Micheál Ó Siochrú and Jane H. Ohlmeyer, eds. *Ireland, 1641: Contexts and Reactions.*

Studies in Early Modern Irish History. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013. xvii + 286 pp. £75. ISBN: 978-0-7190-8817-9.

This volume forcefully demonstrates the potential of digital-humanities projects for facilitating transnational and comparative reevaluations of the past. It presents the results of initial engagement with the 1641 Depositions Project (2007–10), which digitally reproduced and transcribed 8,000 witness statements that document

contemporary allegations of widespread atrocities committed by rebellious Catholics against loyalist Protestants following the outbreak of an uprising in Ireland in October 1641. Whereas many of the original 19,000 manuscript pages (Trinity College Dublin, MSS 809–41) are difficult to read and were preserved in a form that was not amenable to comprehensive analysis, they are now fully word-searchable and freely accessible online (for a review see Michael Ullyot, "Digital Humanities Projects," *Renaissance Quarterly* 66.3 [2013]: 941–43). The essays originated in two international academic events held at Trinity College Dublin — a conference on "Plantation and Reaction" (October 2009) and a symposium on "War and Atrocity" (October 2010) — that offered a tasting of how the 1641 depositions can now be reevaluated in wider Irish, British, European, Atlantic, and global contexts.

By mapping the depositions, which were collected from all over Ireland, the cultural geographer William Smyth has identified influences of early modernity that assumed such forms as the establishment of over 200 new towns between 1603 and 1641, exacerbating colonial anxieties that were manifested in growing tensions between emergent Protestant settler communities and alienated Irish Catholic populations. David Edwards points out that the outburst of extreme violence in 1641 was preceded by continuous native unrest over the previous four decades. In turn, John Walter sees such "performative violence" as an expression of popular political agency. Aidan Clarke maintains that the claim for premeditated massacres, which has been a subject of heated controversy for over 350 years, can be authoritatively refuted. At the same time, he asserts that the most basic fact of how many people were actually killed remains to be established. It is now apparently possible to attempt a recalculation of how many Protestants were killed in cold blood based on forensic county-to-county studies, but it should be conceded that the much larger figure of secondary victims, who died from hunger and exposure to cold, is mostly unknown and there is no comparable documentation for atrocities committed against Catholics.

Hiram Morgan looks at the print culture of Irish Catholic emigrants in the Iberian Peninsula that reported on the events in Ireland, and Igor Pérez Tostada argues that stereotypes and recurring motifs in descriptions of Irish experiences mirror the Spanish Black Legend as it appeared across the Hispanic Atlantic. Nicholas Canny locates 1641 in a colonial context, showing how contemporary English writers compared coercive policies in Ireland to colonization of the New World, and Karen Kupperman offers a more specific comparative case study of experiments with plantation in New England.

Peter Wilson interrogates references to massacres in the Thirty Years' War, with particular attention to the sack of Magdeburg in May 1631. The editors suggest that there is scope for further comparisons with ethno-sectarian violence on the peripheries of Europe, which might look at such events as the Khmelnitsky rising in the Ukraine or the Razin rebellion in Russia. Comparative perspectives can also serve to introduce methodological innovation to the study of 1641 in Ireland. Mark Greengrass's careful attention to use of language in mid-sixteenth-century religious conflict in France could be applied to tease out the transitions from oral testimony to written depositions. The

most original comparative perspective is offered by Ben Kiernan, who refers to eighteenth-century conflicts between natives and newcomers in Southeast Asia. His comparison, however, with an archive of confessions extracted under torture from victims of Khmer Rouge terror in Cambodia seems overstretched.

As stated by Ethan Shagan, "the seventeenth century is alive in Ireland in ways like few other places in the modern world" (17). The place of 1641 as a landmark event in Irish social memory has recently been examined by John Gibney in *The Shadow of a Year: The 1641 Rebellion in Irish History and Memory* (2013). Further detailed studies of local remembrance can benefit from the exemplary sophistication of Erika Kujpers and Judith Pollmann in sensitively tracing transitions from private to public remembrance in Dutch revolts against the Spanish Habsburgs in the 1570s. Overall the volume edited by Ó Siochrú and Ohlmeyer signifies a coming of age of Irish historiography, which has confidently moved away from insularity. Future work will need to engage more thoroughly with synthesis, rather than just placing comparative studies alongside the study of Ireland.

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