

Abstract

This dissertation examines the power that rumour held in England on the eve of the Civil Wars in relation to the Irish Rebellion and the ensuing massacres of 1641. Initially, it will consider how news of events across the Irish Sea arrived and spread across England in an uncontrolled manner. By considering contemporary accounts and pamphlet material it will be possible to see how these stories came to play a dominant role in the heated discussions taking place between Charles I and sections of Parliament at the time. This study investigates the effects this had upon the country as the Civil War period began. Looking at the various ‘panics’ that struck the country and the ways in which Charles I was seen to be complicit with an Irish Catholic invasion will enable an analysis of how Parliamentary polemicists used the opportunity to undermine the monarch’s authority. Furthermore, it considers what it was that made the Irish so fearful in the eyes of the English populace and how Parliament was able to legitimise the ban on quarter for Irish soldiers, despite it clearly going against established Europe-wide codes of military conduct. Finally, this study scrutinizes the debates surrounding the 1649 re-conquest of Ireland and looks at how Oliver Cromwell was able to use memories of 1641 to justify the slaughter of nearly 5,000 men at Drogheda and Wexford. Ultimately, this dissertation suggests ways in which rumour was used to promote hatred and justify harsh political actions against the Irish and goes beyond the established notion that the Civil War was primarily about religion, by proposing that the conflict was also about ethnicity and identity.

Introduction

In 1642, *A true and credible relation of the barbarous crueltie and bloody massacres of the English Protestants that lived in the kingdome of Ireland* was published in London. Written by an anonymous 'eyewitness' of the Irish Rebellion of 1641, it detailed a host of merciless and cruel ways in which Irish Catholics had 'shed innocent blood' of English Protestant men, women and children. From the dismembering of ministers, to the murder of husbands and parents in front of wives and children, to the raping of old and young women, it suggests that no soul was spared.¹ Many accounts like these flooded London and England in the aftermath of the troubles; they accused the rebels of perpetrating a host of bloody atrocities. Furthermore, it was suggested that these events were not to remain isolated in Ireland. In a letter read out in Parliament by John Pym written by Sir John Temple on 30 November 1641, it was inferred 'that the Rebels began now to grow soe confident of their prevailing in Ireland as they did begin to advise of the invading of England'.² Such news consequently sent shockwaves across the country, with numerous 'scares' erupting and pleas countrywide from local authorities to Parliament for help in the preparation of an invasion. As this fear spread, the issue was used to undermine the authority of the King. Indeed, as put forward by Keith Lindley, the 'Irish Rebellion proved to be one of the most effective weapons in Parliament's propaganda arsenal'.³

The Irish Rebellion began in October 1641 as a result of decades of English misgovernment. In reaction to the growing power of English settlers, widespread

¹ Anon, *A true and credible relation of the barbarous crueltie and bloody massacres of the English Protestants that lived in the kingdome of Ireland* (London, 1642), p. 1.

² Willson Havelock Coates (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes from the First Recess of the Long Parliament to the withdrawal of King Charles from London* (Hamden, 1970), pp. 347-348.

³ Keith Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', *Irish Historical Review*, 18 (1972), p. 163.

animosity grew from the country's indigenous population and groups of Old English, immigrants from centuries gone by, as they saw their rights over land and power in the Irish Parliament rapidly dwindle. Much to the surprise of the English governing powers, rebels rose up in Ulster demanding the return of what they saw to be rightfully theirs. New English and Protestant land-owners found themselves targeted because the belief grew that the rebels were also fighting for the defence of their Catholic faith. Initially, the rebels focussed upon the recovery of property rights and deeds, which would often be destroyed or seized by those who laid claim to land. However, as disorder spread across the country, the rebel leaders began to lose control with the original message of the rebellion becoming significantly wider. Many used their own reasons, often local in nature, to justify attacks on Protestants. It was from this loss of control, that rumours began to surface that the Irish Rebellion had become something more than the leaders originally intended: it had developed into wholesale slaughter.

As refugees flooded into western ports of England, they brought with them stories that wide-ranging atrocities had been committed and as they arrived in London, pamphlets were printed in huge numbers. As the notion spread that the Irish were next planning to invade England, numerous 'scares' erupted country wide. This soon became of great consequence to the political turmoil that was taking place in England at the time between the King and factions of Parliament who disagreed with the monarch's method of rule, over issues that would eventually result in Civil War in 1642. Many historians see the Irish Rebellion of 1641 as the tipping point in the conflict between Parliament and Charles I that led to the outbreak of the English Civil Wars. Indeed, Royalist historian Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, later commented that but for the Irish Rebellion: 'all the miseries which afterwards befell

the King and his dominions... [would have] been prevented'.⁴ The event snowballed into a political monster that the rebels of Ulster can never have conceived or intended to have had the effect that it did.

The Irish Rebellion and alleged massacres have provoked great interest from historians in regards to the effect they had in England. In terms of established historiography, the religious element of the troubles has received a great deal of coverage, largely as a result of the English Civil Wars being dubbed by some as a conflict of religion.⁵ As part of a European conspiracy, it was believed by many contemporaries that a Popish Plot was afoot to bring England back under Catholic control. Indeed, in the few years before the Irish Rebellion, Parliament had been pursuing a crackdown on Catholic activity. Consequently, the population became increasingly aware of the possibility of Catholic insurrection. With Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud suggesting a number of religious reforms, backed by Charles I, a number of Puritan elements feared that the King, and indeed his Catholic wife Henrietta Maria, could not be trusted. As the Irish Rebellion broke out, the rebels declared that they were partly fighting for the defence of their religion in reaction to English oppression. Moreover, stories spread that Protestants were being massacred much like had been the case on mainland Europe on St. Bartholomew's Day and during the Thirty Years War. Pamphleteers placed events in a long-established Protestant versus Catholic setting that appeared now to have reached a critical point. Their stories 'appealed to an audience which was willing at least to entertain the notion that the Irish Rebellion was the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot,

⁴ Earl of Clarendon, Edward Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641*, Vol. 6 (Oxford, 1888), p. 2-3.

⁵ For further reading see: Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: studies in religion and politics, 1603-1642* (London, 1989), pp. 72-106, and Glenn Burgess, 'Was the English Civil War a War of Religion? The Evidence of Political Propaganda', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 61: 2 (1998), pp. 173-201.

and the Spanish Match all rolled into one'.⁶ This can certainly be seen through the comments of Neemiah Wallington, a Puritan artisan who lived in London at the time, who cites the proverb 'He that will win England/Must first with Ireland begin'. He certainly did not believe the rebels were fighting for their own freedom: 'all these plots in Ireland are but one plot against England', another occasion where Catholics were attempting 'to bring their damnable superstition and idolatry amongst us'.⁷

A fear and hatred of Catholicism had long endured in England, a notion popularised by John Foxe with his work *The Book of Martyrs*. The piece became a 'standard repository from which seventeenth-century English people could draw anti-papal imagery'.⁸ It labelled Catholics as inherently violent and intent on the destruction of Protestantism, placing their behaviour within a historical context. In the 1640s, polemicists often referred to his work to show that Catholics were still very much a threat. Such texts interpreted the Irish Rebellion 'to portray Stuart absolutism and conservative Anglican ecclesiology as 'popish' and to mobilize radical Protestant and parliamentary opposition to the Crown'.⁹ As mistrust grew about the King's true intentions in his dealings with the Irish, Parliament successfully attached labels of 'popery, tyranny and barbarity' to the monarchy whilst offering themselves as 'the upholders of the Protestant religion, the rights of Parliament, and the fundamental liberties of the kingdom'.¹⁰ Indeed, such talk of popish plotting and conspiracy drove a wedge between Charles I and his opponents.

⁶ Ethan Howard Shagan, 'Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and English Responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641', *The Journal of British Studies*, 36:1 (Jan., 1997), p. 30.

⁷ Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth Century London*, (London, 1985), p.166.

⁸ Shagan, 'Constructing Discord', p. 9.

⁹ Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, 2005), p. 147.

¹⁰ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 166.

Alongside this Anti-Catholic reading of events, a non-Foxean approach to assessing the troubles is also feasible. By going beyond this established narrative it is possible to see a 'contempt for Irish people, culture and religion so deep and comprehensive that it could be called 'racial''.¹¹ The notion that the Irish were a cruel, barbarous, uncivilized group but still very much feared ran concurrently with this obsession with religion. By looking deeper into the past it is possible to see that such an attitude was nothing new and that a distinctly English prejudice towards those from foreign lands was embedded in the national psyche. Unlike the Scottish, and indeed the Welsh and Cornish, the Irish were particularly feared in England. Works by contemporaries such as Sir John Temple, John Milton and Edmund Spenser 'most powerfully enforced prejudices that the Irish were an infamous and barbarous race, with whom no compromise was possible'.¹² The 'Irish Catholic' therefore represented a doubly threatening image for the English population and an ethnic analysis of events leaves a number of areas for research.

When considering this topic it is important to initially consider the content of the rumours and how they spread; Chapter One shall focus upon this and consider why their content was so readily accepted by the general public and propaganda writers alike. In a time when censorship had almost ceased to operate in London, pamphlet writers had free rein to propagate their most gruesome fantasies. They were able to put doubts into the minds of the English population as to the trustworthiness of their king by portraying the Irish as a barbarous, cruel people and suggesting that Charles I was somehow complicit to the atrocities they had supposedly committed. As panic spread across the country, it is important to

¹¹ Robin Clifton, "'An Indiscriminate Blackness?'" Massacre, Counter-Massacre and Ethnic Cleansing in Ireland', in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History* (New York and Oxford, 1999), p. 107.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

consider what it was about the Irish that made them so very terrifying in the eyes of the English. Stories of atrocity were twisted to fit political agenda, consequently blurring the line between what was true and what was seen to be true, mainly to the benefit of the Parliamentarian side and to the detriment of the King. By assessing the content of the rumours it will be possible to see why they were so eagerly embraced, despite protests and contemporary death estimates to be clearly incorrect. This will later help to explain why the English population reacted in the manner they did and assess who stood to gain from such trouble.

In considering the reaction of the English population it is possible to see the very power these rumours held. In the months that followed The Irish Rebellion, English Catholic families, Irish soldiers and foreign ambassadors were amongst those who were violently targeted by a fearful populace. At the same time, numerous 'panics' hit the country sporadically, whereby fear would rapidly spread in a given locality on the understanding that an Irish Catholic army was preparing to attack. This would often occur based on very little or incorrect information, with rumour and hearsay acting to heighten tension. In order to deal with the 'threat' the Irish posed, the policies put in place before and then during the Civil War by Parliament act to not calm the situation, but in fact heighten tension. However, when news arrived in England in 1643 that Charles I was seeking reinforcements in Ireland, the same widespread panic did not occur. With this mind, Chapter Two will look to consider how this course of action created a raft of problems for the King that arguably go on to undermine the rest of his Civil War campaign. Many historians have seen the King's decision to draft in Irish troops to help bolster his military power as a huge tactical blunder; indeed, as Joyce Lee Malcolm states, the decision has been 'regarded as having an insignificant impact on his military situation and a

disastrous effect upon his popular standing'.¹³ It will be possible to see how much of an effect this decision had upon the campaign of Charles I, by connecting this to an inbred fear of the Irish. Furthermore, it will also be possible to see how Parliament were able to use memories of 1641 to justify the execution of Irish captured soldiers regardless of circumstance and consider why Welsh, Scottish and Cornish fighters avoided the same fate.

In 1646, Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion* was printed; this tract had a profound impact upon public perceptions of the Irish, arguably for the next two hundred years. With his work and numerous other depositions still fresh in the mind of the public, an intense public debate took place in regards to what Parliament was to do with Ireland. Chapter Three will look to consider these arguments that preceded the Cromwellian campaign of 1649 and look at how the re-conquest of Ireland was justified in the public sphere. In addition to this, the ways in which Cromwell managed to validate the massacre of nearly 5,000 men at the sieges of Drogheda and Wexford will be assessed. Indeed, the circumstances that surrounded these two events have become the source of great historical debate. A double standard could be said to exist in that when massacre was supposedly committed by the Irish it was considered barbaric and cruel, but when the English did so, it has been seen by some historians to fit a 'code of conduct'.¹⁴ This study will analyse how mass slaughter was legitimised in the eyes of the public.

In order to get as close as possible to the nature of the rumours, it is important to use sources that were available as seen and heard by the population at large. This necessitates the analysis of political pamphlets, newsbooks, sermons and

¹³ Joyce Lee Malcolm, 'All the King's Men: The Impact of the Crown's Irish Soldiers on the English Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22:83 (March, 1979), p. 239.

¹⁴ Barbara Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War,' *The American Historical Review*, 99:4 (October, 1994), pp. 1137-1166, and Micheál Ó Siochrú, 'Atrocity, Codes of Conduct and the Irish in the British Civil Wars 1641–1653', *Past and Present*, 195 (2007), pp. 55-86.

in an attempt to consider the rumours as heard by word of mouth I shall be considering the personal writings of contemporaries such as Joseph Lister, Richard Baxter and Edmund Ludlow. And to find the perspective of an outsider looking in, I shall also be looking at the *Calendar of Venetian State Papers*. I hope the analysis of such sources will illuminate popular feeling towards what was said to have occurred in Ireland. In order to get an idea of the discussions in and actions of Parliament at the time, I shall be considering the journal of Sir Simonds d'Ewes, whilst analysing correspondence in the *Calendar of State Papers*. Furthermore, by comparing contemporary literature and the speeches and writings of Oliver Cromwell, it may be possible to see the extent to which the campaign acted was viewed as retribution for events in 1641, or how far he saw this as justifying his actions.

The Irish Rebellion and accompanying tales of massacre had a powerful effect in England, arguably undermining the Civil War campaign of Charles I to such a degree that he was never able to fully recover. The fear that events in Ireland created played a large part in his downfall. Placing this in a framework encapsulating nationality and ethnicity, it may be possible to gain an insight into why the English perception of the Irish provoked such fear and perhaps even consider the extent to which the English used these labels to help establish their own identity in such tumultuous times. Certainly, it is important to investigate an event that 'served as a public justification for English domination of Ireland for over two centuries'.¹⁵

¹⁵ Clifton, "An Indiscriminate Blackness?", p. 114.

Chapter One: The Role of Rumour in the Aftermath of the Irish Rebellion,

1641-1642

In the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion, an immense fear gripped the English population. Rumour had it that not only had English Protestants been murdered in their thousands, but further slaughter had been planned in the shape of an Irish invasion and an English Catholic uprising. Despite many of these stories being based on hearsay and half-truths, rumour had a profound impact upon the political issues of the country. With Charles I and Parliament at odds over religious and constitutional reforms, the Irish Rebellion and the supposed massacres made Civil War in England seem 'close to inevitable'.¹⁶ It seemed to act as further proof that the King could not be trusted to govern the country. With numerous historians stating that events in Ireland acted as the tipping point that led to the outbreak of Civil War, it is important to consider why rumour caused so many problems and why such fearful stories of wholesale slaughter were so readily believed. In doing so, it will be possible to see why Charles I had his position as monarch undermined during a time when what was believed to be true was more important than what was actually true.

Rumours that emanated from the Irish Rebellion used a number of routes to travel across England. After flooding the western coast in the immediate aftermath of the troubles, English Protestant refugees would often return to their place of birth or go in search of relief from friends and family. Initially western ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Chester, and later places such as Yorkshire, Essex and Kent had to manage a large influx of displaced people.¹⁷ Indeed, the survivors brought with them their own stories about events across the Irish Sea; Edmund Ludlow stated that 'great numbers of English Protestants flying from [the] bloody hands of the Irish rebels,

¹⁶ Clifton, "An Indiscriminate Blackness?", p. 114.

¹⁷ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 147.

arrived in England, filling all places with sad complaints of their cruelties to the Protestants of that kingdom'.¹⁸ Moreover, the local authorities would often be petitioned to provide relief for those affected by the troubles. Alice Stornier of Staffordshire for example, asked for relief having been driven out of Ireland and widowed by 'the barbarous rebels'. The justices of peace granted her request and helped to re-settle her family in her birthplace of Leek. She also made clear that 'many others' had experienced the same fate as her.¹⁹ Similarly, The Sussex Quarter Session records note that in April 1642 Mary West and her two children, who had returned from Ireland as a result of the troubles, had been born in the local parish of Thakeham and so were deserving enough to be 'setled and provided for'.²⁰ The arrival of so many witnesses in England and the need to provide relief for often fatherless families will have had a profound effect upon those developing their own opinions about the Irish Rebellion.

The wide dispersal of refugees meant that when such stories arrived in London, the hub of the country's printing press, they had already been heard by many across the nation. As political pamphlets began to relay these stories they acted to strengthen the notion that the massacres had occurred on the scale that many had heard through word of mouth. While levels of literacy stood at approximately 30 per cent of men, and even lower for women, the message of the pamphlets still managed to reach all levels of society.²¹ It could be assumed that such printed material was only aimed at and digested by those who could read, the political elites and the middling sorts, yet pamphlets would often be read aloud in public places. This meant

¹⁸ Charles H. Firth (ed.), *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Vol. 1* (Oxford, 1894), p. 21.

¹⁹ D.A. Johnson and D.G. Vaisey (eds.), *Staffordshire and the Great Rebellion*, (Stoke on Trent, 1964), pp. 6-7.

²⁰ B.Redwood (ed.), *Quarter Sessions Order Book, 1642-1649: Sussex Record Society, Vol. 54* (Lewes, 1954), p. 4.

²¹ Tim Harris, 'Propaganda and Public Opinion in Seventeenth-Century England', in Jeremy D. Popkin (ed.), *Media and Revolution: Comparative Perspectives* (Lexington, 1995), p. 51.

that the illiterate received news of the atrocities just like everyone else. Despite being published in London, printed stories managed to travel widely. Tim Harris cites that as the Civil War was about to break, thirty three deliveries containing pamphlets left London each week for Buckinghamshire, nine travelling to Yorkshire and seven to Devon.²²

Such printed material had the power to ‘construct and mould popular political attitudes designed to further a particular point of view, accomplish a specific goal, undermine adversaries, or cultivate popularity’.²³ One particular excerpt from a letter read out in Parliament on 14 December 1641 can be said to be very characteristic of what was being spread in printed form across the country about the massacres taking place in Ireland:

The rebels daily increase in men and munitions... exercising all manner of cruelties, and striving who can be most barbarously exquisite in tormenting the poor Protestants, wherever they come, cutting off the privy members, ears, fingers, and hands, plucking out their eyes, boiling the heads of the little children before their mothers faces, and then ripping up their mothers bowels... driving men, women and children, by hundreds together upon bridges, and from thence cast them down into rivers, such as drowned not, they knock their brains out with poles, or shoot them with muskets, that endeavour to escape by swimming out; ravishing wives before their husbands faces, and virgins before their parents faces, after they have abused their

²² Harris, ‘Propaganda and Public Opinion’, p. 51.

²³ David A. O’Hara, *English Newsbooks and the Irish Rebellion, 1641-49* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 13-14.

bodies, making them renounce their religion, and then marry them to the basest of their fellows.²⁴

Clearly, the Irish were being portrayed as brutal savages with seemingly no mercy for those in their wake. Such stories catered for the public craving for sensation in what they read; Joad Raymond has considered how the staple of the country's literary diet consisted of tales containing murder, execution and gore.²⁵ The stories from Ireland were popular because of the countries yearning for such news. Indeed, it is difficult to see how much more graphic and shocking the pamphleteers could have made their stories.

As refugees and pamphlets carrying these rumours travelled across the country, the content often found itself woven into sermons. These would often be heavily based upon religious themes, usually repeating Anti-Catholic messages from *The Book of Homilies* and *The Book of Martyrs*. They would attempt to place the massacres within a context surrounding a Popish conspiracy to destroy Protestant England. On 23 February 1641/2 the radical Stephen Marshall preached a distinctly religious and politically militant Fast Sermon to parliament entitled 'Meroz Cursed'. He certainly did not hold back when it came to making the actions of the Irish rebels

known:

What Souldiers heart would not start at this, not only when he is in hot bloud to cut downe armed enemies in the field, but afterward deliberately to come into subdued City, and take the little ones upon the speares point, to take

²⁴ Thomas Partington, *Worse and worse newes from Ireland* (London, 1641), p. 2.

²⁵ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 108.

them by the heales and beat out their braines against the walles, what inhumanity and barbarousness would this be thought?²⁶

Similar in content to the pamphlet material, sermons would often have an angry, vengeful tone to them. Altogether, the rumours that spread around the country did so through a number of mediums and few will have managed to avoid their message.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes lamented on 11 November 1641 that: 'never soe much hurt done in anie place as had been done by the Rebels in Ireland, for many English and Protestants had been slaine and that with soe much crueltie as was scarce ever heard offe amongst Christians'.²⁷ The stories of Protestants, many of English origin, will have been very shocking to hear for the population but this had not been the first time they had heard tales of this nature. Indeed, they differ very little from those emanating out of Germany during the Thirty Years War. In 1638, Philip Vincent relayed eyewitness accounts telling of the 'extortion, rapine, savage cruelty, desolations, deaths of all kinde'. Much like the accounts of the Irish massacres above, the author states: 'wee see nothing but misery, and a horrid devastation of townes and villages; the insolencie and cruelty of the Souldiers exceeds all beliefe'.²⁸ Much like the supposed atrocities committed by rebels in Ireland, soldiers in Germany were said to have taken part in all manner of cruelties including the desecration of the dead, showing a lack of mercy for man, women and child, and one strange episode where a cat is used to tear a man's stomach open. Alleged atrocities in Ireland were of great similarity to those committed during the Thirty Years War,

²⁶ Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, p. 155.

²⁷ Coates (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, p. 118.

²⁸ Dr. Philip Vincent, *The lamentations of Germany Wherein, as in a glasse, we may behold her miserable condition, and reade the woefull effects of sinne* (London, 1638).

with fear and revulsion increased by the emphasis upon cruelties given out to the most vulnerable.

These stories very much fit a paradigm of what was seen to represent 'atrocities'; it could be that the stories being spread around England were borrowing vocabulary in order to match what they saw as cruel behaviour, indeed attempting to make the massacres seem worse than anything that had been before. The difference with the Irish Rebellion however was that it was when the idea that rebels might invade England or that English Catholics could potentially commit the same atrocities that panic ensued. One writer commented at the time that the Irish had 'prepared men in all parts of the kingdom to destroy all inhabitants there' and 'all Protestants should be killed this night'.²⁹ A year later, Sir Simonds d'Ewes MP spoke of fear of the 'bloody murderers like to descend upon us like a swarm of caterpillars'.³⁰ The fact that English Protestants were being murdered was one thing, the idea that such atrocities could occur in England had much deeper implications. Indeed, Richard Baxter stated that such news 'filled all England with a fear both of the Irish and of the Papists at home'.³¹ With the Germany acting as 'an example and warning of the poverty, depopulation and barbarism war could bring to a once prosperous country', events in Ireland made the prospect of trouble spreading to England very plausible indeed.³²

With pamphlet stories often embellished with overt sensationalism, a small number of pamphleteers publicly protested at their over-inflated and inflammatory

²⁹ John T. Gilbert, *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland, from 1641 to 1652, Vol. 1*, (Dublin, 1879), p. 353-4.

³⁰ Ian Gentles, *The English Revolution and The Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638-1652* (Harlow and New York, 2007), p. 34.

³¹ N.H. Keeble and J.M Lloyd Thomas (eds.), *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London, 1974), p. 32.

³² Barbara Donagan, 'Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War', *Past & Present*, 118 (February, 1988), p. 70.

nature. Critics such as the author of *No pamphlet, but a detestation against all such pamphlets as are printed, concerning the Irish rebellion* complained about the manner in which the rebels were being portrayed. He attacks those ‘who for a small gaine, will endeavour with opprobrious lines to abuse God and Man’, criticising the writers of such ‘fabulous’ pamphlets for ‘making credulous people to believe such things as are contrived from their Hellish braines’. While he concedes there had been a substantial breakdown in law and order in Ireland since the rebellions conception, he states that the stories of ‘murdering and ravishing’ were vastly overblown. He insisted that the main problem in the country had been the pillaging of property, citing an example where the rebels ransack a house, tie-up the victims but do them no harm.³³ On 25 April 1642 the King made a response to these atrocity stories, showing concern that despite the ‘improbable or impossible’ nature of the tales, they may still ‘make an impression in the minds of our weak subjects.’³⁴ Clearly, both the King and other contemporaries were worried about the implications such stories were having, particularly in the increasingly unstable political climate in England at the time. However, it is surprising that few more take a similar line of argument.

It was suggested by the Venetian ambassador on 29 November 1641 that many people were in fact becoming tired of the constant stream of bloody news in the printed press. He states that ‘the Puritans and Parliamentarians of that party... suspect that the people, grown tired of so much violence, are contemplating a return to their old loyalty and devotion to His Majesty. Accordingly they try to stir them up by all manner of inventions’.³⁵ However, it seems the reaction was to put an alternate

³³ Anon, *No pamphlet, but a detestation against all such pamphlets as are printed, concerning the Irish rebellion* (London, 1642), pp. 2-5.

³⁴ James Morgan Read, ‘Atrocity Propaganda and the Irish Rebellion’, in *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Apr., 1938), p. 240.

³⁵ Edward Razzell and Peter Razzell (eds.), *The English Civil War: A Contemporary Account, 1640-1642, Vol.2* (London, 1996), p. 149.

spin upon the stories of anyone who dared deny the 'truth'. One letter to the Lord Chief Justice was read out in Parliament on 8 December 1641 stating: 'That it had been reported here that the dangers of Ireland were not soe great as had been reported, which they feared were spread by such as wished the losse of Ireland and therefore they desired his Lordshipp to take care that noe such false rumours might bee believed to the retarding or putting backe of our timely supplies'.³⁶ It was suggested that those doubting that the existence or scale of the massacres had taken place were attempting to undermine the English cause to regain control and were possibly even supporting the rebels. With Parliament and Charles I continually at odds with each other, to appear to be backing the rebel cause was a potentially dangerous, or even treasonous, thing to do.

Despite concerns towards the validity of atrocity stories emanating from Ireland, it is fair to say that the vast majority of the population accepted the rumours as fact and most historians dealing with the subject tend to agree with this. Indeed, as Ian Gentles suggests: 'beliefs about what was happening were of more consequences than the events themselves'.³⁷ The fact that people believed the stories to be true in England was almost more important than whether they were or not. Even glaring factual mistakes seem to have been overlooked. Richard Baxter commented in his autobiography that 'above all, the 200,000 killed in Ireland, affrighted the Parliament and all the land... there was nothing that with the people wrought so much as the Irish massacre and rebellion'.³⁸ Acknowledging that the news stoked great fear in the hearts of the English, there is no mention that the entire Protestant population of Ireland was in fact closer to 100,000, and so such death rates were impossible. That

³⁶ Coates (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, p. 251.

³⁷ Ian Gentles, *The English Revolution and The Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638-1652* (Harlow and New York: 2007), p.56.

³⁸ Keeble and Thomas (eds.), *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, p.31.

said, Baxter and other contemporaries will have had no idea of the size of the Protestant population in Ireland, so would believe what they heard. Lindley makes the point that ‘whether these atrocity stories were valid or not, it is nevertheless true that throughout England and Wales they were generally believed to be accurate accounts of actual events’.³⁹ It seems that many were unshakeable in their belief that the Irish massacres did occur in the manner described by ‘eyewitnesses’ and in printed material; the Irish were deemed to be more than capable of continuing such acts on English shores. The question here therefore, is why the rumours were so readily accepted and why protests, and indeed the true facts, largely went unheard.

While acts in Ireland certainly fit well within a narrative based on a Catholic versus Protestant struggle as described previously, they also could be seen within a paradigm of what was seen by the English population to represent ‘the Irishman’. Indeed, such an angle shows ‘a construction which was still anti-popish, but saw disloyalty, rebellion and social anarchy as a more serious threat than popery’.⁴⁰ The Irish were viewed in England as a subordinate but feared race; they had been referred to as ‘bloody’, ‘cruel,’ and ‘barbarous’ for many decades. In 1602, Sir Robert Cecil, Secretary of State to Elizabeth I and James I, stated that when the Devil showed Christ the kingdoms of the world, ‘he dyd not shewe him Ireland, but kept that for himself, least he might have thereby distasted Christ of all the rest’.⁴¹ To Cecil, the Irish were a nation of outcasts. Arthur Marotti cites the image of the Irishman as a ‘cutthroat’, who was ‘imagined to appear suddenly on English shores and in English towns, or to emerge from hiding places all over England ready to attack English

³⁹ Lindley, ‘Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales’, p. 146.

⁴⁰ Shagan, ‘Constructing Discord’, p. 17.

⁴¹ Barbara Donagan, ‘Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War’, *Past & Present*, 118 (February, 1988), pp. 70-71.

Protestants', acting as a bogeyman over a period of time that spanned generations.⁴² Indeed, by looking at literature that predates the Irish Rebellion and English Civil War period, it is possible to see that these images of the Irish as a barbarous, uneducated and uncivilised race were by no means a new thing.

During the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, English writers often attempted to justify the colonisation of Ireland. Between 1596 and 1598 for example, Edmund Spenser completed the work *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, taking a very disparaging tone when describing the Irish:

They oppresse all men, they spoile as well the subject as the enemy; they steale, they are cruell and bloodie, full of revenge, and delighting in deadly execution, licentious, swearers and blasphemers, common ravishers of woemen and murtherers of children.⁴³

Interestingly, this piece was not published until 1633, and so provided a refreshed view of the Irish in the run up to the Irish Rebellion in 1641, and may have influenced atrocity material in its aftermath. The suggestion therefore here is that writers of pamphlets were already tapping into preconceived ideas of what the Irish represented in the minds of the English public. In addition to the pre-existing Catholic narrative, the image of the Irish 'was constructed in people's minds in fiercely ideological ways, as part of a struggle which stretched back for generations'.⁴⁴ The stories that spread around England confirmed entrenched beliefs of the Irish Catholic.

⁴² Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy*, p. 149.

⁴³ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (eds.) A. Hadfield and W. Maley, (Oxford, 1997), p.74.

⁴⁴ Shagan, 'Constructing Discord', p. 5.

It is important to note that the Irish were not the only ethnic group that the English viewed with contempt. William Crowne, the Earl of Arundel's official diarist, painted a similar picture in his documentation of their travels in central Europe in 1636. His depressing description of plundered lands and starving refugees left damaged and ravaged by ruthless soldiers painted a very bleak picture of the turmoil created by the Thirty Years War.⁴⁵ Early modern literature also abounded with references to the 'barbarous Turk'; David O'Hara notes that apart from the French and Dutch, it was the Turks who received the most coverage in printed material.⁴⁶ Like the Irish, not only were they seen as a barbaric race, but it was also their religion that was seen as a threat to Christianity. However, of these groups it was still the Irish who were seen to be the most feared. In a letter written by Sir John Temple on 12 December 1641 to Charles I he spoke of the Irish 'furiously destroying all the English, sparing neither sex nor age, throughout the kingdom, most barbarously murdering them, and that with greater cruelty than ever was used among Turks and infidels'.⁴⁷

Moving to consider the British Isles, the Welsh and Cornish were seen to be similarly 'boorish, backward and uncivilised', but less feared, partly because of their shared Protestant faith. As for the Scottish, they were seen to occupy a place slightly above these groups but still described as 'beggarly, mean and grasping', while the Irish found themselves 'languishing at the bottom of the heap'.⁴⁸ Indeed, a hierarchy of sorts seemed to have been created: the English saw themselves as those rightly placed by God as the most powerful and civilised on the Atlantic archipelago, an idea reinforced by years of dominance over these other ethnic groups. When it came

⁴⁵ William Crowne, *A true relation of all the remarkable places and passages observed in the travels of the right honourable Thomas Lord Howard* (London, 1637).

⁴⁶ O'Hara, David A., *English Newsbooks and the Irish Rebellion, 1641-49* (Dublin, 2005), p.16.

⁴⁷ Read, 'Atrocity Propaganda and the Irish Rebellion', p. 236.

⁴⁸ Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 3.

to their opinion of these 'others', Andrew Pettegree has noted that the English had developed a bad name for themselves abroad; foreign visitors had 'commented with almost monotonous regularity on one particular aspect of the English character: their dislike of foreigners'.⁴⁹ While the Irish are arguably seen as the worst, it seems it was part of the national psyche to show mistrust towards the other ethnic groups. Indeed, as will later be assessed, foreigners and strangers were viewed with great suspicion and with the many rumours travelling across the country, their arrival in any given locality would be enough to strike fear into the hearts of the English. Stoye has suggested that this came as a result of a strong sense of national identity, fostered by many years of internal homogeneity.⁵⁰

The portrayal of the Irish in the various ways described had not been an historical constant. The need to populate the Ulster plantations with English and Scottish settlers in the early part of the seventeenth century meant that for approximately thirty years a more positive view of Ireland was promoted. In 1612, Sir John Davies wrote *A discoverie of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued, nor brought under obedience of the crowne of England, untill the beginning of his Maiesties happie raigne* where he painted a very different picture of the country. He states that Ireland 'be a nation of great antiquity and wanted neither wit or valor; and though they had received the Christian faith above 1,200 years since, were lovers of music, poetry and all kind of learning and possessed a land abounding with all things necessary for the civil life of man'. While admitting to a number of negative characteristics, Davies does not blame the 'barbarity' of the Irish for their inability to integrate with the English in the past, explaining that lack of peace and good government had been the real hurdles. 'For the truth is that in time of

⁴⁹ Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London*, (Oxford, 1986), p. 1.

⁵⁰ Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 2.

peace the Irish are more fearful to offend the law than the English or any other nation whatsoever', he states. Davies believed that the English and Irish populations could assimilate, noting that the English were an untamed populous once also. He hopes 'that the next generation will in tongue and heart, and every way else, become English, so as there will be no difference or distinction but the Irish Sea betwixt us'.⁵¹ While he still seemed to note an inherent difference in the development of these two populations, Davies suggests that the Irish were not there to be feared. Such a description certainly seems to serve a purpose, in terms of encouraging people, who would become known as the New English, to settle there. It is also important to note that from Sir Cahir O'Doherty's rebellion in 1608, Ireland remained relatively peaceful up until 1641. During this time it was events on the continent, mainly the Thirty Years War that provided the sensational stories as mentioned above that London's printers relied on to sell pamphlets. Clearly, it could be said that the atrocity stories mentioned above, signified a reporting of events that was far from objective. Portraying the Irish in this manner not only helped to sell pamphlets but it also served a political purpose: to undermine the position of the Charles I.

By depicting the Irish in a barbarous and cruel way, pamphlet writers relied on pre-established notions of what it meant to be Irish and indeed, what represented atrocity. When constructing their material, writers will have had to make a number of considerations. Harris has suggested that for propaganda to work, writers will have had to focus upon the common ground of popular opinion. Only by appealing to 'commonly held values and principles' could a writer hope to catch the attention

⁵¹ Sir John Davies, *A discoverie of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued, nor brought under obedience of the crowne of England, untill the beginning of his Maiesties happie raigne* (London, 1612), p. 272.

of the reader.⁵² O'Hara states that 'to be effective, propagandists must know the sentiments, opinions and prejudices of the audience they are trying to reach, and appeal to people in such a way as to win them over'.⁵³ Furthermore, Ethan Howard Shagan suggests that writers 'could not import new ideas into their pamphlets, but instead had to "gloss, exploit, [and] codify certain pre-existing and free-floating notions about the world"'.⁵⁴ Therefore, by tapping into this pre-existing narrative of the Irishman as cruel and barbaric, writers were merely confirming the innermost thoughts and fears of their audience. Keith Lindley makes the valid point that pamphlets 'were credible not only because Protestant contemporaries believed that Catholics were capable of, if not eager to perform, such acts of barbarity, but also because such acts were committed by the native Irish, commonly regarded by the English as wild and savage who were capable of greater barbarities than the fearsome Turk'.⁵⁵ The combined image of Catholic *and* Irish created a doubly fearful image for the population to contend with, and to the English population, an impending invasion and insurrection made sense.

The spreading of rumours that related to atrocities in Ireland had a vastly debilitating affect upon the political climate of England in the period between the Irish Rebellion and commencement of the English Civil War. The combining of anti-Irish and anti-Catholic polemic caused significant problems for Charles I. True or not, the English population came to believe he was somehow complicit to the actions of the Irish rebels. Although the main aim of a pamphleteer was to make money, the vast majority printed their stories to the detriment of Charles I: it seemed to make business sense to portray the Irish as cruel and barbarous. Indeed, there is no

⁵² Harris, 'Propaganda and Public Opinion', p. 49.

⁵³ O'Hara, *English Newsbooks*, p. 50.

⁵⁴ Shagan, 'Constructing Discord', p. 8.

⁵⁵ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 146.

consensus that all pamphleteers were intent on undermining the King. Shagan states ‘there is no reason to believe that most pamphlets dealing with the IR were intended to motivate people politically’. He continues by saying that ‘while writers may have had axes to grind, most publishers had to sell copies and thus had to be sure that their pamphlets were titillating enough to find readers without being radical enough to drive them away’.⁵⁶ What can be said here though that although many pamphleteers may not have intended to undermine their position of Charles I, by printing these gruesome stories that is exactly what they did. Moreover, there is little reason to assume that the writers themselves did not also believe the stories they were telling. They will have heard the stories from Ireland in similar ways to the rest of the public and there was very little evidence to suggest that the Irish massacres did not occur on the scale many professed. It suited them to make the most of these horror stories, but most shared the mindset of their readers.

As will next be considered, the fear of the Irish is further evident in the way the English population reacted to the rumours they heard. It is possible to see also how the Parliamentarian side continue to reflect and feed this fear through the creation of distinctly anti-Irish policies. In addition to this, by considering the political climate at the time, it is possible to see how wise a decision it was for Charles I to recruit Irish soldiers to aid his war effort.

⁵⁶ Shagan, ‘Constructing Discord’, p. 9.

Chapter Two: Reacting to Rumour: Irish Catholics, Charles I and Parliament,

1642-1646

The torrid rumours that made their way to England in the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion had a profound effect upon the mindset of the country's population. Numerous 'scares' spread across the country, characterised by widespread panic and occasional violence in reaction to the belief that an Irish Catholic attack was imminent. In the weeks and months that followed the Irish Rebellion and preceded the outbreak of Civil War, Parliamentary propagandists continually suggested that the King had been colluding with the Irish rebels to invade England. Consequently, the popularity of Charles I underwent a rapid decline. The problems continued into the Civil War period itself. Following a decline in fortunes in 1643, Charles I found himself in a rather desperate situation. Contending with a lack of troop numbers and the possibility of Parliament taking the strategic upper hand through an alliance with the Scots, he decided to turn to Ireland for help. By negotiating a cessation with the Irish, the King was able to bolster his forces in England with troops returning from Ireland. Taking such a course of action has been seen as a considerable error of judgement: an army was headed to England from Ireland with royal approval, seemingly confirming the fears of the English populace. While Parliament's decision to seek military aid from Scotland can be seen to have hugely benefitted their cause, Charles's decision to look to Ireland for help is seen to have had little effect upon his military fortunes and a ruinous effect upon his reputation with the English people. As the Civil War continued, the MPs at Westminster Parliament repeatedly presented themselves 'as the upholders of the Protestant religion, the rights of Parliament, and the fundamental liberties of the kingdom'.⁵⁷ Their perception of the Irish was

⁵⁷ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 166.

reflected in an ordinance passed in October 1644 that banned the right of quarter for Irish troops. In a war noted for its 'civility', this decision meant that the cruellest atrocities of the conflict were savoured for the 'barbarous' Irish. Catholicism and ethnicity remained closely linked issues in Parliamentary propaganda throughout the war.

From the early seventeenth century a number of scares had swept across England about popish plots to invade the country and slaughter Protestants on a scale witnessed on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572 and during the Thirty Years War in mainland Europe. Such scares were witnessed over a wide area: in Hampshire and Monmouth in 1605, the Midlands in 1613, near Durham in 1615, along the Southeast coast to the Midlands and Northamptonshire in 1630 and in Bristol in 1636.⁵⁸ While they took place countrywide, not once did the forecast of mass slaughter come true, yet a constant fear of Catholics ensured their recurrence. Such scares were prompted by a general fear of Catholicism in general, but depending on where they surfaced different nations would feature as the main focus of alarm, for example those on the West coast of England would tend to expect an invasion from Ireland, the South from the French and Spanish. However, Robin Clifton states that of these ethnic groups it was the Irish who were most feared: the mere presence of migrant workers triggered a number of panics in London in 1640.⁵⁹ One particular instance in Colchester was recorded on 24 June 1640. 'Two Irishmen or strangers' were spotted and 'it was suspected they had a design to fire the town, because they viewed the oldest houses and those most combustible'.⁶⁰ As a result, forty trained men were put on garrison over night to protect the town, raising 'nearly the whole town in great fright'. That night, two Irishmen were found but it turned out that they were not the

⁵⁸ Robin Clifton, 'Popular Fear of Catholics', *Past and Present*, 52 (1971), p. 24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 16, (1640), p. 342.

men initially spotted. The next day the town was awash with fear when a drum was heard, presumed to be fronting an Irish army, but was later found to be merely a young boy.⁶¹ No insurrection took place, but clearly it did not take much to frighten the public.

With the Irish Rebellion of 1641, the spread of rumours of atrocities meant that this fear of Irishmen reached new heights. Events in Ireland, coupled with the barbarous acts witnessed in Germany, seemed to prove that similar atrocities could occur in England. As a result, the number of scares increased dramatically across the nation, in London, Norwich, Bristol, Newcastle and York, the country's largest cities, as well as in smaller communities. In his autobiography, Joseph Lister recalled the terrifying moment when Irish Rebels were rumoured to be fast approaching Pudsey in the West Riding. In 1641, when Lister was approximately twelve or thirteen, a local man named John Sugden arrived in haste at the chapel he was attending and announced: 'Friends! We are all as good as dead men, for the Irish Rebels are coming; they are come as far as Rochdale, and Littleborough, and the Eatings, and will be at Halifax and Bradford shortly'.⁶² Upon hearing the news 'the congregation was all in confusion, some ran out, others wept, others fell to talking to friends, and the Irish Massacre being but lately acted, and all circumstances put together, the people's hearts failed there with fear'. With the young Lister and his family spending the day 'expecting the Cut-throats coming', it later turned out the men in question were in fact Protestants who had recently returned from Ireland.⁶³ The scares that such stories provoked shows that rumour had the power to strike fear into the heart of every Englishman. Indeed, as commented by the Venetian

⁶¹ *CSPD*, 16, (1640), p. 342.

⁶² Abraham Holroyd (ed.), *The Autobiography of Joseph Lister of Bradford, 1627-1709* (Bradford, 1860), p. 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ambassador in England in November 1641 accounts of the rebellion 'aroused strong feeling everywhere'.⁶⁴

It has been suggested by Robin Clifton that the scares of 1641 and 1642 were all the more destabilising because the King's connection to the troubles and the worsening relations between him and Parliament meant that the scares had more political weight than those earlier in the seventeenth century.⁶⁵ Before the Irish Rebellion, Charles I and Parliament had already come to blows over the suggestion that the King had been intending to use an army from Ireland to crush Parliament, an issue that eventually led to the execution of the Earl of Strafford, Thomas Wentworth for treason. Questions were raised over the extent to which the King could be trusted to raise an army against the rebellious Scots. As a result 'the royal prerogative had come under fire and behind the constitutional debate lay the whole question of where power in the state ultimately lay'.⁶⁶ The Irish Rebellion brought a whole host of problems for the King; not only did the rebels announce that they were not fighting against him, they also produced a false ordinance that implicated him in the planning of the uprising. Charles I did little to quell these accusations, waiting from October 1641 until January 1642 before proclaiming the Irish agitators as rebels. By the time this occurred he had already been implicated in the rebellion, which 'dealt a blow to the King's good name from which it would not recover'.⁶⁷ Contemporary opinion seems to confirm the negative effect this had upon the standing of Charles I; the Earl of Clarendon, judged that the claim of Irish insurgents to be acting with the Crown's

⁶⁴ Razzell and Razzell (eds.), *A Contemporary Account*, Vol.2, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Robin Clifton, 'Fear of Popery', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973) p. 162.

⁶⁶ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 162.

⁶⁷ Malcolm, 'All the King's Men', p. 242.

approval 'made more impression upon the minds of sober and moderate men... than could be then imagined or can yet be believed'.⁶⁸

Whether or not Parliament truly believed that an invasion was on its way, it certainly did its best to fan the flames of fear. In reaction to the scares taking place across the country, many pleas were made to Parliament for action to help prepare for an impending invasion. Mercenary Irish soldiers making their way from the continent to Ireland through England and Wales were detained and interrogated at ports; records were made in Middlesex and Westminster detailing the numbers of Irish inhabitants; numerous Irish Catholics and priests were arrested across the country and ships were assigned to patrol the Irish Sea. English and Welsh Catholics were also questioned, had their homes searched, whilst the whole country was ordered to prepare its defences and have trained bands at the ready.⁶⁹ A spate of violent anti-Catholic acts meant that 'Parliament soon – and unexpectedly – had to act to safeguard the property of Catholics and other Royalists from popular confiscation'.⁷⁰ In the North and West of the country anxiety spread over rumours that Catholics were hiding soldiers and military supplies, resulting in house searches that took place over a number of weeks. While the King was constantly accused of collaborating with the Irish rebels and having Catholic sentiments, MPs were presenting themselves as the ones who were taking practical measures to prevent the so-called threat of the Irish becoming a reality. Parliament made it known that they were taking such measures, and in doing so they were able to clearly differentiate themselves from the increasingly suspicious actions of Charles I. At the outbreak of

⁶⁸ Earl of Clarendon, Edward Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641, Vol. 1* (Oxford, 1888), p. 399-400.

⁶⁹ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 161.

⁷⁰ Clifton, 'Popular Fear of Catholics', p. 32.

the English Civil War it is possible to see two markedly different public images of the King and Parliament.

After a relatively successful start to the Civil War campaign for the Royalists, by 1643 the two sides had reached what would prove to be a pivotal moment. Following defeats at the Siege of Gloucester and the Battle of Newbury that year and the rising prospect of Parliament establishing an alliance with the Scots, he had to do something to recapture the initiative. In a letter to the King, the Archbishop of York John Williams stressed the weakness of his position. His English army was ‘small, not like[ly] to increase, and then not to hold out. Your enemies multiply’, he warned.⁷¹ In another letter to the Duke of Ormonde, Lord Lieutenant to Charles I in Ireland, Williams reiterated the urgent need for reinforcements: ‘If the Irish forces come not this way the rebels [Parliament] will gain this country, beginning already to levy forces of our nation [Wales], whereof they never had any before’.⁷² Charles I seemed to take heed of such warnings, commanding Ormonde in April 1643 to negotiate a cessation in Ireland and ‘bring over the Irish Army to Chester’.⁷³ Charles I, commenting later that year in an open letter to the inhabitants of Cornwall, knew full well that he needed such reinforcements to be able to confront what was ‘a potent enemy, backed with... strong, rich and populous cities... plentifully furnished with men, arms, money and provision of all kinds’.⁷⁴

Around the same time, Williams pleaded for one hundred men to be sent from Ireland to bolster the defence of Conway. He seemed to feel little concern about the ethnicity of these troops: ‘I do not care of what country they are, so [long]

⁷¹ Norman Tucker, *North Wales in the Civil War* (Denbigh, 1958), pp 45-6.

⁷² Williams to Ormonde (18 November 1643), in Thomas Carte, *The Life of James, Duke of Ormonde, Vol. 5, New ed.* (Oxford, 1851), p. 516.

⁷³ Sir Charles Petrie (ed.), *The Letters, Speeches and Proclamations of King Charles I* (London, 1935), p. 136.

⁷⁴ *CSPD*, 18, (1641-43), p. 484.

as they come with arms and competency of ammunition'.⁷⁵ Similarly, John Byron, a Royalist commander, had earlier stated that he saw no reason 'why the king should make any scruple of calling in the Irish, or the Turks if they would serve him'.⁷⁶ In both cases there seems to be more concern with the numbers, rather than the ethnicity of these troops. Furthermore, little mention seems to be made of the repercussions such a move could have for relations with the English public or for the morale of their own troops. While it may have been considered a rash tactic to risk creating panic amongst the English once again, it is perhaps reflective of the situation that Charles I found himself in. Not only were the King's troop levels insufficient, increasing reports of mutiny meant that if anything, his forces were on the decline. This seems to be recognised by the military commanders of the King. Daniel O'Neill, an agent of the Royalist George Digby, wrote on 24 February 1644 from Kilkenny: 'if his majesty be not supplied with a very considerable force from hence before the end of April, or assisted by some greater miracle than he had known yet... his condition is such, that he will be forced to a shameful and a destructive peace'.⁷⁷ Such was the deteriorating situation for Charles I, seeking help from Ireland seemed necessary; he did not appear to let the ethnicity of the troops stand in the way of his judgement. It appeared that the King was willing to accept the possibility of a backlash from the population and showed more concern about his lack of troops and the prospect of further military setbacks. He was perhaps right: on 2 July 1644 the Royalists suffered a critical defeat at the Battle of Marston Moor.

The proposal that troops were being brought to England from Ireland was an alarming prospect for the English public. The decision by Charles I to negotiate

⁷⁵ Williams to Ormonde (18 November 1643), in Carte, *Ormonde*, Vol. 5, p. 516.

⁷⁶ Byron to Ormonde (30 January 1644), in Thomas Carte, *A collection of original letters and papers, concerning the affairs of England, from the year 1641 to 1660*, Vol. 1, (Dublin, 1759), p. 39.

⁷⁷ O'Neill to Ormonde (24 February 1644), in Carte, *Ormonde*, Vol. 6, p. 42.

peace with the Irish Confederates and transfer troops from Ireland does not seem very far removed from what many Parliamentarians had previously said he had planned to do earlier. Such an act effectively played into the hands of Parliamentarian propagandists who had already endeavoured to attach labels of popery to the King. Much as in 1641, polemicists played a vital role in the spread of such reports across the country. Memories of the Irish Rebellion were rekindled in an instant; one writer stated that King could not possibly be using such troops for the good of the English people, asking his readers: ‘Do you imagine... the Irish rebels will be [any] more merciful to you, your wives and children then they were to the Protestants in Ireland?’⁷⁸ Another stated that forces sailing from Leinster had ‘a commission to put the English in England that side with the Parliament to the sword, both men, women and children’.⁷⁹ Writers did their best to convey to the English public that upon their arrival the Irish would ‘go to the slaughter in a more miserable manner than at the beginning of the Rebellion’.⁸⁰ Consequently, one writer encouraged the English to unite and protect their ‘native country, to doe his [best] endeavour to withstand and oppose the receiving of any Irish rebels into this kingdome’.⁸¹

There have been various estimates of how many troops came from Ireland to serve Charles I. Joyce Lee Malcolm has suggested that as many as 21,000 men may have made their way across the Irish Sea, a figure dismissed by Stoyale for ‘placing

⁷⁸ *Mercurius Civicus, Londons intelligencer, or, Truth really imparted from thence to the whole kingdome to prevent misinformation*, 23 (26 October-2 November 1643), p. 179.

⁷⁹ *The kingdome weekly post with his packet of letters, publishing his message to the city and country*, 3 (22 November 1643), p. 27.

⁸⁰ *A perfect diurnall of some passages in Parliament, and from other parts of this kingdome*, 19 (27 November 1643), p. 148.

⁸¹ *The true informer continuing a collection of the most speciall and observable passages, which have been informed this weeke from severall parts of his Majesties dominions*, 8 (4-11 November 1643), p. 59.

undue reliance on second-hand and Parliamentary sources'.⁸² Similarly, Pádraig Lenihan has put such a large number down to an overestimation of the numbers who actually arrived in England.⁸³ A figure of approximately nine thousand men seems to be more accurate, largely attributable to the work of John Barratt and Ronald Hutton.⁸⁴ The ethnic composition of these troops has proved harder to determine, with English, Welsh and Cornish, as well as Irish arriving in England. A figure of approximately 2,000 Irishmen has been suggested as a sensible estimate.⁸⁵ There was certainly no precise contemporary knowledge of how many troops made it across the Irish Sea. Robert Baillie commented in late 1643 that 'some thousands of Irish, some call them 3000, some 4000, some 6000,' had landed on the Welsh coast.⁸⁶ He later reported on 14 February 1644 that some 2,000 native Irish had arrived in the port of Bristol.⁸⁷

Parliamentarian propagandists were certainly keen to emphasize the 'Irishness' of these troops, regardless of their actual ethnicity. It was certainly not uncommon for them to be described as one homogenous mass, often 'for the sake of convenience'. Clarendon called the men of the first regiments to reach Cheshire 'the Irish' although he insisted 'there was not an Irishman amongst them'.⁸⁸ In this sense, it may be possible that when Baillie referred to the arriving troops as 'Irish' he may very well have meant merely that they had come from Ireland. In the first weeks of 1644, the term 'English-Irish' comes in to common usage in the press. This term was used to refer to English troops, who had been stationed in Ireland and were

⁸² Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 61.

⁸³ Pádraig Lenihan, *Confederate Catholics at War, 1641-49* (Cork, 2000), pp. 75-76.

⁸⁴ John Barratt, *Cavaliers: The Royalist Army at War, 1642-46* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 139-40, and Ronald Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort, 1642-46* (London, 1999), p.57.

⁸⁵ Barratt, *Cavaliers*, p. 140.

⁸⁶ Robert Baillie, *Letters and journals: containing an impartial account of public transactions, civil, ecclesiastical, and military, in England and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1775), p. 403.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 432.

⁸⁸ Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion*, Vol. 3, p. 315.

returning to their homeland to fight for the King. It could be that this was done to create suspicion towards these men; one newsbook questioned the extent to which these English troops could be trusted having ‘breathed so long the Irish ayre’.⁸⁹ To add to the confusion surrounding the nationality of troops travelling to England, presumptions were often made about those who were found to be non-English speakers. A letter written by the Parliamentarian Sir Samuel Luke reported that ‘I am confidently assured by my scouts that there came in a great number of... men [to Oxford] that could not speak our language and therefore I conceive them to be either Irish or Welsh’.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the policy of Charles I to split his Irish troops amongst his various regiments meant that a spy could presume a whole army to be Irish if they contained even a small proportion of non-English speakers. While modern historians have largely undermined the presumptions made by contemporaries towards the numbers and composition of the troops that came to England, it is more important to recognise that large numbers of Irish troops were believed to be arriving in England and it was these rumours that further undermined the position of the King. Moreover, these reports bore a stark resemblance to the rumours of an impending Irish invasion in 1641.

Despite such efforts being made to rekindle the fear of the Irish, major scares did not recur when troops arrived in England. However, the suggestion has been made that the morale of existing Royalist troops was badly affected by these stories. Stoye has commented that a great number of those troops returning from Ireland had no dedication towards the Royalist cause: ‘there was no particular reason why the English troops who had been sent over to Ireland in 1641-2 should have been expected to favour the King rather than the Parliament when they eventually returned

⁸⁹ *Weekly account*, 18 (28 December - 3 January 1644), p.2.

⁹⁰ H.G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter books of Sir Samuel Luke, 1644-45*, (London, 1963), p. 199.

in 1643-4'. He goes as far to say that fighting against Catholics may very well have entrenched 'zealous Protestantism that was the badge of the Parliamentarians' within the army.⁹¹ While the Irish troops sent to England were those who had been fighting against the Confederates in Ireland, there seemed to be genuine apprehension within the ranks of English soldiers who were returning to their home land to fight alongside Irish soldiers against other English Protestants, encouraging desertion. A scout of Sir Samuel Luke assured him in December 1643 that a large number of the 'English-Irish' in Ralph Hopton's army were 'ready to lay down their armes, saying that they were sent over thither [that is, to Ireland] to fight against Papists, and now they will not fight with them against Protestants'.⁹² Similarly and soon after, Luke was told that these soldiers 'say that they will not fight against the Protestants, insomuch as they [that is, the Royalists] imprison some and others they threaten to hang'.⁹³ Some Royalist troops were abandoning the King's cause as a result of his cessation with the Irish; one officer legitimised his desertion to the Parliamentary cause due to 'the cominge over of the Irish'.⁹⁴ There are however some problems with this argument; Lindley has suggested that Parliamentary propaganda overstated the numbers that actually defected as a result of 'the strangnesse of this project, of bringing over the Irish'.⁹⁵ He goes onto suggest that such anti-Irish feeling, would most likely have been amongst the rank and file Royalist soldiers, but there is a predictable dearth of accounts by men at this level. What can be suggested, however, is that attempts to heighten such fears may have unsettled the soldiers fighting alongside the Irish.

⁹¹ Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 62.

⁹² I.G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, (Oxford, 1947), p. 216.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁹⁴ Lindley, 'Impact of the 1641 Rebellion Upon England and Wales', p. 173.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Another way in which the rumours of the arrival of Irish troops provoked a reaction can be seen in the decision by Parliament in October 1644 to pass a military ordinance stating that no Irish soldier was to be given the right of quarter. Such a decision certainly held propaganda value; with the King seemingly fulfilling the prophecy of an Irish army being brought to English shores, Parliament was once again acting as the defenders of the people. They were the ones seen to be resisting the Irish, they were the ones seen to be preventing the barbarous Irish Catholics from committing barbaric acts on English shores. Clifton sees this as ‘not simply a typical piece of English brutality against the Irish, but a savage reaction to a very real fear that Catholic intervention would first win Ireland and then spill over into England’.⁹⁶ Stoye goes so far as to say that many Parliamentary officers and troops were determined to avenge their fallen countrymen in Ireland in 1641 and so ‘began to pursue a deliberate policy of ‘frightfulness’ against the King’s Irish troops’.⁹⁷ With this military ordinance, the Irish were placed outside the codes of conduct adhered to during most of the English Civil War, a conflict that has been recognised in the past for being ‘uncommonly civil’.⁹⁸ It has been seen as a conflict fought amongst enemies who could ‘live to be friends’ whereby victory would be achieved through civility so that the differences of the opposing sides might be ‘kept in a reconcilable condition’; the Irish however, as the ordinance showed, were not deemed worthy to be part of such an agreement.⁹⁹ Such a move by Parliament came at a time when rumours were being spread that the Irish were enacting atrocities worryingly similar to those that the English believed to have taken place during the Irish Rebellion: ‘It

⁹⁶ Clifton, “An Indiscriminate Blackness?”, p. 117.

⁹⁷ Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 66.

⁹⁸ Blair Worden, ‘Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England’, *Past and Present*, 109, (1985), p. 91.

⁹⁹ Sir William Waller, *Vindication of the Character and Conduct of Sir William Waller* (London, 1793), p. 8.

is written hither the other day from good hands, that some of his Irish troops having taken a castle in Shropshire, and signed a capitulation: notwithstanding, all that did render, to the number of twenty seven men, when they were miserably beaten and wounded, were thrown in a dry pit, and earth cast above them. This burying quick is one of the unheard of barbarities of the Irish'.¹⁰⁰ Not only had the Irish made it to English shores, they were also supposedly committing the atrocities that propagandists had warned may happen in the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion. The military ordinance was therefore presented as a like-for-like response to the barbarity of the Irish.

It has been stated by Will Coster that the military ordinance banning quarter for Irishmen placed them in a very exposed position. As a result of the policy they were 'legally dehumanized and demonized, a group outside the laws of war and therefore uniquely vulnerable to the danger of massacre'.¹⁰¹ This vulnerability certainly showed as some of the worst atrocities of the conflict were saved for the Irish. One of the most shocking of these was the slaughter of one hundred and twenty Irish prisoners following a Parliamentary victory at Cheriton, Hampshire in 1644. After the fall of Shrewsbury in February 1645 thirteen Irish soldiers were hanged, enraging the King's cousin Prince Rupert. He was incensed that these troops had surrendered to quarter and stated that the Parliamentarians had acted 'contrary to the laws of nature and nations'. Interestingly he also states 'that all good men must abhor the circumstances of blood and cruelty caused by the rebellion in Ireland (and all other rebellions) is not applicable to this argument'. It seems he did not believe that people's opinions of what happened in Ireland should stand in the way of maintaining codes of conduct; indeed, he warned that if such actions were to

¹⁰⁰ Baillie, *Letters and journals*, p. 443.

¹⁰¹ Will Coster, 'Massacre and Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War', in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History*, (New York and Oxford, 1999), p. 101.

continue 'the war will become more merciless and bloody than it hath been or any good man or true Englishman could desire it to be'. If such action was to continue he would carry out like for like retribution: 'I will cause for every officer and soldier of mine so treated, the same number of yours that are taken prisoner to be put to death in the same manner'.¹⁰² In revenge for the death of these Irish soldiers, Rupert hanged thirteen captured Roundhead soldiers.

In the case of events at Naseby in 1645, rumour arguably encouraged the slaughter of over one hundred women, believed to be Irish. It had been reported on numerous occasions that Irish women had followed troops across the Irish Sea; one reporter suggested that a band of seven hundred Irish women were following a group of rebels, and 'cut throats apace' in Somerset.¹⁰³ Such stories reawakened rumours that followed the Irish Rebellion, when it was suggested that Irish women had committed worse atrocities than the men. Another writer stated, when reporting the sighting of a Female regiment, that 'when these [women] degenerate into cruelty, there are none more bloody'.¹⁰⁴ Such slaughter at Naseby therefore could be the result of the fear these women provoked. What is interesting here is the shock provoked by stories of atrocity committed against English women in the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion, contrasted with the fear that Irish women provoked. Seemingly, to murder the latter in cold blood was deemed acceptable. In her survey of military codes of conduct during the Civil War, Barbara Donagan states that 'the horrors of the Irish Rebellion, added to religious fears and traditional contempt, appear to have

¹⁰² R.N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton, Vol.1*, (Chester, 1984), pp. 227-228.

¹⁰³ *The Parliament Scout communicating his intelligence to the kingdome*, 32 (26 January-2 February 1644), p. 274.

¹⁰⁴ Anon, *Magnalia dei: A relation of some of the many remarkable passages in Cheshire before the siege of Namptvich, during the continuance of it: and at the happy raising of it by the victorious gentlemen* (London, 1644), p. 18.

legitimated withdrawal of 'humane' rights on a national basis'.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, events of 1641 along with the rumours that further atrocities had taken place in England acted as justification for Parliament to forbid quarter for Irishmen. This happened in a conflict where the codes of soldiers were generally 'subject to the demands of necessity and the laws of war' and the English people were 'still concerned with preserving values and laws more easily applicable in peace'.¹⁰⁶ Propaganda to encourage the spread of rumours, like those mentioned, presented a stark reminder to the English public of the threat the Irish represented. Atrocity was made acceptable against Irish men and women alike in an otherwise 'civil' war, whilst remaining within the boundaries of what the public deemed suitable behaviour.

It is more than likely that Parliament saw the importation of troops from Ireland as a genuine strategic threat that had the potential to re-invigorate Charles I's military campaign. By considering one of the Civil War's most notorious atrocities, conclusions may be drawn to suggest why Parliament then decided to deal with these troops in such a harsh manner. On 23 April 1644, a Royalist ship transferring troops from Ireland was captured by Parliamentary patrols under the command of Richard Swanley, Commander-in-Chief of the fleet in the Irish Sea. Upon returning to Pembroke, the crew on board were given the opportunity to switch sides but those that refused were not afforded the same mercy. Royalist newsbooks displayed shock at what followed; *Mercurius Aulicus* reported that under the orders of the 'barbarous' Swanley, 'the refusers [were] bound... backe to backe and cast... into the Sea'.¹⁰⁷ A week later the same newsbook showed more anger, stating that if the Parliamentary forces 'will but match the barbouressnesse and hypocrisie of this one particular' the

¹⁰⁵ Donagan, 'Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War', p. 94.

¹⁰⁶ Coster, 'Massacre and Codes of Conduct', p. 96.

¹⁰⁷ *Mercurius Aulicus, communicating the intelligence and affaires of the court to the rest of the kingdome*, 18 (4 May 1644), p. 965.

writer continued, 'we'll then grant this is not the most horrible, malicious, groundless Rebellion in the world'.¹⁰⁸

Parliamentarian propagandists saw such actions as retribution for the slaughter that took place during the Irish Rebellion. One writer stated 'the blood thirsty Irish... deserve no quarter, but to be dealt with all here, as they dealt with the Protestants in Ireland'.¹⁰⁹ In the aftermath of the massacre, where approximately seventy Irishmen had been killed, troop shipments were effectively halted. Ormonde reported on 27 May that he had prepared three hundred men to be shipped to England but the events in Pembroke had made the men 'very ferefull to venture upon this voyage... soe that until these seas be cleared... [you] can expect little succor out of Ireland'.¹¹⁰ He later informed another Royalist officer of his reluctance to expose the men to the possibility of a similar fate. While these men eventually made it to England, Stoye states that it was most likely the last substantial shipment of men to reach England, with little over one thousand men making the journey over the Irish sea in the atrocity's aftermath. It could be said therefore that the decision to prohibit quarter, which effectively legitimised wholesale slaughter of Irish soldiers, hugely discouraged them from joining the Royalist cause. Indeed, the Parliamentarian writer George Wither stated that such a policy was necessary to achieve a swift end to the conflict: 'the barbarous Irish will be deterred from coming over so frequently and in such numbers'.¹¹¹

As brutal as it was, the ban on giving quarter effectively neutralised any advantage Charles I could have gained from reinforcements from Ireland. As this event and many of the other atrocities mentioned above showed, the Irish were put in

¹⁰⁸ *Mercurius Aulicus*, 19 (11 May 1644), p. 974.

¹⁰⁹ *Mercurius Britanicus, communicating the affaires of great Britaine for the better information of the people*, 34 (29 April-6 May 1644), p. 270.

¹¹⁰ Carte, *A collection of original letters and papers*, p. 48.

¹¹¹ George Wither, *The speech without doore*, (London, 1644), p. 7.

‘an exposed position if captured by the enemy’, who clearly convinced them that the cause of Charles I was not worth fighting for.¹¹² The memories of the Irish Rebellion of 1641, continually evoked by the Parliamentarians, served to maintain the notion that Charles I could not be trusted and that the Irish were a barbarous people, undeserving of equal treatment in the theatre of war. Indeed, ‘the Irish performed the valuable function of scapegoat against whom anti-Catholic fury could be vented and against whom barbarous instincts, legitimized by claims of reciprocity, could be unleashed with official acquiescence’.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the King continued to show his desperation to find a solution to his ailing military campaign. On 31 July 1645, a month after his shattering defeat at the Battle of Naseby, Charles I still pleaded with the Duke of Ormonde for more troops from Ireland; without them, he exclaimed ‘I am likely to be reduced to great extremities.’¹¹⁴ While the Parliamentary propaganda campaign did not produce the scares seen in the aftermath of 1641, it acted to legitimise the harsh treatment of the Irish in the eyes of the public.

The use of the Irish in Parliamentary propaganda did not end with the defeat of Charles I. In 1646 Sir John Temple published his famous tract entitled *The Irish Rebellion*. Using documents like this, which began to draw on depositions gathered from supposed eyewitnesses in Ireland, it will be possible to see how Parliament and Oliver Cromwell once again manipulated the image of the Irish, this time to justify their invasion in 1649, including the massacres that take place at Drogheda and Wexford.

¹¹² Coster, ‘Massacre and Codes of Conduct’, p. 101.

¹¹³ Donagan, ‘Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War’, pp. 94-95.

¹¹⁴ Petrie (ed.), *Letters, Speeches and Proclamations*, p. 155.

Chapter Three: The Cromwellian Campaign in Ireland: Conquest and Retribution, 1646-1650

In 1649, following the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth, the attention of Parliament moved towards Ireland and Scotland, both deemed to be Royalist threats. While it was hoped that control over Scotland could be established through negotiation, military intervention seemed the only route for the case of Ireland. The Civil Wars had prevented the possibility of a sustained effort to reclaim lost territory but with large numbers of troops and adequate supplies made feasible, the re-conquest of Ireland became a priority. Three years previous to this, the influential and highly partisan work of Sir John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion*, was published. A document that would stand to act as a key reference point in Anglo-Irish debates for the next 200 years, it reminded the English of the need to avenge those that had perished in 1641. Indeed, the ideas of Temple played a crucial role in the extensive public debate over how prudent a campaign to re-conquer Ireland was: England had just come out of a tumultuous period in its history and many believed it was crucial to maintain the stability that many had fought and died to achieve. Interestingly however, there was also an opinion that questioned the extent to which England had the right impose their rule upon the Irish, with concern towards who would be held accountable for events of 1641. While Leveller inspired mutinies caused an embarrassing delay, Oliver Cromwell eventually proceeded to lead this campaign to Ireland, setting sail from Milford Haven to Dublin in August 1649. Cromwell used events in 1641 as justification for the indiscriminate slaughter witnessed at both Drogheda and Wexford, often referring to the many arguments that Temple put forward in his work. This chapter examines how the events of 1641

shaped attitudes towards Ireland and the Irish in 1649 and beyond, reflecting both religious animosity and ethnic tensions.

Before considering the debates that surrounded the military campaign in Ireland and indeed the ways in which events during the Cromwellian campaign were justified, it is important to consider how memories of the Irish massacres were rekindled beforehand. The 1641 depositions, currently held at Trinity College Dublin, consist of sworn statements taken from Protestant refugees. From 28 December 1641 onwards, survivors and supposed eyewitnesses were questioned by a commission of eight clergymen, led by Henry Jones, the author of *A remonstrance of divers remarkeable passages concerning the church and kingdom of Ireland*. While the information that they collected was initially concerned with the property losses suffered by these people, they later moved on to scrutinize the allegations of widespread massacre. The project in its entirety yielded some thirty one volumes of material, totalling over nineteen thousand pages, the majority of which was concerning property offences.¹¹⁵ The sections that focused upon atrocity were later used on numerous occasions, by authors like Sir John Temple, to preserve the memory of the outrages of the Irish. However, it is apparent that writers borrowing from the depositions over this period ‘were prone to ransack them for ammunition than to examine them systematically’.¹¹⁶ This can certainly be used as an apt description of the way in which Temple used the depositions and, indeed, manipulated them to present the Irish in a highly disparaging manner.

While Temple’s work borrows many ideas from Edmund Spenser, Sir John Davies and Henry Jones, he signals a distinct break from past narratives: refusing to blame English government or gentry based rivalries, he focuses quite aggressively

¹¹⁵ Aidan, Clarke, ‘The 1641 Depositions’ in P. Fox (ed.), *Treasures of the Library, Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1986), p. 112.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

upon the ethnicity of the Irish as the reason for the country's tumultuous past and England's failure to establish peace there. Temple commented that it was the 'perverse disposition of the Irish' that had made them resistant to change.¹¹⁷ He goes on to state that their 'irreligion and barbarism' had 'stiffened their necks and hardened their hearts against all the most powerful endeavours of Reformation' and it was this that had 'enraged [the Irish] with malice and hatred against all of the English nation, breathing forth nothing but their ruin, destruction and utter extirpation'.¹¹⁸ Temple saw the troubles that the Irish had endured as their own creation; he certainly had no sympathy towards their cause of fighting for the defence of their lands or religion. He saw the destruction unleashed by the Irish Rebellion as reflecting the very nature of the Irish people.

While echoing the work of political pamphleteers in the aftermath of the rebellion, Temple uses the depositions to bring tales of atrocity back into the public sphere. A section dedicated to 'Some of the most notorious Cruelties, and barbarous Murthers committed by the Irish Rebels, attested upon Oath as they appear in several Examinations' described the worst of the bloodshed. One deponent quoted by Temple said she had 'heard the Rebels say, that they had killed so many English men, that the grease or fat which remained upon their swords... might well serve to make an Irish candle'.¹¹⁹ Similar in style to those sensationalist pamphlets printed directly after news of the massacres filtered into England in 1641, Taylor's account gave particular attention to violent acts committed against women and children to emphasize the barbarity of the Irish once more. James Morgan Read has pointed out that Temple edits the depositions in highly partisan ways, which leaves 'no

¹¹⁷ Sir John Temple, *The Irish rebellion: or, An history of the beginnings and first progresse of the general rebellion raised within the kingdom of Ireland, upon the three and twentieth day of October, in the year, 1641* (London, 1646), p. 9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

possibility of discriminating between hearsay evidence and eye-witness testimony'.¹²⁰ Describing an occasion when a boy was apparently boiled alive, Temple notes that the evidence was 'deposed by Margaret Parkin, as also by Elizabeth Bairsee [previously referred to as Elizabeth Bursell], who saith that the child was twelve years of age, being the child of Thomas Straton of Newtown'.¹²¹ However, the extended deposition taken by Henry Jones states that the women were not eyewitnesses but had merely been 'credibly informed' of the story 'by a great number of people'.¹²² Jones' accounts, many of them only second hand, were manipulated to make them sound more credible; direct evidence from 'eyewitnesses' will certainly have been more believable than tales of hearsay. Clearly, manipulation of the original texts happens for a reason, coming at a time when Ireland starts to become a burning topic in the news once more. In the few years that followed its publication, Temple's *The Irish Rebellion* served to bring memories of 1641 to the forefront of the public mind while heated debates were raging over the possible reconquest of Ireland, acting as a stark reminder to the English public of what it meant to be 'Irish'. John Adamson has suggested in his study of Viscount Lisle's role as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland that one of the key aims of Temple's work was to influence the parliamentary debate that was slowly unfolding when *The Irish Rebellion* was first published in 1646.¹²³

As a result of the drawn out nature of the latter stages of the Civil War period, decisions regarding what Parliament was to do with Ireland had been

¹²⁰ James Morgan Read, 'Atrocity Propaganda and the Irish Rebellion', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2:2 (April, 1938), p. 240.

¹²¹ Temple, *The Irish Rebellion*, p. 101.

¹²² Sir Henry Jones, *A remonstrance of divers remarkeable passages concerning the church and kingdom of Ireland* (London, 1642), p. 67.

¹²³ John Adamson, 'Strafford's ghost: the British Context of Viscount Lisle's Lieutenantcy in Ireland', in Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 141.

significantly delayed. However, the Royalists' final defeat and the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1649 meant that full concentration could again be given to the reclamation of lost territory. The re-conquest of Ireland became a priority for Parliament because it remained a base for pro-Royalists who still posed a threat to their interests. Indeed, Oliver Cromwell saw the Irish threat as one more potent than the Scottish:

I had rather be overrun with a Cavalierish interest than a Scotch interest; I had rather be overrun by a Scotch interest, than an Irish interest; and I think of all of this is most dangerous. If they shall be able to carry on their work, they will make this the most miserable people in the earth, for all the world knows their barbarism.¹²⁴

While the Scots were similarly seen to be inferior to the English, their shared religious beliefs seemed to encourage negotiation over conquest. Cromwell had had his quarrels with Scotland in the past: he was angered by the Scots in the aftermath of the Parliamentary victory at Marston Moor when they claimed to have played the decisive role in winning the battle, coming at a time when Cromwell was painted as a war hero in London. However, as discussions took place over what to do with Scotland, he later stated that military action against them 'was not very unfeasible, but I think not Christian'.¹²⁵ At this point it was deemed preferable to treat the Scots as potentially friends, despite the fact that conflict would come in 1650. Military action seemed more pressing in Ireland; not only was there an apparent need to avenge the deaths of 1641, there was also a vested interest in reclaiming the land

¹²⁴ Wilbur Cortez Abbott, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, Vol. 2* (Cambridge, 1939), p. 38.

¹²⁵ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches, Vol. 1*, p. 678.

many had invested in as a result of the Adventurers Act of 1642. Furthermore, there was felt to be a pressing need to re-establish Parliament's authority throughout the British Isles, especially as every country on the continent had refused to recognise the Commonwealth and saw Charles I's son as the legitimate sovereign. The re-conquest of Ireland would send a definitive message to the regimes doubters about who was in charge.

The decision to send troops to Ireland sparked great debate: after Cromwell was asked to head the expedition in May 1649 numerous pamphlets were published, aimed at discouraging soldiers from fighting. Levellers were generally thought to be behind this campaign, but Norah Carlin has argued that the reluctance of the main leaders to openly commit themselves to opposing the re-conquest suggests that they were concerned not to be perceived publicly as pro-Irish or pro-Royalist.¹²⁶ A key argument against the deployment of troops focused upon the business that the English really had in Ireland. It was certainly seen by some as more important for the troops earmarked for Ireland to stay in England to safeguard what so many had sacrificed their lives for during the Civil Wars:

Is it possible they should seek to tear the peoples Liberties, out of the hand of a strong enemy, and keep our Liberties most Tyrannically in their claws here; this Irish design is as much for common good, as Chinamen come here to buy the ware of their own Country, why doe they not restore the Nation to a general Freedom, and those that have acted it, out of the illegal imprisonment, which these grosse hypocrites have cast upon them... however they hold it most necessary to cry up that voyage the better to be provided to

¹²⁶ Norah Carlin, 'The Levellers and the Conquest of Ireland in 1649', *Historical Journal*, 30:2 (1987), p. 270.

keep this Nation in Slavery, and to enrich and dignifie the whole party of Independents.¹²⁷

Clearly the writer of this passage, which appeared in the newsbook *Militaris*, saw little point to the proposed re-conquest of Ireland. Indeed, they suggest that the Irish be freed from the shackles of English rule and left to run their own affairs.

In April 1649, the tract *Certain queries propounded to the consideration of those who are intended for the service of Ireland* similarly criticised the proposed campaign, showing concern for the position of the Irish. Although no original survives, it was reprinted soon after its original publication in the *Moderate Intelligencer*. One of the key questions asked: 'How can the conquered be accounted Rebels, if at any time they seeke to free themselves, and recover their own?'¹²⁸ It argued that the Irish were well within their rights to defend themselves, their nation and their religion. While the writer stops short of legitimising the Irish Rebellion, he wonders whether the 'rebels' were in fact simply defending their own freedom. If so, Parliament was acting in a hypocritical manner:

Let all the world judge, for a people that desire to live free, must almost equally with themselves, defend others from subjection, the reason is because the subjecting of others make the subdued strive for Dominion over you, since that is the only way you have left them to acquire their common liberty.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Militaris*, 1 (24 April 1649), p. 9.

¹²⁸ *Moderate Intelligencer, impartially communicating martiall affaires to the kingdom of England*, 215 (26 April-2 May 1649), p. 2014.

¹²⁹ *Militaris*, 1, p. 8-9.

Here it is proposed that Parliament were playing two contradictory roles: during the Civil War they had represented themselves as the saviours of the English people from the tyrannical, absolute rule of Charles I, and yet they were proposing now to send troops to impose their own oppressive rule upon the Irish.

There was also some concern that those not responsible for the Irish Rebellion might bear the brunt of reprisal attacks. The Leveller Thomas Prince, committed to the Tower of London with John Lilburne, Richard Overton, and William Walwyn for high treason in March 1649, is thought to have written *The Silken Independents Snare Broke*, which declared: 'As for those murders and cruelties done by any of the Irish, I am against them as much as you, or any men in England can be; yet it's conceived, there is some of the Irish had no hand in the murders'. While he backs the bringing to justice of those responsible for 'inhumane butchery', he was hopeful that 'innocent blood might be saved'.¹³⁰ Another tract, attributed to Miles Corbett, asked 'What have we to do with Ireland, to fight and murther a people and nation... which done us no harm, only deeper to put our hands in blood...? We have waded too far in that crimson stream (already) of innocent and Christian blood'.¹³¹ Evidently, genuine apprehension was felt that all the Irish would be held culpable for the acts of 1641, rather than those actually responsible.

Many of these arguments were strongly refuted in pro-Parliamentary literature, with frequent reference to the barbarism of the Irish. As one pamphleteer asked, 'may not it be reasonable to tame suche wild beasts had they never been in any kinde so cruell and bloody to the English'.¹³² The Irish were often seen as undeserving of any mercy. In its reply to appeals for mercy for the Irish, *Moderate Intelligencer* issued a harsh retort:

¹³⁰ Carlin, 'The Levellers and the Conquest of Ireland in 1649', p. 270.

¹³¹ Anon, *The Souldiers Demand* (Bristol, 1649), pp. 12-13.

¹³² *Moderate Intelligencer*, 215, p. 2015.

What content is there to have Foxes, or Wolves, or Bears, in chains, unless in this, that the tame and usefull Beasts are preserved thereby from danger? And considering the pains and cost England hath been at that way, and the little fruit, it will be discretion, to destroy such game, that by art and industry cannot be made usefull to itself, nor others, is fit for destruction.¹³³

The animalistic attributes that had long been tagged upon the Irish made it seem that discussion and negotiation were impossible, and that force was the only language the Irish understood: speaking of the liberty and rights of the Irish was an absurdity.

One of the most influential anti-Irish tracts at the time was John Milton's *Observations upon the Articles of Peace*. It was printed as a response to the agreement signed between the Duke of Ormonde and Confederate leader Owen Roe O'Neill in January 1649, which proposed the independence of the Irish. Milton's acerbic response, printed on 16 May 1649, criticised the preposterous notion of the toleration of Catholicism and freedom of the Irish, much like John Temple had done, reiterating the need to avenge the deaths of 1641. He angrily stated that 'no true borne English-man, can so much as barely reade them [the Articles of Peace] without indignation and disdain' when considering the 'mercilesse and barbarous massacre of so many thousand English'.¹³⁴ In fact, Thomas N. Corns goes so far as to suggest that the piece works as 'pre-emptive justification' for the events that would later follow at Drogheda and Wexford.¹³⁵ Milton vehemently supported the re-conquest of

¹³³ *Moderate Intelligencer*, 217 (10-17 May 1649), p. 2044.

¹³⁴ Merritt Y. Hughes (ed.), *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 3 (New Haven and London, 1962), p. 301.

¹³⁵ Thomas N. Corns, 'Milton's Observations upon the Articles of Peace: Ireland under English eyes', in David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (eds.), *Politics, poetics and hermeneutics in Milton's prose*, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 123.

Ireland as a means of bringing civility to a land of barbarity. Thomas Waring took a slightly more radical approach: describing the Irish as 'merely of a kind of reptilia... creeping on their bellies and feeding on the dust of the earth,' he did not believe reconquest was enough.¹³⁶ There was apparently 'no safety in cohabitation with them', and any invading English party could 'warrantably and righteously endeavour the extirpation of them'.¹³⁷

Clearly, on both sides of the debate strong views were being vented and this spilled over into the wider unrest that was growing within the army. Discontent had arisen in relation to arrears of pay that went back as far as 1642 and many were reluctant to fight in Ireland without guarantees being made about owed money. With Leveller agitators mixing the humanitarian concerns mentioned above with the worries of the English soldiers, propaganda was spread amongst the rank and file members of the army. As a result, unrest began when the four Foot and Horse regiments were chosen to be sent to Ireland and several hundred soldiers refused to fight. This unrest reached its peak on 1 May when the regiment led by Colonel Scroop reached Salisbury but refused to continue its march to the Western coast. When support was shown by soldiers from the regiments of Colonel Harrison and Major General Skippon, the whole campaign was put into doubt. Despite 1,200 soldiers mutinying, the band were tracked down by a force of 4,000 men led by Cromwell and subdued on 14 May at Burford, ending any threat they posed. Minor trouble continued however as desertion remained a problem and soldiers were herded to Western ports to be sent to Ireland, many still refusing to travel. Despite the many voices that argued against the campaign in Ireland, 12,000 men were still

¹³⁶ Thomas Waring, *A brief narration of the plotting, beginning & carrying on of that execrable rebellion and butchery in Ireland* (London, 1650), pp. 41-42.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

sent over the Irish Sea in August 1649. The rights of the Irish were dismissed, and the political, military and economic needs of the Commonwealth prevailed.

Before departing for Ireland, John Maudit published an open letter to Cromwell, stating the following: ‘You are sent over not to harm and oppress the innocent, but to subdue and chastise the rebellious and take an account of the cruel massacres and abundance of blood of the Lord’s own dear ones which they have shed’.¹³⁸ Here we can see the vast importance of works like Temple’s *The Irish Rebellion* in sustaining the memory of events of 1641: ‘it had lost nothing in the intervening eight years and was certainly believed implicitly by Cromwell amongst others’.¹³⁹ Cromwell’s mandate in Ireland was clearly seen to wreak revenge as a high priority against those who had been behind the 1641-rebellion, but Maudit, like those mentioned above, also shows concern for those who were not a part of the massacres. Two events that have been hotly debated in this regard are the massacres that took place at Drogheda and Wexford. Historians have been split as to the reasons for the slaughter of nearly 5,000 people at the hands of Cromwell’s men. Robin Clifton has attacked those who have referred to Cromwell as a war criminal, instead suggesting that he followed established codes of conduct, while others have proposed that through Cromwell’s own comments it is possible to see how he saw such deaths as retribution for the massacres that occurred during the Irish Rebellion.¹⁴⁰ A declaration made by Cromwell, in response to the meeting of Irish clergy at Clonmacoise who had asked the Irish population to unite against the common enemy, evidently shows the latter: ‘We are come to ask an account of the innocent blood that hath been shed; and to endeavour to bring them to an account...

¹³⁸ John Maudit, *The Christian souldiers great engine, or The mysterious and mighty workings of faith*, (Oxford, 1649).

¹³⁹ Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell, Our Chief of Men*, (London, 1973), p. 328.

¹⁴⁰ Clifton, “An Indiscriminate Blackness?”, p. 118.

who, by appearing in arms, seek to justify the same'.¹⁴¹ Cromwell evidently wanted justice to be served for the Protestant lives in 1641 but it is clear he did not hold every Irishman responsible. Upon arrival in the country, Cromwell declared on 24 August that none of his soldiers were to cause trouble for the peasant population and from a purely tactical point of view this made a great deal of sense. If the army was to avoid starvation and not become overly reliant upon supplies from England, it needed at least a measure of co-operation from the country-folk.¹⁴² When a number of soldiers disobeyed this order, they were hanged publicly to re-enforce this edict. In this we therefore see a degree of compassion towards the Irish: clearly Cromwell was not on a mission of complete vengeful genocide.

Cromwell's first priority in Ireland was the capture of Drogheda, a Confederate stronghold north of Dublin. Garrisoned by 2,600 men, the exact ethnic mix of soldiers has proven hard to determine, but what is known is that senior officers were predominantly English, along with the Commander, Sir Arthur Aston, a Catholic Royalist. Having laid siege on 3 September, a summons for surrender was rebuffed a week later. According to established codes of conduct in relation to siege warfare used across Europe at the time, rejecting such a request would forfeit the lives of all within that garrison if they were defeated. Safe passage would usually be guaranteed for soldiers if a summons for surrender was accepted. In view of that, after Cromwell's men forced entry, orders were given for no quarter to be offered to any of the garrisons soldiers. This resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 men, who were 'butchered as they stood'.¹⁴³ In accordance with these codes of conduct, it has been argued that Cromwell was well within his rights to authorise such a command.

¹⁴¹ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p. 205.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 111 -112.

¹⁴³ Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1656, Vol.1*, (London, 1903), p. 119.

However, in the aftermath of the slaughter at Drogheda, Cromwell saw the 2,000 deaths, as appropriate revenge for 1641. He described it as ‘a righteous judgment of God on these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood’.¹⁴⁴ Samuel Gardiner suggests that with the massacres of 1641 in mind, Cromwell’s decision to prohibit quarter ‘leapt lightly from his lips’.¹⁴⁵ Cromwell later went on to state that he hoped events at Drogheda would ‘tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret’.¹⁴⁶ While Cromwell hoped that these deaths would prevent further bloodshed, he saw his actions as justified retribution for 1641.

A few weeks later, Cromwell decided to switch his attention to the key southern port of Wexford. After laying siege, he again issued a summons for surrender on the 3 October, and protracted negotiations took place over the next week or so. However, in confusing circumstances and without the order of Cromwell, his troops proceeded to scale the town walls and slaughter its inhabitants, again resulting in over 2,000 deaths. Despite clearly losing control of his soldiers, Cromwell’s only regret it appears was the plunder and destruction to the city, rather than the cold blooded nature of the deaths: ‘I could have wished for their own good, and the good of the garrison, they had been more moderate’.¹⁴⁷ He also tried to put a positive spin on the massacre, pointing out that it had created space for new inhabitants: Cromwell ‘wished that an honest people would come and plant here’.¹⁴⁸ In a sense, Cromwell seems able to justify massacre quite easily. The example of Wexford can be seen to strongly break codes of conduct deemed suitable for

¹⁴⁴ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p.127.

¹⁴⁵ Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, Vol.1, p. 119.

¹⁴⁶ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p. 127.

¹⁴⁷ Fraser, *Chief of Men*, p. 345.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

European conduct in war: Cromwell loses control of his men, who go on to kill the town's inhabitants in cold blood. Rather than condemning the actions of his soldiers he states in a letter to William Lenthall, Speaker of Parliament at the time, on 14 October 1649 that the massacre was again a result of God's judgement upon the Irish:

We intending better to this place than so great ruin... yet God would not have it so... by an unexpected providence, in His righteous justice, brought a just judgement upon them, causing them to become a prey to the soldier, who in their piracies had made preys of so many families, and made with their bloods to answer the cruelties which they had exercised upon the lives of divers poor Protestants.¹⁴⁹

Once again, Cromwell justifies slaughter in relation to the Irish massacres of 1641: although he had lost control of his troops, God decided the fate of those within the city walls of Wexford as punishment for the events eight years previous. Almost hypocritically, Cromwell refrains from condemning the actions of his own soldiers as barbaric.

Cromwell's campaign in Ireland contains a number of contradictions in terms of what he states publicly and how he acts out his feelings. The declaration he made to the Irish people when he first arrived in Ireland had stated: 'We come to break the power of a company of lawless rebels, who having cast off the authority of England, live as enemies to human society; whose principles (the world hath experience of)

¹⁴⁹ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p. 142.

are, to destroy and subjugate all men not complying with them.¹⁵⁰ Cromwell saw the rebels of 1641 and those that engaged with him militarily in 1649 as one and the same. Instead of trying to hunt down those actually responsible for the atrocities he allows the killing of anyone who tried to resist him. The ways in which he tried to justify the slaughter of so many at Drogheda are revealing, for first, the area was not one affected by the troubles of 1641 and secondly, those in the castle were predominantly English Protestants who had been posted in the country and had remained loyal to the King. These people became the focus for indiscriminate slaughter. Few, if any, of the troops garrisoned at Drogheda could have taken part in the massacres, particularly the numerous English soldiers and those from Ormonde's regiment who had been raised in Kilkenny. At Wexford there was certainly no way of telling who was and who was not involved in the Irish Rebellion. There certainly seems to be a confused logic in Cromwell's efforts to avenge the deaths of 1641 and yet in the words of Gardiner: 'to Cromwell, as to the majority of Englishmen of his time, every Irishman, and still more every English defender of the Irish cause, had made himself an accomplice in the misdeeds of certain Irishmen'.¹⁵¹

Criticism towards the conduct of Oliver Cromwell in Ireland is largely a modern day phenomenon: upon his arrival back in England the leader was praised for his work in Ireland, having inflicted crucial defeats upon the Confederate forces that effectively neutralised the Royalist threat. Cromwell's actions certainly encouraged hatred from the Irish, for example the legend of 'Cromwell's curse' still holds resonance today. However, no explicit condemnation for his actions was voiced in England. The fact that he returned a hero shows that in the eyes of the English, the slaughter of those at Drogheda and Wexford was deemed justifiable.

¹⁵⁰ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol.2, p. 205.

¹⁵¹ Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth*, Vol.1, p. 125.

Conclusion: The Legacy of 1641

In his study *Atrocity Propaganda and the Irish Rebellion*, James Morgan Read stressed the importance of the study of atrocity stories. He refers to the First World War, the Boer War and the Spanish Civil War as examples of where such tales had been deliberately manipulated to arouse hatred. Indeed, writing in April 1938, less than eighteen months before the Second World War, little was he to know that the world was about to witness some of the most brutal acts of atrocity witnessed in history. In more recent years, conflicts in Vietnam, Iraq and Palestine have been awash with rumours of atrocity. Rumours and, indeed, memories of atrocity have continued, and will continue, to have profound effects upon public opinion and governmental reaction in modern day politics. The Irish Rebellion continues to provoke interest from modern day historians: the current project taking place at Trinity College, Dublin, in conjunction with Cambridge University and Aberdeen University, aimed at digitising the depositions of 1641 shows a great interest in an event that has proven to be central to Anglo-Irish relations for over 350 years. Such is the importance of studying atrocity today, the Irish massacres retain their relevance.

Through studying the events of 1641, it is possible to see the way in which rumour in regards to acts of atrocity can be manipulated to stimulate hatred towards a people and justify harsh political actions. Clearly, the events of 1641 had different political effects at different points during the 1640s. In the aftermath of the Irish Rebellion, the spread of rumours that focussed upon the massacre of English Protestants and the possibility that similar events could occur in England, evidently put great fear into the hearts of the country's public. This seriously undermined the position of Charles I, though almost unintentionally. Not only was rumour

uncontrolled and unregulated, in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion few were using the news for political gain. Such was the public craving for sensationalist stories, writers saw the opportunity to profit: it was certainly unfortunate on the King's part for these stories to undermine his position in this manner. The production of anti-Irish narratives and previous events on the continent made the alleged slaughter seem believable and an impending insurrection plausible. It could be said that it was at this stage that the myth of the Irish massacres was at its most potent. Along with the depositions that were collected, printed material seemingly confirmed the stories many had heard by word of mouth. It is certainly difficult to see how such a memory could have been sustained without the press; indeed, the Civil War is well known for being the first major conflict where political propaganda was used on such a wide scale. It gave life to the Irish massacre myth in its crucial conception period and helped sustain a memory that became engrained in the public conscience.

The rumours of 1641 and 1642 provided a strong basis from which the Parliamentarians were later able to weaken the position of Charles I. The King's decision during the Civil War to look to Ireland for reinforcements would have been a sound tactical idea, had it not been for 1641. In a similar way, it is difficult to see how Parliament would otherwise have been able to justify the ban on quarter for Irish troops. While the rumours and the consequent propaganda were not driven by political designs, rumour soon began to be used to manipulate the outcome of particular situations. As a result of the stories that were spread in the aftermath of 1641, the King's actions played into the hands of polemicists. While fresh rumours of the arrival of Irish soldiers did not cause the levels of panic seen in 1641, they were still used to rationalize further atrocity. The differences between what it meant

to be English and Irish were repeatedly reinforced; this is particularly interesting given that England was undergoing a form of identity crisis itself. With the two sides fighting to establish their view of what it meant to be English, Parliamentarians' ability to suggest that Charles I was in alliance with the Irish, the 'other', must have led the public to question the very Englishness of the Royalist side.

While the Cromwellian campaign was primarily driven by political and economic imperatives, negative perceptions of the Irish and memories of 1641 clearly influenced his conduct. They played a key role in legitimising the mass slaughter at Drogheda and Wexford. It is fair to say that Cromwell believed what almost every other Englishman believed: 'His belief in English innocence and his exaggeration of Irish crime were common to all who thought or spoke on the subject', Gardiner states, 'He had the mind of England as well as its sword at his disposal'.¹⁵² Indeed, after a call from Irish priests for their countrymen to unite against the 'common enemy' on 14 January 1650, Cromwell once again made his feelings known, lambasting Irish clergymen, blaming them for the years of strife: 'You, unprovoked, put the English to the most unheard-of and most barbarous massacre (without respect of sex or age) that ever the sun beheld'.¹⁵³ He blamed the Irish rebels for all the troubles of recent years, much as Sir John Temple had done with his piece *The Irish Rebellion*. The distinct lack of any contemporary condemnation of Cromwell's conduct in Ireland shows that his actions were deemed to be acceptable: retribution for the Irish massacres in an eye-for-an-eye manner was judged legitimate by the English public. Not only the Irish massacres themselves but also the need for revenge was very much at the forefront of the English people's minds. This study has shown that hostility was based on a combination of both

¹⁵² Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth, Vol.1*, p. 149.

¹⁵³ Abbott, *Writings and Speeches, Vol.2*, p. 198.

religious *and* ethnic tensions, both of which were powerfully reinforced by rumour and propaganda.

Kathleen Noonan goes as far as to suggest that for the next two hundred and fifty years Sir John Temple's view of the Irish remained dominant, with his work *The Irish Rebellion* being re-printed eight times up until 1812 to coincide with political events.¹⁵⁴ She also cites the work of Alfred Webb, vice-president of the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association, who stated in 1887 that Temple had created a work that had 'perhaps brought more misery on our country than any other book ever published has on any other country'.¹⁵⁵ Discussions surrounding the Irish massacres played a key role not only in the political discussions of the 1640s, but for many years after. Further research into the reasons for these reprints would no doubt help towards a greater understanding of the legacy of both the work of Temple and the Irish Rebellion itself. If the collective memory of these events had not been sustained it is hard to ascertain whether the initial quarrel between Charles I and Parliament would have led so quickly to war, whether the King's decision to bring over Irish troops would have been so badly received and whether Cromwell would have been able to justify the slaughter of those at Drogheda and Wexford. Rumours and propaganda in the wake of the 1641 rebellion left Anglo-Irish relations deeply scarred, with consequences that were to last for many generations.

¹⁵⁴ Kathleen M. Noonan, "'The Cruell Pressure of an Enraged, Barbarous People": Irish and English Identity in 17th Century Policy and Propaganda', *The Historical Journal*, 41:1 (March, 1998), pp. 175-177.

¹⁵⁵ Alfred Webb, *The Irish Question: The Alleged Massacre of 1641* (London, 1887), pp. 19-20.

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