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**Hibernophobia or Philia in English Perceptions of the Irishman: A Study of Elizabethan
and Early Stuart Commentaries on the Irish Character**

By Michael Ballagh

In his essay on English images of the Irish, David Hayton argues that historians have tended to avoid discussions of the “disagreeable practice” of creating social stereotypes of supposedly inferior national or ethnic groups, unless this analysis incorporates themes of a “subtle and sinister weapon of colonial exploitation.” Research, he contends, has focused on those periods in which the English caricature of the Irish can be seen as justification of “imperialist” policies.¹ Hence, during the Elizabethan era, as Ireland experienced increasing “colonial subjugation,”² numerous contemporary commentators emphasized the need to “reform” and “control” the Irish population.

Tracing the evolution of English-generated Irish caricatures, Hayton suggests that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the inhabitants of Ireland became more generally regarded as figures of fun rather than the menacing papal anti-Christ of the earlier Elizabethan and Stuart periods. At the center of this shift in perception was the decreasing element of fear. The victories of Cromwell and William of Orange diminished the supposed prowess of the Irish warrior; the consolidation of the Established English church after the Restoration, and the decrease in international, geo-political threats from Spain and France diminished the Irish

¹ David Hayton, “From Barbarian to Burlesque: English Images of the Irish c. 1660-1750,” *Irish Economic and Social History* 15 (1988), 5.

² “Colonial Subjugation” meant many different things in Elizabethan Ireland: To some such as Barnabie Rich, subjugation implied the complete eradication of papists on the island - a group who promoted and carried out revolt against the English crown; to Edmund Spenser, the implementation of a British style political administration including English laws, political institutions and administrative divisions (shires and hundreds) was at the forefront

Catholic threat by the end of the seventeenth century. On a broader level, the perceived fear of a Catholic universal hegemony had largely dissipated by the eighteenth century.³

This paper analyzes in greater detail perceptions of fear or ridicule toward the Irishman in the Elizabethan and early Stuart era. Is Hayton's contention that fear dominated English perceptions of the Irishman valid for the period 1558-1610?⁴ Do contemporary assessments fit the colonial mindset of criticizing an inferior race in need of civilizing by its colonial masters? Such an interpretation assuredly over-simplifies attitudes toward the Irish. Can one identify any more magnanimous or complex comments on the Irish at this time? Can one simply dismiss English characterizations of the Irish as racist and imperialist diatribes?

While numerous contemporaries wrote about various issues of Irish society - the polity, the landscape, the economic and social conditions of Ireland in the sixteenth century, this paper concentrates primarily on descriptions and critiques of the Irishman's character. The decision to focus on the Elizabethan era incorporates a number of considerations. A group of Irish historians recently have sought to address what they justifiably consider a lack of studies on Tudor Ireland. In returning to the sources in the classical revisionist approach, they have re-examined and reinterpreted almost every aspect of Tudor policy in Ireland.⁵ The majority of these excellent works remain political studies. No recent works have sought to re-evaluate English perceptions

of "colonialism." Other commentators on the English policy in Ireland focused on the economic aspects of colonialism - notably "plantations" to force the native Irish out of profitable areas of the island.

³ See Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴ While the dates may appear arbitrary, they have been employed to incorporate the writings of the five principal authors analyzed in the paper - Edmund Campion, Richard Stanyhurst, John Derricke, Edmund Spenser and Barnabie Rich. While each of them wrote about Ireland in the Elizabethan era, Rich's works were not written until the early seventeenth century, a date which must be acknowledged in his critique.

⁵ See for example, Ciaran Brady, *The Chief Governors: The Rise and Fall of Reform Government in Tudor Ireland, 1536-1588* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1979); Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A*

of the Irishman in the Elizabethan era.⁶ The second reason for this focus on the age of Elizabeth and James concerns the preponderance of published works at this time. With the growing numbers of English settling in Ireland or at the very least considering a move across the Irish Sea, a group of notable English figures, many of whom had either lived in Ireland for generations, participated in the military campaigns or simply wished to travel around this country, wrote a number of works describing the social life and people in Ireland. Moreover, the Elizabethan era constitutes a vital age in the colonization of Ireland through the imposition of English governmental and administrative institutions and the beginnings of the plantations on the island.⁷

This paper will focus on five individuals, all of whom had considerable knowledge of Ireland in the late sixteenth-century: Edmund Campion, Richard Stanyhurst, John Derricke, Edmund Spenser and Barnabie Rich. Admittedly other short-term visitors to the country retained their own beliefs about the island's populace but, their English bias notwithstanding, the five authors discussed here viewed Irish society first-hand for a number of years. Only one of them, Richard Stanyhurst, can be described justly as "Old English"; namely, a descendant of the original Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century. One might assume that he was able to look at the Irish social system with some sympathy and understanding. One can identify clear divergences in opinion between the "Old" and "New" English (the Protestant settlers of the sixteenth century). While the former group undoubtedly saw themselves as categorically of

Pattern Established (Hassocks, 1976); idem, *Reformation to Restoration: Ireland, 1534-1660* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988).

⁶ In contrast, Kathleen M. Noonan provides an excellent discussion of perceptions of the Irishman in seventeenth-century England; see Kathleen M. Noonan, "'The Cruell Pressure of an Enraged, Barbarous People': Irish and English Identity in Seventeenth-Century Policy and Propaganda," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1998), 151-177.

⁷ See Nicholas Canny, "The Permissive Frontier: The Problem of Social Control in English Settlements in Ireland and Virginia, 1550-1650," in K.R Andrews, N.P. Canny and P.E.H. Hair, eds., *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480-1650* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 16-42;

English stock, their knowledge and perceptions of the Irish character were assuredly more developed (if no less biased) than their recently arrived compatriots, who understood Ireland as either a land of immense economic opportunity or as a vanguard of Roman Catholicism. In this regard, both Stanyhurst and Campion also differed from the other writers by virtue of their Catholicism.⁸ Can one detect a sympathetic view from these two toward their religious compatriots irrespective of differences in ethnic identity?

The final three writers under study, Derricke, Spenser and Rich, were unashamedly Protestant, and all arrived in Ireland either in an administrative or military capacity. Spenser, who was employed as Lord Grey's secretary, held a residence in County Kildare (in the Pale), provided services to the Presidency Council of Munster, had experience as a planter in county Cork, and could presumably speak of the Irish with a considerable degree of authority. Rich's writings provide an insight into the evolution of an Englishman's attitude toward the Irish. Arriving in Ireland with Essex in 1573, Rich continued to return there until 1617. In that time, he published *A Short Survey of Ireland* (1609) and *A New Description of Ireland* (1610). While David Beers Quinn sees Rich's primary role being one of denouncing popery in Ireland, he must nonetheless have come to learn a great deal about the Irish character over the course of forty years in Ireland.⁹ Once again, it will be interesting to note whether a pre-existing knowledge of the Irish character in fact implied a sympathetic voice or, in contrast, a highly critical one. While all three spent a large part of their lives residing in Ireland, did their nominal status as English officials in Ireland imply an overt hostility toward the local population?

Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established* (Hassocks, 1976); idem, *Reformation to Restoration*.

⁸ While admittedly Stanyhurst did not convert until after his departure from Ireland, one can assume that he harbored sympathies toward Catholicism, if not Irish Catholics, while still in Ireland.

According to Quinn, most of the English commentators wanted to know about Irishmen “in order to learn how to turn them into Englishmen.” Some of them recorded Irish traits in order to have a precise conception of what “to destroy, others to have material for satire.”¹⁰ Quinn’s assessment seems unduly harsh: this paper will contend that instances of toleration and even admiration came through in some of the writings. Another question concerns the supposed racial superiority of the Englishman over his Irish subject.¹¹ Do the authors in question identify an “innate” or “natural” inferiority in the Irish person? At the forefront of such a question lies the following conundrum: Did the writers chastise, condemn and ridicule the Irish because of their very Irish ethnic identity, or are other issues at play here?

Upon her accession, Elizabeth inherited a nation on the verge of bankruptcy following mismanagement under the administrations of Edward and Mary. The stronghold of English administration in Ireland remained in the “Pale” -a strip of territory on the East Coast of Ireland that incorporated the capital, Dublin, seat of the Irish House of Commons and Lord Deputy, and the greater province of Leinster. Both Munster and Ulster continued to resist English encroachment throughout Elizabeth’s reign.¹² The 1560s witnessed renewed attempts to reestablish English authority over Ireland and generated dreams of conquest and colonization, primarily through the subjugation of Irish lords.¹³ Under Henry Sidney, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, the Elizabethan government sought to bring all of Ireland under English control through

⁹ David B. Quinn, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹ While a few of the authors do mention Irish women, it is often included as an aside and the writers give little emphasis to the female Irish population.

¹² See below for an overview of the Desmond rebellion in Munster and the O’Neill uprising in Ulster.

¹³ William Palmer, *The Problem of Ireland in Tudor Foreign Policy, 1485-1603* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1994), 89.

colonization. Steven Ellis remarks that the 1560s witnessed a changing attitude toward Ireland as a destination. No longer an area of honorable exile for mediocre talents, Ireland became a significant prize for ambitious English court aristocrats who hoped to get rich quick on the abundance of land made available to them upon conquest and colonization.¹⁴ This emphasis on colonization will prove important when assessing the contemporary portrayals of sixteenth-century Ireland – inevitably, as any good real estate agent will agree, one must provide a positive image of the property if one wishes to convince the buyer or would-be colonizer of the merits of moving west to Ireland.¹⁵ The arrival of large numbers of new colonizers also exacerbated the differences between the “Old” and the “New” English. The former group, though determined to retain their privileged position in government in Ireland, advocated a more conciliatory position toward the native population. They often prefaced remarks on political reform with expressions of “their natural affection” for their “native country.”¹⁶ In contrast, the new English supported tougher measures on the native population as they eyed the large tracts of land that would become available from forced confiscation.

If the majority of English who arrived in Ireland envisaged a glorious campaign to subjugate the native population and occupy land, Edmund Campion moved to the island under threat of arrest for religious heresy. A fellow of Oxford, and reputedly “always a sound Catholic in his heart,”¹⁷ despite taking the Oath of Supremacy under Elizabeth, Campion proceeded to

¹⁴ Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland in the Age of the Tudors, 1447:1603: English Expansion and the End of Gaelic Rule* (New York: Longman Press, 1998), 245.

¹⁵ I will discuss the “positive” attributes of the Irish below.

¹⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 276-77. In fact, the study of Richard Stanyhurst will demonstrate that Bradshaw’s statement appears incorrect – Stanyhurst, an “Old” English in Ireland, harbored little sympathy for his Irish neighbors. See below for an assessment of Stanyhurst’s attitudes toward the Irish.

¹⁷ Campion would eventually be executed at Tyburn in 1581 for “treason.”

Ireland in 1569 where he stayed with James Stanyhurst,¹⁸ then Recorder of Dublin and Speaker of the House of Commons, and his son Richard. Campion was distrusted (rightly so) for being a papist, and orders were given for his arrest. While evading arrest, he worked on his *History of Ireland*.¹⁹

The unashamed Catholicism of Campion clearly demonstrates itself throughout the book: the story of medieval Ireland chronicles “the holy men and abbeys” and laments the passing of the old religious benefactions of the Middle Ages. In his chapter on saints he recalls “the memory of God’s friends, more glorious to a Realme than all the victories and triumphs of the world.”²⁰ Nonetheless, he also acknowledges the failings of the Roman clergy and sees the Irish as too ready to give credit to “idle miracles.” In asserting the ancient authority of the English crown in Ireland, Campion commends Henry VIII’s control over the “sawcynesses of the Priest.”²¹

His dedication to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester underscores the possibility that Campion had not yet thrown himself completely into the sectarian imbroglio. The dedication itself contains a neutral prose that in no way prefigures Campion’s later commitment to the Catholic cause:

...that my travaile into Ireland might seeme neither causlesse, nor fruitlesse, I have thought it expedient...to yield you this poore book, as an accompt of my poore voyage... by the patronage of this Booke, you may be induced to weigh the estate and become a patron to this noble Realme.²²

¹⁸ See below for an account of Stanyhurst’s own depiction of the Irish in Ralph Holinshed’s *Chronicles*.

¹⁹ Sydney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Macmillan Company, 1909), 5: 851.

²⁰ Edmund Campion, *A Historie of Ireland* (1571), Rudolf B. Gottfried, ed. (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles, 1940), 42. Campion’s book did not get published until 1577, when it comprised part of Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 116, 119.

²² *Ibid.*, “The Epistle Dedicatory,” n.p.

His recommendation that the Protestant Leicester invest in Ireland hardly suggests that Campion sought to protect a valuable papist vanguard on the island.

Unlike other English chroniclers of Ireland, Campion did have the good grace to admit that his assessment of the people and culture would have been greatly enhanced if he had understood the native language: "I am perswaded that with choice and judgement, I might have sucked thence some better store of matter, and gladly would have sought them, had I found an interpreter, or understood their tongue..."²³ He praises the elegance of the Irish tongue and claims it "offereth great occasion to quicke apothegmes and proper allusions, wherefore their common jesters, Bards and Rymers, are said to delight passingly those that conceive the grace and propriety of the tongue." Yet, while acknowledging the cultural finery of the language, he argues that only one in one hundred can either write, read or understand it.²⁴

Campion's assessment of the dispositions of the Irish people retains a considerable degree of flattering statements:

The people are thus inclined; religious franke, amorous, irefull, sufferable, of paine infinite, very glorious, many sorcerers, excellent horsemen, delighted with Warres, great almes-givers, passing in hospitalitie: the lewder sort... are sensuall and loose to lechery above measure. The same being vertuously bred up or reformed, are such mirroures of holinesse and austeritie, that other Nations retaine but a shewe or shadow of devotion in comparison of them.²⁵

In contrast to later writers who would condemn the revolt-inciting bards and poets,²⁶ Campion describes these literary figures as "sharp-witted, lovers of learning, capable of any studie

²³ Ibid., Dedication to the "Loving Reader", n.p.

²⁴ Ibid., 12. A rather curious observation considering if no one could understand the native language, how did the inhabitants communicate with each other? Outside of the Pale, few Irish aside from Anglo-Irish landowners would have spoken English.

²⁵ Ibid., 13.

²⁶ In particular Barnabie Rich and Edmund Spenser harbored a distinct distrust of the bards; see below.

whereunto they bend themselves, constant in travaile, adventurours, intractable, kinde-hearted...²⁷

If later Elizabethan and Jacobean chroniclers of the Irish populace would focus their contempt on the papist influence on the island, one might assume that Campion would have harbored a degree of sympathy toward his co-religionists.²⁸ Ironically, the brunt of Campion's criticism focuses on superstitious practices and roguish priests. The Irish, he argues, "are lightly abused and to believe and avouche idle miracles and revelations." Campion ill-disguises his horror at the primeval wakes, where "they follow the dead corpses to the grave with howlings and barbarous out-cries, pittifull in appearance," whence grew the proverb, he conjectures, "to weep Irish."²⁹

Campion's work can scarcely be called a serious work on the history of Ireland – rather, it is a pamphlet written to prove that education is the only means to tame the Irish. A shared religion notwithstanding, Campion critically assesses the ignorance and naiveté of the populace. He recounts the epistle of an Irish monk - an entertaining and highly dubious story that Campion appears to believe without question:

...I found a fragment of an epistle, wherein a vertuous Monke declareth, that to him (travailing in Ulster) came a brave Gentleman desirous to be confessed... whom in all his life had never received the blessed Sacrament. When he said his minde, the Priest demaunded him, whether he were faultlesse in the sinne of Homicide? Hee answered, that hee never wisht the matter to be heinous before, but being instructed therof, hee confessed the murther of five, the rest hee left wounded...³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ See in particular the critique of Barnabie Rich; see below.

²⁹ Campion, *A Historie*, 13-14.

³⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

His focus on education as a means to “enlighten” the Irish underscores the non-sectarian element of Campion’s writings -- he makes no claims for an exclusively Roman Catholic education, but rather focuses on the heinous teaching conditions that now exist:

...learned in their common schooles of leachcraft and law... I have seene them where they kept Schoole, ten in some one Chamber, groveling upon couches of straw, their Bookes at their noses, themselves lying flatte prostate, and so to chaunte out their lessons by peece-meale, being the most part lustie fellows of twenty five yeares and upwards.³¹

Campion, while Catholic, was first and foremost an Englishman, and it is through these eyes that he writes about Ireland. Nonetheless, his criticism of social conditions within the country does not necessarily imply a critique of the populace itself. One can even detect a certain sympathy for those Irish who lived in substandard conditions. Irrespective of the religious neutrality in his prose, Campion undoubtedly eschews the vitriolic condemnation of the Irish population which later Protestant English commentaries would publish. Yet Campion rarely displays any profound sympathy for his fellow Catholics in Ireland. If he was not imbued with a sectarian hatred, he nonetheless harbored contempt toward the Irish native. Undoubtedly, the reason behind this apparent contradiction lay in Campion’s profound belief in the supremacy of *English* Catholicism. Far from the idolatrous and superstitious practices of the Irish Catholics, Campion clearly distinguishes this form of the papal faith from what he considers to be his own intellectually and spiritually more sophisticated notion of Catholicism. Ironically, unlike later English Protestant writers such as Barnabie Rich, who condemn the Irish on the basis of their religious sympathies rather than on ethnic grounds, Campion directs his approbation specifically

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

at the *Irishness* of the islanders. Ethnicity, and the ways in which it has created an “inferior” form of Irish Catholicism, plays a central role in Campion’s critique.

Richard Stanyhurst, who grew up in Ireland before moving to Oxford in 1563, came in contact with Edmund Campion and would later return with him to Ireland, whereupon he devoted himself to Irish history and geography. Under Campion’s guidance, he undertook to contribute an essay to Raphael Holinshed’s collection of Irish chronicles. Stanyhurst’s *Description of Ireland* would appear in Holinshed’s first volume of the *Chronicles* in 1577.³²

Despite his later conversion to Roman Catholicism, it is clear that Stanyhurst like Campion harbored little fondness for the Irish populace. He makes a clear distinction between the Anglo-Irish of the Pale and the “meere” Irish to be found outside this region of “civility.” He forewarns the reader “not to impute anie barbarous custome that shall be here laid downe, to the citizens, townesmen, and inhabitants of the English pale.”³³ The rest of his work can only be described as an ill-disguised plagiarism of Campion’s own work. His positive descriptions of the Irish employ the exact same adjectives (“religious, franke, amorous etc.”) and he copies word for word Campion’s own recitation of the Irish funeral and the origins of “to weepe Irish.”³⁴ The final section unsurprisingly reiterates the importance of education to reform the Irish. Indeed Stanyhurst acknowledges his debt to Campion but denies that he has in any way directly plagiarized from his friend:

I, as one of the most that could doo least, was fullie resolved to inrich maister Campion his chronicle with further additions. But weighing on the other side, that my course packthred could not have beene sutablie knit with his fine silke, and what a disgrace it were, bunglerlie to botch up a rich garment, by clouting it with

³² *Dictionary of National Biography*, 18: 976-77.

³³ Richard Stanyhurst, *A Treatise Conteyning a Pleine and Perfect Description of Ireland*, in *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol. vi . 1577. Reprint (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), 6: 66-67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

patches of sundrie colours, I was forthwith reclaimed from my former resolution, reckoning it for better, that my pen should walke in such wise in that craggie and balkish waie, as the truth of the matter being surprised, I would neither openlie borrow, nor privilie imbezell ought to anie great purpose from his historie.³⁵

Yet while Stanyhurst mimicked Campion's "praise" of the Irish, he gained a reputation for his brutal slandering of the Irish populace. Ironically, Barnabie Rich, himself hardly a great hibernophile, would castigate Stanyhurst for his "want of sympathy with the native Irish" and his prejudiced misrepresentations.³⁶ Geoffrey Keating in his *General History of Ireland* (1723) condemns Stanyhurst on three grounds: he was too young when he wrote the book; he was ignorant of the Irish language (which unlike Campion, he failed to acknowledge); and he was bribed by large gifts and promises of advancement to blacken the character of the Irish nation. Unfortunately, Keating does not substantiate the final claim.³⁷ Keating goes on to add that Stanyhurst later "repented of the injustice he had been guilty of" and promised to revoke any falsehoods in a paper to be printed in Ireland – although no evidence of such a paper exists.³⁸ Irrespective of his later recantation, it is clear that despite his long history in Ireland as part of the "Old English," Stanyhurst did not hold a great fondness for the native population who surrounded him.

Of the Protestant writers on Ireland, little is known of John Derricke, author of *The Image of Ireland* (1578), save that he may have been employed to make the great seal of Ireland in 1557.³⁹ As a follower of Sir Philip Sidney, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, and friend of his son,

³⁵ *Chronicles*, VI, sig. b3^v. Cited in Campion, *A Historie of Ireland*, iv.

³⁶ Barnabie Rich, *A new description of Ireland: wherein is described the disposition of the Irish whereunto they are inclined. No lesse admirable to be perused then credible to be beleaved: neither unprofitable nor unpleasant to bee read and understood, by those worthy citizens of London that be now undertakers in Ireland* (London, 1610), 2.

³⁷ Geoffrey Keating, *The General History of Ireland*. Trans. Dermot O'Connor (London, 1723), xii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, 6: 289-90.

Philip, we can only surmise that Derricke spent a number of years resident in Ireland. In *The Image*, Derricke does not make a blanket condemnation of the Irish. Rather he clearly distinguishes between those Irish “who affirm their dissolute life, and inordinate lying, better to pertaine into infidelles and heathen,” from “all other in generall of the saied land, being lovers of vertue, and inhancers of civilitie.”⁴⁰ The degenerate populace of the island are those soldiers, “Woodkarnes,” who persist in rebellion against the English crown. He beseeches his readers “not to deeme the reprehension of these wilde wanton woodkarne, to bee spoken of all menne in general, which is here ment but of some, of those, I saie, that are rebelles to our (Queene), enemies to peace, and disturbers of the common wealthe.”⁴¹ Derricke’s comments underscore a common element in critiques of the Irish populace – attacks on resistance to the Protestant reformation and a persistent nationalist (anti-English) sentiment, rather than issues of racial inferiority, predominate in their writings.

Derricke’s treatise focuses less on the barbarous characteristics of an entire race than on the threat of revolt and the ensuing threat to the stability of the Commonwealth. The author deems the English campaigns in Ireland as a war against insurrection rather than a comprehensive policy of “ethnic cleansing.”⁴² In this respect, his gaze centers on the northern regions of the island where revolt has become commonplace. The O’Neill dynasty in Ireland

⁴⁰ John Derricke, *The image of Irelande, with a discoverie of vwoodkarne, wherin is moste liuely expressed, the nature, and qualitie of the saied wilde Irishe woodkarne, their notable aptnesse, celeritie, and pronesse to rebellion, and by waie of argumente is manifested their originall, and ofspryng, their descent and pedigree: also their habite and apparell, is there plainly showne. The execrable life, and miserable death of Rorie Roge, that famous archtraitour to God and the crowne (otherwise called Rorie Oge) is like wise discribed. Lastlie the commyng in of Thyrlaghe Leonaghe the greate Oneale of Irelande, with the effecte of his submission, to the right honourable Sir Henry Sidney (Lorde Deputie of the saiedlande) is thereto adioyned. Made and deuised by Ihon Derricke, anno 1578. and now published and set forthe by the saied authour this present yere of our Lorde 1581. for pleasure and delight of the well disposed reade* (London, 1581), epistle, n.p.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n.p.

continued to plague the English authorities in the late sixteenth century. In the 1560s, the English authorities were becoming increasingly frustrated with Shane O'Neill and the "customary right and lordship" over the province of Ulster. In 1566, frustrated with the intransigence of Elizabeth to honor "the traditional claims of his dynasty," O'Neill sought the help of the French court and began a brief military campaign across Ulster. After sacking Armagh, O'Neill was eventually defeated in 1567 and his head was impaled on a spike on the wall at Dublin Castle.⁴³

In reaction to the hostilities, Derricke argued that this was not a war against all Ireland: "warre is not raged against the Queene's freendes, nor yet a battell fought, save onely against her enemies."⁴⁴ In the body of his text, Derricke clearly expounds on the wonders of the country, its natural beauty and honest inhabitants. It is only through the pernicious deeds of the rebellious "sort" that Ireland has undergone a transformation from a peaceful country to one dominated by bloodshed and revolt. "The love of rebelles," he concludes, "is in plaguing of true men."⁴⁵

While not a military man, the poet Edmund Spenser maintained an official administrative post throughout his time in Ireland. He first began visiting Ireland in 1578 as part of an assignment to deliver dispatches to the Earl of Leicester's correspondents in foreign countries. In search of more assured preferment, Spenser accepted the post of secretary to Arthur Grey, Lord Grey de Wilton who was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1580. Although Spenser returned to England in 1589-90 and 1596, Ireland remained his home until 1598, within a month of his

⁴² While the term "ethnic cleansing" is undoubtedly an anachronism to Elizabethan Ireland, one could argue that it was exactly such a policy that Edmund Spenser espoused.

⁴³ GA Hayes McCoy, "Conciliation, Coercion and the Protestant Reformation," in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byren, eds., *A New History of Ireland, Vol. III. Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 84-86.

⁴⁴ Derricke, *The Image of Ireland*, n.p.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11^v.

death. It is clear that Spenser knew a great deal about Irish matters. In 1580 he accompanied Grey to Kerry and described “Those late Warres in Mounster”⁴⁶ following the Uprising of the Earl of Desmond. Throughout the 1570s the local lords of both Munster and Connaught opposed the provincial Presidencies. Imprisoned in England, the fifteenth earl of Desmond was permitted to return to his Munster stronghold in 1573. After a series of aborted uprisings, Desmond revolted in 1580 in defense of the Catholic faith and to oppose Englishmen who “go about to overrun our country and make it their own.”⁴⁷ Over a period of three years English forces hunted down and wiped out the Desmond army and laid waste to the province of Munster - a result for which Spenser held the Irish responsible.⁴⁸

Aside from his duties as a chronicler of the Desmond campaign, Spenser also held posts in Dublin as a transcriber and collator of official documents, and he held the clerkship of the Irish court of Chancery from 1581 to 1588. In 1588 he took up the post of clerk of the Council of Munster.⁴⁹ In addition to official posts in Ireland, Spenser also acquired a considerable amount of property, as he first purchased estates in County Kildare in the Pale and later benefited from the forfeiture of the Desmond estates in Cork.⁵⁰

Possibly written in 1586, Spenser first makes reference to the Irish in book two of the *Faerie Queene*. Herein, we find his first accounts of the savagery of the Irish:

A thousand villeins round about them swarmed
Out of the rockes and caves adioyning nye,

⁴⁶ See below for more of Spenser’s description of the effects of the Munster uprising.

⁴⁷ Richard Cox, *Hibernica Anglicana*, I (1689), 361; cited in G.A. Hayes McCoy, “Tudor Conquest and Counter-Reformation, 1571-1603,” in Moody et al, *A New History of Ireland, vol. III. Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 107.

⁴⁸ Hayes McCoy, “Tudor Conquest,” 108-09.

⁴⁹ In Elizabethan Ireland, the Lord Deputy was responsible for all Ireland but only had direct control over the English Pale and Leinster. Connaught and Munster were administered under the deputy by a President and council on the model of the North of England and the Welsh Marches.

⁵⁰ *Dictionary of National Biography*, 18: 795-800.

Vile caytive wretches, ragged, rude, deformed,
All threatning death, all in straunge manner armd,
Some with unweldy clubs, some with long speares,
Some rusty knives, some steves in fire warmd.
Sterne was their looke, like wild amazed steares,
Staring with hollow eyes, and stiff upstanding heares.⁵¹

The physical characteristics of the Irishman, his demonic features as described by Spenser, seem reminiscent of the later “hell” paintings of the Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel (the Younger). The obvious imagery of the servants of a papal anti-Christ can hardly have escaped the readers of Spenser’s poem. The ferocious and barbaric Irishman of David Hayton’s depiction is clearly present in Spenser’s portrayal.

Spenser’s most elaborate work on the country, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* was written in 1596 after Spenser had had over sixteen years of experience in Ireland. Licensed for issue in April 1598, *A View* was not published until 1633, as part of an appendix to James Ware’s *Historie of Ireland*, when Strafford allowed its printing as proof of the need for a strong government in Ireland.⁵²

Spenser wrote of Ireland altogether from the point of view of an Elizabethan Englishman. Indeed he castigated the Anglo-Irish ascendancy there for degenerating into something akin to an Irishman:

[O]ther greate howses there bee of the old English, in Ireland, which through
lycentious conversinge with the Irishe, or marryinge and fosteringe with them, or

⁵¹ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*. J.C. Smith, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), Book ii, Canto ix, Stanza xiii.

⁵² Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. W.L. Renwick, ed. (London: Scholartis Press, 1934), 250. Ciaran Brady argues that unlike the “orthodox” interpretation of the publication history of *A View*, Spenser’s work failed to be published in 1598 because of his contention that English common law would prove useless as a means of reforming Ireland; see Ciaran Brady, “The Road to the View: On the Decline of Reform Thought in Tudor Ireland,” in Patricia Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1989), 25-40.

lack of meete Nature, or other such unhappie occasions have degndred from their antient dignities and are now growen as Irish as o'hanlans breach.⁵³

He allowed no recognition of Irish claims and rights - English laws should be enforced and Irish nationalism uprooted by the sword. He shared a common Elizabethan belief that the Irish might justly and wisely be expropriated from their lands and, as far as possible, exterminated. James Ware, the initial printer, deplored Spenser's want of charity in his blueprint for the subjugation of the island.⁵⁴

Spenser's commentary on the Irish populace was undoubtedly vicious, but must be seen in light of the political realities of Ireland on the eve of the seventeenth century. Aside from the constant Irish threats, the instrument of English control was shaky at the very least. Officials without security of tenure and without a service tradition found themselves amid the pressures of colonial development and the vagaries of court intrigue and politicking. External threats from the Spanish consistently dogged any sense of English security in Ireland. Spenser's critical posturing vis-à-vis the Irish increased in the light of the rebellious stance of Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone. Although Spenser would not live to witness O'Neill's eventual defeat, he did watch with horror as Tyrone instigated a revolt in 1597 that spread throughout the country as the rebel lord called on the "gentlemen of Munster" to join the Ulster Confederacy and to "make war with us."⁵⁵ Hence, *A View* was written at a time of considerable anxiety.

Spenser was genuinely interested in Ireland and while he disapproved of the fighting casts, he praised their gallantry, military aptitude and horsemanship. In his assessment of the "Kearne," the "proper Irish souldyer," he remarks that they:

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁴ *Dictionary of National Biography*, 18: 800.

...are verie valyante and hardy for the most parte greate endurors of could, labour hunger and all hardnesse, verie active and stronge of hande, very swifte of foote, verie vigilante and circumspecte in their enterprises, verie presente in perills, verie greate scorners of death.⁵⁶

Yet it would be a misinterpretation to assume that Spenser called for the blood and death of all Irish. In his description of the devastation of the Munster famine caused by the Desmond wars, the emotion is hardly gloating, but rather horrified:

...that ritch and plentifull countrye had been reduced to “such wretchednes, as that any stone harte would have rewed the same, out of everie Corner of the woodes and glennes they came creping forth upon their handes, for their legges could not beare them, they looked Anatomies of death, they spake like ghostes crying out of their graves, they did eate of the dead Carrions, happye were they could fynde them, yea, and one another soone after in so much as the verie Carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves... in shorte space ther were none almost left and a most populous and plentyfull Countrye suddenlie lefte voyde of man or beast...”⁵⁷

One might have assumed that Spenser would advocate a similar end for the rest of the Irish population. In contrast, the author’s clearly laid-out plan for the subjugation and occupation of the island was to be extremely well organized, such that “the end I assure will bee verie shorte and much soner.”⁵⁸ In this regard, *A View* is indeed a blueprint for successful colonization of Ireland.

Unlike later commentators such as Rich, Spenser did not involve himself in frontal attacks on the Roman Catholic religion and the ways in which it “infected” the populace with rebellious attitudes. Indeed, the author harbored a certain admiration for those popish priests who “come out of Spaine from Rome from Rennes by longe toyle and dangerous travell hether,

⁵⁵ Hayes McCoy, “Tudor Conquest,” 121-23.

⁵⁶ Spenser, *A View*, 93-94.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

where they knowe perill of death awayteth them and noe rewarde nor ritches, is too found onelye to drawe the people to the church of Rome.”⁵⁹ Spenser’s comments neither castigated the priests themselves nor the populace who embraced their teachings. Moreover, the author even doubts the religiosity of the Irish: “Moste of the Irishe are farr from understanding of the popishe religion as they are of the protestantes profession, and yet doe they hate yt, though unknowen, even for the verie hatred which they have of the English and theirre government.”⁶⁰ Hence Spenser ironically criticizes the Irish not simply for being papists but moreover for not even being good papists. William Lyon, Bishop of Cork mirrors this observation in a letter to Lord Hunsdon in 1596:

A great part of the people of this kingdom are no better than mere infidels, having but a bare name of Christians, without any knowledge of Christ or light of his truth, in that I myself have examined divers of them, being sixty years of age and upwards, and have found them not able to say the Lord’s prayer, or the articles of the Christian faith, neither in English, Latin, nor Irish.⁶¹

Spenser’s comments prove interesting for his observation on the Irish hatred for anything British, but also underscore a curious anomaly that showed itself in the later writings of Barnabie Rich. Rich castigated the Irish for their commitment to popishness, whereas, if Spenser or Lyon are to be believed, they had little interest in any tenets of Christianity save rejecting English Protestantism. Spenser further added that this hatred of Reformation stems from a history of subjugation. They recalled how in the past they were “subdued, and they were thrust owt of all theirre possessions.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶¹ *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1597-97* (London: H.M.S.O., 1893), 16.

So as now they feare that yf they were againe brought under, they should likewise bee expelled owte of all which is the cause that they hate Englishe government.”⁶²

Spenser foresaw the O’Neill rebellion two years before its instigation and while his recommendations on how to respond to such lawlessness are suitably savage, one senses that the author can easily understand why the Irish should wish to revolt: “They should all ryse generallie into Rebellion and caste away the English subjection, to which there is now little wanteth.”⁶³

In contrast, Barnabie Rich in his initial writings on Ireland, saw little or no reason why the Irish should wish to rebel against a “just and mercifull” crown. Rich was a career soldier and part-time writer who participated in a number of military campaigns in Ireland. Originally enlisting as a soldier in Mary’s campaigns against France, he rose to captain after the campaigns in the Low Countries. While he appears to have taken a role in the efforts of Walter Devereaux, the first Earl of Essex to colonize the country -- a campaign that ended disastrously⁶⁴ -- he spent most of his life in Dublin where, in times of peace, he tried to make a career from his pen. While dubbing himself a “gentleman,” he admits that he is no scholar: “I am a souldier, a protested souldier, better practised in my pike than in my penne.”⁶⁵ In 1584, he resumed his military duty in Ireland after Sir John Perot became Lord Deputy of Ireland.⁶⁶

While Rich repeatedly slammed the rebellious Irish, he argued that this intractability stemmed less from any inherent disobedience than the anathematical influence of the papist religion. His first major work on the Irish, *A Short Survey of Ireland* purports to outline the

⁶² Spenser, *A View*, 121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁴ Centrally planned and highly structured colonies were first attempted in Ireland during the 1570s by Sir Thomas Smith and Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex. Neither of these private campaigns met with any success and in the future, the government played a more active role in English colonization in Ireland. See Canny, “The Permissive Frontier,” 18-19, and for a more detailed analysis, Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*.

⁶⁵ Barnabie Rich, *A Short Survey of Ireland* (London, 1609), a3^R

geographical and human characteristics of the island in the Elizabethan era; in reality, he simply launches into a diatribe on the dangers of the papal anti-Christ in universal terms. His dedicatory preface presents the Irish situation as critical in the aftermath of Elizabeth's "milde and mercifull allurements" in that country:

The people were never more forward, never more obstinate, never more perverse, nor the state of that kingdome, never more desperate than it is at this houre, confused as well in the true knowledge appertayning unto God, as in their duetie and obedience belonging to their Prince, where the people are daily seduced, infected and perverted by Jesuites, Seminaries and other runnagate Priests the ministers of Antichrist, wherewith the Country doth swarme, and have so mightily prevailed, that they have wrought a generall contempt, aswell against his Majestie himselfe, as against his godly proceedings.⁶⁷

The policy of "colonization" continued in Jacobean Ireland, namely an exploitation that served both English purposes and private interests. Early Stuart attempts to subjugate the Irish populace were explicitly reformativ. ⁶⁸ One must understand Rich in light of an English principle which argued that the resistance of the native Irish could be most successfully overcome through a "civilizing" process. For Rich, such "civilizing" wholly concerned the spread of Protestantism in papist Ireland.

In spite of his sectarian goals, like Derricke, Rich was careful not to present a blanket condemnation of all the Irish populace. If Derricke's inhabitants had found themselves accursed by prevailing nationalistic or rebellious influences, Rich identifies a plethora of "seducing spirits," the priests that "are planted in all the parts of that Realme, that if there be one that will

⁶⁶ *Dictionary of National Biography*, 18: 991-92.

⁶⁷ Rich, *A short survey of Ireland. Truly discovering who it is that hath so armed the hearts of that people with disobedience to their prince. With a description of the countrey, and the condition of the people. No lesse necessarie and needfull to be respected by the English, then requisite and behoouefull to be reformed in the Irish* (London, 1609), a2^r.

⁶⁸ Aidan Clarke, "Pacification, Plantation and the Catholic Question, 1603-23," in Moody et al, *A New History of Ireland, voumel III*, 187.

stand for the King, there is twentie for that one to maintaine the Pope.”⁶⁹ The Catholic, rather than a specifically Irish threat, remained paramount in Rich’s critique. The racial element was consistently minimized in favor of a universal condemnation of the dangers of Rome. Implicit within this discussion is a sense that English relations with the Irish would undoubtedly improve if the latter could only acquire the godliness of their eastern neighbors. While clearly distinguishing between Protestants and Catholics on the island, he does acknowledge the “Irishness” of the Protestant inhabitants. Once again, we perceive an important distinction between ethnicity and religion – a distinction that ultimately became clouded in the subsequent history of Northern Ireland when sectarianism operated on clearly delineated “British Protestant” versus “Irish Catholic” lines.

In spite of his blanket condemnation of the Catholic religion, Rich does make claims to a strong understanding of the Irish people and indeed goes so far as to claim that he has unearthed those reasons that created “that miserable and wretched Realme of Ireland.” “I have,” he argues, “unmasked this brood of the generation of antichrist.”⁷⁰ How, he wonders, could a country so blessed with climate and a noble history of “trade and traficke” remain so “uncivill,” “uncleanly,” and barbarous and more “brutish in their customes and demeanures than in any other part of the world that is knowne?”⁷¹ Such rhetorical questions hardly require an explicit answer, yet Rich is happy to provide the reader a lengthy diatribe on the origins of the Catholic antichrist and the clear distinction between Christ and the Pope. The second portion of the book provides a rudimentary guide on how to identify the anti-Christ and thus avoid its pernicious influences.

⁶⁹ Rich, *A Short Survey*, a2^R.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, a3^R.

If Rich's *Short Survey of Ireland* underscored the universal threat Roman Catholicism poses to English stability, his second work on the Irish, *A New Description of Ireland*, exhibited a rich if extraordinarily negative understanding of the populace. By this stage, Rich had lived in Ireland for forty-seven years, spent in his "prince and countryes service." In all this time, he never purchased any land or rents, hence one can hardly depict him as a colonialist.⁷² Published a year after the *Short Survey* in 1610, Rich continued his broad theme of popery in Ireland, yet once again depicts the Irish as an ignorant breed incapable of rejecting their religion: "Popery is a malady not easie to be cured, and I think these lines of mine will sooner move Choller, than give contentment, or produce amendment."⁷³ He laments how in his many years in the country, he observed numerous "good people, that are both capable of obedience and discipline... but alas, are still poisoned with Popery and what is he that is not touched with a kinde of compassion to see the poore and silly people so seduced and carried away by these juggling *Jesuites*?"⁷⁴ The Irish whom Rich portrays should not be feared but rather pitied. Once again, his emphasis on religion underscores a minimal ethnic distinction: "I would not have it thought, that I make any difference between the *English* and the *Irish*, in respect of their birth, for I know there be as woorthy men in *Ireland*, as any are in *England*." Moreover, as before, Rich openly distinguished between two kinds of Irish: On the one hand are those "rude, uncivill, unreverent, uncleanly and untaught," on the other are those that are "milde, modest, mercifull, kinde, curteous, and that are very way indued with wit, reason, and understanding." The former, we soon learn, characterize

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷² Barnabie Rich, *A new description of Ireland: wherein is described the disposition of the Irish whereunto they are inclined. No lesse admirable to be perused then credible to be beleaved: neither unprofitable nor unpleasant to bee read and understood, by those worthy citizens of London that be now undertakers in Ireland* (London, 1610), Epistle, n.p.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Epistle, n.p.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Epistle, n.p. His italics.

themselves by superstitious, idolatrous, seditious and rebellious qualities; the latter “do embrace the holy Scriptures, and do indeavour themselves in the service of their God, and obedience to their Prince.”⁷⁵ As if to emphasize his respect for certain “elements” of the Irish populace, he claims that “I love Ireland, and that I thinke there is as neere a highway to go to Heaven from out of Ireland, as there is from any part.” While it is clear that in reality only reformed Irish are close to Rich’s heavenly gates, Rich clearly retains a genuine respect for *Irish* Protestants.⁷⁶

As a text embroiled in a historiographical debate over Ireland, Rich openly condemns those former chroniclers of the island. Campion unsurprisingly receives short thrift from Rich, deeming it unnecessary to “describe the man any further, for his end made tryall of his

⁷⁵ Ibid., Epistle, n.p.

⁷⁶ My emphasis.

honesty.”⁷⁷ Stanyhurst, who “patched and peeced together” a history of Ireland “do (*sic*) evermore engender ignorance.” The reason behind this “ridiculous” history stems from the author’s reliance on “lying Historiographers, their Chroniclers, their Bardes, their Rythmers, and such other lying Poets.” All these figures, Rich contends, “do nothing but sit and compose lies.”⁷⁸ Rich, in contrast, eschews such deceitful sources and provides a portrait based entirely on his own “observations.” Rich’s “revisionism” does indeed ignore all Irish chronicles - what remains is a truly English history of Ireland and her people, or more particularly, a Protestant history of the island. In a more specific attack on Stanyhurst’s assessment of Irish religiosity, Rich argues that if they are indeed religious, such passions stem not from knowledge but mere superstition.

Rich provides a lengthy description of the positive characteristics of the Irish. He highlights their “glorious” and “proud” nature, their innate generosity. Ignorance is not an inherent trait in the Irish: “there bee some other of that Countrey birth, whose thoughts and mindes being enriched with knowledge and understanding, that have done good in the Country, and whose example hereafter, may give light to many others.”⁷⁹ In his description of Dublin, Rich contradicts himself. He describes these citizens as “reformed in manners, in civility, in curtesy.” One would assume he means the Protestant inhabitants of the Pale. Yet, he continues by stating that these people would in fact be irreproachable if not for their religion. Ironically, Rich has provided a positive description of well-to-do urban Catholics! Of Irish women, he focuses on “woorthy Matrones, and of those Women that are honest, good and vertuous, as

⁷⁷ Rich, *A New Description of Ireland*, 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 37

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

Ireland God bee thanked is not destitute of many such.”⁸⁰ The rest of the section, however, launches into a full-scale attack on the “multitude of the rude and ignorant among the *Irish*, [who] do far passe the number either of the religious, or civilly reformed.” While it is not necessary to list the various pejoratives Rich employs in his description of the Irish, it is clear that these negative characteristics of the populace are not innate:

I do not impute this so much to their natural inclination, as I do to their education, that are trained up in Treason, in Rebellion, in Theft, in Robbery, in Superstition, in Idolatry, and nuzeled from their Cradles in the very puddle of Popery.⁸¹

Religion and the teaching of papist practices generate such ignorant and barbarous people – ethnicity and national origin have little or no role. Rich concludes “that if these people did once understand the pretiousnesse of vertue, they would farre exceed us; notwithstanding, our long experience in the Sovereignty of vertue.”⁸² Protestant education could transform this population into a virtuous and superior race. One should not overlook Rich’s sectarian bigotry, but one should nonetheless acknowledge that for all his faults, he was not a prototype of the Darwinian racist.

In a further rejection of innate inferiority, Rich controversially contends that their penchant for “cruelty” stems not from a natural inclination, but rather from “the mallice and hatred they bear to the English government, which they have alwaies spurned at, and are still desirous to shake off.”⁸³ Inherent within this statement is a curious contradiction. As a loyal soldier in the English forces, Rich undoubtedly remains bemused as to why anyone would actually reject the civility and order of the English regime, but at the same time he depicts a

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸¹ Rich, *A New Description*, 15.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17.

perfectly rational reason for the Irish rebellious spirit. Without the English government, Rich argues that we should witness a further descent into lawlessness and barbarity. Yet, he concludes, “it is holden for a *Maxime* in Ireland, that ten English will sooner become Irish, than one Irish will be found to turne English.”⁸⁴

Rich’s *New Description* aroused a great deal of ire among the Irish readership, so much so that Rich felt obliged to publish a defense of his work two years after the original book. *A True and a Kinde Excuse* underscores Rich’s original contention that the *New Description* constituted an attack first and foremost on the papacy, not on the Irish themselves. His defense continues the themes of his first two Irish works, providing scathing attacks on the superstitions and idolatrous tenets of the Roman religion. The “jesuits and their ignorant popish priestes, under a pretense of religion, seeke nothing else but to hatch upp and to drawe in Rebellion, colouring out all their impicities, under the showe of the Catholicke faith.”⁸⁵ He contends that the reasons behind the publishing of the book were “concerned nothing but a discovery of the Pope.”⁸⁶ Moreover, he argues that in the *New Description*, “I have in a more ample manner inveyed agaynst Popery in generall, but not agaynst any one papist in particular.”⁸⁷ Rich acknowledges that the brunt of the criticism came from well-to-do Dublin citizens who took exception to his anti-Catholic diatribes. Rich not surprisingly points out that “it was the papist indeede that pyck to manie quarrelles against [the book].” He concludes that, “they cannot

⁸³ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁸⁵ Barnabie Rich, *A True and a Kinde Excuse Written in Defence of that Booke, intituled a Newe Description of Irelande, Wherein is freely confessed the cause of the writing of that Booke, How that Booke was brought into obloquy and slander, a Revocation of all oversights that through ignorance were published in that Booke, a Bulwarke or Defence of all truthes contayned in that Booke* (London, 1612), 4^v.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 4^r.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 5^v.

indure to heare their holy father so truly translated, from the *Vicar of Christ*, to bee indeed, the *Vicar of the Devil*.”⁸⁸

The second objection, he tells the reader, concerns his depiction of the Irish in general, “to bee more savage and cruell than the Canibals.” Rich’s defense is weak: he points out selected passages in the *New Description* which emphasize that not all the Irish are barbaric savages – what he fails to recap is his own contention that such civilized Irish represented a pitiful minority. “What have I omitted to commend in the Irish?” Rich demands of his critics, or at least he adds, “I meane of those that are worthy of any commendations indeede.” What is pertinent to this discussion is Rich’s clear desire to defend his work as not implicitly anti-Irish. Irrespective of his success in doing so, Rich obviously does not wish to be judged a bigot. He concludes:

I hope there is no man that will accuse me of partiality, to say I have more forborne to speake against the follies of the English, than against the manners and customes of the Irish, or that I doe otherwise distinguish betweene them, but value them both a like, the good to the good, and the bad to the bad.⁸⁹

In a final plea to the reader, Rich reiterates that everything he has written is an explicit condemnation of the Papacy and no more.

Rich’s denial that he sought in any way to slander the greater majority highlights a “double-speak” in the writings of all the authors studied here. They see no contradiction in praising certain facets of the Irish while condemning others. A convenient solution to this supposed conundrum may lie in their clearly delineated distinction between the Irish of the “Pale” and all other “meere” Irish who lived outside the “civilized” zone. It is clear that all the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 7°.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 10°.

authors retained a bias toward the Anglicized region of Ireland, yet these authors did not limit their praise to people of this area. They undoubtedly meant to describe the native Irish when commenting on their extraordinary bravery, loyalty and commitment to a cause - certainly, the “Woodkernes” of Spenser and Derricke hardly existed inside the walls of Dublin. What comes through in their writings is a guarded respect for the courage of the Irish. Ironically, even the Irish population's commitment to Catholicism engenders a begrudging degree of admiration.

It is really not until the writings of Barnabie Rich in the early seventeenth century that we witness the first explicitly sectarian criticisms of the barbarity of the Catholic Irishman. For Rich, all other facets of the populace pale in importance when compared with the need for a complete reformation on the island. Ironically, Rich contends that if the Irish could embrace wholeheartedly the tents of Protestantism, they could attain attributes equal to and even greater than those of the English themselves.

What is not explicit in Rich's or the other writers' critiques is a claim that the Irish are indeed racially inferior to the English.⁹⁰ Obsession with rebellion, disloyalty to the crown and a commitment to the papal anti-Christ all have explainable causes. Hatred of the English and a love of superstitious practices are by no means insignificant characteristics in the eyes of the writers, but nonetheless, these are attributes acquired through “deficient” education and isolation from the “civilized” world - what they are not are innate qualities. Popish priests have “poysoned” the Irish. Indeed, for the writers to admit that such negative attributes are natural to the Irish would beg the question, why then would the English seek to reform and “civilize” the population? They did so because of a strong belief that Irish manners could indeed be

transformed through the processes of a superior form of government and most certainly through the ministries of a godly clergy. Ultimately, as Noonan convincingly argues, this emphasis on religion in distinguishing the Irish from the English becomes less prevalent by the mid-seventeenth century. In the aftermath of the 1641 Rebellion, and in particular the publication of John Temple's treatise on the uprising in 1646, English perceptions of the Irish began to focus as much on their ethnicity as their religion.⁹¹

The writers of Elizabethan and early Jacobean England had not yet perceived the Irish as a cruel race. Even the cruelty Rich attributes to the Irish stems more from the barbarism of the pernicious priests than any ethnic characteristic of the Irish themselves. The paranoia that existed in the wake of the 1641 rebellion led to extraordinary accusations lacking in the works of the authors under study here. Bigoted and cruel these English writers most certainly were, but amid this unsympathetic tone lay another characteristic - a strong belief in the excellence of English political, social and theological traditions - qualities which could relieve the Irish of their untold miseries.

⁹⁰ Admittedly, one could deem the term "racially inferior" as anachronistic - this paper does not pursue the relative meaning of the term in Elizabethan England. What is meant for the purposes of this essay centers on the innate inferiority of an ethnic group.

⁹¹ Noonan, "The Cruell Pressure," 151-177.