

# *Prince of Ulster or Arch-Traitor? The Self Fashioning of Hugh O'Neill*

Eoin O'Neill and Irene Portela

*Abstract: Although in England the Elizabethan era is regarded as a golden age, the same period in Ireland has a much darker and murkier appearance. The aim of this paper is to try to somewhat illuminate this period by looking at the Hugh O'Neill, the dominant Irish figure in the last decades of Elizabeth's reign, leader of the Gaelic forces in the Nine Years War. Rather than trying to minutely analyse O'Neill's life, we intend to use the concepts of 'self fashioning' and 'the flexibility of the self' to see if they can aid to unravel the puzzle of Elizabethan Ireland.*

## *Introduction*

The Elizabethan era is seen by many authors, with some justification, as the golden age of English history. This period witnessed a remarkable flowering of English culture, characterised by diverse figures such as Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon and Raleigh. Politically, Elizabeth's reign was a time of stability, in marked contrast with the turbulence which had disrupted the English policy since the 1530s. The subject of this paper is not, however, the brightness or glory of Elizabethan England. Rather its theme is a contrasting one. It is concerned with something darker, something murky, complicated - and at times horrific. The aim of this essay is to look into the shadows of Elizabethan (and English) history, to look at the opposite - or distorted reflection - of Gloriana: Ireland.

This work does not intend to be a comprehensive account of the Elizabethan age in Ireland. Rather, we wish to focus on a specific political personality, Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone and leader of the Gaelic forces in the Nine Years War (1594-1603). O'Neill's career, specifically his struggle to preserve his power and independence against a centralising state, dominated the final years of Elizabethan Ireland. Although he was ultimately defeated, the reverberations of his efforts would continue to be felt throughout seventeenth century Ireland - and, indeed, England. The study of O'Neill's political performance is therefore, we believe, crucial to the understanding of Elizabethan Ireland.

This analysis will be based on the ideas of Greene (1968) and Greenblatt (1984) on the flexibility and fashioning of the self. These concepts provide a new lens with which to study both Gaelic Ireland and Hugh O'Neill, one which might also help to relate events in sixteenth century Ireland to what was happening in the rest of Europe. We do not intend to minutely analyse O'Neill's life with these concepts, nor to present a mini-biography. Rather, the two concepts will be discussed with the aim of seeing how useful they are in the context of Gaelic Ireland - for both authors deal with a literary sphere rather than a political and

military one -, and to see if they might be able to help shed some new light on O'Neill, and thereby contribute to unravelling the puzzle that is Elizabethan Ireland.

### *Hugh O'Neill and the end of Gaelic Ireland*

The figure of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, the Ó Néill, called by Queen Elizabeth (amongst other things) the Arch-Traitor, the "Running Beast, the Great Divill, the Great Bear, the Northern Lucifer" (O'Faolain, 1942, 1992: 191), is one of the most enigmatic figures of Irish history. He is the central figure in late Elizabethan Ireland, leading a long war against the Tudor state, which he close to winning and which almost bankrupted Elizabeth<sup>1</sup>. He won European recognition for his military exploits. Henri IV of France, according to the contemporary English historian William Camden, called him "the third soldier of the age" (Kerney Walsh, 1986, 1996: 15), after Henri himself (naturally) and the Spanish Conde de Fuentes<sup>2</sup>. O'Neill was not just a general. He was also a Tudor nobleman. He was the Earl of Tyrone, one of the richest and most powerful nobles in either Ireland or England; Lord Deputy Mountjoy estimated that O'Neill could raise £80,000 a year from his lands. Moreover, although he lacked direct influence with the Queen, he did have important 'friends' at Court (even though some of these had to be bribed) and in the Dublin government. Furthermore, like many Tudor noblemen, he was a politician, indeed a particularly able one, who between the 1560s and the 1590s managed to increase his power from that of a minor Gaelic lord whose survival depended on English assistance, to the most powerful lord in Ireland, whose rebellion shook the foundations of English rule. He was also a Gaelic lord, leader of the most powerful Gaelic sept, which had been ruling parts of Ulster since approximately the fifth century. He was not hidebound by tradition, rather he was an innovator who was transforming and centralising Gaelic Ulster, forging a confederacy of Gaelic lords against Elizabeth which, despite defections towards the end of the war, proved remarkably resilient, as well as forming a standing army which he kept intact (and well supplied) until the aftermath of Kinsale<sup>3</sup>.

O'Neill's defeat had important repercussions outside Ireland, principally in England - but also in Scotland. It allowed James Stuart to inherit a pacified and united Ireland. This inheritance was not, as Charles I discovered, without its thorns. For in defeating O'Neill, Elizabeth had come close to bankrupting the state, leaving the Stuarts with long term financial problems. She had also been forced to tacitly permit Catholicism in Ireland, leaving the mass of the people Catholic. Moreover, the plantation undertaken by James I in Ulster, beginning in 1609 after the flight of O'Neill, introduced further problems into Ireland, which would eventually lead to the 1641 Rebellion, which triggered off the English Civil War. Hugh O'Neill, therefore, as well as being central to Irish history, plays an important role in English - or British - history. He was the final important obstacle to a centralised 'British' state, and presented the Elizabethan regime with its the greatest threat and challenge:

"For this reason the defeat of the Spanish Armada was a much less decisive event in the Anglo-Spanish war of 1585-1604 than the lesser-known land battle of Kinsale thirteen years later. The Elizabethan navy could not adequately protect the Irish coastline, and Spanish arms should have won at Kinsale. In the event, Kinsale was of the first importance in British history because instead of transforming England's Irish problem into a mirror image of Spain's difficulties in the Netherlands, it removed the last obstacle to the political unification of the British Isles." (Ellis, 1988: 45).

## *The Flexibility of the Self*

Greene outlines how the idea of the flexibility of the self evolved during the Renaissance. He begins with Pico della Mirandola, who presents a vertical vision of self-fashioning, of the power of men to make themselves into what they wanted, whether animals or something divine: "thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul'd judgement, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine." (*apud*, 1968: 243). In other words, man could transform himself in either of two directions: "upward toward the angel, downward toward the brute." (id: 248-9). From Petrarch on, this vertical scale came to be joined (slowly) by a horizontal dimension. Man came to be seen as pliable and flexible: "During the generations following Vergerius, the basically optimistic belief in human pliability grew. For the first time in a millennium, man saw himself as basically malleable, without quite acknowledging that his belief threatened to involve him the Pelagian heresy with which Humanism characteristically and commonly flirted." (ibid: 250). Humanists, however, still seemed to believe in some form of vertical fashioning and transformation: "The fashioning of the pupil by the pedagogue was replaced by the reflexive fashioning of the individual's own mind and soul. Humanist formation first assisted in, then gave way to, metaphysical transformation." (ibid: 252).

This "Humanist path of willed metamorphosis through intellectual discipline" (ibid: 257), was rejected by the both sides of the post-Reformation religious struggle. On the Protestant side "the will was theoretically denied *any* autonomy and above all denied the autonomy of choosing a destiny. The predestinarianism of Luther and Calvin really represented a return to the Augustinian miracle of conversion through grace, a miracle which the individual accepts but does not initiate." (ibid: id). The Jesuits, on the other hand, "seized upon the concept of fashioning through discipline and altered it brilliantly for their own purposes. The transformation they envisaged as the end of their discipline was to a new, hard, resolute unwavering dedication to God's will as interpreted by His Church." (ibid: ibid). More importantly, it was also challenged by several less optimistic sixteenth century writers, notably Machiavelli and Montaigne. Machiavelli's attitude towards vertical flexibility seems to have been negative: "For him, the vertical flexibility of man is very limited, and such as it is, leads downward to the brute rather than upward to the angel." (ibid: ibid). He does suggest a sort of horizontal alternative: "*tactical* flexibility is the great weapon if one is to hope for consistent success. Tactical flexibility is a kind of horizontal flexibility, the capacity to change one's style, one's strategy, one's mode of procedure, with the flux of events." (ibid: 258).

Following this, Greene jumps to England, where the idea of flexibility and metamorphosis was somewhat different from the continent: "If the English Renaissance was also concerned with the metamorphosis of the self, it fixed much firmer upper limits to human potentiality than did the continent. In spite of Moore, sixteenth-century England was seldom Utopian; it retained by and large a healthy scepticism toward human transcendence; and it remembered more steadily than the continent the orthodox doctrine of original depravity." (ibid: 260-1). Indeed, amongst the authors he discusses there is almost a rejection of the whole idea of flexibility. For Spenser, for example, transformation depends on grace rather than on will and, furthermore: "The process of fashioning is frustrated by the inconsistency of the clay amid the quicksand of history." (ibid: 262). This is more clearly shown in Shakespeare who represents the 'natural end point' of Renaissance discussion of flexibil-

ity. He "is not at all concerned with the discipline of Humanist formation and is too shrewd to dream with Marlowe, of miraculous transformations. His theater is a theater of horizontal manoeuvrings and adaptations, and so ushers in the modern era we still inhabit." (ibid: id). Finally, in a short paragraph, Greene discusses Cervantes to show that the Renaissance age (and its preoccupation with flexibility and fashioning of the self) was over:

"The knight of La Mancha is so loveable a caricature because his rigidity is so pure, and his will for a world made new so movingly inflexible. But he is already *old* in 1605: he belongs to a past that is suddenly seen to be decayed. With the intuitive recognition across the continent that Don Quixote's hope was tragically anachronistic, an age was over. Europe was left with the resignation of the earthbound, and with the novel, which teaches through disillusionment. The blurring of man's upper limits had gradually yielded to a humbling lucidity and the modern age was free to play, like Don Juan and Scapin with the wealth and the ennui of our fixed condition." (ibid: 264; original italics).

### *The Self-Fashioning of Hugh O'Neill*

Oddly enough, this closing image of Greene is not an inappropriate starting point to the study of Hugh O'Neill. Although on one level there seems to be no comparison between Don Quixote and Hugh O'Neill - O'Neill fought real giants, and he was neither pure nor rigid, flexibility and ruthlessness were needed to survive, or thrive, in Elizabethan Ireland - , at another level some useful comparison can be made. Hugh O'Neill's failure represents the end of one age and the beginning of another. In a way, and perhaps not fully intentionally, he became the focus, the key, of the struggle of Gaelic Ireland against the Elizabethan regime. He became its sort of (Shakespearean?) hero whose defeat and fall were felt by a whole society. At the same time O'Neill is more than this. He was not just a 'Celtic', or Gaelic, hero. He was also very much a Prince (in the Renaissance and Machiavellian sense) who ably sought to increase, and protect, his own power. He demonstrated considerable horizontal and tactical flexibility throughout his career. He consistently confused the English with his actions, especially his apparent waverings and frequent (public) changes of heart. Even today it is hard to unravel the reasonings behind some of his actions, which often seem to be pulling in contrary directions. This, however, I believe, was one of his skills; to be able to act like 'the fox as well as the lion'<sup>4</sup>. For the longer O'Neill hesitated, or made the English officials believe that he wanted a truce or a pardon, the nearer would come both Spanish aid and the death of Elizabeth. He also seems to have had more vision than many of his contemporaries. He seemed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of Gaelic Ireland as well as of the English system. He also had the ability and power (and ruthlessness) to pursue his vision and his goals.

Greene's idea of the flexibility of the self is connected with, and complemented by, Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning. This offers another point of entry to the study of Hugh O'Neill. Greenblatt is concerned with 'self-fashioning' in sixteenth century England. His starting point is that "there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social and psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities." (1980: 1). Or, as he puts it more bluntly: "my starting point is quite simply that in sixteenth century England there were both selves and a sense that they could be fashioned." (id: id).

Although “there were always selves, - a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires - and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity.” (ibid: ibid), there was something different about the act of fashioning of the self during this period. At sometime, therefore, in the (early?) sixteenth century an important change occurred: “What is central is the perception - as old in academic writing as Burckhardt and Michelet - that there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities.” (ibid: ibid).

However, it is very difficult to identify the precise nature of this change, due to its complexity:

“This change is difficult to characterize in our usual ways because it is not only complex but resolutely dialectical. If we say that there is a new stress on the executive power of the will, we must say that there is the most sustained and relentless assault upon the will; if we say that there is a new social mobility, we must say that there is a new assertion of power by both family and state to determine all movement within the society; if we say that there is a heightened awareness of the existence of alternative modes of social, theological, and psychological organization, we must say that there is a new dedication to the imposition of control upon the modes and ultimately to the destruction of alternatives.” (ibid: 1-2)<sup>5</sup> .

In its simplest form, this change, Greenblatt believes, can be described as follows “in the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.” (ibid: 2). In a way, he suggests, this was a throwback to classical ideas, which thanks to the structures of St. Augustinian had declined in influence until the early modern age: “Such self-consciousness had been widespread among the elite in the classical world, but Christianity brought a growing suspicion of man’s power to shape identity: ‘Hands off yourself.’ Augustine declared. ‘Try to build up yourself and you build a ruin.’” (ibid: id).

Although, the initial model for self-fashioning was Christ, in Renaissance England the idea of self-fashioning eventually became detached from the idea of the imitation of Christ<sup>6</sup> : “Thus separated from the imitation of Christ - a separation that can, as we shall see, give rise to considerable anxiety - self-fashioning acquires a new sense of meanings.” (ibid: 3). These meanings spread to include all of social life and self-fashioning came to mean the “representation of one’s nature or intention in speech or actions.” (ibid: id). Expanding upon this Greenblatt suggests a similarity between self-fashioning and Geertz’s idea of culture as a set of control mechanisms: “Self-fashioning is in effect the Renaissance version of these control mechanisms, the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment.” (ibid: 3-4). Finally, although he emphasises the differences<sup>7</sup> between the different writers (and their literary creations) he discusses, Greenblatt also identifies their common characteristics, what he calls a: “set of governing conditions common to most instances of self-fashioning” (ibid: 9). He sums these up as follows:

“To sum up these observations, before we turn to the rich lives and texts that exemplify and complicate them, we may say that self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of

both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss." (ibid: 9).

Self-fashioning would, therefore, appear to be an important concept, which can help to understand late Renaissance society, especially in relation to psychological and sociological factors. However, two problems would seem to arise in relation to the application of this concept (as well as that of the flexibility of the self) to Gaelic Ireland. One is that both are literary concepts. Greenblatt and Greene, look at writers, and their analysis is based on essays, plays or poems written by the figures they are analysing. With Hugh O'Neill we do not have these texts. Certainly, we have copies of letters he wrote, as well as reports of meetings he, or things he said. These are political texts, written for a specific purpose, such as trying to convince the King of Spain to send military assistance, or the Queen of his own good intentions. We know O'Neill's life story well, perhaps better than some of the authors Greene or Greenblatt deal with. But we do not have the 'access' to his thinking as we do to Shakespeare or Spenser. However, I would contend, that it is still worth the effort. The texts that we have, while they might not be as fruitful to analyse as *The Faerie Queen*, or some of Shakespeare's plays, are still worth the effort of looking at. The second problem is whether these concepts can be applied to Gaelic Ireland, where a tradition of public printed discourse does not seem to have been common. In a way this problem is easier to overcome than the previous one. As I have emphasised throughout this essay, Gaelic Ireland was not cut off from the rest of Europe. In addition, by the time of Hugh O'Neill many Gaelic lords were receiving English education. They were becoming increasingly aware of political and cultural developments outside their own lordships. Indeed, interesting evidence of this is provided by Sir John Harrington (the Queen's godson, whose romantic description of Elizabeth Greenblatt cites), who in 1599 who visited Hugh O'Neill, where he was entertained by O'Neill's sons reciting Harrington's own translation of *Orlando Furioso*.

Some of the conditions identified by Greenblatt, especially the first one, might not seem to apply to Hugh O'Neill: "None of the figures inherits a title, an ancient family tradition or hierarchical status that might have rooted personal identity in the identity of a clan or caste. With the partial exception of Wyatt, all of these writers are middle-class" (1980: 9). However, although O'Neill was a noble with an inherited title, family lineage and a rooted identity, he was also a 'self-made man', who had fought for his title, and who was living in a time when the 'rooted identities' and family lineages were under attack and, to an extent, unravelling. Several of the other conditions stress the importance of an external alien entity for self-fashioning:

3. Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other - heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Anti-christ - must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed.
4. The alien is perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic (the absence of order) or that which is false or negative (the demonic parody of order)." (ibid: ibid)

For Spenser, to whom Greenblatt devotes a chapter, Gaelic Ireland, as discussed above, is alien and needs to be destroyed. In addition, Hugh O'Neill is *the* threatening Other for Spenser, and for late Elizabethan England<sup>8</sup>.

Yet, it is also possible, to reverse the angle, to look from at Tudor England from the Gaelic point of view. The Elizabethans were to the Irish alien, strange and as *others*. They

were hostile to Gaelic culture; they wished to eliminate it, whether by force or by less brutal 'reforms'. Hugh O'Neill was able to operate in both of these worlds<sup>9</sup>; indeed, he often seemed to blur their boundaries, and this was, perhaps, one of the sources of his strength. Furthermore, he seemed to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of both systems, and to use this to his advantage. Moreover, he was able to present different faces (selves?) when needed: a Counter-Reformation revolutionary; a reformed Gaelic lord; or a remorseful and reluctant rebel. He appears to have constantly surprised and infuriated the English by presenting them with these different faces. O'Neill's ability to move, at ease, in both of the English and Gaelic cultures, was vital to his success. However, this ability and his many different faces also make it difficult to find out what exactly Hugh O'Neill's self-fashioning was. The answer lies perhaps in Machiavelli. What O'Neill was fashioning was a (the) Prince. He wanted to hold on to (and increase) his land and his power: "Hugh O'Neill's main preoccupation was the pursuit of power and his upbringing in this regard was a great advantage because it gave him a facility with both cultures in a period of transition." (Morgan, 1993a: 214).

Part of this self-fashioning was an inherent flexibility which included the ability to present different public faces when necessary, as well as being able to negotiate and manoeuvre his way in two different cultures - different cultures in some sort of self-fashioning sense (as well as what became, much later, cultural identities). This ability accounted for the success of Hugh O'Neill and his ability to stay in power. It was also, perhaps, his *virtu*: "I also believe that the one who adapts his policy to the times prospers, and likewise that the one whose policy clashes with the demands of the times does not." (Machiavelli, 1961: 131). However, O'Neill was defeated, and Gaelic culture definitely became something different. It is possible that, if he had been luckier, for the Battle of Kinsale was really lost because of an unfortunate mishap, or if *fortuna* had not deserted him at the crucial moment, then he could have won the war.

"I conclude, therefore, that as fortune is changeable whereas men are obstinate in their ways, men prosper so long as fortune and policy are in accord, and when there is a clash they fail. I hold strongly to this: that it is better to be impetuous than circumspect; because fortune is a woman and if she is to be submissive it is necessary to beat and coerce her. Experience shows that she is more often subdued by men who do this than by those who act coldly. Always, being a woman, she favours young men, because they are less circumspect and more ardent, and because they command her with greater audacity." (id: 133).

He might, therefore, have become the Prince, the 'order' giver, as he doesn't seem to have exceedingly relied on *fortuna* alone, but in his self-fashioning, to have attempted to deal with *virtu* with the facts and the times presented to him. Maybe, he should not have relied at all on the 'alien', the foreign armies, a symbol of an always moving world, away - or apart - from the island, that seemed to be in the process of stopping the movement of self-fashioning and crystallising, instead, ideas of 'civilisation' and of order that did not need Machiavellian princes (or princesses) any more, be it Hugh O'Neill, or Astea's queen. One may think that they, simultaneously, shaped and destroyed each other; as the 'new order' evolved in the British Isles, as well as in other parts of Europe, with different types of clashes and conflicts.

## Conclusion

The sixteenth century in Ireland was a period of immense change and of much conflict. It was not a time of clarity. Rather, if anything, it was a time of confusion, as individuals and groups tried many different strategies (with varying degrees of success) to come to terms with the new institutions, theologies, and structures. Many, including Hugh O'Neill, also attempted to mould the shape of the future. They struggled with both the emerging social forces as well as the old. These struggles were in Ireland, and throughout Europe, often (a cynic might say invariably) bloody. As the century wore on they became bloodier. In the following century they would become bloodier still. To try to study and understand this society is difficult. Records (when they exist) are haphazard and biased. To many Elizabethans, Ireland was a dark land, a land of un-understandable savagery. They saw their armies and money disappear there, apparently swallowed up by the great bogs and forests. Trying to look at Gaelic Ireland, from the vantage point of the late twentieth is more difficult still, as whatever meanings this society had are now blurred to us. It is cut off from us, as it never was to the Elizabethans. But, I believe, it is a period that has to be studied. It is the opposite of the glory of Elizabethan England. It is dark, murky, and tragic. Yet the Irish dark and the English light were closely connected. The future of the English light was based upon, was guaranteed by, their final victory in Ireland. Indeed judging by the increasing importance of England in Europe in the following centuries, it can also be said that this victory played its part in the subsequent unfolding of European history.

## Notes

1. In a letter written in exile in early 1608 to Philip III, O'Neill described the results of the war as follows: "They waged war for the space of eleven years with the success which was known throughout Europe, gaining many signal victories in the course of which the enemies lost much infantry and artillery, and the flower of the nobility and militia of England perished; among those who were killed were seven generals and the Viceroy of Ireland, called the Baron Bures [i.e. Lord Burgh], about two hundred captains with many other soldiers and innumerable gentlemen and officers. As a result, and because of the taxes which Queen Elizabeth imposed on the English in order to maintain an army of sixteen to twenty thousand soldiers every year in that war of Ireland, they were forced to recall their experienced soldiers who were serving against Spain in Brittany in order to send them to Ireland; they were forced to stop sending their fleets to the coasts of the Indies and of Spain [...]; they were finally brought to such straits that they were forced to coin money of copper instead of silver and they were on the point of losing both England and Ireland if the Earls had received help at the right time. Moreover, when the said Queen died, the English were so exhausted from the war in Ireland and so hopeless of being able to maintain themselves with their strength alone that they surrendered to the Scot and chose him for their King, despite the fact that those two nations are great enemies." (*apud* Kerney Walsh, 1986, 1996: 134).
2. According to Camden, King Henri stated this in the presence of the Duke of Osuna, who, in turn, repeated it to Camden.
3. In his play *Making History*, Brian Friel has O'Neill sum up his own position as follows: "I have spent my life attempting to do two things. I have attempted to hold together a harassed and a confused people by keeping them in touch with the life they knew before they were overrun. It wasn't a life of material ease but it had its assurances and it had its dignity. And I have done that by acknowledging and indeed honouring the rituals and ceremonies and beliefs these people have practised since before history, long before the God of Christianity was ever heard of. And at the same time I have tried to open these people to the strange new ways of Europe, to ease them into the new assessment of things, to nudge them towards changing evaluations and beliefs. Two pursuits that can scarcely be followed simultaneously. Two tasks that are almost self-cancelling. But they have got to be attempted because the formation of nations and civilizations is a willed act, not a product of fate or



- accident.” (1989: 40).
4. “You must understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate one must needs have recourse to the second. [...] So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he must learn from the fox and the lion; because the lion is defenceless against wolves. Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who act simply like lions are stupid. So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist.” (Machiavelli, 1961: 99-100).
  5. This point has, I believe, important implications for the study of Gaelic Ireland. Ireland was not alone in facing problems of adapting to social change, to new institutions, or to new powers and new social forms. Throughout Europe during the sixteenth (and much of the seventeenth) century there were widespread changes. These changes did not all follow a single path of ‘progress’ or ‘modernisation’. Rather they pulled in a multitude of directions, solving some problems but creating many more. It seems as if the whole meaning of ‘social change’ was being built and enmeshed in life itself, perhaps in a sense parallel and linked to the one that was happening with the fashioning of the self.
  6. Greenblatt shows that the verb *to fashion* gained in the sixteenth century a new meaning: “When in 1589 Spenser writes that the general intention and meaning that he has ‘fashioned’ in the *Faerie Queen* is ‘to fashion a gentleman’, [...], he is drawing on the special connotations for his period of the verb *fashion*, a word that does not occur at all in Chaucer’s poetry. As a term for the action or process of making, the word had been long in use, but it is in the sixteenth century that *fashion* seems to come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of a self.” (1980: 2; original italics).
  7. “The closer we approach figures and their works, the less they appear as convenient counters in a grand historical scheme. A series of shifting, unstable pressures is met with a wide range of discursive and behavioural responses, inventions, and counterpressures. There is no such thing as a single ‘history of the self’ in the sixteenth century, except as the product of our need to reduce the intricacies of complex and creative beings to safe and controllable order.” (Greenblatt, 1980: 8).
  8. Spenser labels O’Neill the “arch-rebell” (1596, 1633, 1997: 108) and recommends that he be executed: “*Irenius* He was (I assure you) the most outcast of all the O’Neales then, and lifted up by her Majesty out of the dust, to that he hath now wrought himselfe unto, and now hee playewth like the frozen snake, who being for compassion releived by the husbandman, soone after he was warme began to hisse, and threaten danger even to him and his. *Eudoxus*: He surely then deserveth the punishment of that snake, and should worthily be hewed to pieces.” (id: 110).
  9. Until recently (the 1990s in fact) it was widely believed that O’Neill had been raised in England by Sir Henry Sidney (the father of Philip). This ‘myth’, which entered the school curriculum, is at its most eloquent in O’Faolain (who, although not the originator, who certainly the great populariser of it): “This, then, was the world in which the boy grew away from his memories of Ireland - Shropshire’s ‘coloured counties’, the Kentish chalk-hills, the narrow streets of London, one of the most modest and serious homes in England, glimpses of the court, murmurings of that new learning, both colourful and sober, which was the blending of the Renaissance and the Reformation.” (1942: 42). By contrast, Morgan, who shows that O’Neill was actually raised in the Pale, by the Hovenden family, puts it somewhat less colourfully: “It cannot be stressed enough that Hugh O’Neill was not brought up in at the home of the Sidneys at Penshurst to adorn the court of Elizabeth. Far from being trained in the refined graces of the courtier, he probably received a basic education by attending grammar school or by getting a private tutor.” (1993a: 214).

## Works Cited

- Canny, Nicholas. 1970. “Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and the Changing Face of Gaelic Ulster.” in: *Studia Hibernica 10, 1970*.
- Ellis, Steven G. 1988. “‘Not Mere English’: The British Perspective 1400-1650.” in: *History Today 38, 1988*.
- Ellis, Steven G. 1996. “The Tudors and the Origins of the Modern Irish States: A Standing Army.” in: Bartlett, T. and Jeffery, K. (eds). *A Military History of Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Friel, Brian. 1989. *Making History*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 1980. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Greenblatt, Stephen. 1992. "The Cultivation of Anxiety: King Lear and his Heirs." in: Greenblatt, Stephen. 1992. *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Greene, Thomas. 1968. "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature." in: Demete, P., Greene, Thomas, Nelson, L. Jr. 1968. *The Disciplines of Criticism. Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation and History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kerney Walsh, Micheline. 1986, 1996. *Hugh O'Neill Prince of Ulster: An Exile of Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1961. *The Prince*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Morgan Hiram. 1995. "Faith and Fatherland in Sixteenth Century Ireland." in: *History Ireland* 3, 2, 1995.
- Morgan, Hiram. 1988. "The End of Gaelic Ulster: A Thematic Interpretation of Events Between 1534 and 1610." in: *Irish Historical Studies XXVI*, 1988.
- Morgan, Hiram. 1993a. "Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland." in: *The Historical Journal* 36, 1, 1993.
- Morgan, Hiram. 1993b. *Tyrone's Rebellion: The Outbreak of the Nine Years War in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and MacMillan.
- O'Faolain, Sean. 1942, 1992. *The Great O'Neill*. Cork: Mercier.
- Quinn, David Beers. 1966. *The Elizabethans and the Irish*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press/ The Folger Shakespeare Library.
- Spenser, Edmund. 1596, 1633, 1997. *A View of the State of Ireland*. Oxford: Blackwell.