

## **Towards a parallel-text electronic edition of the 1577 and 1587 editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*: preliminary findings from the Holinshed Project**

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The goal of the Oxford Holinshed Project is a scholarly edition of the *Chronicles* to be edited by an interdisciplinary team and published both in print and online in fifteen volumes by Oxford University Press. The fulfilment of that goal is some way off at present, but by way of a pilot the project is seeking to produce a basic parallel text electronic edition to compare the two versions of 1577 and 1587, which will be an essential tool for the editors of the full edition. A project website has been established, which already contains a comprehensive Holinshed bibliography, a guide to the underlying sources, and some sample texts from the two editions. It is hoped to mount the two texts early in 2009.

This paper looks at the differences between the two editions. It begins with a very brief overview of the story of how the *Chronicles* came about, and of the various people involved in their compilation. The second half, which reflects the work Dr Summerson has been involved in, provides a more detailed account of what he has uncovered about the differences between the two editions.

The making of the *Chronicles* is a story perhaps with some salutary lessons for big academic projects. The work we know of as Holinshed's *Chronicles* originated as the brainchild of Reynier Wolfe, immigrant printer of Latin, Greek and Hebrew books to Edward VI and Elizabeth I, and owner of the largest bookshop frontage in St Paul's churchyard, the Sign of the Brazen Serpent.<sup>1</sup> His aim was a 'uniuersal Cosmographie of

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<sup>1</sup> P. W. M. Blayney, *The Bookshops in Paul's Cross Churchyard* (London, 1990), pp. 18-32.

the whole world, and therewith also certaine particular histories of euerie known nation' (1577, Vol.I, ¶v).<sup>2</sup> Raphael Holinshed was employed as his assistant, working on the project for twenty-five years, but although allegedly it 'wanted little in accomplishment', it was still incomplete at Wolfe's death in 1573. Wolfe's widow Joan assured Holinshed the 'benefit, profit and commoditie' promised by her husband 'concerning the translating and prynting of a certaine Crownacle', and the printers who succeeded to Wolfe's business continued to support the project.<sup>3</sup> But the ambitious scope of Wolfe's original vision had to be curtailed. What appeared from Henry Bynneman's press in 1577 was not a universal history, but the histories and geographical descriptions of England, Scotland and Ireland. Although illustrated with woodcuts, the work did not include the maps that Wolfe had envisaged. And its appearance was dependent on the recruitment at the eleventh hour of some additional assistants. William Harrison undertook the writing of the Description of Britain at short notice, while Richard Stanihurst reworked Edmund Campion's History of Ireland and added a Description. Harrison and Stanihurst came from opposite poles of the religious spectrum. Harrison, the rector of Radwinter in Essex stood on the radical wing of the Church of England, while Stanihurst was a recusant client of the Kildares and went into exile around 1580.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of its size – 2835 folio pages in two volumes - and expense – 20s unbound, 26s bound – the *Chronicles* were a sufficient commercial success for a second edition to be

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<sup>2</sup> References to the successive editions of the *Chronicles* are given in this form, with edition year, followed by reference to volume and pagination.

<sup>3</sup> H. R. Plomer, *Abstracts from Wills of English Printers and Stationers, from 1492 to 1630* (London, 1903), pp.19-23.

<sup>4</sup> For the printing history see C.S. Clegg and R. McLeod (eds.), *The Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment of Blessed Queen Elizabeth. A Facsimile from Holinshed's Chronicles (1587)* (San Marino, CA, 2005), pp. 2-3. For the contributors, see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 3-31; F.M. Heal, 'The Holinshed editors: religious attitudes and their consequences' unpublished paper on The Holinshed Project website: <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/papers.shtml>; G.J.R. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1987); Colm Lennon, *Richard Stanihurst the Dubliner 1547-1618* (Blackrock, co. Dublin, 1981).

envisaged. Henry Bynneman's patent for the printing of dictionaries and *Chronicles* had passed to Henry Denham and Ralph Newbery. Working in conjunction with the survivors of the original 1577 publishing syndicate, they entered a licence to print the *Chronicles* in the Stationers' Register in October 1584. Since 1581 Denham, who owned one of the larger London printing establishments with four presses, had been exclusively employing the Cambridge educated committed protestant Abraham Fleming as a learned corrector, and it was to Fleming that the work of coordinating the editorial work fell.<sup>5</sup> A new team was assembled to revise and extend the *Chronicles*, the new edition appearing in 1587. Fleming himself supplied the continuation history of England, drawing substantially on the work of the more conservative John Stow whose writings and manuscript collections are repeatedly referenced in the marginal annotations.<sup>6</sup> John Hooker, chamberlain of Exeter, and agent in Ireland for Sir Peter Carew, took on the Irish section, recasting it in a 'new English' fashion and demonising Stanihurst's Kildare patrons.<sup>7</sup> Francis Thynne, a gentleman of probably Kentish origins, was responsible for the revision of the Scottish section, as well as supplying some of the additions to the Elizabethan sections, including

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<sup>5</sup> *Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment*, pp. 3-4; C.S. Clegg, 'Fleming, Abraham (c.1552–1607)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9693>, accessed 4 Sept 2008]; E.S. Donno, 'Abraham Fleming: a learned corrector in 1586-7', *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), pp. 200-11.

<sup>6</sup> I.W. Archer, 'John Stow, citizen and historian', in ed. I. Gadd & A. Gillespie, *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past* (2004), pp. 20-23; P. Collinson, 'John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism', in ed. J. Merritt, *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype 1598-1720* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 42-3; B.L. Beer, *Tudor England Observed: the World of John Stow* (1998).

<sup>7</sup> S. Mendyk, 'Hooker, John (c.1527–1601)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., May 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13695>, accessed 4 Sept 2008]; V.F. Snow, *Parliament in Elizabethan England: John Hooker's 'Order and Usage'* (London, 1977).

the account of the Cobhams and the list of the archbishops of Canterbury.<sup>8</sup> Harrison undertook the revision of his Description.

The only full edition of the *Chronicles* is that of Sir Henry Ellis published in six volumes in 1807-8. Ellis, thirty years old in 1807, and recently appointed assistant keeper of books at the British Museum was a man of 'Pickwickian bonhomie' but extraordinary industriousness, turning out editions of Hall in 1809, Fabyan in 1811, and Hardyng in 1812, while at the same time working on the British Museum catalogue of printed books.<sup>9</sup> His edition seems to be a pretty accurate rendering of the 1587 version, but has no scholarly apparatus. Academic attention has tended to focus on the 1587 edition because it was the one used by Shakespeare, and most people are probably introduced to Holinshed through the goblets of 1587 reproduced at the back of various editions of Shakespeare's plays. The 1587 edition has also claimed a great deal of scholarly attention because of the censorship to which it was subjected, and the various stages and priorities have been brilliantly dissected in a facsimile edition of the Elizabethan portions of the 1587 edition, the so-called 'Peaceable and Prosperous Regiment of Blessed Queen Elizabeth' edited by Cyndia Clegg and Randall McLeod, which reproduces Fleming's proof sheets (a remarkable survival), and various cancelled pages surviving in the earliest copies.

But the attention given to 1587 means that the variations between the two editions and therefore the process of composition are not properly understood. Indeed some treatments have been rather cavalier. So, Georges Edelen, editing Harrison's Description of England for the Folger Library, failed to distinguish between the 1577 and 1587 editions, so that

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<sup>8</sup> L.A. Knafla, 'Thynne, Francis (1545?-1608)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27420>, accessed 4 Sept 2008]

<sup>9</sup> *Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Henry Ellis, 6 vols. (London, 1807-8); M. Borrie, 'Ellis, Sir Henry (1777-1869)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2005 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8696>, accessed 4 Sept 2008]

we lose a sense, for example, of the degree to which Harrison had radically revised his chapter on the state of the church of England.<sup>10</sup> It is true that some scholars have been sensitive to variations. It is one of the themes of Annabel Patterson's books *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, and Richard McCabe has commented interestingly on the effects of the different ideological registers of Stanihurst and Hooker on the History of Ireland.<sup>11</sup> But Patterson's account is vitiated by her preoccupation with the supposed 'liberalism' she sees as embodied in the text's polyvocality, and we lack any systematic treatment of the relationship between the two editions. This will be addressed by our parallel text version. By way of preparation, Dr Summerson has been working through the two editions, making manual comparisons, and he is in a position to give a preliminary overview of the process of revision.

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In February 1755, as he approached the end of work on his *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson described himself as having 'wandered...in this vast sea of words.' Anyone who has engaged with the two editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, and their roughly five and half million words, will know exactly how he felt. Those words are not, of course, the same in both editions, and the purpose of this paper is to shed some light on their differences. The most obvious difference is one of length, the extra million words added to the 1587 edition, but there were changes, too, in arrangement and presentation as well as in historiographical content. Externally and internally, the two editions *look* different. Full-sized folios replaced the small folios of 1577. The typeface was greatly improved, inverted commas were introduced, and new fonts made it possible to print passages in Greek (I have noticed only such in 1577, perhaps supplied by a woodcut – **1577**, Vol. I, Description of Irelande, fol.6r) and also Anglo-Saxon (**1587**, Vol. IV, pp. 668-9, 682).

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<sup>10</sup> G. Edelen (ed.), *The Description of England. The classic contemporary account of Tudor social life* (Washington D.C., 1968). Cf. Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, pp. 60-4.

<sup>11</sup> R.A. McCabe, 'Making history: Holinshed's Irish Chronicles', in D.J. Baker and W. Maley (eds.), *British Identities in English Literature* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 51-67.

The crude woodcuts which had acted as markers, as well as illustrations, in the first edition, disappeared, and elegant initial letters replaced their function, supplemented, in the pre-1066 history of England, by increasingly elaborate summaries at the beginning of each chapter. Elaborate, and it must be said, often very lively, with an almost tabloid vividness – they deserve more attention than they have hitherto received. Here, for instance, is the prelude to Book VI chapter 25 describing the aftermath of King Edgar’s death: ‘Contention among the peeres and states about succession to the crowne, the moonkes removed and the canons and secular priests restored by Alfer duke of Mercia and his adherents, a blasing starre with the events insuing the same, the rood of Winchester speaketh, a prettie shift of moonks to defeat the priests of their possessions, the controversie betweene the moonks and priests ended by a miracle of archbishop Dunstane, great hope that Edward would tread his fathers steps, the reverent love he bare his stepmother queene Alfred and hir sonne Egelred, hir divelish purpose to murther Edward hir stepsonne accomplished, his obscure funerall in respect of pompe, but famous by meanes of miracles wrought by and about his sepulture, queene Alfred repenting hir of the said prepensed murther, dooth penance, and imploieth hir substance in good woorkes as satisfactorie for hir sinnes, king Edwards bodie removed, and solemnlie buried by Alfer duke of Mercia, who was eaten up with lice for being against the said Edwards advancement to the crowne, queene Alfreds offense by no meanes excusable.’ (1587, Vol. I, p. 699)

It seems a pity that such résumés disappear after the Norman Conquest. However, there were other ways of commenting on the existing text, and one of them was the marginal note, which was freely used for the purpose. The 1577 text was well equipped in this respect, but the 1587 edition both amplified existing comments and added new ones. Thus 1587’s account of Henry II’s submission to the pope following Becket’s murder, previously unglossed, was now graced with the comment ‘O vile subiection unbeseeing to a king!’ (1587, Vol. II, p. 143). Anti-Romanism was a factor behind several additions, but it was not the only one. Sir John Cheke’s tract *The hurt of sedition*, a response to the risings of 1549, was included complete in the 1577 Holinshed, but without any sort of annotation. In 1587 it was provided with a complete set of marginalia, with observations

like `Whie all must not looke to beare like rule', `The unconscionable wishing of equalitie how hurtfull', and `Reformation intended by rebels, like sores cured by ill surgions', all urging the wickedness of insurrection and the subject's duty of obedience (1587, Vol. III, pp. 989, 990, 1004).

Cheke's treatise provides an example of another kind of revision to which the 1577 edition was subjected. In the first edition of Holinshed it was printed in great slabs of text, with paragraph breaks few and far between. In 1587 this was changed, with Cheke's prose being divided up into more or less regular paragraphs, and becoming much easier to navigate as a result. Such a change was characteristic of the 1587 edition as a whole. The first edition had followed no discernible policy with regard to its own subdivisions, the text could be organised into huge paragraphs that in some cases extended over several pages, or presented in a series of very short paragraphs composed of very few sentences. The second edition clearly aimed to avoid both extremes, and achieved a fair level of consistency in its paragraph lengths, although there were sometimes losses to set against the gains. Abraham Fleming, the editor responsible occasionally gave appearances precedence over historical content, by breaking up large paragraphs at points that disrupt the narrative, while the consolidation of small ones could compromise their literary flavour. At the end of the first edition's account of the 1560 siege of Leith, Holinshed explained that he had given it extended treatment partly because `there came to my hands certeine notes of one or two persons that were there present, and for helpe of their owne memories wrote the same...'. (1577, Vol. II, Historie of Englande, p. 813) This probably explains why his account of events, in a succession of short paragraphs, has a journal-like immediacy, which is largely lost following its subsequent recasting into much longer paragraphs.

The additions to the text of the *Chronicles* constitute the most obvious difference between the two editions, but before I discuss them I ought to say something about omissions. By that I do not mean the government censorship to which the *Chronicles* were subjected in both 1577 and 1587, particularly in the latter year, but rather the deletion of passages of 1577 text by what I take to have been editorial decision. Such

excisions are rare but interesting. Some may have been made for religious purposes, for instance the dropping of two passages in the Scottish history describing the piety of King David I, one of them 'a fond forged tale' about David's miraculous escape from a deer he was hunting, the other an extended discussion of the effects of his generosity to the church. (1577, Vol. I, *Historie of Scotlande*, pp. 263-5) A series of hostile comments on the effects of the Norman Conquest, among them the allegation that the incomers' laws had been preserved, despite numerous promises to abolish them, because 'they make more to the Princes behoofe, than to the commoditie of the people...', and a description of the English as having been 'burthened, after the maner of the bondage which the children of Israell sometime suffered in Egypt', may have been removed as prejudicial to current political and social sensitivities. (1577, Vol. II, *Historie of Englande*, pp. 304, 313) Historical debate, too, may have had an effect, as in the cuts made to the story of Brutus's journey to Albion from his Trojan homeland. (1577, Vol. I, *Historie of Englande*, pp. 9-10, 13) By 1587 the whole story of Brutus was coming under increasingly heavy pressure, and although the second edition of Holinshed clung on to the traditional British History, thereby perpetuating several hundred years of narrative as a nightmare of confusion, its makers may well have felt themselves to be on the defensive, and acted thus in the spirit of defenders of a beleaguered fortress who surrender some of its outworks to avoid giving unnecessary hostages to fortune.

Neither the cuts demanded by government officials nor those made by the editors were on such a scale as to have much effect on the overall length on the 1587 edition of the *Chronicles*. That cannot be said of the additions that were made. Outstanding among these are the updatings of the three national histories, taking them up to the end of 1586. In the early-nineteenth-century reprint of the second edition these constitute an extra 852 pages of text, very roughly 600,000 words. But for present purposes I shall concentrate on the additions that were made not at the ends of, but within, the 1577 texts, and on the ways in which the latter were corrected and amplified.

In both 1577 and 1587 the national histories were preceded by William Harrison's *Description of Britaine*, certainly the *Chronicles'* best-known component, apart from

some isolated historical passages that gave inspiration, or any rate material, to Shakespeare. In his original introduction to the *Description*, Harrison complained of the short notice at which he had been obliged to start work. He certainly laboured afterwards at remedying what he saw as its shortcomings. For 1587 he added four new chapters, including the one 'Of the division of the whole earth' that launches the entire work and another on no less a topic than 'the high court of parlement & authoritie of the same', supplied a catalogue of all the rulers of England from the mythical Samothres to the mythicised Queen Elizabeth, and subjected everything to enlargement and rearrangement, sometimes simultaneously. The most striking example of this technique is provided by Harrison's treatment of English rivers. In 1587 they are the subject of five consecutive chapters, starting with 'Of rivers, and first of the Thames, and such rivers as fall into it'. In 1577 there had been only three chapters in book I, but a further two chapters in Book II, with the former devoted to the rivers that fall into the sea, and the latter to the former's tributaries. In 1587 these chapters were amalgamated, so that the main rivers *and* their tributaries were described together. But this was not all, because not content with reordering his text in this way, Harrison also added to it, both in the chapters that still formed part of Book I and in the passages that he moved from Book II. Thus in his account of the Thames he enriched his original text with two new passages commenting on the danger of flooding, and then having slotted into it several pages from Book II on the rivers that run into the Thames, amplified *them* with an account of the meadows along the River Lee in Essex and remarks on a herb he had seen growing in Kent.

Many of Harrison's additions were essentially factual, but he was not shy of passing on his opinions to his readers, about whatever he happened to be describing. He exclaimed against the effects of travel in Italy, for instance, as causing young men to 'bring home nothing but meere atheisme, infidelitie, vicious conversation, & ambitious and proud behaviour', and denounced the Oxford colleges as having been 'erected by their founders at the first, onelie for poore mens sons, whose parents were not able to bring them up unto learning: but now they have the least benefit of them, by reason the rich doo so incroch upon them...' (1587, Vol. I, pp. 273-4, 252). *Plus ça change...* A propensity to comment is no less apparent among the changes made to much of the mythical, early and

straightforwardly medieval history of England. Apart from the chapter summaries and the small number of cuts that I mentioned earlier, historiographical changes are relatively rare and unimportant before the reign of Richard II. What does occur, at regular intervals, is the insertion of moralising comment, with a line or two of Latin verse at the end to provide emphasis. Thus under the year 764 Holinshed's original account of how the Northumbrians burnt a judge for his cruelty was extended in 1587 by the sententious observation 'In which vengeance executed upon the cruell judge (if he was so severe as this attempt of the two noble men dooth offer the reader to suspect) all such of his liverie & calling are taught lenitie & mildnes, wherwith they should leven the rigor of the lawe', with several lines from Ovid's *Art of Love* (of all things) to drive the lesson home. (1587, Vol. I, pp. 651-2) Such additions are found throughout the history of England, and can be numerous – there are forty-seven of them, for instance, for the fifty-six-year reign of Henry III – altogether amounting to little less than an endeavour to moralise the English past in a way that Holinshed, in the first edition, had not attempted. Perhaps this becomes less surprising when one reads the new conclusion to Volume I of the 1587 edition, with its assertion that 'next unto the holie scripture, chronicles doo carie credit' (1587, Vol. I, p. 766), and remembers that Abraham Fleming, the principal editor in 1587, was an ardent protestant who was ordained priest in 1588.

Significant new material begins to be added in the late fourteenth century. In some cases it was new only in the sense that it had not been used before. Although the chronicler Henry Knighton was certainly known to the 1577 compilers, since he appears, as Henricus Leicestrensis, in the list of sources that forms part of the prelims to Volume I, he is very seldom cited there. In 1587, however, Fleming himself added eighteen passages, including a long account of the Lollards, that were avowedly based on Knighton, who is now named as such. But other insertions seem to have been based on sources that were unavailable in 1577, and came into the *Chronicles* as additional contributors came on board. One of the most important of these newcomers was the antiquary and alchemist Francis Thynne, who supplied material for the reign of Richard II from the muniments of the earls of Huntingdon, including the important lawsuit of Hastings *versus* Grey in the court of arms (1587, Vol. II, pp. 800-9). Another antiquary,

William Patten, who was brought in to help with the fifteenth century, augmented the narrative from documents belonging to the Derbyshire family of Bromley (1587, Vol. III, pp. 75-6, 96-8, 100-1). John Hooker, as well as revising the history of Ireland (of which a little more in a moment), provided information about the fortunes of Exeter (1587, Vol. III, pp. 229, 519, 926-63). This combination, of a fuller use of what was there already with the particular skills, interests and learning of the individual scholars who actually wrote the second edition, fuelled a substantial amplification of the *Chronicles*' coverage of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In 1587's narrative of the reign of Henry VIII lavish use is made of Edward Hall's accounts of court festivities. These had been available before, and were, in a small way, exploited. Whole pages are now devoted, for instance, to the jousts and revels of 1510 (1587, Vol. III, pp. 554-61), pages lifted wholesale from Hall, in the middle of which survives a short passage from 1577 about the king's performance at the barriers (1577, Vol. II, *Historie of Englande*, p. 813). On closer inspection this passage, too, turns out to have been taken verbatim from Hall, and is thus merely restored to its original context – plagiarised context, one would add, if the term meant anything here. In what may have been a gesture towards the original programme for Holinshed's work, a huge universal history, 1587's account of continental affairs is similarly expanded by continual recourse to the contemporary *History of his own times* by Francesco Guicciardini, who like Knighton is named in 1577's list of authors, but only seems to have been fully exploited for the second edition (the appearance of an English translation in 1579 may have helped here). But at the same time there is the first of Thynne's catalogues of office holders (one of the features of the second edition), a list of the constables of England – a virtuoso display of miscellaneous learning which draws on chronicles, charters, epitaphs, lawbooks and poems (1587, Vol. III, pp. 663-71). Hooker provided information about a bishop of Exeter, while Fleming expanded 1577's assessment of Sir Thomas More by reference to a sermon preached by John Aylmer, bishop of London, on 18 October 1584 (1587, Vol. III, pp. 617, 795).

The pattern is similar for Scotland. Here the reviser throughout was Thynne. He was no moraliser, and though he substantially reorganised the paragraphing he made no significant changes in content - apart from the cuts to the reign of David I which I mentioned earlier - until he reached the 1290s. At this point – nearly a century earlier than the parallel development in the history of England – there begin to be numerous additions, principally from the writings of John Mair, John Leslie and George Buchanan, only the first of whom had been available in 1577, being duly named in the list of authorities. No doubt Thynne was glad to be able to get away from the heavy dependence on Hector Boethius that had marked the first edition's account of Scotland. He also used material of English origin to illuminate Scottish affairs. The *Scalachronica* of the Northumberland knight Sir Thomas Gray, an important source for the mid-fourteenth-century Anglo-Scottish borders, was apparently unknown to Holinshed, but Thynne, who seems to have had a good knowledge of northern history, supplying information on a number of bishops of Durham, clearly appreciated its value for events in Scotland and cited it several times (1587, Vol. V, pp. 353-90, *passim*). The histories of Mair, Leslie and Buchanan were all available in print, but Thynne must have consulted the *Scalachronica* in its only surviving manuscript, in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Where the revision of Scottish history in the 1587 edition of the *Chronicles* mostly involved the incorporation of new material, the most substantial change to the history of Ireland entailed a massive reworking of an already known and cited source. Then as always, everything about Ireland was potentially contentious. The first edition's account had been compiled by Richard Stanihurst, basing himself on work by Edmund Campion. By 1587 Campion was dead, executed as a Jesuit missionary, and Stanihurst was a Catholic exile in the Spanish Netherlands. John Hooker, who undertook the task of revising their work, was a committed protestant, no doubt selected for the task for that as well as for scholarly reasons. The scholarship is certainly in evidence in the second book of the Irish history. Where the first edition had merely paraphrased the *Expugnatio Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales, an insider's account of the first invasion and occupation of Ireland in the 1170s, Hooker provided a complete, annotated translation. But this was no

purely academic exercise. The *Expugnatio*, one of English imperialism's foundation documents, concludes with chapters which are headed, in Hooker's text, 'How or by what manner the land of Ireland is throughlie to be conquered', and 'How the Irish people being vanquished are to be governed', chapters which have no equivalents in the first edition (1587, Vol. VI, pp. 229-32). And the notes contain numerous disparaging comments on the native Irish, on their 'revenging nature', their consequent aptness to turn peace conferences into occasions of 'treacheries and treasons', and 'the loose life of that viperous nation' in general (1587, Vol. VI, pp. 132, 170, 198). No more than Thynne did Hooker insert a moralising commentary into the text he updated; rather the agenda he followed was a well-nigh explicitly political one, dictated by English government policy in the 1580s. Which in turn helps to explain the strident note of protestant commitment, probably unmatched elsewhere in his writings, that marks the chapters with which Hooker brought the Irish history down to the 1580s.

No comparison of the 1577 and 1587 editions of Holinshed's *Chronicles* can ignore the time at which the latter was completed. Among the latest events to be described in its English history is the Babington conspiracy. In 1583 it had included the verses of Regiomontanus, 'now so rife in everie mans mouth', proclaiming 1588 a year of destiny (1587, Vol. IV, p. 511). The moralising I have been referring to sometimes had a distinctly political colouring. Reflections on the state of Britain under the Danes included a lament for 'the defacements of this Ile by the crueltie of the bloodthirstie enimie', and a prayer 'that the like may never light upon this land...' (1587, Vol. I, p. 738). Political context and the combination of a wide range of authorial and editorial skills do much to give the 1587 edition its particular character. If the *Chronicles* speak with many voices that is at least in part because they are the work of many hands, and were compiled to serve more than one purpose. But credit should also be granted to the man who gave his name to them. It is because Holinshed left them a huge and well-cast piece of scaffolding that his successors were able to build upon it in a variety of styles without imperilling the basic structure.