Etudes Celtiques

An Dream Gaoidhealta Gallda : East Ulster poets and patrons as Gaelic Irish and English Crown *personae*

A. J. Hughes

Résumé
An Dream Gaoidhealta Gallda (Les Anglo-Normans devenus Gaels), Les Poètes de l'est de l' Ulster et leurs mécènes, représentant à la fois la Couronne anglaise et l'Irlande gaélique.
Si la colonisation anglaise en Irlande, aux XVIe et XVIIe s., a eu pour résultat de remplacer l'ancienne hiérarchie gaélique par les notables anglais, les poètes bardiques et les juges brehon n'ont pas toujours été hostiles au nouveau régime. De plus, quelques familles nobles de provenance non gaélique ont entretenu des lettrés gaéliques, un phénomène d'assimilation culturelle qui s'était déjà produit à l'époque des conquêtes anglo-normandes et même Scandinaves. Un exemple remarquable de famille anglo-normande gaélicisée se voit dans les Savage des Ards, comté de Down — la famille anglo-normande qui eut la plus grande longévité de toute l'île, et qui pour survivre pratiqua la duplicité à l'égard de la Couronne comme à l'égard de l'ancien système gaélique.
Beaucoup de poètes gaéliques ont accepté des postes dans la nouvelle administration anglaise en Irlande, et quelques familles d'origine gaélique écossaise (poètes ou seigneurs), choisirent le statut de citoyen [denizen] anglais afin de pouvoir conserver leur pouvoir et leurs privilèges dans la période qui suivit la Plantation, comme par exemple les McDonnells et les Agnews, comté d'Antrim, qui invoquaient leur origine écossaise pour revendiquer une identité «britannique» plutôt que «gaélique» ou «juste irlandaise».

Abstract
While the upshot of English colonisation in Ireland in the 16/17th centuries was the replacement of the old Gaelic legal system with that of the English ruling classes, the traditional bardic poets and brehon judges were not always hostile to the new English regime. Incoming noble families of non-Gaelic extraction were also known to have supported the Gaelic literati (a cultural assimilation going back to Anglo-Norman and even Viking times). A prime example of such gaelicised Anglo-Normans is provided by the Savage family of the Ards in County Down, perhaps one of the most longstanding of the old Anglo-Norman families in all of Ireland whose key to survival was their deft use of duplicity vis-à-vis the Crown and the old Gaelic order.
Many Gaelic poets, in turn, took up positions in the new arrangements for English rule in Ireland and we see how a few families of Scottish Gaelic extraction, both patrons and poets alike, opted for the status of English denizens to maintain their positions of power and privilege in the post-Plantation period, as may be demonstrated by the McDonnells and Agnews in County Antrim who used their Scottish origin to invoke a 'British' rather than be ascribed a 'Gaelic' or 'mere Irish' identity.

AN DREAM GAOIDHEALTA GALLDA : EAST ULSTER POETS AND PATRONS AS GAELIC IRISH AND ENGLISH CROWN *PERSONÆ*

BY

ART J. HUGHES

One of the foremost debates in contemporary Irish historical circles is the issue of what is commonly termed 'revisionism' versus the so-called traditional 'nationalist', or indeed 'unionist', interpretation of history'. [1] Furthermore, the syllabic poetry of the Classical Common Gaelic schools dating from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries has also been an element of heated scholarly debate in recent years as to whether or not the Gaelic poets, or *filí*, were conscious of a nationalism. [2] While the aspect of the presence or absence of a conscious nationalistic feeling pertained among the bardic poets of this era has been aired, I should like here to focus on the issues of dual loyalties to the old Gaelic order and the new regime of the English crown in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by both the bardic poets [3] and their patrons. The image portrayed by romanticised English-language ditties of more recent times, such as 'The minstrel boy to the war has gone' has evoked a heroic, idealist and populist view of the bardic poet. True, many of these 'minstrels' did go to war, [4] but it must also be said that others did not.

It will be seen, during the course of this discussion, that one prominent scholar of the mid twentieth century saw the duties of a seventeenth-century High Sheriff as being incompatible with those of a fully trained bardic poet (p. 251 below), whereas I shall hopefully demonstrate that, rather than being exceptional or somehow contradictory in the political mindset of the Early Modern period generally, this assumption of dual role as a custodian of Gaelic lore and legal training on the one hand, and as Crown official, on the other, was a quite common career move among Gaelic *literati* in the period in question. One prominent feature which arises from one's reading of the poems of the period is that ambiguity was an accepted fact of political life. This ambiguity was not only practised by the poets themselves but

1. For literature on this subject see Brady (1994), and Boyce and O'Day (1996).

2. See for example O'Riordan (1990 : 1-20) and Leerssen (1996 : 197).

3. The term 'bardic' poet, for all its shortcomings, is used in this article to describe the schools or academies of poetry which were maintained by members of prominent literary families from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland, see Bergin (1970 : 4, n. 1) and Breatnach (1983 : 3).

4. See, for example, Leerssen (1996 : 178) for his view of genuine anti-English poetry from the Gaelic regions bordering the English Pale.

by many of their patrons. An example, from many, would be that of Cú Chonnacht Mag Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566-89, a leader acclaimed by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird as one who rallies Ireland against the foreigners, [5] by Iolland Ó Domhnalláin as an Irish Hector, [6] and by Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa as 'head of battle of the men of Ulster', [7] yet a man who quite comfortably colluded with Sir Henry Sidney against Toirdhealbhach Luineach Ó Néill, so that Sidney could report, in December 1575 : 'O'Donnell ... and Maguire, Lord of Fermanagh, who wrote humbly unto me, live wealthfully and deny not to pay rent and service to her Masjestie so that they may be discharged from the exactions of others'. [8]

One particular class of patron excelling in ambivalence was of course the gaelicised Anglo-Norman. Leerssen (1996 : 169) has referred to this in his treatment of the poetry of fourteenth-century Gearóid Iarla, or Gerald, third Earl of Desmond, who in 1367 convoked the next parliamentary session following the passing of the Statutes of Kilkenny the previous year. Despite agreeing to some of the measures requested by the English king in the Statutes, in order to reverse the trend of gaelicisation among Irish Anglo-Normans, Gerald writes a poem of apology in elegant language to his Gaelic compatriots, assuring them that there is no personal malice on his part against them, but rather that he acts as he does merely to appease the English :

> *Fuilngim tír na nÉireannach*
> *nach rachainn i gceann Gaedheal*
> *mina tíosadh éigeantas*
> *ó ríogh Shaxan dom laoidheadh.*
>
> I swear by the land of the Irish
> that I would not move against the Gaels,
> if it were not that a command had come
> from the Saxons' king to spur me on. [9]

An excellent example of such Anglo-Norman duplicity in the North of Ireland is the old Anglo-Norman family of the Savages of the Ards Peninsula in County Down. The history of this family (as outlined by G. F. Savage-Armstrong in his 1888 and 1906 works) was one of a remarkable durability over seven centuries. As Savage-Armstrong belonged to an Ascendancy pro-Union background, then his emphasis on loyalty to the Crown was understandable. Nevertheless, a study of

5. Cf. *Leath re Fódla fuil Uidhir*, Greene (1972 : 1-15) v. 7 : *Mac Siubhán a ndáil Danar / ag tionál Chláir na cCuradh / téid an chóir dóibh nach dleghar / 's nír benadh cóir d'fhóir Uladh*. 'When the son of Siobhán rallies Ireland / to meet the foreigners / they win a tribute which is not due to them / and no tribute has been extracted from the host of Ulster.'

6. *Ibid.* 226 v. 5d.

7. *a chend cagaidh fher nUladh* v23c *of Anois molfam Mag Uidhir*, *ibid.*, 216-25; also referred to as *a sgiath cabhra braonchlár Breagh* 'helping shield of the watered plains of Breagh', *ibid.* 28c.

8. Cited by Greene *ibid.* vii. On later branches of this family we may note : *Mag Uidhir Gallda is Mag Uidhir Gaelach*, C. O'Rahilly (1977 : 74), i.e. 'English and Gaelic Maguire'.

9. Cited Leerssen (1996 : 169).

the behaviour of the Savage family between the twelfth and, even as far as the eighteenth century, clearly indicates that a flexible and cohesive juxtaposition between the social orders of the English Crown and that of the old Gaelic order was a crucial key to their success and remarkably durable longevity. Leerssen (1996 : 168), rightly views the gaelicisation of the rural Anglo- Normans, [10] as a 'cordial acceptance' of this group as 'fellow rivals in the time honoured infighting for prestige' and as 'an infusion rather than an intrusion into the Gaelic system'. Leerssen, however, (who was admittedly speaking in broad terms) seems to limit the process of gaelicisation to Munster and Connacht, [11] but an examination of the behaviour over the centuries since early Anglo-times of the Savage family of the Ards probably affords us one of the longest case studies of this *genre* anywhere in Ireland.

Much of this ambiguity, *vis-à-vis* English rule and the Gaelic order was not confined to Anglo-Norman families and a broader examination of the considerable toings and froings which took place in the eastern part of Ulster will serve to corroborate the general state of affairs reflected in Ireland generally, as it will also show a similar tactical approach by certain families, both of the ruling Gaelic classes and those of their poets, in that a two-sided identity was cultivated and exploited depending upon the exigency of the socio-political climate of the day. Furthermore, the situation in Co. Antrim will show a similar approach to the emerging Crown regime by Scottish families either side of the North Channel, such as the Co. Antrim MacDonnells, or the Scottish Campbells.

The seventeenth century is rightfully viewed as a watershed in Irish history, or what I have previously referred to as 'the beginning of the end of administratively-run Gaelic Ireland' [12] – not least for the most northerly part of the island. One knows that part of Elizabethan policy was to make incisive inroads in undermining the old Gaelic system as may be seen from the later words of Sir John Davies, a central figure in the Plantation of Ulster : « We may conceive and hope that the next generation will in tongue and heart and every way else become English; so that there will be no difference or distinction but the Irish sea betwixt us. » [13]

Nevertheless, an examination of the facts on the ground reveals considerable alternation between the two codes involved at the interface between the old Gaelic administration and the post-Plantation régime which later emerged. Quite often the simplified and generalised perception of this period of our history is that there was a clear and net distinction between the Gaelic order and the emergent English one, a situation summed up, for example, by P. L. Henry (1977 : 20-1) :

10. Or his 'Hiberno-Normans'.
11. Leerssen (1996 : 395 n. 23).
12. Hughes (1988 : 82).
13. Cited Ó Fiaich (1969 : 105). We may also note the attitude of Edmund Spenser : 'It hath ever been the use of the conquerors to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his ... the speech being Irish, the heart must needs be Irish', cited *ibid.*

> « The outcome of the war in Ireland in the 17th century was the split society of the eighteenth, in which the winner proceeded to take all. The winner was the English Protestant colonist, the looser the Irish Catholic native. It became a rule of privilege versus deprivation and disability. English became the language of politics, of public service and of commerce and education. Irish clung to the countryside remote from where the action was. »

While even the most robust of revisionists will surely find it difficult to refute the broad findings of the above statement by Henry, it must also be added that any scenario which does not take account of the existence of an undercurrent of seemingly contradictory ambiguities (so often the case in Anglo-Irish affairs, past and present) only serves to overshadow the reality of the situation on the ground. One must also recognise that eighteenth-century Ireland cannot be too cosily broken down into the winner-takes-all versus deprivation dichotomy proposed by Henry, as Whelan (1995) has examined the emergence of the Catholic middle classes. Returning to the seventeenth century one must also be aware of the risks of imposing twentieth-century values on the practise of fluctuating loyalties which was commonplace for Gaelic leaders of that era. For example the late Cardinal Ó Fiaich expressed puzzlement as to why 18th-century Armagh poet Art Mac Cumhaigh should retrospectively extol the virtues of Sir Toirdhealbhach (mac Éinrí) Ó Néill (†1640) of the Fews in Co. Armagh, given that the latter was involved in collaboration with the English crown, conspiring, for example, with Mountjoy against Aodh Ó Néill (= Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone) in the early years of the seventeenth century. [14] Leaving aside the matter of Mac Cumhaigh, writing over a century after Sir Toirdhealbhach's death, we can be certain that the O'Neills of the Fews, like other main Gaelic families of the 17th century, [15] more often than not ran with the fox and hunted with the hounds, and in doing so were merely men of their times.

The main focus of our attention will be on how the officials of the Crown patronised certain Gaelic bardic poets, and how many of the poets themselves availed of opportunities of promotion within the Crown administration. Thomson referred to the acquisition of land by professional poets in Scotland, [16] a situation, yet again mirrored in Ireland, where, according to Simms (1978 : 71), the *ollamhain*, professors of poetry history, medicine, law and other crafts would have enjoyed much the same privileges as the ecclesiastical erenaghs and 'held their land free of taxation ... by virtue of their professional appointment'. The foregoing observations of

14. Ó Fiaich (1972 : 25-8).

15. Such as the Maguires of Fermanagh, commented upon at the beginning of this article.

16. 'The power of the bards was partly at least a temporal power, growing out of possessions, and often boosted by closeness to the chief. They formed hereditary lines (as did the brehons or judges, the harpers, leeches and others), and held lands in virtue of their office, and the Scottish evidence itself points to conditions of comfort in a material sense and strong influence in a social and political sense. The MacMhuirich farms in South Kintyre were on excellent lands and were extensive, and the MacMhuirich bards' closeness to their Chief (originally Lord of the Isles and later Clanranald) is well attested'. Thomson (1974 : 12).

Thomson and Simms are supported by contemporary documentation such as the following passage, cited by Kelly (1988 : 101 n. 10), from the early 17th century *Lawes of Ireland* : « the chief lord [17] had certain landes in demesne which were called his *loughty* [18] or mensall landes wherin hee placed his principal officers, namely his brehon, his marshall, his cupbearer, his physicion, his surgeon, his chronicler, his rimer and others which offices and professions were hereditary and peculiar to certen septs and families. »

In a previous article I referred to landholdings of bardic families throughout Ireland, and in parts of Gaelic Scotland, such as those of Ó hEodhasa (Hussy) in Fermanangh, Ó Ruanadha (Rooney) in Co. Down, Mac an Bhaird in Donegal, Ó hUiginn in Sligo, Mac Mhuirich in Kintyre etc. [19] One can hardly overemphasise the major preoccupation with the process of property amassment in which the professional bardic, legal and medical Gaelic families engaged, and the extraordinary lengths to which they would, and did, go in order to preserve this real estate, [20] and the continual quest for property was rarely disguised as may be seen from the work of Fermanagh poet, Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa, who reminds Cú Chonnacht Mag Uidhir of the generous grant of land bestowed by Énrí (mac Eoghain) Ó Néill (†1489) on his poet Brian Ruadh Mac Con Midhe :

Do-gheibeadh Brian na mbreth dtrom
a bhreth féin d'fhonn is d'fherann
is d'iolmhaoinibh Í Néill náir
céim dob inmhaoidhimh d'fhaghâil.

Brian of the heavy exaction used to get
whatever he asked for of land and soil
and varied wealth from modest O'Neill,
to get what might be boasted about. [21]

A similar soliciting of land by Gaelic poets from Anglo-Norman patrons was to be a common feature from the arrival of the earliest Anglo-Norman families until the eventual demise of the Old Gaelic order in the seventeenth century. Indeed, Ó Cuív has shown that assimilation by poets of 'extraneous' elements into the Gaelic code does not begin with the Anglo-Normans as there is evidence for this in the Viking period. Ó Cuív cites references to poetry composed on the marriage of the daughter of Irish king Aed Finnliath (†879) to Amlaíb Conung, which he describes as 'No doubt the most famous inter-racial union in the Viking period.' [22] He further

17. Equivalent to the *rí* 'king' of the Old Irish law texts.
18. I.e. Irish *lucht t(o)ighe* 'household'.
19. Hughes (1994-5).
20. One could, for instance, cite the assassination of two members of the Ó hEachaidhéin family of poets by members of the rival Ó Dálaigh family in contesting the title of *ollamh*, or professor of poetry, to O'Neill of Clandeboye – Tadhg Ua hEachaidhéin killed by the sons of Cú Chonnacht Ó Dálaigh (AFM s.a. 1394), plus a further fatality in 1408.
21. Greene (1972 : 220) v. 15 of *Anois molfam mág Uidhir*.
22. Ó Cuív (1988 : 86 n. 3).

cites the following stanza from the Middle Irish period which extols a Norse king of Dublin named *Amlaíb* (the Irish form of Norse *Oláfr*) :

Amlaíb airchingid
Átha airtheraig
Érenn iathaige;
dagrí Duiblinde,
déne dúthaige
tréne triathaige.

Amlaíb, chief champion
of the eastern *Áth* ('ford')
of Ireland of the many territories;
good king of Dublin
eager for strong
noble patrimony. [23]

Ó Cuív, quite rightly, interprets this verse as providing 'an interesting indication of the extent to which Norse rulers had become part of the overall scene in Ireland relatively soon after the first settlements were established here'. One of our earliest examples of interaction between Anglo-Norman lord and Gaelic poet is a poem composed by Muireadhach Ó Dálaigh seeking patronage from Richard FitzWilliam FitzAdelm de Burgo, Earl of Clanrickard. The career of Muireadhach Ó Dálaigh epitomises the degrees to which bardic poets would go to maintain their position and privileges. The *Annals of the Four Masters*, for the year 1212, tells us how, having slain a rent-collector sent by Ó Domhnaill of Tír Chonnaill, Ó Muireadhaigh is forced to leave his landholdings in Co. Sligo. In the interim between Muireadhach's forced flight from Lisadill and his sojourn into Scotland, [24] Ó Dálaigh asked for protection from the Anglo-Norman Lord of Clanrickard in his 29-stanza poem *Créd agaibh aoidhigh a gcéin?* ('Whence comes it that ye have guests from afar?'). [25]

Créd agaibh aoidhigh a gcéin,
a ghiolla gusan ngaillsgéimh,
a dhream ghaoidhealta ghallda,
naoidheanta sheang shaorchlanda

Whence comes it that ye have guests from afar,
O youth of foreign beauty
O ye who are become Gaelic, yet foreign,
young, graceful and highborn? [26]

O'Riordan (1990 : 43-4) points out how 'Anglo-Norman presence in Ireland was hardly a generation old' when Ó Dálaigh composed this poem and that the :

23. *Ibid.* 87, n. 19. I am indebted to Professor Ó Cuív for calling these items to my attention.
24. Where he was to establish a line of hereditary poets which continued (under the name *Mac Mhuirich*) down to the mid-eighteenth century, see p. 248, n. 83 below.
25. Bergin (1970 : poem 20 p. 88-92, translation pp. 252-4).
26. Verse 1.

> 'poet's situating this foreigner in an already established tradition ... illustrates at once the paradoxical flexibility of this rigid genre, the poets' ability to manipulate the tradition for the purpose of accommodating extraneous elements in their world, and the ability of the literary genre and the perceptions which dictate its tone to articulate the Gaelic world's ability, and interest in, assimilating and accommodating new elements in its own terms of reference'.

Further examples of early contact between Anglo-Normans and Gaelic poets include the instance of Richard Carew (†1199) or his son Robert (†1245), one of whom O'Sullivan (1971-2 : 33) sees as the original donor of lands to the Ó Dálaigh branch of poets in Muntervary, in West Munster – land later to be reclaimed by Tadhg Ó Dálaigh in a poem to Sir George Carew, President of Munster some four centuries later in Elizabethan times! Simms (1978 : 93) gives details of a 17th-century bardic poem congratulating Theobald Viscount Dillon and his family, of *Sean-Ghaill*, or 'Old English' stock, for their continued patronage of Gaelic letters. Indeed so comprehensive was the weaving of many of the Old English families into the fabric of native Gaelic society that Knott comments how Maol Seachluinn na nUirsgéal Ó hUiginn 'excuses himself from detailing the exploits of Brian O'Conor lest he should offend not only the O'Kellys and other native gentlemen, but the English of Connaught as well'. [27]

In many respects an examination of the situation which pertained in East Ulster reflects the general paradigm of developments traced elsewhere in Ireland. One might argue that there has been a tendency to ignore or overlook this part of Ireland, not to mention Gaelic Scotland, but evidence from parts of Counties Antrim and Down does throw light on the general ambiguity which persisted in Gaelic society at the level of the Anglo-Gaelic interface. Remaining in East Ulster, I should like to explore the manner in which the descendants of the old Anglo-Norman family of Savage were readily assimilated into the Gaelic system of bardic patronage between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries despite discouragement from the English of Dublin, in the early period, the later admonishments of London in the time of Elizabeth, and the rebuke of Scottish settler families in the post-Plantation period.

The old Anglo-Norman family of Savage arrived in Ulster, to Ardkeen, Co. Down, from Derbyshire at the time of de Courcy, [28] and descendants of this same family live there until this very day. In Elizabethan Ulster, the southernmost portion of the Ards peninsula in Co. Down was known as the Little Ards, the long-established territory of the old Anglo-Norman family of Savage. [29] As traditional holders of the office of seneschal the Savages would have been considered by the Elizabethan administration to have been among the more trustworthy of the major families in East Ulster at that time, but even so there is abundant evidence to show that the Savage family was also directly involved in the patronage of Gaelic

27. *TD* i pp. xlvi-lvii.
28. On the arrival of the Savage family in the early Anglo-Norman period see *Sav. Ards* 1 ff.
29. Cf. how the area is referred to in 1553 as 'Arde Savage', *Cal. Carew* MS p. 242.

poets and arts at this period. Ó Cuív (1984 : 145) points out that Carew writes *McCantoshe* 'where we would have expected Savage' for a member of this family; and while references to the Savages under a gaelicised form of their name are arguably to be expected as a matter of course in the Irish Annals,[30] we can also unearth evidence for the use of Gaelic personal names among individual members of the family. In the Elizabethan period, for example, Edmund Savage also had a Gaelic name Fear Dorcha mac Seineascal (i.e. "Fear Dorcha son of the Seneschal"), as had other members of the family at this time, e.g. *Pádraig Buidhe, Roibéard Ruadh* etc.[31] It is also significant that when the Irish bardic poet Aonghus na n-Aor Ó Dálaigh (+1617) composed his invective diatribe *The tribes of Ireland* 'written against the Gaelic chiefs reputedly at the behest of Lord Mountjoy and Sir George Carew', President of Munster,[32] the Savages of the Ards were also lambasted :

> *Ard Uladh gann gortach*
> *Tír gan aoibhneas, gan aifreann*
> *Mac an t-Sabhaoisigh an crochaire Gaill*
> *Fear chasgairt báirneach le h-aircinn*
>
> Ard-Uladh destitute, starving,
> A district without delight, without mass:
> Where the son of Savage, the English hangman:
> Slaughters barnacles with a mallet.[33]

The reason for this satirical swipe at the Savage family is probably due to the fact that they were considered as belonging to the general class described by O'Donovan (1852 : 23) as 'such descendants of the Anglo-Normans' who 'had adopted their [i.e. the Gaelic chiefs'] customs and formed alliances with them'.[34] Indeed, in the following bestowal of the office of Seneschal to Patrick Savage in 1571 it is interesting that the grant is phrased as to be held 'during good behaviour', and reference is also made to '... rhymers, Irish harpers, and idle men and women' :

> « Grant to Patrick Savage: of the office of seneschal of that portion of the territory of the Arde in the north of Ireland, of which his father Rowland was captain. To hold during good behaviour, with the profits appertaining; with power to assemble and command the inhabitants for defence; **to punish malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, rhymers, Irish harpers, and idle men and women**; and to hold a court baron. »[35]

30. E.g. *AFM* for the years 1360, 1383, 1407, 1408, 1433, 1469, 1475, 1481, 1490 and 1522.
31. Cf. 'Pardon to Edm. Savage alias Fardoragh m'Senishall of Little Ardes, co. Down, Patr. boye Savadg, Robert roo Savadg, James m'Genicoke Savadg, and Rich. M'Owen, of the same place, gentlemen', *Fiants Eliz.* 3060, 1577 AD. See further *Fiants Eliz.* 6711.
32. Walsh (1928 : 12) and O'Riordan (1990 : 207).
33. O'Donovan (1852 : 60-1).
34. However, for the problems of interpretation posed by the term *crochaire Gall*, in relation to the Savage family, see p. 000 below.
35. *Fiants Eliz.* 2090, 22 March 1571 (my emphasis).

One might alternatively argue that the phrase 'to punish malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, rhymers, Irish harpers, and idle men and women' was something of a standard fixed phrase in grants of this time, as may be seen from the wording of *Fiant Eliz.* 5528 when, in 1591, Patrick McEagan was granted a licence to 'prosecute and punish by all means malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, rymors, Irish harpers, idle men and women, and other unprofitable members'.[36] However, if one examines a similarly worded instruction issued by the English to Gerald of Desmond in 1563 to outlaw all 'rhymers, bards and dice-players' within his territory,[37] and bears in mind the links that existed between the Desmonds and the bardic family of Ó Dálaigh – not forgetting the Gaelic poetry composed by Gerald, the Third Earl of Desmond, in the late 14th century – then one suspects that this phraseology was rather pointedly used by the Crown in cases where bardic activity and patronage were known, or suspected, to be fairly commonplace.[38]

In the medieval period we have many references to poets being accompanied by an entourage, and in the obituary for Mac Diarmada of Magh Luirg in the Annals of Connaught for the year 1486 we are afforded an insight into the variety of visitors one could expect to find at a typical medieval Irish court :

> *Mac Diarmada Maighi Luirg .i. Ruadri mac Ruadhri meic Aodho, uaidne einigh 7 engnomha 7 cend cothaighthe 7 congbala cliar 7 cerrbach 7 oide damhsgol 7 deorad 7 deibhlen 7 fer dob ferr daonacht 7 derlacad da tanic a n-aonaimsir fris, d'ecc isin bliadain-si.*
>
> Mac Diarmata of Moylurg, that is Ruaidri son of Ruaidri son of Aed, pillar of generosity and valour, chief supporter and maintainer of the minstrels and gamblers, fosterer of poets and exiles and needy men, the most humane and liberal-handed man of his own time, died this year.[39]

Mac Cana (1974 : 132) makes reference to bardic poets as keepers of guest-houses between the 13th and 17th centuries, and that other chieftains, in addition to Mac Diarmada, would doubtless also have been partial to this general concept of feasting and carousal may be gathered form the opening line of a late 13th-century poem to Brian Mag Shamhradháin († 1298) : *Teach n-óil gach bruighean 'n-a bhaile*

36. Fiant 5528. As will be seen below (p. 251) this concerns Irish judge *Pádraig Mac Aodhagáin*.

37. *Cal SP Ire*, cited by Caball (1992 : 180 n. 12). For similar references, see Leerssen (1996 : 255).

38. Indeed Thomson's remarks on the widespread practise of bardic patronage in medieval Gaelic society on the Scottish side of the Irish sea would also hold good for Ireland : 'it seems a fair inference that bardic poetry was once practised fairly freely, and on a wide scale, and we can conjecture that wherever a Gaelic Chief held established court, from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth, and as we have seen in certain localities until the late seventeenth, there was likely to have been some form of bardic activity. The scale of this activity might vary widely, from the court of the Lord of the Isles, where there were probably a number of professional bards, to humbler and more peripheral courts favoured by a visit from a bard on a circuit', Thomson (1974 : 21).

39. *A. Conn.* s.a. 1486.2 pp. 588-9.

'Every house in his homeland is a hostel', [40] while Co. Leitrim writer (and Gaelic poet [41]) Tadhg Ó Rodaigh (1623-1707) recounts : 'The inhabitants of this county are very much addicted to hospitality, freely inviting and receiving all men into their houses and giving them the best they have'. [42]

Simms (1978 : 76), in her extensive study of this topic, remarks how the men of art 'included not only native poets, historians, doctors and lawyers, but also gamblers, jugglers and buffoons', and she further draws our attention (*loc. cit.*) to the statute drawn up by native Irish bishop David Mag Oireachtaigh (+1346) 'against mimers, juglers, poets, tympanists or harpers, and especially against kernes and wicked seekers, or rather extourters of gifts'. [43]

Considering, then, the direct evidence for patronage of Irish poets by the Savage family, provided by the obit of *Senicin Sabhaois*, or Jenkin Savage, in AU 1374, where 'the literati, or poets, (*an éigse*) were left as *orphans* by his death', [44] then we can easily imagine that the 'malefactors, rebels, vagabonds, rymors, Irish harpers, idle men and women, and other unprofitable members', spoken of in *Fiant Eliz.* 2090, in relation to Patrick Savage, reflected a collection of individuals who would actually have been present in the Ards at that time, an ensemble which the Crown was anxious to discourage, and in no uncertain terms. However, one realises that the success enjoyed, in practice, by 'official' discouragement of such gatherings of people would have been limited at this period.

Indeed even in the post-Classical period we see that the association of the Savage family with things Gaelic continued well into the 18th century. In a late 17th-century *Description of the Ards* a member of the post-Plantation Montgomery family records how certain members of the Savage family had lapsed into Gaelic ways :

> I conclud the description of ye said territoryes with a briefe remark on ye Savages that they have always been a stout and warlick people loyall to ye Crown of England, who however they may have had some civell broyles amonst themselves & became (as many noble English Familys in Leinster, Munster and Connaught) **too much addicted to Irish Customs & exactions** yett they are now as much Civellized as ye **Brittish**, & doe live decently & comfortably to ye Church and enjoy houses Orchards & inclosed fields and hold ye possession they had at ye entry of King James aforesaid. [45]

40. McKenna (1947 : 2-7).

41. Cf., for example, Tadhg Ó Rodaigh's poem *Tugas tuile tromghráidh duit* addressed to Cormac Ó Néill of Clandeboye, Co. Antrim (*LCABuidhe* poem XLVI pp. 279-81, the poem does not, however, conform to the strict rules of *dán díreach*).

42. MacLysaght (1979 : 18).

43. Compare also the remarks of Stanihurst, the 16th-century Dublin writer : 'a set feast, which they call coshering, whereto flocke all theyr retayners, whom they name followers, their rithmours, their bardes, theyr harpers that feed them with musike ...' (cited Simms 1978 : 81). For the status of such accompanying entertainers in Early Irish law, see Kelly (1988 : 64-5).

44. 'Seinicín Sabhais do marbhadh le Mag Aengusa in bliadhain si 7 is dileachta in eigse d'a eisi', *AU* ii sa. 1374 (pp. 550-1, see also O'Donovan *AFM* s.a. 1374 p. 659 n.).

45. *Descr. Ards* 1689 36-7, my emphasis.

This lapsing into 'Irish Customs' did not appear to end, even by Montgomery's day, for although Patrick Savage of Portaferry (1739-97) was made High Sheriff of Co. Down in 1763, in his younger years Irish was certainly still prevalent in this part of Co. Down, [46] and it appears that he was a monoglot speaker of Irish as a young boy because, following the death of his mother, the orphaned Patrick Savage, and a younger brother Andrew, were reared by Mrs O'Reilly, a maternal aunt. In a letter dated 17 August 1744 Mrs O'Reilly writes to Patrick's father informing him of the state of the five-year-old's development : 'Patt. is very forward. I think 'tis very early for him to read. My little boy spakes nothing but Irish, which I fear will prevent his being a scholar so soon'. [47]

Irish-speaking monoglots, or perhaps more accurately non-English speaking members of Anglo-Norman families, were not uncommon in the medieval period and afterwards, [48] but in the case of Patrick Savage (+1797) the ability to speak English was soon acquired as both he and his brother Andrew were sent to Dublin in 1746 to their cousin Miss Lucy Savage. [49]

A branch of the Savage family of the Ards changed its name to Nugent, [50] and in the *Nugent Documents*, a collection of largely unedited material relating to the Upper Ards, there is abundant evidence that patronage was still going on into the late 17th and early 18th centuries. In the summary of these papers it is stated that 'Harpers and pipers and other itinerant musicians seem to have been at Portaferry Castle and some of them are mentioned by name'. [51] Thus in the *Nugent Estate, Co. Down, Account Book 1694- 1764* one witnesses :

> a payment to 'Para More Neglore (Big Paddy of the Voice)' 1695, [52]
> payment to a harper named Higgins, [53]
> 'Payment to a piper', [54]

46. For some idea of the survival of Irish as a spoken language in the Ards, Co. Down, see Ó Duibhín (1991 : 28).

47. *Sav. Ulst.* 147.

48. Cf., for example, the Sir Seáan Mac William Burke of Mayo (†1580), whose mother was a daughter of Aodh Dubh Ó Domhnaill and a sister of Maghnus Ó Domhnaill. Sir Henry Sidney, in a letter to council, states : 'I found Mac William very sensible; though wantinge the English tongue, yet understandinge the lattin; a lover of quiet and cyvilitie' (cited Henry/Marsh-Micheli 1987 : 810).

49. Mrs O'Reilly writes on 7 June 1746 : 'I think you have done right in bringing them to town, as they will have by much a better opportunity of learning everything that is necessary for them than they could possibly learn here in the North', *Sav. Ulst.* 148.

50. Cf. Reeves' remarks that the Savages 'are now somewhat disguised under the equally noble name of *Nugent*', UJA 2 (1854) 57 n. 2. G. Scott, writing in the 1830s, states that 'At present there is a Mr Nugent residing close to the town who changed his name from Savage to Nugent (in order to receive the property) about 20 years ago' (*OSM* vii, 12).

51. *PRONI Dep. K Rpt. 1949-50*, 12.

52. *Ibid.* 203.

53. *Ibid.* 117. Note also 'payments to a harper', 113.

54. *Ibid.* 208.

In addition to the above, there are also several records of payments for music at Christmas [55] and these latter citations would seem to support not merely what Simms has to say on the subject of feasting at Christmas, [56] but her theory that the continuation of feasting among members of the Anglo-Irish society of the 18th century can, perhaps, be attributed to a continuation of the Gaelic tradition of guesting and feasting : 'Some hesitation has been expressed over whether the riotous hospitality of the eighteenth- century Anglo-Irish can be conclusively associated with earlier Gaelic tradition, or whether it was a phenomenon of the Ascendancy period itself. ... It seems quite clear, at any rate, that their way of life was not imported from England'. [57]

In the further light, then, of the attested sustained patronage of Gaelic cultural activities among the Savage family from the 14th to 18th centuries it seems sensible to view the wording of *Fiant Eliz.* 2090 addressed to Patrick Savage in 1571 as a direct indication that he was to discourage 'rhymers' and 'Irish harpers' owing to the fact that these people were not merely present in the Ards at that time but were also actively supported and patronised by his family.

SAVAGE AS PATRON TO Ó GNíMH, OR AGNEW

Confirmation of Savage links with the professional Gaelic poets appears to be forthcoming from 17th-century place-name evidence. The above-cited grant to Patrick Savage from the *Fiants of Elizabeth* in 1571 also contained an accompanying list of 25 townlands, including one spelt 'Tullagharnan'. This survives today as a townland *Tullycarnan* in the civil parish of Ballyphilip, barony of Ards Upper. [58] Among a list of 21 spellings of this name for the period 1559 to 1661 we find two with an alias form of the modern townland name proper :

Ballytullycarnan al. Listyagnew *Ham. Copy Inq.* xlii 1623
Balletullecarnan al. Listiagnewe *Inq. Ult. (Down) §104* Car. I 1645 [59]

The alias form *Listyagnew* strongly suggests that this place was also known in Irish as *Lios Toighe Uí Ghnímh*, i.e. 'fort / enclosure of the house of Ó Gnímh' and, in the light of the professional activities of various members of the Ó Gnímh family

55. *Ibid.* 195 & 196.

56. E.g. the example of William Ó Ceallaigh who, in 1531, 'invited all the Irish poets, Brehons, bards, harpers, Gamesters or common kearoghs, Jesters & others of theire kind of Ireland to his house upon Christmas this yeare' (cited Simms 1978 : 91). Note also the late 16th-century example of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn's *Nollaig do-chuamair don Chraoibh* (TD poem 8), on spending Christmas at Toirdhealbhach Luineach Ó Néill's, and the *Nodluic na Ruarcach* ('Christmas at O'Rourkes') composed by Hugh MacGauran, circa 1700, supposedly recalling the Christmas feast of Brian na Múrtha Ó Ruairc (†1591), Simms (1978 : 93).

57. Simms (1978 : 94).

58. *Townland Index* 1871 689.

59. Hughes/Hannan (1992 : 134, nos 7 & 19).

in Iveagh, Co. Down, Clandeboye, and Dunluce, Co. Antrim, not forgetting a poem apparently addressed by Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh to members of the O'Neill family of the Fews, Co. Armagh, [60] then some form of patronage of the *Ó Gnímh* family by that of Savage seems a distinct possibility.

Ó Cuív (1984 : 153) mentions that there was 'evidence of members of the Ó Gnímh family holding lands in the Larne area in the first half of the seventeenth century; and they were quite numerous, under the name Agnew, according to later documents such as the Census of Ireland of 1659'. Given that Irish manuscripts were in the possession of these Larne Agnews when the antiquarian and Oxford Celtic scholar Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) purchased part of what is now the Trinity College Dublin MS H.3.18, [61] from Eóin Ó Gnímh of Larne, Co. Antrim, then these Larne Agnews, or at least some of them, can be safely taken as descendants of the bardic family of Ó Gnímh.

However, it would appear that references to Agnews elsewhere in Ulster from the 17th century onwards should be treated with caution as G. Black (1946 : 10) hints at confusion between Agnews, from Irish *Ó Gnímh*, [62] and the Scottish Agnews from Lochnaw who were sheriffs of Galloway, apparently owing their Anglo-Norman name to the territorial origin from the Baronie d'Agneaux in the Bocages of Normandy. In the light, then, of the possibility of the existence of two separate families of Agnews in Ulster which were initially distinct – a matter in need of clarification – [63] one might be left wondering whether 'Andrew Agnewe' reported, circa 1618, [64] as living in 'Carnie', [65] which lies 2 to 3 miles to the north of Tullycarnan in the Ards peninsula, Co. Down, represents a descendant of the Ó Gnímh family or whether he was a member of a distinct Scottish family more recently arrived in Ulster. However, the likelihood is that we can connect him with the Agnew family (Gaelic *Ó Gnímh*), as Andrew appears to have been a name in use in that family, as may be seen from the mid fifteenth-century reference to an Andrew Agnew in Galloway, appointed Constable of Lochnaw and Sheriff of Wigtown, but who also visited Antrim in 1460, at around the same time when the MacDonnells inherited the seven *tuatha* of the Glens of Antrim. [66]

---

60. Details in Cunningham/Gillespie (1984 : 110).

61. Details in Abbot/Gwynn (1921 : 140-58).

62. Probably more accurately Scottish, or Classical Common Gaelic *Ó Gnímh*.

63. Ó Cuív (1984 : 156) expresses a hope to return to this subject on a future occasion, and promptly does (1984b). H. C Lawlor (Chart 1940) connected the Agnews in the castle at Ballygalley with 'an Anglo-Norman family who settled in Loch Naw in Scotland in the time of David I', a suggestion rightfully dismissed by Ó Ceallaigh (1951 : 99 n. 11) who could, however, merely suggest : 'Probably some planters of that name came into the vicinity and the O'Gneeves adopted the surname – just as Mac Cathmhaoil (McCawell) was completely lost as Campbell. If the representatives of the two families are still mixed there, it would probably be impossible to discriminate between them now'.
For the most recent and extensive treatment of the name, see Ó Cuív (1984b), who also moots the possibility of a Norse name *Gnúmr* lying behind the name.

64. *CPR Jas* I 326, 15.

65. I.e. the modern townland of Kearney, parish of Ballytrustan, barony of Ards Upper (*Townland Index 1871*, 425).

66. Ó Cuív (1984b : 69).

Later evidence for Agnews in this area of the Little Ards is forthcoming from gravestone inscriptions in the cemeteries of the parishes of Ballyphilip (in which the townland of Tullycarnan is situated) and Slanes. Inscriptions from Ballyphilip include : 'Mary AGNEW who departed this life January the 29 day 1756 aged 72 years', [67] and 'Here lyeth the body of William Agnew who lived ... and departed this life ye 17th ... 1726 aged 81 years'. [68] Forenames such as William, David and Robert Agnew might seem to point to a recent Scottish, non-Gaelic literary, origin for these Upper Ards Agnews of the 18th century and beyond, but the adoption of English- or Scots-sounding Christian names by Gaelic families wishing to disguise somewhat their Gaelic past, could hardly be described as either a novel or a recent development. For example, Kelleher (1991 : 58) notes the ploy of adopting non-Gaelic sounding names in the Early Anglo-Norman period as a tactic employed by many Irish people aspiring to anglicisation in the major towns and, more specifically relative to the Agnews in the Ards Peninsula, Ó Ceallaigh (1951 : 99, n. 11) considers the possibility that the Christian name *Gilbert*, used by a member of the Larne 'O'Gneeves', in neighbouring County Antrim, may represent Irish *Giolla Brighde*. [69]

Ó GNÍMH POETS AND MACDONNELL PATRONS AS DENIZENS AND OFFICIALS OF THE CROWN

Apart from the issue of the employment of non-Gaelic Christian names, there is also the fact that the wording of the 1618 grant in *CPR Jas.* I, 326 further suggests that 'Andrew Agnew of Carnie' was a recent arrival to the Ards from Scotland that he should : « be free from the yoke of servitude of Scotland, Ireland or any other nation, and enjoy all the rights of an English subject. »

It is interesting to note, however, that many of the Co. Antrim *O'Gneeves* were also bestowed similarly worded grants, e.g. Ó Tuathail (1950 : 159) cites from a grant dating to 1624 and contained in *CPR Jas.* I, 585b :

> Grant to the following persons, natives of Scotland, or of the blood of that nation, of the rights and privileges of English subjects, in the kingdom of Ireland, viz. ... John O'Gneeve of Ballygreenlaw [70] ... Gilbert O'Gneeve of Inver. [71]

67. *GI Down* vol. 13, 39 (sv Samuel CARSON †1742, Mary Agnew's husband).

68. *GI Down* vol. 14, 35 (sv Agnew). There are several other Agnews mentioned here (including a John Agnew of Ballyquantain, modern Ballyquintin a townland contiguous to Tullycarnan), as well as a 'David AGNEW of Tullytramin Farm' (†1801) p. 51. See also *NI Deputy Keeper's Report 1949-50*, p. 19 for references to circa 20 members of the Agnew family in the southern Ards.

69. Cf. the use of *William*, *John* etc. among the Agnews in Co. Antrim.

70. Identified by Ó Tuathail (1950 : 159) as the modern townland of Greenland, in the parish of Larne County Antrim (in the Barony of Glenarm Lower, *Townland Index 1871*, 404).

71. i.e. Inver, a townland and parish adjoining Larne, but in the Barony of Lower Belfast.

Later on in the same century, 1653, William and John Agnew, of Island Magee, Magheramourne and Ballynure occur in a list of Scots to be transplanted from Counties Antrim and Down. [72] It seems abundantly clear that these Co. Antrim Agnews are to be connected with the earlier O'Gnieff (Gaelic *Ó Gnímh*) family. The fact that the Ó Gnímh poets held lands in the Larne area is beyond question judging by the evidence contained in a bardic poem composed by a poet of that name [73] on the death of Domhnall Gorm Mac Domhnaill [74] who was killed in 1586 during 'the massacre of a colonising body of Scots men, women and children by Sir Richard Bingham at Ardnaree on the bank of the Moy opposite Ballina, Co. Mayo'. [75] In this poem the Ó Gnímh poet claims that the image of the scene at the River Moy (Irish *Muaidh*) still haunts him at his home in Ulster, near Larne :

Cloch mhór gé théid 'n-a tarrsa
fliuchaidh fraoch na habhannsa
leithne linn Mhuaidhe ná in mhuir
ar ngruaidhe is inn a n-Ulltaibh .

Dom shaoradh ar an Muaidh mir
ní díon dúinn ard tar ísliḃ
tug a fearg iomluaighil oirn
ar tiormghuaillibh [fearg] [76] *Lathoirn*

'Though a great flag-stone (of ice) is placed across
it, the boiling spray of that river wets our cheeks
even here in Ulaidh [= Ulster], the water
of the Muaidh is now wider than the sea.

To save me from the wild Muaidh
high places are as useless as low;
its anger has sent me rushing widely
about the parched shoulders of the hillsides of Latharn' [77] (i.e. Larne).

In a mid-17th-century poem, *Oide a ndréachtaibh an dreasfháil*, Piarus Feiritéar refers to the major poets' dwellings in Ireland and mention is made to a *Baile Í Ghnímh* [78] which O'Rahilly (1942 : 117) translated as 'the townland of Ó Gnímh', adding that it was 'doubtless in Co. Antrim, but its exact location does not appear to be known'. Since O'Rahilly (1942), however, Ó Tuathail (1950) has amassed a number of references that appear to locate *Baile Í Ghnímh* at, or very near to, the

72. Young (1896 : 80). Note also in the same grant 'Captain John Agnew' and 'Francis Agnew' of Glenarm, Co. Antrim (Young op. cit. 81).
73. Identified by Ó Tuathail (1950 : 158) as Brian Ó Gnímh.
74. A son of Seumas (James) Mac Domhnaill of Islay (†1565).
75. Ó Lochlainn (1945-7 : 149).
76. I supply *learg* for rhyming (: *fearg* c) and other metrical purposes.
77. Ó Lochlainn (1945-7 : 152-3, verses 10 & 11).
78. O'Rahilly (1942 : 115, l. 21).

modern town of Ballygalley to the north of Larne. [79] One such reference is taken from a description, written in 1683 by Richard Dobbs, of a journey along the east coast of Co. Antrim from Larne to Glenarm :

> Ballygelly hill appears a good way to the sea. Under this hill is a small Building about 16 feet square upon a rock in the Sea, where one Agnew, an Irish Poet, dwelt in Old Times'. [80]

Leaving aside the issue of the landholding by a poet of the Ó Gnímh family in the Ballygalley area of Co. Antrim, and returning to the wording of the grants from the *Calendar of Patent Rolls of James I* which refers to : 'natives of Scotland, or of the blood of that nation, of the rights and privileges of English subjects, in the kingdom of Ireland', it would seem that while the Ó Gnímh family were prepared to accept the benefits of Gaelic patronage they, like many of the Gaelic rulers at this time, were also prepared to avail of any benefits that loyalty to the Crown could procure.

Although the 17th-century native Irish genealogist and historian Dubhaltach Mac Fir Bhisigh listed the Ó Gnímh family among the 'poets of Ireland', [81] Ó Cuív (1984 : 152) remarks :

> as far as I know there is no record of any poet of that name earlier than the second half of the sixteenth century. Indeed the number of Ó Gnímh poets who we can name is very small. In the catalogues of Irish manuscripts I have noted only four identified by their first name Brian, Eóghan, Fear Flatha and Pádraig. The earliest of these would appear to have been Brian. [82]

Further on Ó Cuív (1984 : 155) suggests that 'the Í Ghnímh had their origins in Scotland and that later some of them crossed over to Ireland and received lands in Antrim from the MacDonnells'. The inclusion of the Ó Gnímh family among the poets of Ireland by Mac Fir Bhisigh, writing in 1657, need not be viewed as going against the theory proposed by Ó Cuív that the arrival on Irish soil from Scotland of the Ó Gnímh family in their capacity as professional poets was a recent one, as it would appear that another Scottish family, the Mac Mhuirich poets, were also listed among the 'poets of Ireland' in the same source. [83] What is of further significance,

---

79. In the parish of Carncastle, barony of Glenarm Upper, Co. Antrim (*Townland Index 1871*, 61). As to Ó Gnímh lands near Larne in the parish of Killwaughter and Ballygally, cf. Ó Ceallaigh (1951 : 98).

80. Ó Tuathail (1950 : 159-60, ex *MacDonnells Antrim*, 381). Ó Tuathail further cites, from an inquisition taken at Ballymena in 1625, 'a lease for ever' given by the Earl of Antrim to a John O'Gneeve in the Larne area, in addition to leases to Fardorrogh mac Mulmorra O'Gneeve and Daniel O'Gneeve in 1624 (ex *O'Laverty* iii 277).

81. i.e. *aos dána Éireann*, Carney (1946 : 92 lines 129-36).

82. i.e. the Brian composing in the second half of the 16th century.

83. *Mec Mhuiridhe*, in Mac Fir Bhisigh lines 129-36, was interpreted by Carney (1946 : 104) as : '*Mec Mhuiridhe*. Doubtless for *Mec Mhuireadhaigh*, the branch of the O'Daly family

however, is the fact that not only did the Uí Ghnímh manage, apparently within a century, to sufficiently establish their Gaelic background and poetic prowess so as to be included among the leading Irish bardic families by Mac Fir Bhisigh, but they also cleverly manipulated their Scottish background to avoid being castigated as 'mere Irish' in the pre- and post-Plantation period, a fact which enabled them to retain their right to hold and lease land.

Shaw (1911) points out that part of medieval official English policy was to disqualify aliens, or non-English, from holding land and senior office, or to tax such individuals at twice the rate of an Englishman. This could, and did, apply to peoples such as the Welsh on the English borders, [84] or to the 'native' and 'mere Irish' in Ireland. One way around this exclusion was to become a naturalised Englishman or a denizen for, as Shaw (1911 : vi-vii) rightfully argues, this issue would have been central to land tenureship :

> In making his grants of denization by letters patent the king (the executive) could put into the grant what he pleased or keep out of it what he pleased. He could grant the right of paying only natives' or single customs; he could refuse that right and make the denizen pay alien duties; **he could grant the right to purchase and hold lands; he could withhold that right** ... [85]

Pinkerton (1857: 191) gives details of how, in 1573, a member of the Antrim MacDonnells 'being of the "Scottish-Irish race"', [86] accepted letters of "denyzenyse" agreeing to pay the queen a yearly rent of twenty shillings Irish for each plough-land Irish'. This meant that in becoming denizens the MacDonnells had, in effect, become naturalised Englishmen with full rights.

> When a person was made denizen by patent the intention was to make him an Englishman, not half an Englishman or three-quarters an Englishman and the word denizen is never used legally as implying a class of Englishmen with restricted rights. For instance when in the latter half of Elizabeth's reign naturalization Acts

---

which settled in Scotland', i.e. the descendants of Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh (fl. 1213), mentioned above (p. 238). In regard to the importance of this family in Gaelic Scotland one might also cite *Iacclanus Mac-Mhuirich* styled as *archipoeta*, or chief poet of the Lordship of the Isles in 1485 AD (Bannerman 1988 : 13).

84. E.g. 2 *Henry IV* c. 12 'which forbade Welshmen born in Wales of Welsh father and mother to purchase lands or tenements in certain merchant towns joining the Marches of Wales or to be citizen or burgess in any city, borough or merchant town and all Welshmen in any such places are to give surety', (cited in Shaw 1911 viii).

85. Shaw (1911 : vi-vii) - my emphasis.

86. For the generally-held view of the Scottish background of the MacDonnells from contemporary sources, see, for example Sir William Fitzwilliam, writing 10 June 1567 to Sir William Cecil, concerning the murder of Shane O'Neill by the MacDonells : 'God so disposed his pleasure as he suffered that traitor [Shane O'Neill] to receive his end amongst these Scots who cut and hewed him, as is said, extremely' (cited Brady 1982 : 117, see further p. 123 for the description of the MacDonnells as 'the Scots of the out ylles kolled Kyntere'). Note also how O'Neill's death is reported in the Irish annals as 'killed in treachery by the Albanachs' (*do mharbhad i bhfioll dAlbanchaibh*, *AIC* s.a. 1567, pp. 394-5).

> specifically so called come into vogue the words naturalization and denization are used as interchangeable terms. [87]

Evidently, then, the similar Scottish background of the Ó Gnímh poets meant that the way was open for them to become denizens, a prerogative which they must have exploited to avoid loss of lands and status under the new regime that was emerging. Indeed in a poem, discussed in greater detail below and probably dating between 1565 and 1567, [88] the Ó Gnímh poet includes references to the Gaelic ancestry of the MacDonnells through such traditionally venerated figures as *Colla Uais*, *Conn Céadchathach* ('Conn of the Hundred Battles') etc., but in a reference to Alexander, son of James, MacDonnell the poet also extols his patron's British ancestry :

> *Cuirn chorma iarfoighear lais*
> *Alasdair saormhac Sémois*
> *cuacha clochaoine d'ól*
> *air pór na bogcraoibhe a Breatain.* [89]
>
> Cups of ale shall be demanded
> From Alexander James's noble son,
> And splendid beakers to drink his health in
> Shoot of the tender branch of Britain.

This effective ploy of citing Britishness in a Gaelic context, which was deftly exploited by the Ó Gnímh, or Agnew, family was by no means restricted to themselves. R. Black has shown that, in prose fragments appended to a bardic poem composed by Scottish poet Cathal Mac Muireadhaigh (fl. 1625) for Colla Ciotach Mac Giolla Easpaig (c.1570-1647), the Campbells were ascribed a genealogy to connect them (as Mac Cailín) with the British (*Bretnaigh*) through a common descent from *Briotus*, [90] which Black (1973 : 207) describes as :

> « A piece of genealogical propaganda. Mac Cailín is the patronymic of the Earls of Argylle, chiefs of the Campbells, whose traditional policy was one of territorial aggrandisement through collaboration with central government. Campbell historians justified this by assigning to them British rather than Gaelic descent. Cathal here vilifies a key figure in the pedigree. »

Of course, while one may be tempted to view these references to 'British' as a response to the political climate of the time, which they undoubtedly were, one is left wondering whether the idea was a fresh one, or whether one can detect echoes of a ploy exploited by poets of earlier centuries, such as Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, writing in the second half of the fourteenth century :

---

87. Shaw (1911 : vii).
88. C. Breatnach (1991 : 133).
89. Walsh (1928 : 16 v. 21, translation p. 21).
90. *Briotus mac Silvius mhic Amasa ... ón Bhriotus sin atáid Bretnaigh 7 Mac Cailín na hAlban 7 sliochd Artúir Mhic Iubhair uile*, Black (1973 : 200).

Dá chineadh dá gcumtar dán
i gcrích Éireann na n-uarán
na Gaoidhil-se ag boing re blad
is Goill bhraoin-inse Breatain. [91]

Two races to whom poems are sung
are in cool-streamed Éire
the Gaoidhil known to fame
and the Goill of Britain's dewy isle.

In the wake of this evidence of a British pedigree being exploited by the Scotto-Gaelic MacDonnell and Agnew families in Co. Antrim (not to mention the Campbells in Argylle), one must now surely re-examine the background of Patrick Agnew, of Ballygally who, as Young (1896 : 257) points out, was High Sheriff of Antrim in 1688. Ó Tuathail (1950 : 159 n. 25) remarks : « As the duties of a High Sheriff would have been incompatible with those of an Irish poet he [Patrick Agnew] is not to be identified with Pádraig Ó Gnímh, who wrote the piece beginning : *An cumhall cédna ag Cloinn Eogain*, *RIA Cat. Ir. MSS*, p. 1254. »

One feels bound to point out that the statement made by Ó Tuathail that the duties of a High Sheriff would have been 'incompatible with those of an Irish poet' may, in reality, be an over-simplification of the facts.

Firstly we may note that the 'Cormac O'Neill of Broughshane', who was listed as High Sheriff of Antrim for the years 1686-7, [92] was none other than Cormac Ó Néill of Clann Aodha Buidhe (or Clandeboye) who, as we shall see below (p. 254), was a staunch supporter and patron of bardic poets up until the time of his death in 1707. Likewise, we have already seen that Patrick Savage (1739-97), who was High Sheriff of County Down in 1763, spoke Irish as a boy and doubtless continued his links with Irish poets and musicians during his tenureship of this post.

Secondly, in excluding the possibility that a fully trained professional Gaelic man of letters could also have gone on to procure an official position of this kind in the administration of the English Crown, Ó Tuathail overlooks a large number of precedents – an example of which will be seen below in that the Patrick McEagan, who was appointed a seneschal in *Fiants Eliz.* 5528, was none other than *Pádraig Mac Aodhagáin* a fully trained Irish *breitheamh* 'brehon, or judge', described in *Fiants Eliz.* 6658 as 'Patrick McKigan, of Curraghbeg, brehowne'. [93] Kelly (1988 : 261), in making his point that 'some members of the old legal families put their training at the disposal of the new régime', also notes how Baothius MacClancy (or *Baothghalach Mac Fhlannchadha*), a member of a renowned old Gaelic legal family, served the English Crown as High Sheriff of Clare, was elected Member of the Parliament of 1585, and was described on his death, in 1598, in the *Annals*

91. *Irish Monthly*, Sept. 1919, 513, cited Knott (*TD* i p. xlvii) and Leerssen (1996 : 171).
92. Young (1896 : 257).
93. The townland of Carrickbeg, Parish of Noughaval, barony of Shrule (*Townland Index 1871*, 158). For some speculation on the earlier Irish from of this name, see O'Rahilly (1922 : 94, n. 3).

of the Four Masters, as a 'man fluent in Latin, Irish and English'. [94] One may, of course, cite a long history of other Gaelic judges adapting to incoming judicial systems, both in Ireland and Scotland. [95] It is also important to bear in mind the frequent overlap between judges and poet, as O'Rahilly (1922 : 98) cites references to lawyer poets taking part in the *Contention of the Bards*, [96] while the chronicler Thomas Smith, writing in 1561, includes the *Brehounde* (= Irish *breitheamh* 'judge') as part of the four septs he describes as 'rimers' : « Their is in Irland four shepts in manner all Rimers. The first of them is calleid the Brehounde, which is in English calleid the Judge. » [97]

All things considered, then, it is plainly possible that the position of High Sheriff of Antrim could have been filled by Pádraig Ó Gnímh, a Gaelic poet, known officially to the Crown as Patrick Agnew and who doubtless also claimed for himself 'all the full rights of an English subject' in order to retain the lands originally amassed by the Ó Gnímh family as poets to the MacDonnells. [98] It can further be seen from the evidence available for other holders of roughly equivalent Crown positions of administrative responsibility elsewhere in Ireland that bardic, or professional Gaelic, training was certainly no drawback in acquiring a post of elevated status under the new regime. One has already seen evidence for members of the Mac Aodhagáin and Mac Fhlannchadha families of judges in counties Longford and Clare, and one could go on to cite further instances from the careers of the Ó hUiginn family of Sligo, in that poet Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (+1591) was summoned as a juror to several Exchequer Inquisitions taken at Sligo in 1584 and 1590. [99] In fact Tadhg Dall's subservience as a juror can be compared to his admonishment of Riocaird Óg Mac Uilliam (Burke), 'to desist form using his English title (presumably sheriff or seneschal)' because 'to go by an English style or dignity would, in one of his elevated rank in the Gaelic order, be an odious dissonance'. [100]

Thus, *pace* Ó Tuathail (1950 : 159 n. 25), there would seem to be no good reason in dismissing the possibility that Gaelic poet Pádraig Ó Gnímh and Patrick Agnew High Sheriff of Antrim in 1688 could have been one and the same, especially as

94. On this family see also Caball (1992).

95. Cf., for example, Bannerman (1988 : 11-4) for Gaelic professional classes in Scotland adapting to the incoming common law of Scotland with examples from the 12th to 16th centuries.

96. Earlier, O'Rahilly (1922 : 97), identified 'Beolhaghe duff mcEgane' of Pallis, west of Killarney, *Fiants Eliz.* 4576 14 Jan 1585, as *Baothghalach Dubh Mac Aodhagáin*. O'Rahilly adds that in addition to his being a member of the branch of the Mac Aodhagáins who were brehons to Mac Carthaigh Mór, Baothghalach 'was apparently something of a poet. Thus he appears to have the best claim for authorship of *Dia do chruthaigh grianbhrugh Nimhe* [Printed *TGSI* xxvi 100]'.

97. *Irish Bardism 1561*, 166. For the category *brithem bérla Féne 7 filidechta*, i.e. 'judge who is competent in both traditional law and poetry', in Early Irish Law (*CIH* 1614.20), see Kelly (1988 : 52).

98. For an earlier Patrick Agnew in the Larne area who received land from Sir Randal MacDonnell of Dunluce in 1636, see Ó Cuív (1984b : 68).

99. *TD* i p. xiv.

100. Leersssen (1996 : 174). See also Welch (1996 : 404-5).

Patrick Agnew's address is given as Ballygalley, which we know to have been the former abode of 'Agnew an Irish poet', according to Richard Dobbs, writing in 1683, and Ó Ceallaigh (1951 : 99) cites from a portion of a *Hearth Money Roll* of 1669, dealing with the nearby parish of Killwaughter which records Patrick Agnew as having six smokes in the 'Big House' [101].

Leerssen (1996 : 171) has warned of belated attempts to impose principles of honesty, veracity, and loyalty on a bardic praise-poem as short-sighted, yet it is a trap into which Ó Tuathail was not the first to fall. When Standish Hayes O'Grady was compiling his exemplary catalogue of Irish MSS in the British Museum he interpreted the poem which Flann Mág Craith had penned for Queen Elizabeth as a 'mock laudatory satire *per antiphrasim*', [102] a view which we must now discount in the light of the evidence that Elizabeth also received a praise poem from Muiris Ó hEodhasa (p. 256 below). Of course, the attitude of disbelief at poems of such nature was not confined to modern scholars as Mág Craith was lampooned by Dáibhí Ó Bruadair (c. 1625-98).

RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AS A FORM OF INGRATIATION WITH THE ENGLISH CROWN

It would also appear that religious conversion was a frequently-taken step to further ensure assimilation into the Crown regime. Knott [103] may well be right in her tentative identification of the ex-priest Paul Higgins, employed by Narcissus Marsh as lecturer in Irish in Trinity College Dublin in 1688, as none other the Paul Higgins who was in possession of the former lands of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn in 1641. [104] As regards the situation in Co. Antrim at this time, Richard Dobbs (late 17th century) records the Agnews as being "Irish Protestants" at the time of the Cromwellian disturbances some decades earlier. [105] As regards the social and political expediency of changing one's religion one may note also the case of Sir Henry O'Neill (†1638) of Clandeboye who married Martha, daughter of Sir Francis Stafford. Leerssen (1996 : 200) stated how the Ó Gnímh poets had deserted the Clandaboye O'Neills to compose for the MacDonnells, but this is an unfortunate slip of pen, as it can be seen that the Ó Gnímh poets came initially to serve the MacDonnells before moving on to the O'Neills of Clandeboye. Perhaps most significant of all is the fact that both the Clandeboye O'Neills and the MacDonnells also reverted to conversion to Protestantism to secure their

101. The increase in the appointment of Catholic sheriffs in the late 1680s would also have stemmed from the influence of James II and his appointment of Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel, as Lord Deputy.

102. *BMCat.*, I, 544.

103. *TD* i p. xiv.

104. On the provision of Irish-language versions of scriptures for the purposes of proselytisation of the native Irish in the seventeenth century, see Leerssen (1996 : 284 ff.).

105. Cited Ó Ceallaigh (1951 : 98).

landholdings, as pointed out by McDonnell (1996 : 21) : 'In all only three major families in these two counties kept their estates : the MacDonnells, a branch of the Clannaboy O'Neills in Antrim who had become Protestants, and the Magennises in southern county Down'.

One further point of interest, from the point of view of bardic patronage enjoyed by the Ó Gnímh family, is the fact that 'Cormac O'Neill of Broughshane', or Cormac Ó Néill of Cland Aodha Buidhe (†1707), is also listed as Sheriff of Antrim. This may suggest that Cormac was in a position to influence appointments of this type and it may be that the Ó Gnímh family was in receipt of fairly strong support from the Clandeboye O'Neills, in respect of professional Gaelic literary duties – a fact already suggested by the occurrence of poems composed by Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh in the Book of Clandeboye – compiled at Cormac's behest. If, however, Cormac was active in supporting the poet Patrick Agnew's appointment as Sheriff of Antrim in 1688, then it may prop up the claim, made in Abbot/Gwynn (1920 : 140), that Agnew 'was the hereditary bard of O'Neill of Clandeboye' as it seems reasonable to assume that this piece of information may have actually been related orally to Edward Lhuyd by Eoin Ó Gnímh, in whose possession the manuscript was [106] and who, we can further assume, was a relative of Patrick Agnew, High Sheriff in 1688. This late 17th-century connection between the Clandeboye O'Neills and the Agnews would seem, therefore, to reflect a considerable strengthening of the patron/poet bonds between these two families during the course of that century, with Eoin Ó Gnímh – who sold what is now TCD MS H.3.18 to Edward Lhuyd in the lifetime of Cormac (mac Airt) Ó Néill (+1707) – particularly anxious to emphasise these same links.

Bearing in mind, then, the evidence available for the Co. Antrim Agnews, it seems likely that 'Andrew Agnew of Carnie' in the Ards, Co. Down, [107] could, after all, have been a member, or direct descendant, of the Ó Gnímh family of poets and one may suppose that the 17th-century alias forms for the townland of Tullycarnan, viz. 'Listyagnew' and 'Listiagnewe', go back to *Lios Toighe Uí Ghnímh* 'the enclosure/fort of the house of Ó Gnímh'. This landholding most probably resulted from a grant of land to a member of the Ó Gnímh, by the Savages of the Ards, for we know, from the *Fiants of Elizabeth*, that the townland of Tullycarnan was in the possession of the Savage family in 1571.

The questions now arise as to how and why the Ó Gnímh family of poets would have found their way to the Savages in the Ards peninsula from their more traditional Co. Antrim Irish hinterland among the MacDonnells and, but presumably later, the Clandeboye O'Neills ?

106. Cf. Edward Lhuyd's remarks on buying TCD MS 1377/2 (H.3.18) from 'Eoin Agnîv' in Larne in South Antrim : *Gan Eoin Agnîv yn agos i Lârn yn Swydh Antrim a prynwydhwn Anno 1700.* Abbot/Gwynn (1921 : 140), see also Black (1973 : 193 n. 183).

107. Mentioned in *CPR Jas. I*, 326 (1618 AD), cited *supra.*

Ó GNíMH'S TEMPORARY DEPARTURE FROM MACDONNELL

In a recent series of articles, C. Breatnach has discussed the nature and background of Early Modern Gaelic prose tales. Thus far he has proposed that rather than representing mere reworkings of older tales, some of the pre-17th-century Early Modern prose tales 'may have been written for a particular patron and a particular purpose' [108] and that 'Later versions of Old and Middle Irish tales have also been undervalued' owing to the fact it is 'not merely the case that later versions expand on the earlier tales. The earlier text can be altered in many ways, by excising certain material or by portraying various characters in a new light'. [109] In his 1990 article, Breatnach argued that the Early Modern version of the Old Irish tale *Scéla Mucce Meic Da Thó*, 'The tidings of Mac Da Thó's pig', was written by the scribe Ó Gnímh for MacDonnell of Antrim in order to justify the killing, in 1567, of Shane O'Neill by the MacDonnell clan in revenge for the Battle of Glenshesk in 1565, when a number of the Mac Donnells lost their lives. [110] Breatnach then proceeded to propose, in a subsequent article, that the tale in this same manuscript entitled *Ceasacht Inghine Guile*, 'The complaint of Guile's daughter', was reshaped to parallel the rise to their former prominence of the MacDonnell clan as a political force in the North Antrim area following the death of Shane O'Neill. [111] Breatnach (1991 : 135-6) accepts the view, forwarded by Walsh (1928), that the Ó Gnímh poem *Treisi an eagla ioná an andsacht*, 'More powerful is fear than affection', meant that Ó Gnímh 'sought new patrons among the English' and that the poem 'is a begging letter, asking to be received back to favour'. [112] The penitent tones of, presumably Brian Ó Gnímh's poem, *Treisi an eagla ioná an andsacht* appear to have proven successful as he was accepted back into the MacDonnell fold, and went on to compose poems for members of this Co. Antrim family. [113]

NON-GAELIC PATRONS OF GAELIC POETS IN THE ELIZABETHAN ERA AND BEYOND

One might well ask to which English patrons Ó Gnímh would have turned? It is, of course well known, that Gaelic poets found patrons among English officials.

108. C. Breatnach (1991 : 120).

109. *Ibid.* 121.

110. See *McDonnells Antrim* 130-40, Walsh (1928 : 19 ff.) and Brady (1982 : 116).

111. 'Their [i.e. the MacDonnells] power-base in north Antrim was almost completely destroyed by their defeat at Glenshesk and their chieftain, James MacDonnell, died shortly after the battle while held in captivity by O'Neill. James's brother, Sorley Boy, was also held captive by O'Neill until the latter's murder in 1567. After O'Neill's murder, however, the MacDonnells became a prominent force in north Antrim again. These events could provide a suitable background for *Ceasacht Inghine Guile*', C. Breatnach (1991 : 133).

112. Walsh (1928 : 13).

113. C. Breatnach (1991 : 136).

We know for example that a set of Irish annals compiled in Co. Fermanagh recall how the late sixteenth-, early seventeenth-century poet Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa was 'esteemed by the Gael and the Foreigner' (*duine mórainmneach ag Gaoidhealaibh agus ag Gallaibh*) :

> *Ó hEodhasa darbh ainm Eochaidh ardollamh oirdheirc a ndán & a bhfoghluim & a ngéirintleacht na healadhna Gaoidheilge & biatach maith & fear tighe aoidheach go comchoitchionn & duine mórainmneach ag Gaoidhealaibh & ag Gallaibh d'ég an naomhadh lá do mhí June.* [114]
>
> `Ó hEodhasa called Eochaidh, *a renowned erudite professor of poetry* and learning and in the intricacies of the art of the Irish language, also *a fine hospitaller and guest-house keeper* and a *man highly esteemed by Gael and Foreigner alike*, he died on the ninth of June'.

As corroboration of this statement, we know that at least one of Eochaidh Ó hEodhasa's compositions, *Mór theasda dh'obair Óivid*, was composed for James VI of Scotland, in which James was proclaimed as 'the dispersal of all mist' (*sgaoileadh gach ceó Cing Séamas*). [115] It will also be seen below that Muiris Ó hEodhasa, a 'chronicler' who resided near Mullingar, was paid 50 shillings in 1586 for a poem in praise of Elizabeth I : « To Morishe Ohosie an Irish chronicler dwelling besides Mulliger in West Meath for a rhyme in praise of the Queens maiestie Ls. » [116]

The Ó hEodhasa poets were by no means unique in this regard, as can be shown by a host of further examples such as : Flann Mág Craith's poem to Elizabeth (discussed above); plus a Fearghal Mac an Bhaird poem for James VI, *Trí Coróna i gcairt Shéamais* ('Three crowns in James' charter'), [117] a poem for which he received one hundred pounds! One could also cite the work of Maoilín Óg Mac Bruaideadha; [118] or that of a number of Ó Dálaigh poets, such as Aonghus na n-Aor Ó Dálaigh's celebrated Gaelic satire, *The Tribes of Ireland* [119] or the notable early 17th-century poem by Tadhg Ó Dálaigh to Sir George Carew *Gabh mo gherán a Sheóirse* ('George, heed my complaint') in which the poet reclaims lands bestowed

114. `Short Annals of Fir Manach' (ed. Pól Breatnach, *Irish Book Lover*, xxiii, p. 8 – subsequently cited by McGrath (1957 : 13), Mac Cana (1974 :132) and Breatnach (1977-8 : 169).

115. P. A. Breatnach (1977-8 : 174, v 13b). Breatnach states that this poem may not have been the sole example of Eochaidh's links with non-Gaelic patrons 'Is cosúil nárbh í seo an t-aon chomaoin amháin a chuir Ó hEódhasa ar Ghaill fad a mhair sé' (1977-8 : 169).

116. From a document *Note of money lent and due to Perrot* dated 18 July 1586 (PRO, Chancery Lane, London E101 525 no. 1). I am indebted to Dr Hiram Morgan, Editor, *History Ireland*, for this reference.

117. The text of this poem is given in *Aithd. D.* poem 44, although for some important recent refinement of detail, notably that the poem was composed before Elizabeth's death and James's coronation as James I of England, see Ó Concheanainn (1973-4 : 249, esp. n. 47).

118. 'a poet who said he could discover advantage with the English by denouncing O'Brien of Thomond to the Protestants for venerating images, and for making pilgrimage to a holy well', Walsh (1928 : 12).

119. O'Donovan (1852).

by the Carew family to Ó Dálaigh in the Anglo-Norman period and, in stanza 26, declares Carew as a calming influence in Irish affairs :

D'fhortacht Éireann, go dul duibh
le dírmuibh láech ó Londuin
do chuaidh ort an ardbhladh
ní fhuair a holc d'ionarbhadh.

Until you left London with a large
body of troops to help Ireland
she had not succeeded in banishing
her evils; the fame of doing it fell to you. [120]

In East Ulster, it is also significant that English-born Lady Martha Stafford, daughter of Sir Francis and wife of Sir Henry O'Neill (†1638) of Clandeboye, also supported poets as may be seen, for example, from poems dedicated to her by Fear Flatha Ó Gnímh *Mná tar muir maith re Gaoidhil*, ('Women from beyond the sea are liked by the Gaels'), or Domhnall Ó hEachaidhéin's *A Mhárta ceanglum connradh* ('Oh Martha let us make a contract'). [121]

Nevertheless, in spite of well-attested examples of Gaelic bardic poems being composed for English patrons in the 16th and 17th centuries, it is difficult to find MS evidence for Ó Gnímh compositions of this type outside of the territory of O'Neill of Clandeboye or the MacDonnells of Antrim. It is true that the internal language of the poem *Treisi an eagla ioná an andsacht* describes a distinct element of discomfort on Ó Gnímh's part among his new patrons :

Grádh chloinne Colla um chroidhe
as fuath Ghall ghuirt Laoghaire
mar budh eadh gurbh annsa Goill
ar fheadh na nGall sa gabhoim.

With love of Clann Cholla in my heart
And detestation of Ireland's foreigners,
As though I loved the English better,
I go among them. [122]

Furthermore, Ó Gnímh concludes his poem *Treisi an eagla ioná an andsacht* by stating that although he is now accepted by the English, he does not feel the blood relationship that he enjoys with the MacDonnells as common descendants of their Gaelic genealogical forefather Eochaidh Duibhléin :

120. Edited and discussed in detail by O'Sullivan (1971-2).

121. *LCABuidhe* poems 30 and 33.

122. Walsh (1928 : 14 v. 3, translation p. 16). As a prime example of the ease with which bardic poets employed, what might nowadays be interpreted as, broad-faced hypocrisy one may note stanzas 10- 13 in which, as Walsh (1928 : 17) points out, 'The poet uses the similitude of a certain sea-bird which screams as if in distress on the beautiful day, but sings with delight when the storm is at its highest. The bird is styled *murdhuchan(n)* "siren"'.

Dúinn araon giodh ionann frémh
meisi as fhuil Eachoidh Dubhléin
mo luct cuil a(s) siad Sacsain
's ni hiad an fhuil Eathach soin.

Though we both be of one descent
I and the stock of Eochaidh Duibhlen
'Tis the English who are my cousins
And not the blood of Eochaidh. [123]

It may well have been that the Ó Gnímh poets sought patrons or the services of the English at Carrickfergus but that evidence for such patronage is not forthcoming, and must remain a matter of conjecture. On the other hand, one is also left wondering whether the English in question were the Savages of the Ards, for although these people were satirised among the Gaelic tribes in the satire of Aonghus na n-Aor Ó Dálaigh, it is interesting that Savage is referred to as 'The English hangman' (*Mac an t-Sabhaoisigh an crochaire Gaill*) [124] perhaps reflecting an element of circumspection among Gaelic poets (not to mention Crown officials) as to where exactly the loyalties of the Savages lay, as they were, after all, English crown-approved seneschals and appeared to have fluctuated on many occasions in their position *vis-à-vis* the Crown.

One can, of course, equally well imagine that *Lios Toighe Uí Ghnímh* at Tullycarnan in the Ards peninsula was totally unrelated and immaterial to the wavering fortunes of the MacDonnells of Antrim, and that this Co. Down land merely resulted from a grant of land by the Savages to the Ó Gnímh family under normal routine circumstances where poets continually sought to consolidate and expand their position and find new patrons. In any case, the circumstances which led to Savage granting land to Ó Gnímh in the vicinity of Tullycarnan in the Ards Peninsula, must be assessed in a context where the Savages, like many of their powerful Gaelic neighbours, were well assimilated into the network of Gaelic patronage at this time, despite their offices of Seneschal and of Sheriff.

Judging by the later, 18th-century, tombstone and rental evidence – which suggests that a fairly permanent settlement of the Agnews took place in the Little Ards – it would appear that the rapport between the Agnew and Savage families remained cordial and good-natured. Nevertheless, the question as to the exact circumstances in which the Savages were first approached by the Agnews has still to be answered, and it may just possibly be that Ó Gnímh unease or insecurity following the turbulent rout of their foremost patrons, the MacDonnells of Antrim, by Shane O'Neill at the Battle of Glenshesk in 1565 provided the initial impetus for their exploratory moves into the Ards.

123. Walsh (1928 : 16 v. 23, translation p. 18).
124. O'Donovan (1852 : 60-1), cited above.

CONCLUSION

Despite the impending end of the old Gaelic system of administration, many of the practitioners of the native Gaelic arts were flexibly resourceful and hard-headed enough to abandon, if necessary, their traditional role as native judge or poet for a position in the new emerging regime such as high sheriff, seneschal or judge – as can be seen, for example, from the careers of Pádraig Mac Aodhagáin, Baothghalach Mac Fhlannchadha both members of Old Gaelic legal families who changed codes in the Elizabethan period. Like many more individuals of their time, these latter two would doubtless have maintained an ambiguous role, such as that of poet and juror known to have been practised by Co. Sligo poet Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (†1591).

In this latter dualistic approach the poets merely reflected the attitude of many of their patrons and sponsors who likewise accepted official Crown positions (thus ensuring continued tenure of their lands and social status), but who also continued, simultaneously and often relatively unabated, in their sponsorship of the Gaelic men of letters – or the 'rebels, vagabonds, rhymers Irish harpers, and idle men and women' so often decried in Crown decrees. In East Ulster, one could cite many examples of local rulers of this genre such as 16th-century seneschal Patrick Savage, of the Ards Co. Down, and later successors of the same line such as Patrick Savage, High Sheriff of Co. Down in 1763. Moving northwards to Co. Antrim, one could cite late 17th-century High Sheriff of Antrim, and Colonel in the Army of James II, Cormac Ó Neill of Clandeboye (†1710) [125] or a Clandeboye predecessor such as Sir Henry, son of Seaán, Ó Néill (†1638) who changed religion, held official position, but still continued to support poets. In certain respects, the Clandeboye O'Neills could be seen as native Gaelic converts to the new regime which was ever gaining ground in East Ulster.

While the Gaelic chiefs of Clandeboye demonstrated a degree of pragmatism in observing which way the political land lay, in many ways one must view the Savages of the Ards as inveterate masters of the tidal ebb and flow in Anglo-Irish affairs for well over half a millennium. In the Gaelic revival which followed the initial impact of the Anglo-Norman invasions, the Savages, cut off for long periods from Dublin and London, assimilated themselves into the Gaelic code of their near neighbours. As the Plantation of Ulster gathered momentum the Savages were in a position to re-invoke their loyalty to the Crown although not before indulging in a period of calculating ambiguity with the old Gaelic ways. In his description of Anglo-Normans lapsing into Gaelic ways, Leerssen (1996 : 178) describes the western 'territories like that of Desmond or of De Burgo' as 'islands in a Gaelic sea', and we could equally refer to the Savage family of the Ards as a peninsula in the same way.

Remaining in the region of East Ulster, at the end of the professional literary and legal Gaelic era, one can also witness the superbly resourceful strategy

125. *I.CABuidhe* vi.

adopted by one of the most cunning and pragmatic of all families, that of Ó Gnímh, or Agnew. This latter family, like their erstwhile patrons MacDonells of Antrim, managed not merely to successfully fluctuate between two codes – as may be most obviously instanced by poet Pádraig Ó Gnímh who secured the position of High Sheriff of Antrim as Patrick Agnew – but they also succeeded in exploiting, to the very full, the concept of two nationalities. It was the Gaelic ancestry claimed by the Ó Gnímh poets which gained them a foothold in the Gaelic literary circuit in Ulster following their arrival from Scotland in the late sixteenth century, and their learned status within the Gaelic system which enabled them to acquire land on Irish soil in the first place. However, it was their recourse to denizenship, or the assumption of the full rights of English subjects, that helped them in order to maintain their social standing and to secure the landholdings they had most speedily amassed and jealously maintained.

Art J. Hughes
Centre for Irish Celtic Studies
University of Ulster at Belfast

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbot, T. K. & Gwynn, E. J., 1921, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the library of Trinity College Dublin*. (Dublin).

Bannerman, J., 1988, 'The Scots language and kin-based society', pp. 1-19 *Gaelic and Scots in harmony : Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Languages in Scotland* ed. D.S. Thomson (Glasgow).

Bergin, O., 1970, *Irish bardic poetry* : texts and translations with an introductory lecture (compiled and edited by D. Greene and F. Kelly (Dublin).

Black, G., 1946, *The surnames of Scotland : their origins and meanings* (New York).

Black, R., 1973, 'A manuscript of Cathal Mac Muireadhaigh', *Celtica*, 10, 193-209.

Boyce, D. G. & O'Day, Alan, 1996, *Modern Irish history : revisionism and the revisionist history* (Routledge, London).

Brady, C., 1982, 'The killing of Shane O'Neill : some new evidence', *Irish Sword*, 15, 116-23.

Brady, C. (ed.), 1994, *Interpreting Irish history : the debate on historical revisionism 1938-1994*, (Dublin).

Breatnach, C., 1990, 'The Early Modern version of *Scéla Mucce Da Thó* : tempus, locus, persona et causa scribendi', *Ériu*, 41, 37-60.

Breatnach, C., 1991, 'Early Modern Irish prose reconsidered - the case of *Ceasacht Inghine Guile*', *Ériu*, 42, 119-38.

Breatnach, P. A., 1977-8 : 'Metamorphosis 1603 : dán le hEochaidh Ó hEódhasa', *Éigse*, 17, 169-80.

Breatnach, P. A., 1983, 'The Chief's poet', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. 83, sect. C, 37-79.

Butler, W. F. T., 1925, *Gleanings from Irish history* (London).

CABALL, M., 1992, 'Notes on an Elizabethan Kerry bardic family', *Ériu*, 53, 178-92.

CARNEY, J., 1946, 'De scriptoribus Hibernicis', *Celtica*, 1, 86-110.

CARNEY, J., 1950, *Poems on the O'Reillys* (Dublin)...

CARNEY, J., 1967, *Poet and patron* (Dublin).

CHART, 1940, *A preliminary survey of the ancient monuments* (Belfast Record Office).

CUNNINGHAM, B. and R. GILLESPIE, 1984, 'The East Ulster bardic family of Ó Gnímh', *Éigse*, 20, 106-114.

DE BRUN, P., Ó BUACHALLA, B. & Ó CONCHEANAINN, T., 1971, *Nua-Dhuanaire* I (Baile Átha Cliath).

DINNEEN, Rev. P. (ed.), 1917 : *Me Guidhir Fhearmanach* (Dublin).

GREENE, D. (ed.), 1972, *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir : The poembook of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, Lord of Fermanagh 1566-1589* (Dublin).

HENRY, F. & MARSH-MICHELI, G., 1987, 'Manuscripts and illuminations 1169-1603', pp. 781-813 in *A new history of Ireland*, vol. 2, ed. A. Cosgrove (Oxford).

HENRY, P. L., 1977, 'Anglo-Irish and its background', pp. 20-36 of *The English Language in Ireland*, ed. D. Ó MUIRITHE (Thomas Davis Lecture Series, The Mercier Press, Dublin).

HINDLEY, R., 1990, *The Death of the Irish language : a qualified obituary* (Routledge).

HUGHES, A. J., 1987, 'Fuar leam longphort mo charad', *Celtica*, 19, 61-74.

HUGHES, A. J., 1988, 'The seventeenth-century Ulster/Scottish contention of the red hand : background and significance', pp. 78-94 of *Gaelic and Scots in harmony : Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Languages in Scotland*, ed. D. S. THOMSON (Glasgow).

HUGHES, A. J. and R. J. HANNAN, 1992, *The place-names of Co. Down*, vol. 2 : *The Ards* (Belfast).

HUGHES, A. J., 1993, 'A bardic poem by Diarmaid Mac an Bhaird on the destruction of a MacMahon stronghold in Co. Monaghan, 1647 AD', *Clogher Record*, vol. XIV, No. 3, 67-76.

HUGHES, A. J., 1994-5, 'Land acquisitions by Gaelic bardic poets : Insights from place- names and other sources', *Ainm*, 6, 74-102.

KELLEHER, J. V., 1991, 'Mac Anmchaid, *Lebroir*', *Ériu*, 42, 56-9.

KELLY, F., 1988, *A guide to Early Irish law* (Dublin).

LEERSSEN, J., 1996, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael : studies in the idea in Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century.* (Cork University Press, 2 edn).

LLOYD, J. H., 1912, 'From the Book of Clanaboy', pp. 53-60 in *Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer*, ed. O. BERGIN & C. MARSTRANDER (Halle 1912).

MAC AIRT, S. (ed.), 1944, *Leabhar Branach : The Book of the O'Byrnes* (Dublin).

MAC CANA, P., 1974, 'The rise of the later schools of *Filidheacht*', *Ériu*, 25,126-46.

MC DONNELL, Hector, 1996, *The Wild Geese of the Antrim MacDonnells* (Irish Academic Press, Dublin),

MC GRATH, C., 1957, 'Í Eódhosa', *Clogher Record*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 1-19.

MC KAY, P., 1990, *The names of the parishes of the baronies of Upper and Lower Toome, Co. Antrim*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ulster at Coleraine.

MC KENNA, L. (ed.), 1920, 'Poem to Mág Uidhir by Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa', *Irish Monthly*, 649-52.

MC KENNA, L. (ed.), 1947, *The Book of Magauran, Leabhar Méig Shamradháin*, (Dublin).

MC KENNA, L. (ed.), 1951, *The Book of O'Hara : Leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin).

MAC LYSAGHT, E., 1979, *Irish life in the seventeenth century* (4th edn,, Irish Academic Press, Dublin).

NICHOLLS, K., 1987, 'Gaelic society and economy in the high middle ages' pp. 397-438 of *A new history of Ireland*, vol. 2, ed. A. COSGROVE (Oxford).

NICHOLLS, K., 1991, 'Notes on the genealogy of Clann Eoin Mhóir', *West Highland Notes and Queries*, Series 2, no. 8 (November) 11-21.

Ó CEALLAIGH, S., 1951, *Gleanings from Ulster history* (Cork); reprinted Ballinascreen Historical Society (1994).

Ó CLEIRIGH, T., 1939, 'A poem book of the O Donnells', *Éigse*, vol. 1, 51-61, and 130- 42.

Ó CONCHEANAINN, T., 1973-4, 'A feature of the poetry of Ferghal Óg Mac an Bhaird', *Éigse*, 15, 235-51.

Ó CUIV, B., 1984, 'Some Irish items relating to the MacDonnells of Antrim', *Celtica*, 16, 139-56.

Ó CUIV, B., 1984b, 'The family of Ó Gnímh in Ireland and Scotland : A look at the sources', *Nomina*, 8, 57-71.

Ó CUIV, B., 1988, 'Personal names as an indicator of relations between native Irish and settlers in the Viking period', pp. 79-88 of *Settlement and society in medieval Ireland, studies presented to Francis Xavier Martin*, edited by John BRADLEY (Kilkenny, Boethius).

O'DONOVAN, J. (ed.), 1852, *The tribes of Ireland* (Dublin).

Ó FIAICH, T., 1969, 'The Language and political history', pp. 101-11 of B. Ó CUIV (ed.), *A View of the Irish Language* (Dublin).

Ó FIAICH, T., 1972, *Amhráin Airt Mhic Cumhaigh* (An Clóchomar, Baile Átha Cliath).

Ó DUIBHIN, C., 1991, *The Irish language in Co. Down since 1750* (Cumann Gaelach Leath Cathail).

O'GRADY, S. H., 1926, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British museum*, vol.1 (London).

Ó LOCHLAINN, C., 1945-7, 'Ár ar Ard na Riadh', *Éigse*, 5, 149-55.

Ó MAINNIN, M. B., 1993, *The place-names of Co. Down*, vol. 3 : *The Mournes* (Belfast).

O'RAHILLY, C., 1977, *Five seventeenth-century political poems* (Dublin).

O'RAHILLY, T. F., 1922, 'Irish poets, historians, and judges in English documents, 1538-1615', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. 36, sect. C, 86-120.

O'RAHILLY, T. F., 1942, 'A poem by Piaras Feiritéar', *Ériu*, 13, 113-118.

O'RAHILLY, T. F., 1950, 'Ó Gnímh's alleged visit to London', *Celtica*, 1, 330-1.

O'RIORDAN, M., 1990, *The Gaelic mind and the collapse of the Gaelic world* (Cork).

O'SULLIVAN, A., 1971-2, 'Tadhg O'Daly and Sir George Carew', *Éigse*, 14, 27-38.

Ó TUATHAIL, É., 1950, 'Baile Í Gnímh', *Éigse*, vi, pt. 2, 157-60.

PINKERTON, W., 1857, 'The "Overthrow" of Sir John Chichester at Carrickfergus in 1597', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, ser. 1, vol. 5, 188-209.

REEVES, Rev. W., 1847, *Ecclesiastical antiquities of the dioceses of Down, Connor and Dromore* (Dublin).

REEVES, Rev. W., 1854, 'Irish itinerary of Father Edmund MacCana', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 44-59.

SAVAGE-ARMSTRONG, G. F., 1888, *The ancient and noble family of the Ards* (London).

SAVAGE-ARMSTRONG, G. F., 1906, *A genealogical history of the Savage family in Ulster*, being a revision and enlargement of Certain chapters of "The Savages of the Ards" (London).

SHAW, W. (ed.), 1911, *Letters of denization and acts of naturalization for aliens in England and Ireland, 1603-1700* (Lymington).

SIMMS, K., 1978, 'Guesting and feasting in Gaelic Ireland', *JRSAI*, 108, 67-100.

THOMSON, D., 1974, *An introduction to Gaelic poetry* (London).

Uí Fhlannagáin, D. 1974, 'Logainmneacha mar fhoinse staire', *Dinnseanchas*, iml. iv, uimh. i (Meitheamh), 1-13.

Walsh, Rev. P. (ed.), 1916 : *The Flight of the Earls* (Dublin).

Walsh, Rev. P., 1928, 'Worth and virtue unrequited : an Irish poet and the English', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, vol. 31, ser. 5, 10-22.

Walsh, Rev. P., 1947, *Irish men of learning* : studies by Father Paul Walsh edited by Colm Ó Lochlainn (Dublin).

Whelan, K., 1995, 'An underground gentry : Catholic middlemen in eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 10, 7-68.

Young, R. M., 1896, *Historical notices of old Belfast and its vicinity* (Belfast).

SOURCES

A. Conn. Annála Connacht : The Annals of Connaught, ed. A. M. Freeman (Dublin 1944).

AFM Annála Ríoghachta Éireann : annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the year 1616, ed. John O'Donovan, 7 vols (Dublin 1848-51; reprint Dublin 1856 and 1990).

AGBP Ainmneacha Gaeilge na mBaile Poist (An tSuirbhéireacht Ordanáis, Oifig an tSoláthair, Baile Átha Cliath 1969).

Aithd. D. Aithdhíoghlaim dána, ed. L. McKenna (Dublin).

ALC The annals of Loch Cé : a chronicle of Irish affairs from AD 1014 to AD 1590, ed. William Hennessy, 2 vols (London 1871; reprint Dublin 1939).

AU Annála Uladh : annals of Ulster; otherwise Annála Senait, annals of Senait : a chronicle of Irish affairs, 431-1131, 1155-1541, ed. William Hennessy and Bartholomew MacCarthy, 4 vols (Dublin 1887-1901).

Cal. Carew MSS Calendar of the Carew manuscripts preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, ed. J. S. Brewer and W. Bullen, 6 vols (London 1867-73).

Cal. SP Ire. Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland, 1509-1670, ed. H. C. Hamilton, E. G. Atkinson, R. P. Mahaffy, C. P. Russell and J. P. Prendergast, 24 vols (London 1860-1912).

CPR Jas. I Irish patent rolls of James I : facsimile of the Irish record commissioners' calendar prepared prior to 1830, with a foreword by M. C. Griffith (Dublin 1966).

Descr. Ards 1689 'William Montgomery and the description of the Ards, 1683' ed. D. B. Quinn, *Irish Booklore*, vol. 2 no. 1 (1972), 29-43.

Fél. Óeng. Félire Óengusso Céli Dé : the martyrology of Oengus the culdee, ed. Whitley Stokes (London 1905; reprint 1984).

FFE Foras feasa ar Éirinn : The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, 4 vols., ed. Rev. P. S. Dinneen (ITS, London 1908).

Fiants Eliz. 'Calendar and index to the fiants of the reign of Elizabeth I', appendix to the 11-13th, 15-18th and 21-22nd *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of public records in Ireland* (Dublin 1879-81, 1883-86, 1889-90).

GI Down Grave inscriptions of County Down, vol. 13 & 14, by Dr Richard Clark (Belfast 1984-, Ulster Historical Foundation).

Inq. Kerry 1584 'Inquisition of 1584 ...', *Kerry Archaeological Journal*, no. 4 (April 1910), pp. 213-26, concluded No. 5 (Oct. 1910), pp. 263-79.

Irish Bardism 1561 'Irish bardism in 1561', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, ser. 1, vol. 6 (1858), 165-7.

LCABuidhe Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe, ed. Tadhg Ó Donnchadha alias Torna (Baile Átha Cliath 1931).

MacDonnells Antrim An historical account of the MacDonnells of Antrim ..., Rev. George Hill (Belfast 1873).

Onom. Goed. Onomasticon Goedelicum, ed. E. Hogan (Dublin, 1910).

OSM Ordnance Survey Memoirs : Parishes of County Down 1832-4, 1837, vol. 7 : *North Down and The Ards*, edited by A. Day and P. McWilliams (Belfast 1991).

PRONI Dep. K Rpt. 1949-50 Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Deputy Keeper's Report 1949-50 (HMSO Belfast).

RIA Cat. Ir. MSS Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy Dublin, T. F. O'Rahilly inter alios (Dublin).

Sav. Ards The ancient and noble family of the Ards ..., G. F. Armstrong (London 1888).

Sav. Ulst. A genealogical history of the Savage family in Ulster being a revision and enlargement of certain chapters of "The Savages of the Ards", ed. G.F.S.A. [George Francis Savage-Armstrong] (London 1906).

TD The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550-1591), ed. E. Knott, 2 vols, Irish Texts Society (London 1922).

Townland Index 1871 Census of Ireland, 1871. Alphabetical index to the townlands and towns of Ireland... (Dublin 1877).

Ulster Plant. Pap. 1608-13 'Ulster Plantation papers from MS N.2.2 in the library of Trinity College, Dublin', ed. T. W. Moody, *Analecta Hibernica*, 8 (1938), 181- 297.