CHAPTER 17

The wider world

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The answer to the question of where the 'wider world' begins is always subjective. People inhabit a variety of overlapping worlds, contoured by status and role as much as by geography. The horizons of a well-travelled English aristocrat, conscious of belonging to an international chivalric culture, of an educated cleric whose physical and mental habitat was western Christendom, or of a London merchant with contacts from Genoa to Reykjavik, were very different from those of lesser people. Yet it would be misleading to imagine that the awareness of any inhabitant of England stopped at the county or parish boundary. As the tens of thousands of mariners and military recruits show, wealth was not a necessary precondition of wider experience, and even the untravelled could absorb perceptions and prejudices. It was within this context that a sense of 'Englishness' was formulated.

England was, it is true, an agglomeration of overlapping 'countries': counties and broader regions. Contemporary comments convey images of particular areas and their inhabitants. A thirteenth-century satire, 'A Description of the Norfolk people', mocked the supposed naivety and crudity of its subjects, provoking a Norfolk man, John of St Omer, to respond with 'A Refutation of the Description of Norfolk'.[1] In the mid-fourteenth century, John de Grandisson, the bishop of Exeter, reaching for a handy cliché, portrayed Cornwall and Devon as at 'the end of the world'.[2] Writers frequently commented on the supposed barren wildness of the north. Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose fantastical *History of the Kings of Britain* was composed in the 1130s, set the tone by describing Britain north of the Humber as 'a land frightful to live in, more or less

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[1] T. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: language, literature and national identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 142–3.

[2] F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, ed., *Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (A.D. 1327–1369)*, (3 vols., 1894–99), i, pp. 97–8. I owe this reference to Professor R. A. Griffiths.

uninhabited'.[3] Nor were such views confined to inveterate southerners. They were shared by Ranulf Higden (d.1363), a Benedictine of Chester who compiled a widely read *Universal Chronicle*. Higden's comments are a warning that perceptions were as complicated at this period as at any other.

Any attempt to pinpoint the division between 'north' and 'south' soon exposes complex regional interlockings, and also the slipperiness of terminology. The crown used the Trent, the boundary between the ecclesiastical provinces of Canterbury and York, as a convenient line of administrative division. But, while rivers might mark organisational boundaries, they were centres of social and economic regions. The Tees, far from marking the southern limits of a distinctive 'north-east', was at the heart of a single world, embracing south Durham and north York-shire. Students at Oxford were divided into 'northerners' and 'southerners', but the 'northerners' included Scots, Welsh and Irish. The prominence of northern barons and knights in the opposition to King John led chroniclers to apply the label 'northerners' to the opposition movement as a whole. At the other end of the period, Richard III's affinity could be characterised as 'the northern men' by hostile southerners. But there was no impermeable north–south political division. The Percys, as well as lording it at Alnwick and in Yorkshire, held estates in Sussex. It was the same in the west, where the greater Welsh marcher lordships had always been held by English aristocrats.

The close integration of the outer parts of the kingdom confirms that England, while containing *pays* and regions, cannot be represented as divided into them. As Simon Walker discusses above, royal government penetrated the entire land. A common law of England was applied throughout the country, and law was perhaps the most significant marker of identity in the medieval world.[4] Taxation and military service drew men together, in complaint and comradeship. The 'countries' of particular lords formed zones of influence, but they were constantly reshaped by accidents of inheritance and politics, and were firmly caught within the patronage field of the crown. The boundaries of the kingdom were also fairly clear. The sea answered most questions. Before the outbreak of the Anglo-Scottish wars in 1296, the border with Scotland was certainly porous, with aristocrats holding lands in both kingdoms, and market

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[3] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 189.

[4] See pp. 92–5.

towns such as Selkirk or Morpeth, as well as the regional centres of Newcastle upon Tyne, Carlisle and Berwick-upon-Tweed (the richest borough of the Scottish crown), attracting people from both kingdoms. But the political frontier, agreed in 1237, was well understood. There remained a small 'debateable land' in the Eden Valley to the north of Carlisle, just as there were local disputes over where the competence of the sheriffs of Shropshire or Herefordshire ended and those of neighbouring marcher lords began. But such uncertainties are notable mainly for their triviality. There was, however, a significant complication, to which we shall return at the end of the chapter: not all those who regarded themselves as English lived within the kingdom itself.

An image of England in relation to its neighbours and in the world at large, which was familiar not just to the highly educated, is presented in *mappae mundi* (world maps).[5] These were based on outlines which went back to classical times. Many were produced in England. Henry III had world maps painted on the walls of his palaces at Westminster and Winchester, and the St Albans chronicler Matthew Paris (d. *c.* 1259), himself a cartographer, was aware of another at Waltham Abbey. The most famous survivor is the elaborate map dating from the reign of Edward I, now in the cathedral library at Hereford. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi* has the characteristic features of such maps. The world is shown as a disc. East is placed at the top, where Christ presides in majesty over creation; here too is paradise, shown as an island. Jerusalem lies at the centre of the earth, as befits the focal point of the Christian faith. The three known continents are shown. Asia occupies the upper half of the map; the Mediterranean divides the lower half into two quarters, with Europe on the left and Africa on the right. Around the perimeter lie the islands, with those of the Atlantic, including Britain and Ireland, at the bottom left, opposite Sri Lanka, which was well known by 1300 as a source of spices. In the remoter parts of Asia and Africa appear a selection of the strange beings that were believed, on the evidence of classical and early medieval writers, to inhabit the margins of the known world.

The same cosmographical scheme permeates the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. It was once believed that Mandeville was, as the preface claims, an English knight, and that his book was stimulated by journeys he made in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. However, the

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[5] The maps referred to in the succeeding paragraphs are conveniently reproduced in P. D. A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi. The Hereford World Map* (1996).

author's name, like the content of the book, is almost certainly fictional. *Mandeville* is based on familiar classical and medieval texts, among them the vast *Speculum Mundi* of Vincent of Beauvais (d.1264), though it does show some awareness of recent writings by western visitors to India and China. *Mandeville* may have been written in northern France or the Netherlands, but it was widely circulated in England. The first part deals with the Near East and the Holy Land, whose topography was familiar from classical works, the bible and pilgrim literature. The second part takes the reader to India and China ('Cathay'), Ethiopia and Turkey. The author then proceeds further into the world of the imagination, with Gog and Magog and the ten Jewish tribes believed to have been penned up by Alexander the Great beyond the Carpathian Mountains, the idealised kingdom of Prester John, and the 'Valley Perilous'. Here the normal rules of nature ceased to apply. The traveller encounters giants, troglodytes, cyclopses, headless races with eyes beneath their shoulders, and *sciapods* – 'whose foot is so large that it shadeth all the body against the sun when they wish to lie and rest themselves'.[6] Mandeville, nevertheless, made it clear to his readers that the earth was spherical and circumnavigable, a view pro-pounded by Bede (d.735) and more recently by the English polymath, Roger Bacon (d.1266): 'the land and sea are of a round shape and form, for the part of the heavens that is visible in one country is not visible in another country ... and if a man took passages by ships that would go to explore the world, men could go by ship all about the earth, both above and beneath'.[7]

The primary purpose of the world maps was spiritual and didactic; they delineated the divinely ordered cosmos. Nevertheless, however crudely, they provided an image of England's relationship to her immediate neighbours. The Hereford map has an elongated outline of England (labelled 'Britannia') and Wales, the latter almost separated from the former by rivers. Scotland is broader than England, and is shown as a separate island. Ireland lies to the west, parallel to England and Wales; it is even more elongated, extending south beyond Cornwall. Despite the errors and the lack of proportion and perspective, the map shows some awareness of contemporary realities. It shows Edward I's recently built Welsh castle-boroughs of Conway and Carnarvon, together with his city of Dublin. The Isle of Wight is shown midway between the English south coast and Aquitaine, which lie closer to each other than England does to

[6] P. Hamelius, ed., *Mandeville's Travels, from MS Cotton Titus C. XVI in the British Museum* (2 vols., EETS, os CLIII–IV, 1919–23), i, p.104.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 119–20.

Ireland: but this may reflect contemporary perceptions of the relationship between the English crown and its duchy in south-west France.

In the minds of its inhabitants England was clearly positioned historically as well as geographically. The antiquity and coherence of the kingdom made the English identity less problematical than that of many other peoples. At times of political turbulence, and in border regions in times of war, Englishmen could face awkward choices. But they were spared the continuing dilemmas over loyalty and identity that afflicted people in Aquitaine, or those who had to combine the roles of 'bons Bretons' and 'bons Francoys'.[8] Even so, the English identity was not without its historical ambiguities, paradoxes and tensions. Contemporaries knew that the inhabitants of England were of varied origin. A shared past had to be manufactured – consciously or not – out of awkward materials.

Already by 1200 the descendants of the Norman settlers had accommodated themselves within the history of England, a process eased by the eagerness of the Norman kings to present themselves as the legitimate inheritors of an ancient kingly tradition. Chroniclers such as William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, writing in the time of Henry I, seamlessly continued the story of English kings and people under God first set forth by Bede. Differences of opinion exist about the speed and thoroughness of this Norman appropriation of the English past. But it was well advanced by the time of the conquests and settlements in Ireland, which began in 1169–70. Those who participated in these ventures were normally described as 'English', both by themselves and by the Irish. Their Englishness was formed within the context of twelfth-century European cultural developments: one mark of a cultivated Englishman was knowledge of French, which was already by 1200 becoming a 'learned language' in England. The point is neatly made by a verse-chronicle celebrating the achievements of the conquerors in Ireland. The work is in French; its heroes are throughout described as *li engleis*.[9]

A second piece of inventiveness rebranded Arthur, and the 'British' history he symbolised, as 'English'. It is impossible to over-estimate the influence and popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History*. Geoffrey had told the story of the struggle of the Britons against the Anglo-Saxon invaders. The obvious resonances of his work for the Welsh, who looked

[8] M. Jones, '"Bons Bretons et Bons Francoys": the language and meaning of treason in later medieval France', *TRHS* 5th ser., 32 (1982), 91–112.
[9] G. H. Orpen, ed., *Song of Dermot and the Earl* (Oxford, 1892). The range of languages available to the English is discussed by Strohm, below, chapter 18.

forward to an apocalyptic revenge on the English, did not stop its appropriation in England itself, where the distinction between Britons and English was brazenly elided. Edward I and Edward III were Arthurian enthusiasts, for whom 'The Matter of Britain' provided a counterpoise to the Charlemagne legend which was used as an endorsement by the French monarchy. Arthur was adaptable to most situations. As well as ruling all Britain, according to Geoffrey his authority had extended over Ireland and into France as well. The power of these ideas is visible in the chronicle of Peter Langtoft, canon of Bridlington. Writing in French, at a time when Edward I appeared to have subdued the Scots as well as the Welsh, Langtoft portrayed him as out-doing Arthur:

> Now are the islanders all brought together
> and Albania is rejoined to its regalities
> of which King Edward is proclaimed lord.
> Cornwall and Wales are in his power
> and Ireland the great is at his will.
> There is no longer any king of all the countries
> except King Edward who has united them.
> Arthur had never so fully the allegiances.[10]

Like Edward's, Langtoft's horizons were not bounded by the British Isles. He presents the revived Arthurian overlordship of the islands as a preliminary to a reconquest of the Plantagenet lands in France, after which Edward would take the cross to the Holy Land.

The twin themes – of a Christian English people with a continuous history, who were the true inheritors of the Arthurian tradition into the bargain – were widely diffused in the later middle ages. Some scholars had reservations about Geoffrey's wilder imaginative flights; but the mutually contradictory nature of the narratives does not appear to have been a problem. They lay behind the two most influential historical works of the fourteenth century: Higden's *Polychronicon*, translated from Latin into English by John Trevisa around 1387, and the Brut chronicles, which exist in French and English versions. Some fifty manuscripts of the French Brut survive, and double that number of the English Brut. Both works were printed by Caxton in the 1480s. These narratives seeped into the national consciousness; they were familiar far beyond the circles where books were handled and read.

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[10] P. Coss, ed., *Thomas Wright's Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 308.

English history was not, however, a smooth, consensual construct. There was also a history of friction: the story of the English at odds with their rulers, who might still be presented as foreign. This interpretation is present in two of the earliest histories composed in English, the verse chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, written in the West Country in the time of Edward I, and the chronicle attributed to Robert Mannyng of Bourne in Lincolnshire, who completed a translation and continuation of Langtoft around 1338. Both fail to fold the Normans comfortably into the national story. Instead, picking up a line of interpretation pursued by the Anglo-Saxon chronicle until it petered out around 1150, they present them as interlopers, ancestors of an oppressive government and aristocracy, which burdens 'the Englyssh' with taxes and feudal dues.[11] These ideas, which find echoes in fourteenth-century poems protesting against royal exactions and abuses, were not peculiar to those who wrote in English. Langtoft himself was disillusioned by Edward I's later years. Higden deplores the adulteration of the English language by Norman-French influences. And the notion that the national stock was weakened through the foreign blood of the aristocracy was a commonplace found in the Brut and elsewhere. Such paradoxes cannot be resolved by imagining that the two interpretations played to different audiences. The same gentry, clergy and freemen who warmed to stories of national solidarity and a heroic past under heroic leaders were receptive to denunciations of a distant and exploitative political class. The political elites, depending on circumstances and context, could be viewed either as patriotic English leaders of an English people, or as outsiders, against whom 'the English' sharpened an identity of a more resentful sort.

The 'alien' motif appeared early in the domestic political context. Matthew Paris condemned Henry III for the favour shown to foreigners at the expense of native-born barons. He targeted the Savoyard relatives of Queen Eleanor of Provence who came to England after Henry's marriage in 1236, and the Poitevins, led by Henry's half-brothers, who made careers in England from the following decade. The political analysis is simplistic. In 1258 the Savoyards were mostly aligned with the English barons in opposition to the Poitevin group; and, of course, Simon de Montfort, the champion of the cause of the 'native-born', was himself a Frenchman. But these illogicalities do not detract from the underlying assumption that the kingdom belonged rightfully to those who were born

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[11] Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 91–103. For further discussion of Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng see pp. 457–9 below.

within it. This view even led Matthew to praise the hated Welsh when it suited his rhetorical purpose: he presents them as leaguing together to defend 'the liberty of their country and the laws of their ancestors', in stark contrast to the craven English, who bent their necks to a foreign yoke.[12] Similar views are expressed in the *Song of Lewes*, a poem written by a supporter of the baronial opposition, which condemns those who 'had studied to erase the name of the English', praises the de Montforts for 'condoling the lamentable lot of the English', and urges the king to favour the native-born and cease promoting greedy outsiders: 'let strangers arrive only to depart swiftly, like men of a moment, not permanent fixtures'.[13] The *Song* was, admittedly, written for an elite audience. But there is no doubt that the sentiments it expressed were widely shared.

Anti-alien sentiment recurred throughout the period, in various guises. The hatred of outsiders in authority encompassed the papacy and its representatives. Controversial issues included ecclesiastical taxation, the proceeds of which pope and king shared, and papal provision of clergy – especially foreign (usually Italian) clergy – to English benefices, which limited the opportunities of native clergy and cut across aristocratic rights of church patronage. The gradual deterioration of the English position in France from the 1430s intensified the general hostility towards aliens resident in England. In 1440 a tax of 16d was imposed on all alien households and 6d on individual foreigners. There was also recurrent animus against foreign merchants and financiers, who were thought to be damaging the interests of their English counterparts, and draining the country of bullion. The Italians were a well-established target, and the collapse of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance in 1435 intensified suspicions of the Flemings.

Comments on England's enemies are characteristically crude. Chief Justice Fortescue, writing in praise of the English system of government in the 1470s, was at the more sophisticated end of the spectrum of abuse when he wrote that 'it is not poverty which keeps Frenchmen from rising, but it is cowardice and lack of hearts and courage, which no Frenchman has like an Englishman'.[14] Hostility to the French and delight at English successes were fanned by royal propaganda, which found its way to the public by numerous routes. Edward I and Edward III informed their

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[12] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H. R. Luard (7 vols., RS, 1872–83), v, pp. 596–8, cf. pp. 616, 639–40.

[13] C. L. Kingsford, ed., *The Song of Lewes* (Oxford, 1890), lines 68–9, 281–2, 315–17.

[14] John Fortescue, *On the Laws and Governance of England*, ed. S. Lockwood (Cambridge, 1997), p. 111.

subjects that the French king had plans to conquer England and extirpate the English tongue. The chronicler Henry Knighton elaborated Edward III's claim in 1346 that an invasion plan had been discovered, saying that the French king's son would have given 'the lands which he won in England to the nobles who went with him, to each according to his degree, and in that way the lands of England would be permanently secured for France'.[15] There were stage-managed celebrations, notably in London upon Henry V's return from Agincourt, when the king was welcomed as 'another David coming from the slaying of Goliath (who might appropriately be represented by the arrogant French)'.[16]

From the point of view of its neighbours, later medieval England appeared a bellicose state – conquering the Welsh, attempting to subjugate the Scots and the Irish, and maintaining armies in France in pursuit of preposterous claims. It is easy to underestimate the extent to which the English felt threatened and surrounded. In 1216–17, during the civil war that marked the end of John's reign, the future Louis VIII brought an army to England in support of John's opponents, Alexander II occupied Carlisle and Llywelyn the Great, who had been in negotiations with France in 1212, took many castles in south Wales. During the Hundred Years War the fear of invasion and encirclement was well founded. The French attacked Southampton and the Isle of Wight in 1339. Scottish invasions of the north, as in 1346 and 1357, were timed to coincide with English campaigns on the continent. The coastal counties, like those of the north, were often in a state of military preparedness, which placed obligations on the population at large. Particularly in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the seas were infested by pirates associated with hostile powers. This gave the maintenance of an English presence on the other side of the Channel a defensive rationale with wide appeal. Mercantile interests in London, Southampton or Bristol, for whom the North Sea and Biscay routes were vital, could identify themselves readily, not just with the need to hold Calais, Brest or Bordeaux, but with the recovery of the duchy of Normandy by Henry V, and even with the possession by Henry VI of the crown of France itself.

Anti-French sentiment co-existed with a continuing sense of cultural unity between the elites of the two countries. To some extent the same could be said of Scotland. Jean Froissart (*c.* 1337–*c.* 1410), the Flemish chronicler who spent time at the French and English courts, recorded the

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[15] G. H. Martin, ed., *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337–1396* (Oxford, 1995), p. 59.
[16] F. Taylor and J. S. Roskell, eds., *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 108–11.

chivalric deeds of knights of all three kingdoms. David II (1329–71) and James I (1406–37) spent comfortable periods of captivity in England. The latter, author of *The Kingis Quair*, advanced the literary use of English in Scotland. The lack of a linguistic barrier at the border facilitated the sense of membership of a common cultural world, though the growing link between language and nationality could lead to questioning of Scotland's right to be a separate kingdom. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries substantial numbers of Scots lived, as traders and migrant labourers, not just in northern England, but down the entire east coast as far as London. They attracted hostility during times of military crisis, but often attempts to expose and indict them seem to have sprung from the resentment of their neighbours at the very ease with which 'enemies' could live and profit among them. False accusations that people were Scots (which would be considered libellous in York) confirm that there was little observable difference between the English and the sort of Scotsmen who settled across the border.

Matters were not, however, so straightforward as this suggests. Even in the twelfth century, English writers had contrasted the kings of Scots and their Anglo-French entourage with the savage troops from the outer provinces who committed atrocities during Scottish invasions of northern England. In the later fourteenth century Scottish writers themselves, notably the chronicler John Fordun, began to portray Scotland as culturally polarised between the Gaelic-speaking highlands, inhabited by 'wild Scots', and the more civilised, anglophone lowlands. This distinction was also made by men from south of the border. Froissart referred to 'a city called Aberdeen, on the borders of wildest Scotland'.[17] These finer distinctions may have been lost on less expert observers, who could imagine that the Scottish leaders all spoke Gaelic. In 1464 William Gregory, a London merchant, was content to remark of the Scots in general 'it is hard to put trust in them, for they are ever found full of guile and deceit'.[18]

If the subjects of the kings of Scots were believed to include barbarians, the Welsh and Irish were unambiguously stigmatised as such. By far the most influential writer on this subject was Gerald of Wales (*c.* 1146–*c.* 1223), whose works became the standard handbooks on these peoples. Gerald's outlook was not straightforward. He was one-quarter Welsh by blood, and

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[17] J. Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. G. Brereton (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 335.
[18] J. Gairdner, ed., *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century* (Camden Soc., 2nd ser. XVII, 1876), p. 224.

not slow to play up his connections with Welsh royalty. But essentially he wrote as an outsider, portraying exotic and barbarous peoples for a metropolitan audience:

while man usually progresses from the woods to the fields, and from the fields to settlements and communities of citizens, this people [the Irish] despises work on the land, has little use for the money-making of towns, contemns the rights and privileges of citizenship, and desires neither to abandon, nor lose respect for, the life which it has been accustomed to lead in the woods and countryside.[19]

The Welsh and Irish lacked stable central authorities, were given to internecine wars and inheritance disputes, were brave but lacked staying power in battle, were unreliable in their dealings and ignorant of chivalric conventions. While they were hospitable, 'their external characteristics of beard and dress, and internal cultivation of the mind, are so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture'.[20] These traits were seen as character flaws: their economic arrangements amounted to 'idleness', their unstable politics to 'oath-breaking', 'treachery' and 'fickleness' (*levitas*). Above all, as a Paris-educated religious reformer, Gerald disapproved of married clergy, hereditary benefices and the lax marriage arrangements of the population, which failed to draw the proper line between legitimate children and bastards. They were, in short, 'a filthy people, wallowing in vice'.[21] Ireland's position on the edges of the known world also predisposed Gerald to locate strange beings there – including some who were half-man, half-ox, as a result of the habit of sexual congress with cows.

The influence of Gerald's works on later commentators was pervasive. Higden's characterisation of Ireland and its human and animal inhabitants was lifted almost entirely from Gerald, whose views thereby attained wider currency than they might otherwise have done. During the thirteenth century these assumptions of Welsh and Irish barbarity, unreliability and lack of morality had passed from academic to political discourse. The codification of English law enshrined a set of norms to which the Celtic peoples failed to conform. In 1277 Edward I, having received petitions from some Irish bishops seeking the extension of English law to the Irish, condemned Irish laws as 'detestable to God, and

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[19] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. J. J. O'Meara (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 100–1.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 101. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

so contrary to all law that they ought not to be deemed laws'.[22] By 1284, in the wake of the conquest of north Wales, the king and his advisers were busy extirpating the unacceptable features of Welsh law and replacing them with enlightened English practices, such as the law of felony and associated capital punishment. Similar opinions and stereotypes constantly recur. As R. R. Davies said, 'the image of the Welsh had taken a firm shape, so that when the master-builders of Beaumaris castle remarked in a letter in 1296 to Edward I that "as you will know, Welshmen are Welshmen", there was no need to elaborate the point. The image did the rest'.[23] In 1351 the king's council in Ireland considered that settlers who lived in frontier areas were beset by the 'fickleness [*levitas*] of an unconquered people'.[24] In 1419 the Yorkshire Franciscan Nicholas Warter, who had been provided to the Ulster bishopric of Dromore by Pope Martin V, immediately petitioned successfully to be excused residence because of the insuperable difficulties of ministering 'among the native Irish [*meros Ybernicos*]'.[25]

Thus presented, it might seem that the outlook of the English was formed by a mixture of bad history, xenophobic propaganda, resentment and crude ethnic prejudice. When attention shifts from what some men wrote to what many people did, a more complex picture emerges. In 1270 the future Edward I and his brother Edmund of Lancaster set out on a crusade which was to keep Edward abroad, in France, Italy, Cyprus and the Holy Land itself, until 1274. Accompanying the expedition were some 300 members of the English elite, about half of them knights, whose landed interests stretched into every county of the kingdom. These men did not travel alone; the numbers on the move were much increased by the presence of their households and servants. Occasionally the results could be startling. Hamo Lestrange, from a Shropshire baronial family, married the heiress of the lordship of Beirut, though he survived only until 1273 to pursue his Levantine ambitions. Another figure who set out with Edward better exemplifies the range of experiences that could be acquired by a well-born Englishman. Thomas de Clare (d.1287) was a younger brother of the earl of Gloucester. After some education at Oxford, he did well out of the spoils of the Barons' War of 1263–5. He was with Edward at Paris in 1269, during the preparations for the

[22] H. S. Sweetman, ed., *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland* (5 vols., 1875–86), ii, no. 1408.
[23] R. R. Davies, 'Buchedd a Moes y Cymry', *Welsh History Review*, 12 (1984), 179.
[24] R. Frame, 'Thomas Rokeby, Sheriff of Yorkshire, Justiciar of Ireland', *Peritia*, 10 (1996), 284.
[25] M. Robson, 'Nicholas Warter, Franciscan bishop of Dromore, c.1372–1448', *Collectanea Hibernica*, 42 (2000), 24.

expedition. After he returned in 1272, he was used as a diplomat in Gascony and in dealings with the French court. The last phase of his life was focused on Ireland, where the earls of Gloucester were lords of Kilkenny. He received a speculative grant of lands and rights beyond the Shannon, in Thomond. His last years were spent fighting, castle-building and honing his diplomatic skills among the O'Briens and others whom he sought to make tributary.

Like so many rulers of the period, Edward I had a genuine enthusiasm for the crusade, but European politics had a habit of getting in the way. Even so, his reign was punctuated by communications with distant places. While in Palestine in 1271, he had sent envoys to the Mongol khan in the hope of forging an alliance against Islam. After his return to the west, spasmodic contacts were maintained, partly through the English Dominican David of Ashby, author of *The Deeds of the Tartars* (as westerners called the Mongols), who had spent time at the Mongol court. Some fifteen embassies from the east made contact with the English court during Edward's reign, six from the Mongol rulers themselves. In 1291, just before news arrived of the fall of Acre, which was to end the possibility of crusading in the Holy Land itself, Geoffrey of Langley, a knight who had been on the 1270 crusade, went on a crusading journey which took him to Trebizond. During it he sent messengers to the khan at Tabriz.

Despite the collapse of the crusader states, the area that was to be the subject of the first part of Mandeville's *Travels* remained open. There were new possibilities too for those who sought adventure and spiritual merit. Edward I's great-nephew, Henry of Grosmont, duke of Lancaster (d.1361), participated in campaigns in southern Spain; he was present at the siege of Algeçiras and on a naval expedition against the Moorish town of Ceuta in North Africa. In 1351–2 he followed fashion by organising an expedition in support of the Teutonic Order against the pagans on the frontiers of northern Germany, visiting Stettin and possibly reaching Estonia and Lithuania. After this he seems to have visited Cyprus and Rhodes. His grandson, the future Henry IV, followed in his footsteps. In 1390 Henry sailed from Boston in Lincolnshire to eastern Germany, landing near Danzig, from where he rode through Brandenburg to Vilna on the River Neva. A second expedition in 1392 was followed by an excursion through Prague, Vienna and Venice to Rhodes and Jerusalem; his return journey took him to Cyprus, Milan and Paris.

English people also travelled abroad as pilgrims. In the early fifteenth century the *Life* of Margery Kempe, the Norfolk mystic, shows her covering startling amounts of ground on journeys driven by religious

fervour. The places she visited included Danzig, Aachen, Santiago de Compostela, Constance, Venice, Assisi, Rome, Jerusalem, Jericho and Bethlehem. Few others were so extensively travelled, but pilgrim routes were well worn. Froissart tells of two English knights who underwent the rigours of the journey to St Patrick's Purgatory, a cavern at Lough Derg in Fermanagh.[26] More familiar to English men and women was the taxing journey across southern France and northern Spain to the shrine of St James at Compostela. Many also visited Rome, whether on pilgrimage or on business at the papal curia. Throughout the period, but particularly from the 1290s to the 1450s, hundreds of thousands of Englishmen soldiered on the continent; at least as many more were engaged in transporting them and in attending in non-combatant roles. The largest expedition was probably that for the Crécy–Calais campaign of 1346–7, when close on 30,000 troops were involved. In between the major campaigns there were dozens of smaller expeditions. Nor were military enterprises confined to the nearer continent. The Black Prince's 1355–6 expedition to Gascony saw English and Gascon forces penetrate deep into Languedoc, bypassing Toulouse, sacking Carcassonne and occupying the *bourg* of Nîmes. During the following decades, the prince and his brother John of Gaunt campaigned extensively in Spain. Success could lead to troops assuming a garrison role which kept them in France for long periods. Some were given land there. Henry V's conquest of Normandy turned Caen in particular into a veritable English town.

The relationship between the English and the outside world was complicated by the fact that not all English people lived within England itself. The settlement in Normandy, where grants were made on condition that they could be sold on only to other Englishmen, was merely the last and most temporary creation of an English community rooted elsewhere. English settlers had encroached on the borders of Wales since the Anglo-Saxon period. The conquests of marcher lords after 1066 had scattered English-speaking garrisons, burgesses, peasants and churchmen from Flint and Montgomery to Glamorgan, Gower and Pembrokeshire. A further wave of settlement followed Edward I's conquest of north Wales, symbolised by plantation boroughs such as Denbigh, Ruthin and Carnarvon. Self-interest, displayed in defence of their legal privileges, together with periodic Welsh uprisings, preserved the sense of ethnic difference, despite some intermarriage and considerable cultural exchange.

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[26] Froissart, *Chronicles*, pp. 405–6.

The connection of Welsh outposts of Englishness with the metropolis remained close and relatively unproblematical. Where the English were not the direct subjects of the prince of Wales (or, in the absence of a prince, of the king), they were subjects of marcher lords, themselves English nobles. From Bristol and Hereford well-ridden roads led to centres of colonial administration such as Brecon, Monmouth, Cardiff and Carmarthen. English magnates came frequently to their Welsh lordships on hunting expeditions, or to receive fealties and gifts, as Roger Mortimer, fourth earl of March did upon coming of age in 1393. Cattle were driven to the households of marcher lords in midland and eastern England; salmon caught in the River Usk were served at the table of Elizabeth de Clare in Suffolk. Except in the period of Owain Glyn Dŵr's rising, Wales functioned as a familiar satellite to the English world. Its management at local level depended heavily on Welshmen who ran their own communities; but they did so under the supervision of English officials, and the network of colonial centres in the lowlands formed a bridge to the metropolis.

The relationship with Ireland was more difficult. The south and east of the country was part of the English world, and anything but cut off. The eastern ports from Dundalk and Drogheda to Dublin and beyond were in constant communication with Chester. Wexford, Waterford, Cork and other south-coast towns were linked to Bristol, Bridgwater and Southampton. All were ruled by English-speaking elites, with a sense of distinctness from the Irish, which showed itself in Waterford by-laws forbidding the use of the Gaelic language. The coastal lowlands and river valleys of the same regions contained small towns and manorial villages dominated by elites whose origins lay outside Ireland. Stretching across and beyond these zones of heavy settlement was a society of settler lords and gentry, holding their lands by English law (a privilege that was denied to their Irish neighbours), conscious of their English descent, and describing themselves as English.

People came and went between the two islands. Into Ireland sailed governors and other officials from England with substantial retinues, agents of English aristocrats and religious houses that held Irish lands, clergy taking up Irish benefices, together, of course, with merchants and mariners from English ports. Although the deterioration of security in Ireland, together with adverse economic conditions, led some English landowners to sell up in the later fourteenth century, not all did so. Bath Abbey was still managing property in Waterford in the late fifteenth century. Some important interests remained alive and even expanded,

notably those of the Mortimer and Talbot families. It remained possible for English newcomers to establish themselves. In the fourteenth century the Prestons, a merchant dynasty from Lancashire, grew rich on the commissariat trade promoted by the Scottish wars. Members of the family entered the Irish judiciary and made advantageous marriages; the creation of the viscountcy of Gormanston for Sir Robert Preston in 1478 completed their success. For Michael Tregory, archbishop of Dublin from 1449, who had been rector of the university founded in Caen under Henry VI, English Ireland proved an alternative to the collapsing English Normandy.

From the later fourteenth century there was movement in the opposite direction as traders, professional men, artisans and rural labourers migrated from the beleaguered colony to England. Measures to force the Irish-born to return to Ireland at the time of Richard II's 1394 Irish expedition produced more than 500 recorded exemptions, and these do not reveal migrants at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. As with the Scots, there is little to suggest that there were cultural barriers to assimilation. Men born in Ireland could rise high. John Toky or Bannebury, originally from Limerick, was sheriff and mayor of Bristol during the 1390s; in the 1420s William Overy from Ireland was mayor and MP for Southampton.

Despite these exchanges of people, there were tensions and uncertainties in both countries over the status and national identity of the settlers. In what sense were they English? They were undoubtedly subjects of the king, and English in their own estimation. In the fourteenth century clashes between the existing establishment in Dublin and the circles of governors newly arrived from England were debated in terms of identity and allegiance. In 1341 the nobles and higher clergy, with representatives of the Irish shires and royal boroughs, angered by what they saw as maltreatment by officials from England, drew Edward III's attention to the loyalty of his 'English liege people of Ireland'.[27] Later, such jealousies led to ordinances prohibiting quarrels between 'the English born in Ireland' and 'the English born in England', and insisting on what might today be described as parity of esteem.[28] The anxieties of a colonial population, whose privileges depended on differentiation from the native population and identification with the metropolis, are also visible in the 1366 Statutes of Kilkenny, which sought to

[27] H. F. Berry, ed., *Statutes of Ireland, John–Henry V* (Dublin, 1907), pp. 342–3.
[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 417 (1357), 436–7 (1366).

prevent intermarriage and cultural exchange with the Irish. Officials from England and the inhabitants of the core settled areas were agreed that such interactions undermined the English identity and the loyalty of those who lived on the frontiers of the colony.

That Ireland stretched the boundaries of Englishness wider than some found comfortable is also apparent from reactions in England to residents from Ireland. Orders concerning the Irish in England often made no explicit distinction between the 'two nations' in Ireland, a distinction that was fundamental to life within the colony itself. From the 1420s the Irish-born – in this case almost by definition men of English descent and status, since only they were entitled to use English law – suffered a period of exclusion from the Inns of Court. In 1440 they were briefly swept up in the anti-alien feelings that led to the imposition of taxation on foreigners. This may have been an administrative error made in a period of financial difficulty rather than the product of considered hostility. But it is significant that the mistake could be made, and that it prompted the earl of Ormond, the settler lord with the best connections in England, to petition in favour of 'the English lieges'. The loss of most of the French lands by 1453, together with the shrinkage of the colony in Ireland, may have contributed to the ending of some of these ambiguities. By the 1480s the (loyal) inhabitants of all the diminished territories outside England were explicitly defined as 'denizens' for English purposes.

Thus the line between English and non-English was not absolutely clear-cut. Even so, there is something to be said for the view that the critical divide lay not so much between England and its insular neighbours as between the extended English world and the uncivilised zones that lay beyond: the Scottish highlands and islands, native Wales and Gaelic Ireland. As we have seen, outsiders were aware of a difference between 'wild Scots' and lowlanders. The chronicler Adam of Usk, a Welshman variously in the service of the Mortimers, the crown and the papacy, drew a sharp distinction between his own anglicised region of south-east Wales and the north. In 1403 he describes how Owain Glyn Dŵr 'emerged with his manikins from the caves and the woods ... [and] taking enormous quantities of booty with him, he returned to the safety of Snowdonia in the north of Wales, the source of all the evils in Wales, while the people silently cursed his flagrant barbarities'.[29] Despite the looseness of labelling in England, descriptions of the 'barbarity' of the Irish took for granted the (less interesting) fact that there were English zones in the island. Thomas

[29] C. Given-Wilson, ed., *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk* (Oxford, 1997), p. 173.

Walsingham, the St Albans chronicler, reporting the repatriation measure of 1394, stated that 'such a multitude had come to England in the hope of gain, that [Ireland] was almost emptied of cultivators and defenders, through which the native Irish, enemies of the English, had almost destroyed the part of the island which obeyed the king of England, and had subjected it to their abominable rule'.[30]

Yet just as some 'English' were more unambiguously English than others, the supposedly barbarous outbacks were far from impenetrable to Englishmen, and perhaps not so exotic as journalistic observers suggested. Owain Glyn Dŵr himself had served on Richard II's 1385 campaign against the Scots, joined the household of the earl of Arundel, and possibly even served a period of legal apprenticeship in the courts at Westminster. He followed in an honourable tradition. In Edward II's time Sir Gruffudd Llwyd and Sir Rhys ap Gruffudd, leaders of the Welsh of north Wales, had been closely attached to the royal court. John Rous (d.1491), the Warwickshire antiquary, saw nothing odd about travelling to Anglesey in order to consult chronicles.

Ireland too constantly belies the image of separate worlds. John Colton, the Norfolk-born archbishop of Armagh (1383–1404), who reached the archbishopric after periods spent as head of Gonville Hall in Cambridge and in high posts in the Dublin administration, ruled a diocese and province that lay mostly 'among the Irish'. Like his predecessors and successors, he normally resided in the English enclaves in counties Louth and Meath. Armagh itself was dominated by the Gaelic Irish dean and chapter, and provincial councils were normally held, not there, but at the church of St Peter at Drogheda. Yet this is not the whole story. Colton visited Armagh, and clergy from the Irish districts attended councils at Drogheda. He had close dealings with the Gaelic lords of Ulster, counselling them on their submissions to Richard II in 1395. In 1397 he journeyed north to exercise his jurisdiction during a vacancy in the bishopric of Derry. We glimpse him, amid a clerical and lay entourage of mixed origin, receiving the renders and hospitality of the erenaghs, heads of the hereditary ecclesiastical families, deep in the Gaelic interior. At sites near Derry, such as 'the vill of Dermot O'Cahan', he heard marital cases involving native dynasties whose power lay on this remote Atlantic coast.[31]

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[30] H. T. Riley, ed., *Chronica Monasterii S. Albani Johannis de Trokelowe et Henrici de Blaneforde* (RS, XXVIII, 1866), p. 171.
[31] W. Reeves, ed., *Acts of Archbishop Colton in his Metropolitan Visitation of the Diocese of Derry, 1397* (Dublin, 1850), pp. 35–8.

This vignette may serve as a final illustration of the gulf that lies between the images presented in descriptive sources and practical relationships, between words and deeds. The English had a clear view of their place in space and time, and of their identity as a people. They equipped their neighbours, whom they often resented or feared, with fixed characteristics, verging upon caricature. At the same time, some English lived permanently intermingled with outsiders, and many spent time, successfully enough, in distant places. The wider scenes on which they commented, and which many experienced in person, were for the most part set within a common west European home.