see . . . established 4 pallia in Ireland' but not (quite) right in claiming there were no archbishops in Ireland until then. (John Lynch's *Cambrensis eversus* I–III (ed. M. Kelly, Dublin 1848–52), which is cited in TH, 134 n. 63 on this point, is not available to me.) See (and in some respects, contrast) J. F. Kenney, *Sources for the early history of Ireland* I (New York 1929, repr. 1968) 761; A. Gwynn, *The twelfth century reform* (Dublin 1968) 35. For Gerald the formalist, an archbishop without the pallium was doubtless no (real) archbishop. *Ardepscop*, which became the technical term for a canonical archbishop, was used earlier as a mere honorific for 'a bishop whose prestige or influence marked him out as a leader' (Gwynn, 24). Kenney (*Sources*, 765) is therefore not correct in speaking of Cellach as archbishop of Armagh and Malchus as archbishop of Cashel in the early twelfth century. See too D. Ó Corráin, 'Mael Muire Ua Dúnáin (1040–1117), reformer', in *Folia Gadélica* (ed. P. de Brún et al., Cork 1983) 47–53.

⁸G. H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans, 1169–1333* I (Oxford 1911, repr. 1968) 137; J. C. Hodges, 'The Nibelungen Saga and the great Irish epic', *Modern Philology* 19 (1921–2) 383–94.

⁹Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans* I, 124–6; A. Knoch, 'Die Ehescheidung im alten irischen Recht', in *Studies in early Irish law* (ed. R. Thurneysen et al., Dublin and London 1936) 235–68; N. Power, 'Classes of women described in the *Senchas Már*', in *ibid.*, 81–108; Gwynn, *Twelfth century reform*, 16–19. 'Such a matter as marriage remained in Ireland a purely secular concern' (K. Nicholls, *Gaelic and gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin 1972) 91).

¹⁰As indicated, for instance, by F. X. Martin, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 271.

¹¹Of the extensive literature on Gerald's inauguration account I shall cite only the pioneering remarks of J. Pokorny, 'Das nicht-indogermanische Substrat im Irischen', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 16 (1927) 95–144, p. 123; F. R. Schröder, 'Ein altirischer Krönungsritus und das indo-germanische Rossopfer', *ZCP* 16 (1927) 310–12, p. 310; H. Wagner, 'Studies in the origins of early Celtic civilization', *ZCP* 31 (1970) 1–58, p. 42; P. Mac Cana, 'Regnum and sacerdotium', *British Academy Proc.* 65 (1979) 443–79; and the recent article by Yolande de Pontfarcy, 'Two late inaugurations of Irish kings', *Études Celtiques* 24 (1987) 203–8, and the works there cited.

Impressive as that list of acquittals might seem at first sight, it involves a mere fraction of the statements made in TH. What of the rest of the work? How does it stand up to the lie detector? These are questions that have remained unanswered¹² because nobody seemed willing to undertake the preliminary task, essential to an adequate appreciation of TH, of investigating the sources of that work and Gerald's handling of them, until the present writer, having undertaken a pilot study of some of Gerald's sources (presented as a thesis, unpublished, in Sweden in the 1960s), decided to attempt a full investigation of the sources of TH. That, in the intervening two decades, I have never considered abandoning the project suggests that I share one quality with Gerald – persistence. That the work remains unfinished suggests, on the other hand, that I lack another of his abilities – that of writing several books simultaneously. My investigations of Gerald's sources have, however, reached a stage where it is possible to present some results in what is likely to be their final form. To do so seemed fitting in a work (mooted, as it happens, about the time of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the completion, in its initial form, of TH) in honour of the teacher from whom I probably first heard the name Giraldus Cambrensis.

To present conclusions without the full line of argument by which they are reached is of course unsatisfactory. To thus present mine seemed less unsatisfactory, however, than not to present them at all, especially as the viability of my conclusions will, I believe, be readily appreciated and generally controllable even on the basis of the limited documentation I have here provided.¹³

That Gerald, in the opening section of the third and last part (*distinctio*) of TH (here designated III) drew on an early version of the *Lebor gabála* (LG) was known, being implicit, for instance, in Keating's censure of Gerald for confusion as to the identity of the ante-diluvian survivor, and explicitly stated in O'Meara's translation (TH, 92–3, 126, 133). What was not recognised was that Gerald's account of the legendary early invaders follows LG so closely, and, as a rule, so accurately, that it can only be based on a written resumé of the LG sequence which Gerald had acquired and kept by him as he wrote.

That Gerald knew some account(s) of Irish wonders was likewise known. The aforementioned wells, for instance, which Keating accused Gerald of inventing, are to be found in not one but all surviving main versions – Latin, Old Norse and Irish – of that series of Irish wonders

¹²As indicated in the notes to the O'Meara translation (TH, 452), the question of Gerald's handling of sources is addressed in Matthew Kelly's edition of John Lynch's *Cambrensis eversus*. As indicated above, note 7, this work has not been available to me. The 'single related study' which would attempt to assess Gerald's veracity, called for by Eileen A. Williams, 'A bibliography of Giraldus Cambrensis, c.1147–c.1223', *National Library of Wales Jn.* 12 (1961–2) 97–126, p. 126, remains unwritten. Such a study would of course involve scrutiny of his individual works and the present study might be regarded as a contribution towards that greater work.

¹³I have aimed at a documentation that is adequate without being exhaustive.

which I have found it useful to label the 'official' *Mirabilia Hiberniae* (here abbreviated MH).¹⁴

That Gerald in the opening section of part II (here abbreviated II) had otherwise drawn on this MH tradition was also known (TH, 130). What had not been established was the degree and quality of Gerald's debt. So familiar does he show himself with some reflexes of this set of wonders and so detailed and (on the whole) accurate is his handling of them that his account amounts to a version of the MH and one must conclude that in this case too he worked from a written text.

Other elements of TH show an acquaintance with other types of Irish sources, in addition to those two main ones – LG in III, and MH in II. Thus in II, Gerald (not surprisingly for a churchman who was soon to become a keen, though not disinterested, hagiographer)¹⁵ has also drawn on Vitae and/or other saintlore in telling about Patrick (and the snakes,¹⁶ 50; his Purgatory,¹⁷ 61), Kevin¹⁸ (77), Colman¹⁹ (79), Nannan

¹⁴For a convenient introduction see A. Gwynn, *The writings of Bishop Patrick, 1074–1084* (Scriptores Latini Hiberniae I, Dublin 1955) 56, 126. The view that Gerald collected his wonders piecemeal orally does not convince.

¹⁵For some information about these see Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 271, 183, 145; and M. Richter, 'Gerald of Wales: a reassessment on the 750th anniversary of his death', *Traditio* 29 (1973) 379–90, p. 385.

¹⁶While sceptical about the story that Patrick banished the snakes, Gerald retells, without demur, the comparable one about Nannan and the fleas. Recent work on such traditions includes R. Wildhaber, 'Beda Venerabilis and the snakes', in the Dorson festschrift, *Folklore today* (ed. L. Dégh, H. Glassie, F. J. Oinas, Bloomington 1976) 496–506; and P. K. Ford, 'Aspects of the Patrician legend', in the Heist memorial volume, *Celtic folklore and Christianity* (Santa Barbara 1983) 37–49. Both cite A. H. Krappe's article 'Irish earth', *Folk-lore* 52 (1941) 229–36, but not his posthumously-published article, 'St. Patrick and the snakes', *Traditio* 5 (1947) 323–30, which provides adequate material for placing this Patrick legend in perspective.

¹⁷Of the extensive literature on St Patrick's Purgatory I cite only two of the latest works, J.-M. Picard and Y. de Pontfarcy, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory* (Dublin 1985), where earlier works are given; and M. Haren and Y. de Pontfarcy, *The medieval pilgrimage to Saint Patrick's Purgatory* (Enniskillen 1988).

¹⁸Interestingly, the story of a willow-tree that bears apples, as required, through the virtues of St Kevin, is told in extenso in the Old Norse version of the MH: L. M. Larson, *Speculum regale: Konungs skuggsjá* (New York 1917) 112–13. Another instance of Gerald's drawing on the MH tradition.

¹⁹The story of St Colman's teals is found in the Irish-language version of the MH published by J. H. Todd in *The Irish version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin 1848) 217–19. As Todd remarks (218), the story is found in a note on the *Féilire Oengusso* at 27 October: W. Stokes, *The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London 1905, repr. Dublin 1984) 229.

(80), St Dominic of Ossory²⁰ (35), and, most extensively, Brigid²¹ (85–91).

For his account of Lough Neagh, likewise in II (64), he had used Irish placenames-lore,²² and in the case of one solitary wonder – the fish with the golden teeth (65) – he used an annalistic, or related, account.²³

Brian Ó Cuív has suggested²⁴ that ‘the accounts of the Viking Turgeis and the stratagems by which his death was encompassed, which are found in Giraldus . . . [TH, 120] . . . and in Keating, probably derive from one of the historical tracts which came to supplement the

²⁰ As indicated (with reference to Stokes, *Martyrology of Oengus*, 113) in TH, 126 n. 4, St Mo Dhomhnóg is probably intended. Gerald here chooses to be sceptical. D. A. Binchy, ‘Irish law tracts re-edited’, *Ériu* 17 (1955) 52–85, p. 56 (followed by T. Charles-Edwards and F. Kelly, *Bechbretha* (Dublin 1983) 40), suggests that the account of the introduction of bees was ‘doubtless based on the fact that apiculture on a large scale was first practised in the monasteries’. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 141 n. 73, states: ‘The story of how bees followed him (Modomnoc) to Ireland . . . is told in Rhigyfarch, *Life of St. David* (ed. J. W. James, Cardiff 1967, repr. 1985) 18–9’.

²¹ P. Mac Cana, *Celtic mythology* (London and New York 1970) 34, writes: ‘paradoxically, it is in the person of her Christian namesake St Brigid that the pagan goddess survives best. For if the historical element in the legend of St Brigid is slight, the mythological element is correspondingly extensive, and it is clear beyond question that the saint has usurped the role of the goddess and much of her mythological tradition’, in illustration of which, Gerald’s pages on this saint would serve very well. His handling of sources in this case I have yet to study and so shall merely refer to some relevant works: Kenney, *Sources*, 356–64; F. Ó Briain, O.F.M., ‘Saga themes in Irish hagiography’, *Féilscribhinn Torna* (ed. S. Pender, Cork 1947) 33–42; *Bethu Brigte* (ed. D. Ó hAodha, Dublin 1978); R. Sharpe, ‘*Vitae S. Brigidae*: the oldest texts’, *Peritia* 1 (1982) 81–106; K. McCone, ‘Brigit in the seventh century: a saint with three lives?’, *ibid.*, 107–145; D. A. Bray, ‘The image of St Brigit in the early Irish church’, *Études Celtiques* 24 (1987) 209–215.

²² Such as the verse account of the origin of Lough Neagh: E. Gwynn, *The metrical Dindsenchas* IV (Todd Lecture Series XI, Dublin 1924) 66–8. Compare the prose recensions, W. Stokes, ‘The prose tales in the Rennes Dindsenchas, first supplement’, *Revue Celtique* 16 (1895) 135–67, p. 150, and W. Stokes, ‘The Edinburgh Dindsenchas’, *Folk-lore* 4 (1893) 471–97, p. 474; and E. Mac Néill, ‘The mythology of Lough Neagh’, *Béaloides* 2/2 (1929) 115–21; O. Bergin, ‘Observations on “The mythology of Lough Neagh”’, *Béaloides* 2/3 (1929) 246–52, p. 248. P. Mac Cana, ‘Aspects of the theme of king and goddess in Irish literature’, *Études Celtiques* 7 (1955–6) 76–114, 356–413, p. 371, would agree with Gwynn (*Dindsenchas*, 390) that the story of Loch Rí is a variant of the same legend. *Tomaidm Locha Echach* is given as the type of ‘lake-bursting’ tales in the Book of Leinster tale-list, on which see P. Mac Cana, *The learned tales of medieval Ireland* (Dublin 1980).

²³ Annals of Tigernach s.a. 743 (739), ed. W. Stokes, ‘The Annals of Tigernach: third fragment’, *Revue Celtique* 17 (1896) 119–263, pp. 246–7; S. H. O’Grady, *Silva Gadelica* II (London 1892) 480. Cf. E. Mac Neill, ‘The authorship and structure of the “Annals of Tigernach”’, *Ériu* 7 (1914) 30–113, p. 84. Gerald’s placing of the event 400 years too late (TH, 132 n. 27) is doubtless an instance of his penchant for portents of the Norman invasion: cf. TH, 71, 77, etc. On the occurrence of some of the Wonders of Ireland in the annals, see K. Hughes’s review of A. Gwynn’s *The writings of Bishop Patrick, 1074–1084*, in *Medium Aevum* 26 (1957) 122–8, pp. 125–6.

²⁴ ‘Literary creation and Irish historical tradition’, *British Academy Proc.* 99 (1963) 233–62, p. 246.

Irish annals of the 9th and 10th centuries'.²⁵ For his knowledge of the North Atlantic Island (67), which he presumably included on grounds of analogy, Gerald evidently drew on a continental source – Adam of Bremen's chronicle of the archbishops of Bremen–Hamburg.²⁶

In some cases, as for instance when characterising the state of religion among the Irish, layfolk and clergy, Gerald was able to augment from his own experience of Irish conditions, the written testimony of other clerical critics such as Lanfranc (late eleventh century), Anselm (c.1100), Bernard (mid-twelfth century) and his own senior contemporary, John of Salisbury, as also, papal utterances such as *Laudabiliter* (c.1155) and the letters of Alexander III, 1172.²⁷ This is made clear by comparing (for instance) the opening of Gerald's 'charge-sheet' against the Irish (106) – the epitome of what he strove to establish against the Irish – with Bernard's charges against the people of Connor in his *Life of Malachy*.²⁸

In method, too, Gerald's work resembles Bernard's: to magnify Malachy's virtues, Bernard magnified the vices of the Irish; to magnify the merits of the Norman intervention, Gerald did likewise. In the effect they had, the two works are also comparable, both enjoying an immediate and lasting success²⁹ – unfortunately for Ireland's reputation.

²⁵No Irish source for the Death of Turgesius is now known, but the story has classical analogues: J. Stewart, 'The death of Turgesius', *Saga-book* 18 (1970–71) 47–58.

²⁶In a geographical appendix to the text which was completed c.1076, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, ed. B. Schmeidler, revised with German translation by W. Trillmich in *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches* (Berlin 1961). There is an English translation by F. J. Tschan, *History of the archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* (New York 1959); and a Swedish translation by Emanuel Svenborg, *Adam av Bremen, Historien om Hamburgstiftet och dess biskopar* (Stockholm 1984), with valuable commentaries. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 158–77, shows how it is 'especially useful to compare' Adam with Gerald but without suggesting that Gerald actually drew on Adam's appendix (Bk 4) for his description of the northern seas. My studies suggest that Gerald is actually indebted to Adam or a congener.

²⁷For these see Kenney, *Sources*, 757–67; E. Curtis and R. B. McDowell, *Irish historical documents 1172–1922* (London 1943) 17–22; M. P. Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica* I (Dublin 1962) 15–25; J. A. Watt, *The Church and the two nations in medieval Ireland* (Cambridge 1970); J. Watt, *The Church in medieval Ireland* (Dublin 1972); A. Gwynn, *The twelfth century reform* (Dublin 1968); M. Sheehy, *When the Normans came to Ireland* (Cork and Dublin 1975).

²⁸Bernard of Clairvaux, *The life and death of Saint Malachy* . . . (transl. R. T. Meyer, Kalamazoo 1978) 33–4; Gwynn, *Twelfth century reform*, 42; Watt, *The Church and the two nations*, 20 n. 6.

²⁹As Gwynn, *Twelfth century reform*, 52, reminds us, Bernard's *Life of Malachy* had 'an immensely wide circulation', no less than 39 manuscript texts having survived from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. As Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 213–21, reminds us, uniquely among Gerald's works, a similar story is to be told of TH – 'Gerald's first major work and his most popular'. There is no gainsaying the verdict of another historian, himself a cleric: 'St. Bernard and Gerald were largely responsible for the lamentable public image of Ireland in medieval Europe' (F. X. Martin, 'Gerald of Wales, Norman reporter on Ireland', *Studies* 58 (1969) 279–92, p. 288).

It is melancholy to consider how much the predominant attitude of TH and the reputation it was a prime force in establishing for an entire nation owe to the fortuitous

In arraiguing the Irish clergy (68) (as a counter to an Irish attack on British clergy based in Ireland), Gerald was drawing on a written source of another kind – the text of a sermon he had delivered in Dublin in 1186 (TH, 135). To show the British clergy in a better light he made the Irish clergy as black as possible. And ‘he was anxious to blacken the Irish laity the better to upbraid the clergy for neglect of their duties’.³⁰ The ‘modern miracles’ (those of Norman Ireland) he recounts in II (72–3, 85–91) and in III (117–18), he doubtless also heard in Ireland. The continental parallels he likes to cite (for instance, in discussing wells, 62, and hybrids, 72–3) he could have heard from his travelled friends or seen or heard about in France.

His story of the werewolves (TH, 69–72), a narrative highlight of the work, reads as if he wrote it up from a written source (it is in all the main versions of MH), drawing perhaps on his knowledge of lycanthropy elsewhere.³¹ He updates it, makes it the lead story in this section on ‘The wonderful happenings of our time’, doubtless hoping to make it interestingly ominous.

If, in discussing his sources in the expanded TH,³² Gerald had confined himself to claiming that it was only in part III that he had drawn on ‘the chronicles of the Irish’, he might have got away with it, for only there (his river-list in I, apart) does he draw on LG, which alone of the sources discussed above, could be called a chronicle of Irish history (or ‘history’). But he specifically claims that he had used no written sources for part I or II. This, as we have seen, is not so in the case of II, for he

course of events at the Lenten synod in Dublin in 1186 and to Gerald's fortuitous presence at it. See TH, 135 n. 68; Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, xxix and 324 n. 248; and H. E. Butler, *The autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London 1937) 90–92.

³⁰Watt, *The Church and the two nations*, 156.

³¹G. Kittredge, ‘Arthur and Gorlagon’, (Harvard) *Studies and Notes in Philology & Literature* 8 (1903) 149–275; M. Summers, *The Werewolf* (London 1933); E. Odstedt, *Varulven* (Uppsala 1943); J. R. Reinhard and V. Hull, ‘Bran and Sceolang’, *Speculum* 11 (1936) 42–58; H. W. Bailey, ‘Bisclavret in Marie de France’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (1981) 95–7; W. Sayers, ‘Bisclavret in Marie de France: a reply’, *CMCS* 4 (1982) 77–85; K. McCone, ‘Werewolves, cyclopes, *diberga*, and *fianna*: juvenile delinquency in early Ireland’, *CMCS* 12 (1986) 1–22.

³²In the *Introitus in recitationem* of the expanded work, Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 8 (and see TH, 130–31): ‘In tertia sola, de habitatoribus insulae, et gentium origine, aliquam ex eorum chronicis contraxi notitiam’. While it would not be impossible for the convinced casuist so to construe these words of Gerald here and those in *Speculum duorum* (ed. Y. Lefèvre & R. B. C. Huygens, Cardiff 1974) 172–3, that he had tried to ‘distil the histories of Ireland and Wales . . . from hitherto untouched material’ and even the claim, made in the same work (170–71, and elsewhere) that in devising his moralisations in TH he ‘had received no help’ except from God, that Gerald might be acquitted of actual lying, there seems little doubt that he was being less than candid in these cases as he certainly was when, in the ‘Introduction to the public reading’ of *Expugnatio Hibernica* (Scott and Martin, 2–3) he claimed to have ‘actually witnessed’ the greater part of the events he there reports on. See J. Stewart, ‘The Devil’s dealing with the Proud’, *Arv* 29–30 (1973–4) 26–30, for analogues to one of Gerald’s moral applications.

drew heavily on a written version of MH and on other Irish source-types. In part I because of its proclaimed preoccupation with physical facts, geographical and zoological, and Gerald's claims, implicit (TH, 35) and explicit,³³ one might expect to find that Gerald had repressed his bookish urges. This is not so, however. As Aubrey Gwynn pointed out (TH, 126-7) the list of 'ancient rivers' there found (TH, 36), Gerald took, without acknowledgement, from LG. Discussion of the relative merits of the East and West for human habitation such as we find at the end of I (54-6), by no means originated with Gerald.³⁴

In addition to references to Solinus and Bede, whom Gerald cites to correct them, the opening pages of I contain 'discernible echoes of Caesar's *Gallie Wars* and Tacitus' *Agricola*' (TH, 130-31) and of others.³⁵ For the moralisations that he appends, almost invariably, to his accounts of Irish (or 'Irish') birds, Gerald indicates a source once only: Cassiodorus on the hawk (39). The rest are obviously related to some branch of the Physiologus/bestiary tradition.³⁶

When, on excluding this moralising, and other extraneous matter, one considers the core of hard, zoological data, one is struck by the remarkable paucity of palpable fact proffered by one given to preaching (35) the need to report from actual experience and who spent a total of some two years in Ireland – having made due allowance for the restrictions of movement and access imposed on one such as he, who had come in the wake of invading forces with pretensions to conquest.

In other respects, too, Gerald's natural history is very limited, for, at the basic level of meaning, the identity of the creatures intended, his text (as in the case of the likewise much-praised account of Irish musicianship

³³Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 8.

³⁴For Gerald's climatic and environmental determinism and its classical and medieval analogues (including Isidore of Seville), see Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 201-5, with special reference to Clarence J. Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian shore* (Berkeley 1967). Glacken comments, 'It all sounds like Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos' (280). Of Gerald's 'theory of the stages of economic development' he writes, 'it might well be the theory of Dicaechus adapted by Giraldus to Irish history' (281). B. Robinson's view of TH as an 'attempt to create an all-embracing logic, a geography of contradictions', if valid, would increase one's admiration of Gerald's intellectual capacity but not of the book as a descriptive work ('A geography of contradictions: Ireland in Giraldus Cambrensis' *Topography of Ireland*, *Irish Geography* 7 (1974) 81-7, p. 87).

³⁵O'Meara, TH, 131, doubtless also has in mind the obvious similarity between Gerald's account of the size and shape of Britain and Ireland and the opening of Bede's history, of which B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors remark that it is 'a mosaic of quotations': *Bede's ecclesiastical history of the English people* (Oxford 1969) 14 n. 1.

³⁶For instance, F. McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French bestiaries* (revised ed., Chapel Hill 1962); E. Heron-Allen, *Barnacles in nature and myth* (London 1928); Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 143. Bartlett minimises the prevalence of moralisations in the original TH (145). In fact they are the norm in Gerald's birdlore from the outset. Bartlett also plays down Gerald's debt to the bestiary tradition here, while acknowledging it in other respects (143).

in III (103)³⁷) is fraught with difficulties, as a simple comparison of Holmes's views on Gerald's fish with those of Went,³⁸ shows. And when, occasionally, he does more than list the creature, and indulges in actual description, as, for instance, in the case of the bird called *martineta* (44), that description too is vitiated by problems of interpretation.³⁹

For his innate curiosity and 'alert observational powers', exceptional in his age, which resulted in a list (however problematic) of Irish birds and fish and mammals (and those lacking), Gerald is deserving of commendation.⁴⁰ To go further and imply, on the basis of the natural history element in TH (even when taken in conjunction with the corresponding element in his Welsh works), that Gerald was some sort of harbinger of a precocious dawn of the Scientific Age, would be no more justifiable than setting him up, on the basis of certain cognates adduced in his Welsh works, as a founding father of comparative philology.⁴¹ Gerald was no pioneer of scientific zoological enquiry or experiment, no western counterpart of his near-contemporary, the emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, as even their differing attitudes⁴² to the supposed origin of the barnacle goose serve to remind us. He was best on mammals, earning special praise for his characterisation (in the augmented TH)⁴³ of the Irish hare. But again, he will tell the old tales of the beaver's self-sacrificing ways and of the beaver thralls.⁴⁴ His tidal lore (58–60)

³⁷L. Hibberd, 'Giraldus Cambrensis and English "organ" music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 8 (1955) 208–212; Ingrid de Geer, *Earl, saint, bishop, skald and music* (Uppsala 1985) 157–60. (The latter reference I owe to my colleague, Prof. John Bergsagel.)

³⁸U. T. Holmes, 'Gerald the naturalist', *Speculum* 11 (1936) 110–21, and A. J. Went's note on Gerald's fish in TH, 128. Holmes's article on Gerald's fishlore, 'Giraldus the naturalist, and his *Welsh journey*', *Modern Language Forum* 27 (1942) 101–110, has not been available to me. There would appear to be little reason to modify the following verdict on Gerald's natural history: 'here is some genuine observation – not enough to banish or even restrict credulity, still less to threaten the tradition' (C. H. Raven, *English naturalists from Neckam to Ray* (Cambridge 1947) 25).

³⁹Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 50 and 427, identifies the bird as the kingfisher; Holmes, *Speculum* 11 (1936) 119, writes: 'The dipper (*cinclus aquaticus*), occasionally known as a kingfisher, sometimes as the water ouzel, was probably the *martineta*. . .'. O'Meara, TH, 129 n. 9, writes: 'Giraldus has plainly confused the kingfisher with the water ouzel'. 'Obviously he was conflating the dipper with the kingfisher', states B. Yapp, *Birds in medieval manuscripts* (London 1981) 118.

⁴⁰Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 140, 144.

⁴¹E. A. Freeman, *History of the Norman conquest* V (Oxford 1876) 579; C. C. Coulter and F. P. Magoun, Jr, 'Giraldus Cambrensis on Indo-Germanic philology', *Speculum* 1 (1926) 104–9; Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 208.

⁴²For which see Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 137.

⁴³Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 57 and p. lxxii; Holmes, *Speculum* 11 (1936) 120. TH, 48, merely says 'there are many hares but rather small'.

⁴⁴Briefly mentioned in TH, 49, the beaver's self-sacrificing ways are described at length in both his *Journey through Wales* and *Description of Wales* (transl. L. Thorpe, Penguin Classics, 1978) 176, 229. There too will be found the natural slavishness of some beavers which in TH, 48, is ascribed to the badger or melot tribe (Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 141–4). J. Bernström, 'Bäver', in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*

has also come in for praise. But if John Kirtland Wright⁴⁵ can state that 'the most elaborate tidal studies of our period are in the pages of Giraldus Cambrensis', he can also write that 'Giraldus was not always so fortunate in his discussion of marine phenomena'. As in the case of Gerald's other realia, the odd unquestionably laudable observation on natural phenomena only underlines the lack of real distinction in much of the rest.

The meagre, problematic and tradition-bound natural history notwithstanding, part I of TH is no different in essence from the other two. Each of this work's three parts is dominated by one (borrowed) book which sets its tone and some of its prime concerns. In III, that book is LG, with which it opens. In II the dominant presence is MH, with which it opens. Part I (which purports to be an observed account of Irish fauna), remains, I submit, dominated by the Physiologus tradition.

In claiming his independence of written sources in all but the LG section of his book, Gerald was, then, being economical with the truth. With all three of its parts so firmly book-based, TH is in effect essentially a book-derived book, what would be called a compilation in modern terminology. In later medieval – Bonaventuran – terms, too, *compiler* would not be far off the mark for Gerald's role in making TH, though *commentator*⁴⁶ would be the better term because of the modicum of observed data that he added in all three parts.

As to why Gerald insisted on the non-derivative nature of his TH, one may speculate. About a decade later he was willing to admit the compilatory nature of his *Gemma ecclesiastica* (that he was compiling 'from the disparate ideas of others something like a compendium'⁴⁷) though without naming any of his main sources, or indicating the extent of his debt – one eighth of his book! – to the *Verbum abbreviatum* of Peter the Chanter.⁴⁸ Like Layamon (and with greater truth) he could have emphasised the service he had done his readers in having 'compressed those three books into one'.⁴⁹ Presumably his vanity would not allow him to do so thus early in his career. As we shall see, he was to persist in his taking ways.

for *Nordisk Medeltid* II (Copenhagen 1957) 190–92; J. Granlund's commentary in O. Magnus, *Historia om de Nordiska Folken* (Stockholm 1951, repr. 1979) 344–5.

⁴⁵*The geographical lore of the time of the Crusades* (New York 1925) 119, 194.

⁴⁶See the passage in the fourth *quaestio* of the proem to St Bonaventure's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, by now much discussed, e.g. by M. B. Parkes, 'The influence of the concepts of *ordinatio* and *compilatio* on the development of the Book', in *Medieval learning and literature: essays presented to R. W. Hunt* (ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson, Oxford 1976) 115–41, p. 127; and J. A. Burrow, *Medieval writers and their work* (Oxford 1982) 29–30.

⁴⁷Gerald of Wales (transl. John J. Hagen), *The jewel of the Church* (Leiden 1979) 3.

⁴⁸E. M. Sanford, 'Giraldus Cambrensis' debt to Petrus Cantor', *Medievalia et Humanistica* 3 (1945) 16–32.

⁴⁹Burrows, *Medieval writers*, 31. Geoffrey of Monmouth and his 'British History' Gerald was not reluctant to mention (e.g. TH, 69, 120) presumably because he despised them. Cf. Thorpe's translation of the *Itinerarium Cambriae*, 117.

TH, as should now be clear, is neither the 'pack of lies' that its Irish critics of the seventeenth century⁵⁰ and others since would have us believe it to be; nor, as the blurb-writer of the Penguin translation fatuously claims, 'the prime source for what is known of Ireland during the Middle Ages'.⁵¹ Nor is it a uniquely valuable collection about Irish life in the twelfth century, painstakingly recorded in the field. Rather is it, as seen, essentially a compilation of lore, largely learned, carefully collected from an array of written sources, Irish and others, one major source dominating in each of its three parts. These sources having survived (that, of course, is why they can be identified), Gerald's compilation is deprived of any unique – or even substantive – value as a source for early Irish conditions.

Admiration for the care with which the compilation was made is tempered by an awareness of the limitations of the matter involved and of the amount of precious space sacrificed to such derivative matter at the expense of observed fact. To be surprised that a medieval man should write in this way would be anachronistic. To be surprised that Gerald should write his TH in that way would also be unrealistic in view of what is known of his authorial ways otherwise. The Chanter's *Verbum abbreviatum* is but one of three sources which Gerald drew on extensively in his Gemma, the others being Peter Lombard's *Sententiarum libri quattuor* and the (anonymous) *Glossa ordinaria*.⁵² He drew on several other sources less extensively in that work.

Book I of his *De principis instructione*, 'a work whose composition extended from about 1190 to about 1217', is a conventional Mirror of Princes and 'is largely derivative', Gerald drawing a large number of his classical quotations from the *Moralium dogma philosophorum* and the historical exempla which he uses to illustrate 'the moral platitudes he advanced' he took in large part from the early twelfth-century Hugh of Fleury's *Historia ecclesiastica*.⁵³ As R. H. and M. A. Rouse have shown,⁵⁴ 'the *Florilegium Angelicum* was extensively used by Gerald in the later years of his life', for instance in the *De principis instructione* and 'in the collection of letters included in the *Symbolum electorum*'. In the former, he also drew on the *Florilegium Gallicum*.⁵⁵ The Rouses conclude that 'Gerald was an avid user of intermediate sources'. To

⁵⁰W. R. Jones, 'Giraldus redivus – English historians, Irish apologists, and Gerald of Wales', *Éire-Ireland* 9/3 (1974) 3–20; B. Cunningham, 'Seventeenth-century interpretations of the past: the case of Geoffrey Keating', *Ir. Historical Studies* 25 (1986–7) 116–28.

⁵¹Change the tense, however (from 'is' to 'was'), and the statement can stand. The repetition, TH, 13, of Brewer's outmoded views is less readily dealt with. (The verdict at the end of TH, 17, is acceptable because the *Expugnatio* is involved.) Only to those ignorant of the native sources would TH still be a prime source.

⁵²Hagen, *Jewel of the Church*, xxi.

⁵³Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 70.

⁵⁴'The *Florilegium angelicum*: its origin, content, and influence', in *Med. learning and literature*, 66–114, pp. 89–90.

⁵⁵*ibid.*

regret that Gerald did not write a different book, an original type of work describing Irish life in the twelfth century – a precious, indeed a priceless pioneering work – would, on the other hand not be anachronistic: his *Descriptio Cambriæ* (written soon after TH) shows him capable of doing so, as do likewise the occasional, tantalisingly few⁵⁶ informative items of observed fact in TH and several of the maligned additions⁵⁷ to that work. Had he written that ‘other’ TH, it would, like the Welsh books, have the feel of a lived rather than a ‘lifted’ book and Gerald would today be hailed as a great pioneer of Western ethnography, perhaps the greatest between Tacitus and Tylor, so to speak.

Had Gerald not visited Ireland he might never have written TH. As he did trouble to cross the turbulent Irish Sea and dwell among the turbulent Irish, it is frustrating (to say the least) to find him writing a book which he could have written (with a little help from his friends, i.e. from matter provided by his contacts in Ireland) almost as well had he never left the comfort of his study.

To wish he had given us that other book – a true *Descriptio Hiberniæ* comparable in calibre to his justifiably admired *Descriptio Cambriæ* – would not seem that unreasonable – were it not for his aim(s) in writing TH. While these motives were doubtless⁵⁸ several and complex, I believe a prime aim to have been more specific and serious than the general urge to entertain or/and to instruct hitherto proposed – or to emulate such works as the Wonders of the East.⁵⁹

Gerald, we need not doubt, was well pleased to amuse himself and promote himself (satisfying his writerly urge, indulge his preoccupation with the bizarre), and advance his career by entertaining his initial Oxford audience, his contemporary readers – and posterity; likewise, for he was a complex and vindictive man, to wreak vengeance on the Irish who had dared decry his British colleagues and kill (albeit in defence of their birthright) his kinsmen, including a dear brother’s son. But his book was also – and perhaps primarily – aimed at a more specific

⁵⁶For observing the obvious about Irish society – its pastoralism, multifarious divisiveness, centrifugality, fissiparousness, and endemic strife – Gerald is deserving of credit for a man of his time. Any appreciation of the subtleties of the Irish ethos or culture (its law or literature, say) it would be folly to expect from one so prejudiced and ignorant of Irish. Something more substantial on the palpable surface-patterns of Irish life – which one could otherwise reasonably hope for – he was barred from giving by the inhibiting constrictions of his purpose.

⁵⁷For instance, the custom of keening: Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 157; S. Ó Súilleabháin, *Irish wake amusements* (Dublin and Cork 1967, repr. 1976) 144. The ‘cult’ of trees: Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 152; A. T. Lucas, ‘The sacred trees of Ireland’, *Cork Hist. and Arch. Soc. Jn.* 68 (1963) 16–54. Milch-hares: Dimock, *Topographia Hibernica*, 106; G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1929) 166; Jan Wall, *Tjuvmölkande Väsen I* (*Studia Ethnologica Upsaliensia* 3, 1977) 73.

⁵⁸Here we leave the firm ground of source-determination for the speculative area of motivation.

⁵⁹Cf. R. Wittkower, ‘Marvels of the East’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942) 159–97.

audience, the real holders of power, as witness the dedication and the conclusion (31 and 124). For such, I submit, he wrote this reminder that Ireland was a place so remote and special – *sui generis* (see again, the Dedication and 103) – so weird and wild and wonderful that the abnormal is there virtually the norm; a place inhabited by a people so weird, wild, wonderful – and wicked – as to be as much in need of the strong hand as when Henry II (dedicatee of this book) had personally intervened in a western ‘crusade’ a decade and a half before. Here, as in the *Expugnatio* (though less explicitly), Gerald was urging actual conquest, the final solution, already in the 1180s, of the Irish problem. If the *Expugnatio* emphasises the Geraldine⁶⁰ contribution in Ireland, deploring the lack of backing that would have enabled them expeditiously to complete the conquest, the companion volume seeks to reassert, by subtle means and unsubtle, the persisting moral imperative for sustained, intensified and resolute involvement. The one is also a chronicle of an abortive conquest, the other a proleptic, oblique apologia for actual conquest. Both seek to magnify the achievement (actual or to come) of the heroes by magnifying the odds they are up against.⁶¹

Aims such as those outlined preclude an ‘even-handed’ treatment such as Gerald meted out to the Welsh, balancing their virtues against their vices in a sort of thesis, anti-thesis.⁶² They would likewise virtually preclude the ascription to the Irish of almost any normal living, such as Gerald could concede to the Welsh. More colourful phenomena, however, such as werewolves, birds-from-seashells, blood-brotherhood, ‘incest’, bestiality (ritual and other), hybrid creatures, irreligion, etc., suited his purpose – and his book – very well. This view of Gerald’s aims in writing would appear to be supported by the book’s structure and strategies. The work reaches a climax (emotional, too) in the stridently negative account of the Irish in part III (100–122), just after the outline of their history in terms of invasions (92–9); the wonders of Irish nature, Irish saints, etc. in the first two parts providing a sort of protracted prelude and lead-in to the wonders of Irish life⁶³ in the third. Taking his

⁶⁰For the *Expugnatio* as family epic, see Scott and Martin, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, xxi, 169, 272; Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 22.

⁶¹To see such a negative account as (also) a tract – a prospectus – to promote service in Ireland might seem paradoxical if not perverse. In fact, however, Gerald’s talk of the lush – and unworked – lands of Ireland must have worked as an incentive rather than as a deterrent on those lusty landless younger sons (from whose ranks Gerald came) who would have lost none of the inherited Norman venturesomeness.

⁶²A. B. Scott, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, xxxi, compares the classical *suasoria* and *controversia*. Above all the Irish merit praise for their fine physiques (‘unaided nature’, again) – those of them who are not cripples (TH, 118), that is – and their musicianship (TH, 103). The problem of how such a people could ever have produced a beautiful illuminated manuscript such as that described by Gerald (TH, 84) is neatly circumvented, as B. F. Roberts, *Gerald of Wales* (Cardiff 1982) 79, remarks by ascribing it to extra-terrestrial – angelic – intervention.

⁶³Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 106, on the difference between marvel and miracle. Nannan, Lough Derg and the Cenél Conaill notwithstanding, TH shows an eastern/south-eastern bias, understandably in view of the limitations of the Norman

cue from the inherited, classically-inspired concept of the evolution⁶⁴ of normal people, Gerald opens his account (100–103) of the ‘nature, customs and characteristics’ of this abnormal people by telling how Irish infants are ‘abandoned to nature’; ‘unaided nature according to her own judgement arranges and disposes without help’ (100). And this theme of ‘unaided nature’ permeates and informs the entire account. Thus the Irish go into battle clad in little but their own flowing hair. They ride their horses without saddles, leggings, or spurs. As weapons they prefer axes and stones. Nature, too, they prefer to let produce their basic food needs, eschewing agriculture and horticulture in favour of pastoralism. Mining and manufacture are likewise alien to them. They do not build castles, still less towns. In short, here is an uncouth, uncultured, uncultivated people inhabiting an uncultivated land; a wild, unshorn (101) people in a wild, unshorn (34) land, or to retain Gerald’s punning Latin (*barba-barbarus*): *Gens igitur hec gens barbara, et uere barbara. Quia non tantum exteriore uestium cultu, uerum etiam comis et barbibus luxuriantibus, iuxta modernas nouitates, incultissima; et omnes eorum mores barbarismi sunt.*⁶⁵

To emphasise which and clinch his argument, Gerald, able preacher and born polemicist that he was, planted strategically and contiguously a triad of exempla, his set pieces about the blood brotherhood ritual, the inauguration ritual and the Two Men in a Boat who had never heard of bread or cheese or Christ – another triad, however incongruous.⁶⁶ Now, the inauguration rite – if it survived at all to Gerald’s day – must have been rare indeed. The number of the Irish in the twelfth century who did not normally eat bread even in places less remote than north-west Connacht, may well have been many, for the record shows that of the corn then grown in Ireland, some went to making oaten bread, but ‘probably

sphere of influence. Eileen A. Williams’s suggestion, *National Library of Wales Jn.* 12 (1961) 108, that Gerald ‘seems to have been able to draw, directly or indirectly’ on the Book of Leinster (‘transcribed some 20 years before the coming of the Normans’: TH, 126–7) is worth considering in view of Gerald’s seeming familiarity with the ‘oldest extant version’ of the *Leabhar Gabhála* etc.

⁶⁴Of the passage corresponding to TH, 101–2, W. R. Jones, ‘The image of the Barbarian in medieval Europe’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971) 376–407, p. 396, remarks that ‘all these ideas were available to Gerald in Cicero and his other classical sources’. (For Cicero, for instance, barbarians are ‘*sylvestres homines*’. For Gerald the Irish are a ‘*gens silvestris*’.) U. T. Holmes, ‘The *Kambriæ* Descriptio of Gerald the Welshman’, *Medievalia et Humanistica* 1 (1970) 217–31, p. 225, suggests ‘it is likely that Seneca’s *Quaestiones* had a considerable influence’ on Gerald’s scientific thought. I remain unconvinced by the case made for the ‘detachment and tolerance’ of Gerald’s attitude to Irish practices by R. R. Davies, *Historical perception: Celt and Saxon* (Cardiff 1979) 12.

⁶⁵O’Meara, *RIA Proc.* 52 C (1948–50) 163. For the influence of ‘the stylistic qualities of the medium of expression’ – as in the *blason populaire* – in the original Latin of passages such as this and that of TH, 107 (*ars/Mars, pax/fax, mel/fel*, etc.), on the evolution of the national image see J. T. Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael* (Amsterdam 1986) 37.

⁶⁶For this ‘permutation of the raw and the cooked’, see too Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 162.

as much, or more was eaten in the form of porridge'.⁶⁷ Similarly, while 'cheese of one kind or another formed a standard and substantial part of Irish diet from at least as far back as the early Christian period',⁶⁸ it is not possible to determine the exact kinds of cheese involved; people in every part of Ireland would probably have been familiar with soft, 'fresh', curd-like cheeses, but there would be many who had not experienced hard, 'ripened' cheeses such as would have been preferred on a sea-voyage of any duration. As far as diet goes, then, Gerald's two men in a boat are credible. That large numbers of the Irish had never heard of Christ or been baptised, almost eight centuries after the time of St Patrick, even in the remoter parts, is, however, hardly credible. Irish church practice was esoteric, but not to that degree.⁶⁹

Statistical tendentiousness, the presentation of the atypical as typical and the blending of the dubious with the less (than) dubious, were, however, procedures not likely to deter a determined apologist like Gerald in his immediate purpose of showing that 'a great number of these people are not baptised', itself but part of his overall plan of showing this to be an outlandish, barbarous people, *gens ex bestiis solum et bestialiter uiuens*, faithless in every sense, as much as ever in need of normalisation, that is Normanisation.

With sure instinct, Gerald recognised the prime requirement of a travel-book – novelty, wonder. And TH is a most wonder-full book. With characteristic enterprise and remarkable authorial economy he found his basic needs in this regard ready-made in various Wonders of Ireland, 'official' and unofficial: the core of his work is a commendably conscientious crib, which he had only to 'patch together':⁷⁰ this traveller had no need to invent his tales, to resort to fiction. 'Faction' (in the sense '(somewhat) fictionalised fact') might, however, be a permissible term for what he added to the cribbed core, so pervasive and many-faceted is the tendentiousness⁷¹ there in evidence: in the unre-

⁶⁷A. T. Lucas, 'Irish food before the potato', *Guerin* 3 (1960) 8–43, p. 12. St Jerome evidently knew about this aspect of Irish diet. He giped at a heretic (thought to have been Pelagius) 'heavy with Irish porridge' (*Scotorum pultibus praegravatus*: Kenney, *Sources*, 162). A. T. Lucas's posthumously-published *Cattle in ancient Ireland* (London 1989) appeared too late for me to use.

⁶⁸Lucas, *Guerin* 3 (1960) 28.

⁶⁹Could the charge owe something to misunderstanding, or to exaggeration of the fact that some Irish infants were 'baptised without chrism'? – Gwynn, *Twelfth century reform*, 4. To a canonist like Gerald this would be no real baptism. On the shortage of clergy, see, for instance, Bernard's life of Malachy, as cited by Gwynn, 42. On the other hand, Sidney could write (doubtless from observation), mid-sixteenth century: 'I doubt whether they christen there children or no' (N. P. Canny, 'The ideology of English colonization: from Ireland to America', *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 30 (1973) 575–98, p. 585). See too A. Cosgrave, in *A new history of Ireland II* (Oxford 1987) 58–9.

⁷⁰Gerald's own expression (*Speculum duorum*, ed. Lefèvre and Huygens, 173).

⁷¹Meriting Keating's comparison, FF I, 4, with the (dung) beetle (*proimpiollán*) which, eschewing the fragrant blooms of the field, makes a bee(tle)-line for the ordure. See N. J. A. Williams, 'A possible source for a passage in Keating's history', *ZCP*

lenting emphasis on the sensational, the virtually unrelievedly negative attitude, the frequent exaggeration, the *suppressio veri* (his failure to mention the Golden Age, or the twelfth-century reform), etc. Gerald of course was no mere travel-book writer but a reforming (albeit pluralist and absentee) Norman cleric with a mission, personal, professional and political. What was the making of the sensationalist bestseller was, however, the undoing of the prospective ethnographic masterpiece.

In criticising as he did, Gerald was, as indicated, the culmination (in the Middle Ages) of a whole line of influential churchmen who had criticised Irish ways in what Orpen called 'the intemperate language habitual with ecclesiastics'.⁷² Like his ambitions for the status of St David's, Gerald did not see his dream of a conquered Ireland realized. Ultimately, however, his writings were successful. While earlier critics of the Irish were the more immediately effective in that they prompted papal reaction which in turn⁷³ justified a (delayed) royal intervention – religion seeking to validate conquest – Gerald's criticism is seen to have been ultimately no less successful when one considers the disintegration of Gaelic Ireland (conquest in that sense) – in the Tudor Age and the near-pervasive role that the Gerald-generated image of Ireland played in the accompanying war of words.⁷⁴ In time, Gerald did indeed become the bull of the herd of the (later) detractors of Ireland and helped to give Ireland a reputation and a history from which she has yet to recover. In that sense, Keating was right.

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35 (1976) 169–71, p. 169; F. C. Tubach, *Index exemplorum: a handbook of medieval religious tales* (F[olklore] F[ellows] Communications 204, Helsinki 1969, repr. 1981) 47, no. 554.

⁷²Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans* I, 137.

⁷³I am, of course, aware of the view that Henry's title to Ireland rested on conquest (attempted some 17 years after *Laudabiliter*), not papal concession, and that he, an Angevin, liked to distance himself (like Gerald) from actual Normans, on occasion. I am also aware of the debate about the assumption 'that 1169 was a turning point in Irish history' and about the best term (Norman, Anglo-Norman, Cambro-Norman or English) for the first invaders of this period. See M. Richter, 'The interpretation of medieval Irish history', *Irish Historical Studies* 24 (1985) 289–98; and TH, 100. Canny's convincing case for the influence of Spanish thinking on English colonial ideology does not preclude the probability of inherited British influence too: *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser. 30 (1973) 575–98.

⁷⁴See Jones, *Éire-Ireland* 9/3 (1974) 3–20; Cunningham, *Ir. Historical Studies* 25 (1986–7) 116–28.