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The Device of the Savage Irish: The Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee

The portrait of Captain Thomas Lee by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (1594)¹ is a striking image of an Elizabethan gentleman exhibiting long bare legs and feet and a hairy chest left visible through a half open shirt. Loosely dressed young men featured in the more intimate genre of miniature painting, but on such a scale (2305x1508 mm) it was unique, and explanations for this unusual representation point to a resemblance with the costume of the barefooted Irish soldier, the kerne. Lee, who from 1573 served for three decades in the queen's campaign against Ireland,² seems to allude with his dress to the wild foot soldiers of his place of service.

An inscription on the left hand side in the tree provides a further possible layer of interpretation of this rare device. The line 'Facere et pati Fortia' ('Both to act and to suffer with fortitude') is from Livy (*History of Rome* 2:12) and was uttered by the Roman Caius Mucius Scaevola before thrusting his hand into fire to prove his loyalty to his country after being captured in the enemy camp attempting to kill their king. Scaevola was dressed in disguise and his Etrurian dress may have inspired Lee's Irish costume by referring to Lee's loyalty to the crown amidst the wild rebellious Irish, or, as Einberg points out, Lee's costume may also be simply a reference to ancient garments.³

The *Tate Gallery Companion* establishes a direct link between Lee's career in Ireland and his Irish kerne costume by claiming that it is a direct appeal to the queen 'designed to draw attention to his complaint of poverty' as a soldier serving in Ireland.⁴

While savageness is indicated by the attire of Lee, certain other details – like the shirt decorated with embroidery and lace, the richly inlaid pistol, the spear and sword, the embossed helmet and shield – point to a refined courtly context, which prompted Morgan to state that the costume resembles a 'stage-costume' like one worn on tilts or masques.⁵

¹ The portrait is at Tate Britain, catalogued T03028.

² James P. MYERS JR.: "Murdering Heart ... Murdering Hand": Captain Thomas Lee of Ireland, Elizabethan Assassin.' *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXII, 1991/1. 51.

³ Elizabeth EINBERG: 'Portrait of Captain Thomas Lee, 1594. [T03028].' In Ronald Alley (ed.): *The Tate Gallery 1978–80: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions*. London, The Gallery Publications Department, 1981, 24.

⁴ Simon WILSON: *Tate Gallery: An Illustrated Companion*. London, Tate Gallery, 1991, 16.

⁵ Hiram MORGAN: 'Tom Lee: the Posing Peacemaker.' In Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley (eds.): *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534–1660*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 142.



Captain Thomas Lee in Irish dress, by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, oil on canvas, 1594, Tate Britain. Photo © Tate. CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 tate.org.uk/art/artworks/gheeraerts-portrait-of-captain-thomas-lee-to3028

This paper will also underscore the importance of the courtly context of this image, but it will argue that the savageness represented by the attire is also informed by the popular wild man figure of contemporary *al fresco* progress entertainments. The wild man of the Middle Ages survived in a courtly form in the sixteenth century where it became an expression of a mode of aristocratic courtliness representing a ‘stage prior to the achievement of perfect chivalry.’⁶ The wild man also became an emblem of courtly service in England where his unrestrained physical force was tamed through the presence of an awesome virgin monarch and his masculine energy channelled into providing active military protection to a female queen.

⁶ Phillipa BERRY: *Of Chastity and Power*. London, Routledge, 1994, 98.

Thus, representing Thomas Lee as an Irish wild savage has more than one layer of signification: one that refers to savagery associated with Ireland by the English, one that hints at the career of Thomas Lee as a soldier in Ireland, but also a very important one – not yet analysed by scholars – that employs a courtly language in which the trope of the wild man symbolises the perfect service of Queen Elizabeth.

The Irish Kerne and Irish Savagery

The representation of Captain Thomas Lee on Gheeraerts's canvas follows the conventional sixteenth century iconography of an Irish foot soldier, the kerne, the lowest degree of soldiers serving in an Irish army who travelled barefooted through the Irish bogs. The kerne was seen as the most primitive form of soldier, and the term was often used abusively to denote Irish rebel leaders, as e.g. in 1569 when James FitzMaurice FitzGerald was termed 'a silly wood-kern.'⁷ Lee's loose attire followed the conventions of the representation of the kerne that was seen as indicative of Irish savageness, a political ideology gaining ground with the increased efforts of English colonisation in the late sixteenth century.

On continental depictions the Irish soldier, the *Hybernus Miles* – informed by the presence of Irish mercenaries in the service of the Habsburgs – was represented in a loose open shirt, a mantel with exotic dangling sleeves and with characteristic long hair. This is how they appear in the drawings of Albrecht Dürer of 1521 (Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), and in later costume books, such as in the Flemish engraver Abraham de Bruyn's *Imperii ac Sacerdotii Ornatus* (1577, 1581) or in the French antiquarian Jean-Jacques Boissard's *Habitus Variarum orbis gentium* (Antwerp, 1581), which according to Roy Strong was the most likely source of Gheeraerts's composition.⁸ In addition to these more generalised images of the Irish savage soldier a particularised view is offered about the kerne by John Derricke's *The Image of Irelande* (1581), a work accompanied by twelve double-page woodcut illustrations entitled 'The Notable Discouery Most Liuely Describing the State and Condition of the Wilde Men in Ireland Properly Called Woodkarne.'⁹

Derricke had first-hand experience about the Irish soldier as he spent some time in Ireland during the 1570s – possibly as a retainer of Sir Henry Sidney – and his illustrations accompanied by verse descriptions delineate the features of the Irish kerne as seen by the English. On the first image of the set, the Irish are depicted in short skirts displaying well-shaped legs, and an open upper garment revealing

⁷ Quoted in Steven G ELLIS: *Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community and the Conflict of Cultures, 1470–1603*. London and New York, Longman, 1985, 261.

⁸ Roy STRONG: *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting Iconography*. Vol. II. Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1995, 289.

⁹ John DERRICKE: *The Image of Irelande*. London, John Day, 1581.

much of the breast with awkward long sleeves. The main body of the text describes the outfit of these Irish in detail:

Their shirtes be verie straunge,
 not reaching past the thie;
 With pleats on pleates thei pleated are,
 as thicke as pleates maie lye.
 Whose sleues hang trailing doune
 almoste unto the Shoe:
 An with a Mantell commonlie,
 the Irishe karne doe goe.
 Now some amongst the reste,
 doe use an other weede:
 A coate I meane of strange deuice,
 which fancie first did breede.
 His skirtes be verie shorte,
 with plaetes set thick about. (E3^v)

The shortness of the skirt is explained by Derricke to be necessary so that they ‘with safer meanes to daunce the Boggs, when thei by foes are wexte’ (D1^v). The *Image of Ireland* calls the attention several times to the ‘glibbed hedds’ of the Irish, that is, their long and loose hair, which according to the author signifies ‘their monstrous malice, irefull hartes, and bloodie hands’ (D1^v) and connects the idea of savagery with its old archetypal symbol, the long uncut hair. The second and third images of the set also show similar Irishmen, while the later plates – depicting English soldiers wearing fashionable suits and armour – counterbalance them in order to adumbrate the difference between Irish barbarity and English civility. Derricke’s work is marked by strong anti-Irish and anti-Catholic feelings calling attention to the savage customs of the Irish and the work is widely considered ‘a conventional attack on Irish barbarism, influenced by an increasingly brutal form of English colonialism, and intended to justify the mistreatment of Ireland’s native population.’¹⁰

Thomas Lee’s barefooted costume draws on these conventional features of the representation of the Irish, yet there are several details of the painting which go against an interpretation that would like to see the image as an expression of barbarity. Instead of the exotic sleeves the Irish kerne exhibits on other images, Lee is wearing a fashionable doublet with an elegant, embroidered shirt lined with lace cuffs and collar. Furthermore, his hair, moustache, and beard are far from being wild: the hair is carefully combed back (perhaps fixed with a lace), and the mous-

¹⁰ James A. KNAPP: “‘That moste barbarous Nacion’: John Derricke’s *Image of Ireland* and the “delight of the well disposed reader.”” *Criticism*, XLII, 2000/2. 416.

tache and beard are well trimmed. The pistol's exquisite inlay and the helmet decorated with an elaborate design also underscore the courtly aspects of the canvas. Thus, the Irish kerne costume is not utilised to condemn the wild Irish in general, and so it stands in sharp contrast with other works of the period, which launched a severe attack on the uncivilised Irish.

The 1570s brought about a change in the English strategy towards Ireland. The ruthless methods of Sir Henry Sidney, the Irish Lord Deputy between 1568–1571 and 1575–1578, and the especial cruelty with which leaders such as Sir Humphrey Gilbert or Walter Devereux, the first Earl of Essex, and other adventurers treated the natives were symptoms of an increased harshness with which inhabitants, both Gaelic and Old English, were regarded. The divide between the local population – both the Gaelic Irish, the so called 'wild' or 'mere Irish,' and the Old English who settled during the Middle Ages – and the so called New English arriving after 1534 was widening as the former two groups were allied both in defending their old privileges, lands, customs, and their religion.¹¹ The assimilation of the Old English with locals was by long tradition regarded as a threat to English civility, and law from time to time explicitly forbade the adoption of Irish customs by English subjects (e.g. the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1366, and the Act for the English Order, Habit, and Language in 1537). Edmund Campion claimed in his *History of Ireland* (1571) that 'the very English of birth, conversant with the brutish sort of that people, become degenerate in short space, and are quite altered into the worst ranke of Irish Rogues, such a force hath education to make or marre.'¹² Long hair or the Irish costume were seen as outward signs of Irish savagery and the cutting of the hair could be seen as a 'first token of obedience' to the monarch, or 'wearing the proscribed Gaelic habit' as an act of challenging English authority.¹³ Yet the treatment of the Irish as a savage nation was not an innovation of the Tudor polity even though by the end of the sixteenth century the failure of the Tudors to secure the Anglicisation of Ireland was responsible for the acceleration of the extreme application of the idea.

Since Gerald of Wales wrote his history of Ireland in the twelfth century in which he described the Irish as 'so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture,' anti-Irish tropes dominated works of chorography written by the English.¹⁴ A conscious policy of segregation divided those regarded wild or 'mere Irish' and the civilised English, a distinction 'dependent not so much on the accident of birth or ethnic descent but rather on attitude and behaviour'.¹⁵ One of the most in-

¹¹ Andrew HADFIELD: *Edmund Spenser's Irish experience: Wilde Fruit and Salvage Soyl*. Oxford, Clarendon Press Hadfield, 1997, 21.

¹² Edmund CAMPION: *The History of Ireland*. (1571). In: *The Historie of Ireland collected by Three Learned Authors*, Dublin, Society of Stationers Campion, 1633, 14.

¹³ Steven G. ELLIS: *Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community and the Conflict of Cultures, 1470–1603*. London and New York, Longman Ellis, 1985, 262.

¹⁴ Quoted in HADFIELD: 26.

¹⁵ Joep LEERSSEN: 'Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility.' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LVI, 1995, 31.

fluent descriptions of Ireland in the sixteenth century, Richard Stanyhurst's *Description of Ireland* published in Holinshed's *Chronicles* in 1577 and in the enlarged second edition of 1587–1588, concludes with a supplication to God for the Irish who are considered rude, savage, wicked and idle:

... bend their industrie (with conscionable policie) to reduce them from rudenes to knowledge, from rebellion to obedience, from trecherie to honestie, from sauagenesse to ciuilitie, from idlennesse to labour, from wickednesse to godlinesse, whereby they maie the sooner espie their blindnesse, acknowledge their loosenes, amend their liues, frame themselues pliable to the lawes and ordinances of her majesty. (1587, 2:45)

John Derricke's *Image of Ireland* paints an even darker image by calling them the 'most barbarous Nation' (B2^r), wild both in manners and in fashion (D3^r), having sin as 'their chief felicitie' (D3^v), and being 'brutisher then beasts' (D4^v) as well as 'rude,' 'monstrous,' and 'crooked' (E4^r). In Robert Payne's *A Briefe Description of Ireland* (1589), a tract deliberately written as a propaganda piece to induce English settlers to Ireland, the author cannot altogether dismiss the presence of the 'wild' Irish, but treats them as an extinct species: 'The second sorte [of people of the country] being least in number are called Kernes, they are warlike men: most of that sorte were slayne in the late warres' (A2^v) – a possibility that was seen as a welcome solution amid the accelerating conflicts of the late 1590s.

Instead of the constitutional reforms favoured by the early Tudors, in the last decades of the century English administration relied more on harsher methods and on the introduction of martial law to enforce their power, which alienated the local population whose last resort was to rebel against the violation of their privileges and the often illegal and brutal actions of the self-seeking adventures. The fracture between the new English and the old gentry, either Gaelic or Old English, gradually increased, thus making a peaceful transformation of the country an illusion. Amid such conditions, where acts of extreme violence were frequent on both sides, Captain Thomas Lee's political outlook advocated in his *A Briefe Declaration of the Government of Ireland* (1594) was remarkable as it pioneered a moderate solution to the conflict through cooperation with local lords. Lee's political pamphlet dedicated and handed over to the queen in the same year the portrait was made is thus instrumental in deciphering the possible meaning of Lee's Irish garment in his portrait. The 'wildness' represented in the image is not a condemnation of the Irish, but a courtly device of the humble service of wild subjects who readily acknowledge the civility and justice introduced by their monarch.

Captain Thomas Lee and his A Brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland

Thomas Lee's military career in Ireland was always seen as controversial. Opinion about him ranged from his being regarded as a 'valiant man ... [who] has done more good service with twenty-four horses than any other captain in his land' (Chancellor, Archbishop Rofus, 1582), to a reference to his decision 'to reform his mis-spent life by hazard in service' (Lord Deputy Grey, 1582). However, Sir Henry Wallop hinted at the 'many disorders' in him (1584), and he was utterly condemned by Sir Geoffrey Fenton (1601) as having a 'murdering heart and a murdering hand.'¹⁶ His harsh and rough manners caused him much trouble, and he ultimately became compromised, was declared a traitor and was executed at Tyburn during the Essex rebellion, when he attempted to seize the queen and force her to sign a warrant for the release of the Earl of Essex.

Lee lived through an era of anarchy and being stationed on the frontier his service often involved plotting and scheming. He knew Ireland well; arriving in the 1570s, by 1584 he owned land which he then enlarged by marrying the widow of a local Irishman who the English had defeated, and by further acquisitions of a legally doubtful character, for which he was often involved in legal disputes and was cast several times in prison. Yet his influential cousin at court, Sir Henry Lee, meant that many of his troubles were smoothed over through good connections. In 1585 he was granted access to court where he offered to defend the border of Kildare with a company of 25 horsemen and 50 footmen which was accepted by the queen and council.

One of Lee's major assets was his old acquaintance with the most powerful Irish lord, Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, who is mentioned as 'being often his bedfellow' in his *Brief Declaration*.¹⁷ By the 1590s, Tyrone emerged both as the local lord of Ulster (officially inaugurated as The O'Neill in 1595), and as a servant of the English Queen, a seemingly incompatible position, but one that offered him the only possible way to achieve the local sovereignty he sought for. Lee often acted as a go-between and messenger for the English, and he wanted to prove his service to the crown by negotiating with the earl. Tyrone, though closely acquainted with the English and brought up in the Pale, was a suspicious ally, and amid his wavering of submitting himself to the authority of the queen and seeking his own interest it 'seems impossible to determine' when exactly he turned against the court.¹⁸

¹⁶ Quoted in Brian de BREFFNY: 'An Elizabethan Political Painting,' *Irish Arts Review*, I, 1984/1. 39. and MYERS: 52.

¹⁷ Thomas LEE: *A Brief Declaration of the Government of Ireland* [1594]. In John Curry (ed.): *An Historical and Critical Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to the settlement under King William; with the state of the Irish Catholics, from that settlement to the relaxation of the Popery Laws, in the year 1778*. London, Robinson, 1786, 115.

¹⁸ G. A. HAYES-MCCOY: 'The Completion of the Tudor Conquest and the Advance of the Counter-Reformation, 1571-1603.' In Moody, T. W., F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds.): *A New History of Ireland III: Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 118.

In 1593 he helped Marshal Bagenal to defeat a local struggle near Belleek (10 October) but became resentful of the English whom he claimed did not acknowledge his efforts and assistance. Lee, himself participating in the campaign and being rewarded for bravery for having entered the ford first, took it upon himself to procure the good will of the court towards the earl. He crossed the Irish Sea in 1594 and handed over his *Brief Declaration* to the queen which most probably reflected the earl's views and was a realistic proposition at the time¹⁹ and 'might have averted outright war.'²⁰

The main concern of Lee in the pamphlet is to position himself as a man of military and local experience, as a well-informed advisor, and a trustworthy subject, underlining that 'there is no one who hath known [the Queen's] service of Ireland longest' and that he is suitable through knowledge gained 'almost by twenty years' experience.²¹ He relies heavily on his connections to the court and adumbrates both his previous services and his former visit.²² Furthermore, he uses a personal tone to address his sovereign by ending his arguments with asking for the prudent judgement of the queen with the words "I humbly beseech / refer / leave to your highness," thus establishing a peculiar intimacy towards her.²³ This rhetorical figure also underscores the importance of just and wise judgement in a land that – according to Lee – was plagued by government officials abusing their power. Lee mentions several examples of the violent misdeeds committed by English officers, for instance, one where they

. . . have drawn unto them by protection, three or four hundred of these country people, under colour to do your majesty service, and brought them to a place of meeting, where your garrison soldiers were appointed to be, who have there most dishonourably put them all to the sword; and this hath been by the consent and practice of the lord deputy for the time being. If this be a good course to draw these *savage people* to the state, to do your majesty service, and not rather to enforce them to stand upon their guard, I humbly leave to your majesty.²⁴ (emphasis mine)

As opposed to the corrupt, uninformed and inefficient English administrators, Lee portrays Tyrone as the only person able to secure the submission of the North.²⁵ He urges alliance with Tyrone as

¹⁹ ELLIS, 299.

²⁰ MORGAN: 138.

²¹ LEE: III–III2.

²² LEE: 97.

²³ See examples at LEE: 89, 91, 93, 97, 113, 137, 144, 145, 149.

²⁴ LEE: 91.

²⁵ LEE: 113.

Your highness shall not get so great honour in cutting off him, and thousands of those *bare people* that follow him, as you shall to win him and them to be good and loyal subjects, and to live and serve your highness for good offices. As the case now standeth with the earl, he hath small encouragements to be otherwise than now he is.²⁶ (emphasis mine)

Throughout the *Brief Declaration* Lee describes the abuses and savagery of the English rather than the Irish, and he adumbrates not the ills the English have to suffer in Ireland, but rather the faults of the new English arrivals. Although Lee declares that the locals have to be handled with a strong hand, his text seems to offer an apology for the mere Irish and casts a more favourable light on them than other contemporary accounts usually do. He uses the term 'savage people' many times, but in a different context than has been previously examined. Lee seeks justice for these simple people, 'your majesty's poor subjects,'²⁷ and he fashions himself as a protector and sympathiser with the Irish, an authority on their lives and plight. The villains are the New English, whose deeds 'bred great fear ... [and] hath bred such terror,'²⁸ and whose 'dishonest practices have not only used these bad means against those *poor and savage people*, but have done all their endeavours ... to discomfort and discredit your majesty's best servitors'²⁹ (emphasis mine). Although he deems there have been several traitors among them, but he once again accuses the administrators who let them 'go uncorrected for all their murders and treasons.'³⁰ Lee speaks out against martial law applied without discretion to all areas, and whereas he feels it a necessary means to accomplish civility in 'remote and savage areas,' he sympathises with most of the locals when asserting

... to use the same where the people are civil and obedient to other laws, is very indirect, and savours of cruelty; and yet this, and the like exemplary justice, is ministered to your majesty's poor subjects there, who, if they have once been offenders, live they never so honestly afterwards, if they grow to any wealth, are sure by one indirect means or other to be cut off.³¹

Thus Lee acts not just as advisor but as the spokesmen of the Irish beseeching the queen to appreciate Irish loyalty and not to antagonize the native population.

Accompanying such a supplication to the queen the portrait of Captain Thomas Lee reinforces his self-fashioning of a sympathiser with the 'poor subject,' whose situation he expounds in detail and to which he offers ample remedy. The Irish

²⁶ LEE: 110.

²⁷ LEE: 96.

²⁸ LEE: 96.

²⁹ LEE: 98.

³⁰ LEE: 131.

³¹ LEE: 95.

costume in this respect associates Lee with the country; it does not hint at its poverty, but rather signifies expertise knowledge and experience about the country he comes from (depicting the open Irish landscape on the left of the canvas) and his military successes there (the wood and pond with a few armed soldiers on the right referring to his victory at Belleek).

A further theme lying at the heart of the pamphlet *Brief Declaration* is the readiness to become the privileged servant of the queen. In a work of about 15000 words the expression 'service' appears one hundred and four times, as if the composer of this document wished to engrave in the mind of the reader that his ultimate aim was to serve by all means: by advice, expertise knowledge, sincere loyalty, and military valour.

Service of the Queen and the 'Wild Man' Device

The portrait of Thomas Lee was painted in 1594 during Lee's trip to England, and presumably also reflects and appropriates his political aims and personal beliefs that were incorporated in the *Brief Declaration*. But the canvas was not such a straightforward self-expression, as it was most probably commissioned and paid for by Lee's courtier cousin, Sir Henry Lee, who hired the painter Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger on many other accounts and in whose family's collection the portrait remained until 1933. So the composition may reflect Sir Henry's creative influence and a more intimate knowledge of courtly devices than could be expected from a remote Irish captain such as Thomas Lee. It is also telling that Thomas Lee in the picture is standing in the 'lee' or shelter of an oak tree, referring presumably to Sir Henry, whose benevolence and patronage Thomas enjoyed. Sir Henry Lee possibly advised both sitter and painter on the program of the canvas, adding his own expertise and creativity in devising a composition fit for the court and the entertainment of its members. Such a device (often applied during the royal summer progresses of the queen) was the conceit of the wild man, one which expressed unconditional service to a civilised authority and thus rhymed with the political intentions of Lee and with his Irish background.

Sir Henry Lee was the initiator of the annual Accession Day Tilts of Queen Elizabeth, and a Champion of the Tilts, and in this function he had a key importance in the development of the imagery and metaphorical narratives, emblems, impresa, costumes and scenic devices which accompanied royal tournaments. Among the Lee papers several texts can be found that were written for shows,³² two very remarkable being hosted by himself – one at Woodstock in 1575, and another at Ditchley in 1592 – and in both Lee took a lion's share in composing the dramatic stories acted out for the royal court.³³ Thus, he was not only familiar with the court-

³² *Sir Henry Lee's Devices*, British Library Manuscript Catalogue 41499.

³³ Erzsébet STRÓBL: 'Entertaining the Queen at Woodstock, 1575.' In Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 438–441.

ly language, but one of the contributors to the fashionable discourse of the court. He presumably also advised Gheeraerts on the visual programs of the portraits he commissioned from him, and, as Roy Strong observed, Gheeraerts's 'most innovative work' was done in the service of Sir Henry Lee and when this 'guiding hand was removed, the artist became repetitive.'³⁴ The famous portrait of Queen Elizabeth standing on the map of England ordered for the Queen's visit to the Lee estate in Ditchley (1592) also belongs to this group of pictures representing courtliness. So could the costume of the wild Irish kerne also have a courtly connotation exploited by the Lees and the artist?

The wild man, a medieval stock figure symbolising the counterpart of courtly civility, was transplanted into the world of Elizabethan royal entertainment, to compliment the queen's virtues as a virgin having the power to tame wildness, subdue it, and transform it into unquestionable service.³⁵ Such a wild man appeared for example at the royal progress to Kenilworth in 1575, where he broke his symbolic weapon, his club, and submitted himself to the service of the queen with the words '[I] do here submit my selfe, beseeching you to serve,'³⁶ or at Bisham in 1591 where the wild man's speech reflected the main idea behind this courtly trope:

My untamed thoughts waxe gentle, and I feele in myselfe civility; a thing hated, because not knowen, and unknowen, because I knew not you. Thus Vertue tameth fiercenesse, Beauty, madnesse. Your Majestie on my knees will I followe, bearing this Club, not as a Savage, but to beate downe those that are.³⁷

The importance of this metaphor, which ultimately expresses the essence of the proper nature of reverence and obedience due to the sovereign by her subjects, is a further allegorical layer which must be taken in account when 'reading' the details of the portrait of Thomas Lee. The wild man thus signifies the way of proper, unquestionable service of a female ruler. The visual similarity of the courtly wild man – dressed loosely, with long hair and always barefooted – and the Irish wild kerne helped the sitter to appropriate both aspects of the costume.

³⁴ STRONG: 281.

³⁵ Erzsébet STRÓBL: 'The Figure of the Wild Man in the Entertainments of Elizabeth.' In Michael Pincombe and Zsolt Almási (eds.): *Writing the Other, Tudor Humanism / Barbarism*. Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, 59–78.

³⁶ George GASCOIGNE: 'The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle, 1575.' In John NICHOLS (ed.): *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (1823), rpt. New York, Burt Franklin, 1966, 1: 497.

³⁷ 'Speeches delivered to her Majestie this Past Progresse, at the Right Honourable the Lady Russel's at Bisham.' In John NICHOLS (ed.): *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* (1823), rpt. New York, Burt Franklin, 1966, 3: 132.

Conclusion

Thomas Lee's portrait is a complex representation of an ambitious adventurer who styles himself a would-be courtier through utilising different significations of the loose costume he wears. While conventional interpretations emphasised 'the contrast between English sophistication and Irish simplicity' on the picture,³⁸ the present paper underscores a yet unexplored aspect of the imagery: the courtly wild man device. Through the contrastive analysis of sixteenth-century English political writings about the Irish and Thomas Lee's 1594 position-paper it can be substantiated that the savage attire of the captain is not part of a negative bias but rather refers to the apparatus of royal diversions and entertainments, in which the wild man appears as a masculine raw power to be tamed by the presence of the female monarch for her service.

A further facet to the courtly aspect of the canvas is the representation of the open, loose shirt of Thomas Lee, which – with its refinery – belongs much more to the world of courtly love than to Irish savages. Visually the shirt's arrangement recalls the love-sick young men of the miniatures of Nicholas Hilliard who are engulfed in the flames of love or recline in the seclusion of an Elizabethan garden. Lucy Gent asserts that on Lee's portrait the shirt 'is a lover's, a shirt fit for making courtly love, with the resonance of Petrarchan desire, and of the role-playing involved in acting out Petrarchan scenarios,'³⁹ and as Morgan observed together with the depiction of the bare feet the canvas becomes a declaration of 'the most striking male sexuality in Elizabethan portraiture.'⁴⁰ The oil painting's evocation of the Petrarchan love discourse smoothly fits into the line of royal service the image tries to propagate. In the court of Elizabeth the Petrarchan language was often used by courtiers to address their lady, the queen. The court playwright John Lyly articulated this conceit at the end of his play *Endimion* (1588), when the character Queen Cynthia (an allusion to Queen Elizabeth) allowed Endimion, the courtier-in-love-with-his-queen to call his service love, yet never to strive for real fulfilment of his feelings: '*Endimion*, this honourable respect of thine, shalbe christened loue in thee, & my reward for it fauor.'⁴¹

Captain Thomas Lee's portrait expresses this 'honourable respect,' the yearning of a male, rough, but loyal subject, for the service of her female sovereign, the Queen.

³⁸ Brendan BRADSHAW, Andrew HADFIELD and Willey MALEY. 'Introduction: Irish Representations and English Alternatives.' In Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds): *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict 1534–1660*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 7.

³⁹ Lucy GENT: 'Marcus Gheeraerdt's Captain Thomas Lee.' In Caroline Van Eck and Edward Winters (eds.): *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics, and Visual Culture*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005, 90.

⁴⁰ MORGAN: 142.

⁴¹ John LYLY: *The Complete Works of John Lyly*. (1902). R. Warwick Bond (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967. 5.3.179–80.

Abstract

The costume of the famous 'barefooted' portrait of Captain Thomas Lee, who served three decades in Queen Elizabeth I's campaign against Ireland in the late sixteenth century, is widely considered to refer to 'wildness' and 'savagery' associated with Ireland in contemporary English writings. The following paper will argue that the attire of Lee may also allude to the courtly image of the Wild Man as it appeared in Elizabethan entertainments where it was transformed into a gendered compliment to the queen emphasising unconditional service. This courtly aspect may serve as a key to the deciphering of the 1594 canvas that was presumably commissioned by Lee's famous courtier cousin, Sir Henry Lee, the initiator and champion of the annual Accession Day tilts of the queen, one of the chief devisors of court pageantry and shows in which wild men appeared. The political appeal of the portrait is underscored by Thomas Lee's handwritten treatise about Ireland submitted to the queen in the same year the portrait was made, in which he fashions himself as a spokesman of the poor locals. The present paper treats the portrait and the text of Lee as a pair, and argues that both adumbrate a desire for the service of the queen.

Keywords

wild man, sixteenth-century Ireland, Elizabethan courtly entertainment, Thomas Lee, Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger

Rezümé

Thomas Lee kapitány híres „mezítlábas” portréjának öltözetét általában a vad és barbár írekre történő – korabeli angol írásokban szereplő – utalásokkal hozzák összefüggésbe, hiszen a kapitány három évtizedig szolgált I. Erzsébet írországi hadjárataiban a XVI. század végén. Jelen tanulmány e portré szimbolikáját egy Erzsébet-kori udvari mulatságokon megjelent karakterrel, a vademberrel hozza összefüggésbe, hiszen Lee viselete magyarázható e vademberfigurával is, akinek személye a szűz királynő iránti elkötelezett szolgálatot szimbolizálta. Ez az értelmezés új oldaláról világítja meg az 1594-es képet, amelyet valószínűleg Lee híres unokatestvére, Sir Henry Lee festtetett róla. Sir Henry volt ugyanis a királynő trónra lépési ünnepnapja alkalmából tartott látványos lovagi tornák megálmodója, és egyik főszervezője az udvari mulatságoknak, ahol vademberkarakterek is szerepeltek. A portré politikai jelentőségét húzza alá Thomas Lee írása Írországról, amelyet a királynőnek nyújtott be a kép festésének évében, és amelyben magát a helyiek szöcsöveként kívánta beállítani. Jelen tanulmány a képet és a szöveget összetartozó párként kezeli, és rámutat arra, hogy mindkettő arra irányul, hogy Lee elnyerje a királynő kegyeit.

Kulcsszavak

vadember, XVI. századi Írország, Erzsébet-kori udvari mulatságok, Thomas Lee, az ifjabb Marcus Gheeraerts