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Religious Refugees or Confessional Migrants? Perspectives from Early Modern Ireland

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Abstract: Early Modern Ireland was a society deeply influenced by contrasting currents of mobility. Indeed, together with the Netherlands, it can be suggested that Ireland was the Western European society most shaped by confessional migration. Uniquely in Europe, the kingdom witnessed the effective replacement of its existing elites by immigrants whose religious affiliation marked them out as distinct from the mass of the inhabitants. As migrants into Ireland, Protestants derived substantial advantages from their religious identity. Ironically, however, it was the moment of their forced flight in 1641–42 which became a touchstone of historical memory and identity for this community, commemorated by an annual church service on 23 October, the date of the outbreak of the original rebellion. Similarly, for the Irish military, merchants and clerics who constituted the backbone of a very significant Irish Catholic diaspora during the Early Modern period, an inheritance of religious persecution became a vital and cherished aspect of identity and a critical aspect of the perception of them by their host societies, thus blurring the lines between the categories of religious refugees and confessional migrants.

Keywords: confessional migrants, Ireland, refugees, 1641 rebellion

Early Modern Ireland was a society deeply influenced by contrasting currents of mobility. Indeed, together with the Netherlands, it can be suggested that Ireland was the Western European society most shaped by confessional migration.¹

¹ There is a rich Dutch literature in this regard: see in particular the analysis of the radicalization of Dutch Catholicism in exile in Geert Janssen, *The Dutch Revolt and Catholic Exile in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) and *idem*, “The Republic of the Refugees; Early Modern Migrations and the Dutch Experience,” *Historical Journal* 60 (2017): 233–252 which examines how the arrival of thousands of refugees in the United Provinces helped to generate a discourse which interpreted religious exile in heroic terms. The southern linkages of support for Catholics in the United Provinces are explored in Paul Arblaster, “The Southern Netherlands

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Uniquely in Europe, the kingdom witnessed the effective replacement of its existing elites by immigrants whose religious affiliation marked them out as distinct from the mass of the inhabitants. This in turn precipitated significant Catholic migration out of the island in the course of the long seventeenth century. Yet the role played by religion in currents of Irish migration was by no means simple and although both Protestant and Catholic migrants at different times made much of the religious persecution to which they had been subjected, it is evident that religion acted as part of a complex dialectic in interaction with several other factors in promoting mobility.

As Alexander Schunka has noted, the impact of religious persecution has been one of the most salient element of studies of Early Modern European migration, resulting in the long term survival of images derived from the self images of Early Modern Protestant exiles.² That in and around a million Europeans have been identified as driven into exile for confessional reasons certainly means that this remains a phenomenon of great significance.³ Yet other estimates would suggest that this figure perhaps constitutes something in the region of a mere one per cent of the mobile Europeans who crossed borders within the continent during the Early Modern period. Religious exiles were also dwarfed in numbers by the millions of African slaves transported by Europeans to the Americas during the same timeframe.⁴ Thus it might be suggested that historiographical focus on the topic of outright persecution and exile carries the risk of distorting understanding of the relationship between confessional identity and migration in two different ways. The first of these is perhaps to concentrate too exclusively on the religious factors which impelled the victims of confessional coercion to migrate rather than situating it within a wider panoply of mutually-influencing factors.⁵ Studies of the mobility of Jews and New Christians out of, within and

Connection: Networks of support and patronage,” in *Catholic Communities in protestant states*, eds. Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk Van Nierop and Judith Pollmann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 123–38. Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt: Exile and the Development of Reformed Protestantism* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1992) examines the manner in which Emden became a centre from which Dutch Calvinist exiles were able to sustain a challenge to Catholic authority in the Low Countries.

2 Alexander Schunka, “Immigrant Petition Letters in Early Modern Saxony,” in *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. B. Elliot, D. Gerber and S. Sinke (New York: Palgrave US, 2006), 271–90 (271–72).

3 Jesse Spohnholz and Gary Waite, “Introduction,” in *Exile and Religious Identity, 1500–1800*, ed. Jesse Spohnholz and Gary Waite (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 1–7 (2).

4 Katharine Donato and Donna Gabaccia, *Gender and International Migration: From the Slavery Era to the Global Age* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2015), 57.

5 David van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), offers a brilliant analysis of the interweaving of socio-

into Iberia in the Early Modern period, for instance, indicate the immense complexity of choices and patterns which obtained. It is clear that by no means all Jews left Spain in the face of the expulsion orders of 1492 and many of those who did leave initially, in particular to Portugal, seem subsequently to have returned and accepted conversion after the forced baptisms ordered by Manuel I in 1497. In a similar way, not all the New Christians who elected to leave Iberia eventually embraced Judaism, even if fear of the Inquisition seems to have been a motivating factor in their migration. And while many of the New Christians eagerly sought to recover a Jewish identity in exile, a significant number of them, or their offspring, seem to have been at least tactically willing to undergo baptism if their commercial activities subsequently prompted a return to Iberia.⁶ Second, an emphasis on flight as a response to direct persecution may also tend to obscure the importance of religion as a factor in promoting mobility, influencing the migratory choices and the subsequent adaptations of the tens of millions of Europeans who moved across borders in the continent in the course of the Early Modern period. In Germany, for instance, a city such as Durlach drew the considerable bulk of its immigrants from Protestant territories, some of whom travelled considerable distances but relatively few arrived from the neighbouring Catholic Baden-Baden. Immigrants from the Rhineland to Berlin, on the other hand, tended to come from the scattered Protestant territories in the area and these migrants journeyed a significant distance to reach the city.⁷ In these instances, the original decision to migrate probably had relatively little to do with religious affiliation but the choice of destination was evidently inflected by the confessional identity of the migrants and their adaptation to their new environment was almost certainly influenced by their interaction with the religious structures of the cities in question.

Permanent exile provoked by direct coercion represented the extreme of a wide spectrum of confessional mobility in Early Modern Europe. There can be no doubt that migration whether short or long term was a frequently-employed strategy by Early Modern populations in the face of hostile confessional pressure, or even simply uncongenial local circumstances. As Godly Protestants

economic and religious factors in patterns of migration, together with a rich analysis of the psychological impact and the creativity of exiles in forging narratives of identity.

6 Henry Kamen, "The Mediterranean and the Expulsion of Spanish Jews in 1492," *Past & Present* 119 (May, 1988): 30–55; Jonathan Ray, "Iberian Jewry between West and East: Jewish Settlement in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009): 44–65 (46–47); David Graizbord, "Historical Contextualization of Sephardi Apostates and Self-Styled Missionaries of the Seventeenth Century," *Jewish History* 19 (2005), 287–313.

7 Steve Hochstadt, "Migration in Preindustrial Germany," *Central European History* 16 (1983): 195–224 (216–17).

unhappy with what they considered an imperfectly-reformed church establishment, lay English Puritans might travel up to twenty miles to hear sermons by particular divines.⁸ In Upper Styria and Upper Carinthia in the first half of the seventeenth century, it is evident that the proximity of the Hungarian border helped cushion Habsburg pressure on Lutheranism, as even peasants proved capable of travelling to attend services in a jurisdiction where the dynasty's coercive measures could not be implemented.⁹ This pattern was replicated for different confessions across the religious mosaic of the Holy Roman Empire. In the same time frame Hungarian Catholics also noted with disfavour that the ramping up of pressure on Austrian and Bohemian Protestants was resulting in significant more long-term migration, which the palatine of the kingdom, Miklos Eszterhazy, described intemperately in 1633 as the expulsion of foreign faeces into Hungary.¹⁰ Yet Early Modern Hungary was also witness to other perhaps more complex confessional movements. Following the Turkish conquest of central Hungary in the sixteenth-century, there was a significant displacement of the *Magyar* population north. This in turn opened the way to the migration of Southern Slavs, predominantly Orthodox in religion but including also some Catholics, into the Turkish-occupied portion of the medieval kingdom. Direct religious persecution was certainly not the predominant factor in these movements.

Such long-term migration was both a more dynamic and more disruptive process. Eszterhazy's bitterness was probably heightened by the confluence of ethnicity and religious difference, two ascribed categories of belonging, in the persons of these immigrants. This was not an infrequent occurrence in Early Modern Europe but it raises a series of questions concerning the complex relationship between the ethnic, social and confessional identities of both Early Modern migrants and their host societies. It is evident that religion could underpin ethnic/national differences and thereby legitimate hostility but it could also provide a bridge to the host community and foster sympathy. The flip-side of Esterhazy's disdain for Protestant newcomers to Hungary was the confessional welcome which could be extended to them by the still numerically dominant Reformed and Lutheran population of Royal Hungary.

A number of factors can be identified which tended to foreground the importance of the religious element of Early Modern migrant identity. The utility to migrants, not least psychological, in terms of dignifying personal choices by

⁸ Roger Thompson, "Early Modern Migration," *Journal of American studies* 25 (1991): 59–69.

⁹ Thompson, "Early Modern Migration," 186, 227–28, 230, 232, 244–46.

¹⁰ Memorial of Miklós Eszterházy, April 7, 1633, Magyar Kancelláriai Levéltár, Litterae Palatinorum, 1614–1765, A21, 144, Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest.

associating them with a higher purpose and commitment was probably a factor.¹¹ This process also opened avenues to link personal and community experiences to wider providential patterns of meaning. For Sephardim, the chronicle of Elijah Capsali (1483–1555) allowed the mapping of the movement of Iberian Jews into the Ottoman empire to serve as evidence of God's continuing compassion for his Chosen People even as Christian Europe became more intolerant and hostile.¹² In addition, it is something of a truism of modern sociological research that increased religiosity is itself frequently a consequence of migration. Particularly in the case of forced migration, spirituality has been seen to function as a vital psychological support for refugees but even unforced migrants can in find in religion a whole series of resources, both social and cultural, to enable them to deal with their new environments. In the Early Modern period, given the salience of religion in all articulations of community and difference, in the provision of transferable norms, and the creation of explanatory frameworks in which to understand the world, this tendency was naturally heightened. In this regard, it is noteworthy too that the transformation of the religious culture of Early Modern Europe was itself largely mediated by internal migrants, clerics who had gone to universities before returning to pastoral activity in sometimes different localities. Early Modern migration, therefore, took place in an environment where religion was already acting as a solvent on purely local identities and attachments, however powerful these still remained.

In the remainder of this article I examine two currents of migration in Early Modern Ireland, one Protestant and one Catholic. In both instances, the migrants themselves, and others, often chose to heighten the religious dimension of their mobility while downplaying other aspects. To arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the role of religion in their migratory experience, it is necessary to tease out the context in which certain aspects, most notably religious victimization, came to be highlighted.

In the winter of 1641–42, thousands of Protestants domiciled in Ireland were forced from their homes by a series of attacks by the Catholic population. Many grisly murders certainly occurred. Stripping of clothing was common with the result that many subsequently died of exposure in a harsh winter as they tried to make their way to safe havens. Those who survived in their depositions bitterly recorded many examples of overt religious hostility. Richard Belshire, for instance, driven out of county Waterford noted his assailant

¹¹ In this regard see the excellent discussion in van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile*: 82–96, 164–76.

¹² Jonathon Ray, "Iberian Jewry between West and East: Jewish Settlement in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009): 44–65 (48).

tooke the deponents new testament & first opening it spread it vpon the fire and burnt it & kept his foot vpon it, that it might be burnt the sooner, & in that action sayd of the booke that this is the thing that offends me.¹³

In Armagh, William Duffield deposed:

And this deponent further sayth that it was Comonly reported amongst the Irish that they hadd authoritie from England to wynn their lands againe & inhabite them if they cold that the Protestants *were divells* & served the devill: And *some of* the Rebels tooke from this deponents wiffe a byble and a sermon booke, tore them in peeces & threw them away.¹⁴

Again in Waterford, Elizabeth Hooper recalled how her

husband comeing along with the women and children through St Johns gate of Waterford [...]one Cary (whose *Christian* name she knoweth not) formerly a protestant & free school-master of the dioces of Waterford aforesaid (but then turned papist) strooke the deponents said husband with his habbord sayeing Ah Traytour [...] But soone after this deponent among the rest) being sent downe to Passadge aforesaid she *there* obserued one of the rebels (whose name shee knoweth not) teareing the singeing Psalmes out of this deponents Bible or Testament & shee reproueing of him for doeing soe, one Mr Butler then present tould this deponent I am sory (quoth he) honest woman that you are soe deluded, for there is nothing in that booke but *the* devills Inventions.¹⁵

In the same county, Thomas Muncke estimated his total losses to amount to

the some of foure hundred and Ten pownds ... And lastly this deponent saieth that hee was Robd by the hands and Meanes of Robert ffreny of Ballikedy in the County of Killkeny gent & Now out in Actuall Rebellion and the said Robert ffreny three dayes after this deponent payd him his Rent was the Man Amongst others whose Names he knoweth not that Robbed and dispoyled him of his aforesaid goods and Chattells And this deponent further saieth that his aforesaid land lord promised him his said aforesaid Cattell againe if soe be that this deponent would turne from his protestant Religeon and goe to Mass.¹⁶

From the neighbouring county of Wexford William Whalley deposed:

in the begining of the Rebellion when the said rebels had robbed and stript not only him this deponent and his wife and 4 children *but* at least 140 more of English protestants his

¹³ "Deposition of Richard Belshire," August 17, 1642, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=820020r017>.

¹⁴ "Deposition of William Duffield," August 9, 1642, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=836048r026>.

¹⁵ "Deposition of Elizabeth Hooper," February 1, 1643, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=820050r038>.

¹⁶ "Deposition of Thomas Muncke," June 27, 1642, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=820048r037>.

neighbours and had broken this deponents Arme, Then they imprisoned them putting roaps about theire necks to hang them if they would not turne to Masse, and some of them they most cruelly murdered [...] although this deponent refused to turne to masse) he was not put to death but he and many others were kept in prison in a fowle dungeon for eighteene weekes or thereabouts, during the time of which imprisonment he observed heard & sawe through the grate of the said dungeon theise occurrences & passages following vizt that the rebells in Rosse aforesaid did say that by the perswation of the romish preists they must digg for and rake vpp the dead Carkasses and bones of the heretiques meaning the English protestants there buried out of the Church and Churchyard before they could rightly consecrate the Church.¹⁷

Further north in Westmeath, Thomas Fleetwood, a clergyman in the Established church had recorded:

That the reason why they went into Rebellion, was because they were informed That there was made in England an Act of Parliament, That all of them should goe to the Church by a Certain day or els bee putt to the sword, And that they would not lay downe armes except an act of Parliament should be made that a native should be capeable of any office vnder the King as Lord Lieutenant, deputy & the rest: That the Landes that were taken away theis 40 yeres, & passed by way of plantacion. should be restored: And that they should have tolleration of Religion: And this deponent further saith that that one Brian O Creive farmer in the begining of theis troubles tould him. That there came a fryre to Masse that exhorted them all present to fall to this Course of Rebellion or commotion And swore them Wishing them all to get skeanes and what weapons they could: And assureing them that though the English did discharge musketts and that some of them should be Killd yet they should not feare ffor such as soe djed should be saints And they should rush on with a multitude, and kill all the protestants & soe receive armes from them.¹⁸

These themes of sectarian hostility with particular revulsion towards the vernacular bible, a strong antipathy towards Protestant corpses and refusal to allow them burial in consecrated ground, a determination not to allow Protestants remain in their homes and retain their property unless they embraced Catholicism (which a significant number evidently did), and evidence of priestly encouragement of the rebellion on religious grounds are ubiquitous throughout the mass of testimony which was compiled.¹⁹ The depositions of course represent a highly problematic body of sources in many respects. Yet it is interesting

17 "Deposition of William Whalley," September 5, 1642, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depid=818024r056>.

18 "Deposition of Thomas Fleetwood," March 22, 1643, *1641 Depositions*, Trinity College Dublin, accessed 15/02/2018, <http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depid=817037r049>.

19 Brian Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence against settlers in south Ulster, 1641–42," in *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 154–75.

that significant corroboration of many of these details is available from Catholic sources too; in Tralee, for instance, beleaguered Protestants were informed by Richard O'Connell, the Catholic Vicar Apostolic and later bishop of the diocese, that they could retain their property and domiciles if they converted to the church of Rome, otherwise they would be forced to depart.²⁰ Similarly, the refusal to allow the burial of Protestants in consecrated ground or with formal obsequies evidently continued to be endorsed by the Catholic authorities which emerged in places such as Wexford in the wake of the rebellion.²¹

In 1646, basing his work on an extensive trawl through the existing depositions, Sir John Temple provided what was to become a canonical account of the Irish rebellion. He insisted the whole operation had been planned and orchestrated by Catholic clergy:

The very first principles of this inhumane conspiracy, were roughly drawne and hammered out at the Romish forge, powerfully fomented by the treachery and virulent animosities of some of the chief Irish natives. There certainly it received the first life and motion, whether at Rome, whether in Ireland, or in any other place, I cannot yet determine; But my meaning is, it was first hatched and set on foote by those most vigilant and industrious Emissaries, who are sent continually abroad by the power of that See with full commission, *per fas & nefas*, to make way for the re-establishment of the Romish religion in all parts where it hath been suppressed. Great numbers of these wicked instruments (the Lawes against all of the Romish clergy, being of late laid aside, and tacitely suspended execution) came over into Ireland: The main groundwork, and first predisposition to a Rebellion in general, were most undoubtedly with great dexterity and artifice laid by them; their venomous infusions taking such deepe roots in the minds of a blind, ignorant, superstitious people, as made them ready for a change, the great ones mischievously ready to plot and contrive, the inferior sort tumultuously to rise up and execute whatsoever they should command.²²

Yet before these thousands of people became religious refugees in the winter of 1641–42, it can be suggested that the identity of this grouping was already shaped by a migratory experience in which religion was a vital feature. Between 1580 and 1641, a substantial immigration in the order of 100,000

20 *Commentarius Rinuccinianus, de sedis apostolicae legatione ad foederatos Hiberniae catholicos per annos 1645–49*, vol. 1, ed. Stanislaus Kavanagh (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932), 311.

21 *Historical Manuscripts Commission thirteenth report, appendix 1: the manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland*, vol. 1, ed. F.H. Blackburne Daniell (London: Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1891), 403.

22 Sir John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion: or, An History of the first beginnings and progresse of the Generall Rebellion raised within the Kingdom of Ireland, upon the three and twentieth day of October, in the year, 1641. Together with the Barbarous Cruelties and Bloody Massacres which ensued thereupon* (London: R. White for Samuel Gellibrand, 1646), 66.

people occurred from Britain to Ireland. The vast bulk of the Protestant population in the island traced their provenance to this phenomenon. Religion in itself figured significantly but arguably not in any way as dominant motivator in the original movement of this grouping. The state certainly favoured Protestant immigration, although significant numbers of English Catholics also settled in Ireland,²³ but the chief lure was undoubtedly the opportunity for economic and social advancement. Once in Ireland, however, the settlers derived very considerable advantages from their Protestantism and their identity as a group evolved in cognisance of this. By 1641 practically the entire administration of the kingdom and its established church was in the hands of immediate or first and second generation immigrants from Britain. This was accompanied by a massive acquisition of land and wealth, partly through state-sponsored initiatives. While much of the accumulation of resources derived from the energy and expertise of the immigrants themselves, they were the beneficiaries also of significant transfers from the existing population.²⁴

The explosion of resentment in 1641–42 against this grouping was thus economic and ethnic as well as religious. Rebels targeted the property even more than the religion of the settler population.²⁵ What religion certainly provided was a normative structure which legitimated the violence against the Protestant population. To some extent, elements of the Catholic clergy clearly made use of the popular fury as an instrument in the destruction of heresy and in allowing for the purification of sacred sites by the removal of a contaminant presence. But the emphasis on the religious rationale of the violence also provided a means to channel and control its spread. This was particularly attractive to Catholic secular gentry in Ireland, who had little sympathy with the Protestant victims of attacks but who were clearly anxious to avoid being engulfed in the general chaos. Rather than being the prime motive of the violence, it might thus even be suggested counter-intuitively that religion was a force for *limiting* it as the Catholic clergy could ensure that those Protestants who elected to join the Church of Rome were allowed to remain in their localities, despite the fact that their patterns of behaviour were not dissimilar to those of other settlers. Perhaps most importantly, the foregrounding of religion ensured that wealthy Catholics, who had also profited from the boom

²³ David Edwards, “A haven of popery: English Catholic migration to Ireland in the age of plantations,” in *The origins of sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95–126.

²⁴ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, “Plantation, 1580–1641,” in *The Oxford handbook of Modern Irish History*, ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 291–314.

²⁵ Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 461–550.

conditions of early seventeenth-century Ireland, most of all through money-lending, such as the merchants of Galway, were not exposed to the full fury of the economically discontented.²⁶

If Catholics had good reasons for foregrounding religion as the principal site of cleavage in 1641–42 then so too did Sir John Temple in his retrospective account. Temple was by no means unaware of the economic discontents which many in Ireland had been nursing. In part he addressed this by othering the Irish as both pathologically lazy and envious. In his view they looked upon the settlers

With much envie upon their prosperity, considering all the Lands they possessed (though a great part bought at high rates of the Natives) as their owne proper inheritance. They grudged at the great multitudes of their faire English cattell; at their goodly houses, though built by their own industry at their own charges; at the large improvements they made at their estates, by their own travails and careful endeavours. They spake with much scorne and contempt of such as brought little with them into Ireland, and having there planted themselves, in a little time contracted great fortunes: they were much troubled, especially in the Irish countries, to see the Englishe live handsomely, and to have everything with much decency about them, while they lay nastily buried, as it were, in mire and filthinesse; the ordinary sort of people commonly bringing their cattle into their owne stinking creates, and there naturally delighting to lye among them. These malignant considerations made them with an envious eye impatiently to looke upon all the British lately come over into the Kingdome. Nothing lesse than a general extirpation will now serve their turne; they must have restitution of all the lands to the proper natives, whom they take to be the ancient proprietors, and onely true owners, most unjustly despoiled by the Englishe, whom they holde to have made undue acquisition of all the land they possess by gift from the Crowne, upon the Attainder of any of their ancestors.²⁷

But a number of important reasons obtained for Temple's insistence on placing these discontents within a controlling scaffold of religious hatred. By doing so, he could mobilise an entire grammar of Protestant victimhood of Catholic atrocity as a framework to understand what had happened in Ireland. Second, he could identify the previous tacit toleration of the activity of the Catholic clergy as the cause of the disaster, with the implicit and explicit implication that this could never be allowed to happen again, which was entirely consonant with the dominant current of political thought within the New English Protestant community over the previous decades.²⁸ Third, by privileging religion as the

²⁶ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland: The Mission of Rinuccini, 1645–49* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 19–26.

²⁷ Temple, *The Irish Rebellion*, 79.

²⁸ Temple, *The Irish Rebellion*, 66; Aidan Clarke, "The 1641 Rebellion and Anti-popery in Ireland," in *Ulster 1641: Aspects of the Rising*, ed. Brian Mac Cuarta (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1991), 139–157 (155–56).

prime motor of discord and atrocity, the text opened the way for an attack on *all* Catholic power in Ireland, most notably the descendants of the original Anglo-Norman colony, the so-called Old English in Ireland, which were identified by the New English colonists both as the chief political threat and the most lucrative source of potential riches if they were to be properly punished for their religious dissidence.²⁹ Yet the principal landowners of this group, not surprisingly, were rarely implicated in any direct attacks on Protestant settlers.

In this reading of the 1641 rebellion therefore, confessional migrants, that is individuals whose religion became a vital aspect of their identity and the manner in which they were perceived by others in the colonial environment of Ireland, remained as apt a term for the New English of Ireland during their travails in 1641–42 as it was in the previous decades. For while their religion was of genuine importance in making them the targets of attack, it was certainly not the only driver of their refugee status, just as it had not been the sole reason for their original arrival and for their prosperity. Ethnic and economic factors were at least as important in creating antipathies and violence. Yet on both sides of the religious divide, the religious identity of the settlers was very frequently foregrounded.

New English Protestants were not the only grouping in Early Modern Ireland who attempted to articulate an identity as refugees from religious persecution. Very significant numbers of Irish Catholics went into exile between 1570 and 1700. The numbers for the seventeenth century have been estimated to amount to at least 175,000. War and land confiscation played a significant although not exclusive role in provoking this mobility. In the course of second half of the sixteenth century, English power in Ireland increased, provoking a series of escalating confrontations with the power of Gaelic and Gaelicised lordships.³⁰ While it seems clear that resentment of the new intrusiveness of state power was the principal motivating factor behind magnate resistance, for a number of reasons religion acquired a particular salience in the conflicts which developed. For Gaelic Irish rebels seeking to mobilise aid from the continent of Europe to support their resistance to Elizabethan expansion, it made sense to frame their struggle in religious terms. For Spain also, religion provided a legitimating reason for funding a tit-for-tat war of diversion in Ireland similar to the English efforts in the Netherlands which the Habsburgs so bitterly resented.³¹

²⁹ Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 267–68, 553–54.

³⁰ David Edwards, “The Escalation of Violence in sixteenth-century Ireland,” in *Age of Atrocity*, 34–78.

³¹ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, “The Strategic Involvement of Continental Powers in Ireland 1596–1691,” in *Conquest and Resistance: War in Seventeenth Century Ireland, 1596–1691*, ed. P. Lenihan (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 25–51.

In addition to continental support, Gaelic adversaries of the crown could hope also to limit the commitment to supporting the Elizabethan regime of the Old English, the existing colonial community, and their own traditional enemies and bulwark of the English presence in Ireland. As a group, these had proved notably unreceptive to the Reformation. In the event, the Old English entertained sufficient doubts about the religious credentials of the most important Gaelic rebel, Hugh O'Neill, to prevent them rising in support. However, their distaste for the Elizabethan regime did ensure that their commitment to the state's military initiatives was luke-warm at best which facilitated the continuation of the rebellion.³² O'Neill's capacity to stay in arms between 1594 and 1596 eventually persuaded Spain to promise assistance although it was not until 1601 that any significant Spanish troops came into confrontation with crown forces in the island. The crown's victory at Kinsale in that year decisively turned the tide against the rebels.³³ It also precipitated the flight to the continent of waves of rebels seeking assistance from the Spanish crown. In the seven years which followed the battle it is estimated that in the region of 10,000 Irish migrated to Spain where they clustered primarily in La Coruna in Galicia and around the court at Valladolid. The central figures in this movement were Gaelic and Gaelicised lords and military commanders who were escaping the wrath of the victorious English state but they brought with them a dense web of kinfolk and clients.³⁴

As Ciaran O'Scea has noted, it was these "useless Irish" (*gente inutil*) which created the greatest problems for the Spanish state. While military positions could be created for able-bodied men of military age, to whom the crown recognised an obligation since they had stayed in arms after 1596 on the promise of assistance from Spain, assuming responsibility for thousands of non-productive and hungry Irish mouths was less palatable. In a *saue qui peut* gesture, prominent Irish lords were prepared to accept that this *gente inutil*, comprising mainly of women and children who lacked the means to support themselves, would be returned to Ireland. Plans were made to charter a ship to transport some considerable number of these back to Ireland.

Yet this created ethical dilemmas for the Spanish crown. The governor of Galicia noted the

³² S. J. Connolly, *Contested Island: Ireland 1460–1630* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2007), 244–49.

³³ Hiram Morgan, "Disaster at Kinsale," in *The Battle of Kinsale*, ed. Hiram Morgan (Bray: Wordwell Ltd, 2004), 101–46.

³⁴ Ciaran O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale: Irish Emigration and identity formation in early modern Spain, 1601–40* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 41–46.

very great problems and evident danger that could occur to the people that it is now proposed to send to Ireland who having come to Spain as everyone says for reason of religion. It seems that the question of making them return to such evident danger and risk should be carefully considered especially in regards of the children and people in whom one can have little assurance of their convictions.³⁵

Obvious parallels can be seen here with the criteria which the Spanish state was to use in the expulsion of the *Moriscos*, particularly the cut-off age limit which was imposed in that case.³⁶ Ultimately these arguments carried the day. The decision was made to distribute the non-productive exiles into other cities of Galicia to be sustained from clerical resources because the threat to their faith in the event of their forced return was considered to be too grave.³⁷

To some extent the construction of this group as religious refugees seems actually to have been done principally by the Spanish authorities who were clearly sensitive to the potential damage to the reputation of the monarchy by shipping off unwanted Catholics.

As Igor Tostado has demonstrated, throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, Irish military migrants in Spain continued to play the religious card, emphasising the degree to which their exile was a product of religious persecution and the losses which they had sustained in defence of the Catholic faith. Particularly in Spain, but also to a degree in France, they were thus able to mobilise on their own behalf the obligations to Catholicism which pertained to the role of both the king of Spain and *le Roi Très Chrétien* outside as well as within their dominions.³⁸ The foregrounding of religion thus helped to create a sense of kinship and sympathy. It also materially affected the behaviour of the migrant communities. Particularly after 1609 and in the face of increasing anti-Irish sentiment, which threatened to link their cultural practices of Catholicism to the perceived deviancy of the *Moriscos*, the community in exile in Spain

³⁵ Quoted in O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale*, 48.

³⁶ Georgina Dopico Black, "Ghostly Remains: Valencia, 1609," *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 7 (2003): 91–100 (93–94).

³⁷ O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale*, 48.

³⁸ Igor Pérez Tostado, "'Por respeto a mi profesión': disciplinamento, dependencia e identidad en la formación de las comunidades militares irlandesas e inglesas en los ejércitos hispanos," in *Guerra y sociedad en la monarquía hispánica: política, estrategia, y cultura en la Europa moderna (1500–1700)*, vol. 1, ed. Enrique García Hernán and Davide Maffi (Madrid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2006), 681–706 (692); while under-studied in comparison to immigration to Habsburg territory, it has been estimated that 30,000–40,000 Irish migrants to France prior to the more celebrated emigration of "Wild Geese" in the 1690s represents the low end of what may have been a more considerable total: Éamon Ó Ciosáin, "Irish Catholic Migration to France, 1590–1685," in *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603–88*, ed. David Worthington (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 125–40.

reacted with a whole series of adaptations: stricter registration of births, emphasis on orthodox confirmation, lodging female children in convents and a close association with the Dominican order.³⁹ Perhaps the most significant element of this change was the seminal historical work, *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae Compendium*, of a first-generation migrant, Philip O'Sullivan Beare. In this text, O'Sullivan Beare produced an account in which the state-building wars of the Elizabethan period in Ireland were entirely transmogrified into wars of religion and the constancy of the Irish in upholding the Catholic faith against tyrannical oppression became explicable only in providential terms:

Many have often wondered as to how this island with such constancy and such unbroken spirit could have sustained such an unprecedented and long tyranny against the Catholic Faith that the Faith was preserved always pure and unadulterated. The cause of which I cannot ascribe to anything unless to divine providence and compassion. Because I do not believe that the powers of men to be great enough to endure and defeat such monstrous cruelty unless helped by special aid from Almighty God from whom Saint Patrick is said to have procured that the Catholic Faith should never be destroyed in it.⁴⁰

This subsequently became a foundational text for the self-understanding not merely of the Irish exiles in Europe but of the Catholic community in Ireland itself.

A revealing indication of the degree to which Irish exiles adapted to the religious orthodoxy of their Habsburg surroundings comes from the careers of Eoghan Roe O' Neill and Thomas Preston, who served for many decades in Flanders before finally returning to Ireland following the collapse of the government in the island in the rebellion of 1641. As it transpired, both men proved willing to accord reverence and obedience to the papal nuncio in Ireland, Gianbatista Rinuccini, as he first successfully and then unsuccessfully attempted to force the Irish rebels into turning their insurrection into a full-out war of religion. A definite contrast can be noted here between returning and acculturated religious exiles and the landholding aristocracy of the island who were

³⁹ O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale*, 110.

⁴⁰ "Tantum autem, tamque inauditam, et diuturnam tyrannidem, qua Fides Catholica premittitur, multi saepe mirati sunt, quemadmodum haec insula tantam constantiam, tamque invictum animo sustinuerit, ut Fidem semper puram sinceramque servaverit. Cujus ego causam non, nisi divinae providentiae, et miseratione adscribendam arbitror. Neque enim hominum vires potentes esse credo, tantam immanitatem perferre, et vincere, nisi a Deo Optimo, Maximo praecipuo quodam munere adjutas: a quo Divus Patritius Iberniae Praeses fertur impetrasse, ne in ea unquam Fides Catholica deleatur." *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae Compendium Domino Philippo Austriaco Hispanarum, Indiarum, Aliorum Regnorum Atque Multarum Ditionum Regi Catholico Monarchaeque Potentissimo Dicitur A D. Philippo O'Sullevano Bearro, Ibero*, ed. Matthew Kelly (Dublin: John O'Daly, 1850), 81–82.

notably less ticklish in their consciences and who ultimately forced Rinuccini out of Ireland.⁴¹

Preston is a particularly interesting figure in terms of Irish migrant identity. Unlike his more inexperienced superior officer in Spanish service in the 1630s, Hugh O'Donnell, or his confederate colleague Eoghan Roe O'Neill who could make a strong case for having suffered a significant downgrade in fortune ostensibly in the interests of Catholicism as a result of the defeat of the great rebellion in the 1590s, Preston came from a landed family in the English colonial community which suffered no land confiscation. What Preston was unable to do as a Catholic, however, was to exercise the traditional privileges of his birth in terms of serving his king in arms. He therefore became one of literally thousands of Irish who took service on the continent.⁴² Religion played an important and shaping role in these choices. The vast majority of the tens of thousands of Irish mercenaries who went abroad in the course of the seventeenth century took service in the militaries of Catholic states, principally the Spanish Habsburgs, France and the Empire. In doing so they could piggy-back on the notion of the Irish as religiously persecuted and therefore as confessionally reliable troops for their continental masters, which could be deployed even in Iberia where the deployment of Protestant forces was frowned upon.⁴³ But their sense of exclusion from their proper place within their own kingdom, also contributed to an identity which found compensation in the service of a *Catholic* king.

Any analysis of Early Modern Irish military migration, therefore, is forced to acknowledge that religion was an important and structural factor in governing choices. Across the spectrum of a genuinely demographically significant phenomenon, we can see that a certain proportion could be identified as religious refugees, although in most cases it was their involvement in *political* manifestations of religious dissidence which ensured that they could no longer remain in Ireland. Yet this relatively small group blurs in to a much wider category of tens of thousands of Catholic military migrants whose choices were confessionally influenced but certainly not determined by religious persecution.

In conclusion, Early Modern Ireland was a society deeply influenced by contrasting currents of mobility. Indeed, together with the Netherlands,⁴⁴ it can

⁴¹ Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Reformation*, 154–58.

⁴² Eduardo de Mesa, *The Irish in the Spanish Armies in the Seventeenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 41–46.

⁴³ Igor Pérez Tostado, *Irish Influence at the Court of Spain in the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts press, 2008), 34.

⁴⁴ Spohnholz and Waite, “Introduction,” 2, note the particular importance of religious exile with regard to the Netherlands.

be suggested that Ireland was the Western European society most shaped by confessional migration. Uniquely in Europe, the kingdom witnessed the effective replacement of its existing elites by immigrants whose religious affiliation marked them out as distinct from the mass of the inhabitants. As migrants into Ireland, Protestants derived substantial advantages from their religious identity. Ironically, however, it was the moment of their forced flight in 1641–42 which became a touchstone of historical memory and identity for this community, commemorated by an annual church service on 23 October, the date of the outbreak of the original rebellion.⁴⁵ Similarly, for the Irish military, merchants and clerics who constituted the backbone of a very significant Irish Catholic diaspora during the Early Modern period, an inheritance of religious persecution became a vital and cherished aspect of identity and a critical aspect of the perception of them by their host societies, thus blurring the lines between the categories of religious refugees and confessional migrants.

⁴⁵ T. C. Barnard, “The Uses of the October 23, 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations,” *English Historical Review* 106 (1991): 889–920.