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John Cunningham

Milton, John Hall and Thomas Waring's *Brief Narration of the Rebellion in Ireland*

On 19 March 1650, the London book collector George Thomason acquired a copy of a printed work that bore the following title: *A Brief Narration of the Plotting, Beginning and Carrying On of that Execrable Rebellion and Butcherie in Ireland. With the Unheard of Devilish-Cruelties and Massacres by the Irish-Rebels, Exercised Upon the Protestants and English There. Faithfully Collected out of Depositions, Taken by Commissioners Under the Great Seal of Ireland. Hereunto are Added Observations, Discovering the Actions of the Late King; and Manifesting the Concernment of the Protestant-Army, Now Employed in Ireland.* This pamphlet has been hitherto attributed solely to Thomas Waring, a Protestant who had relocated from Dublin to London in the mid-1640s. This article offers a significant new perspective on *A Brief Narration*. It outlines evidence for the involvement of a second author, namely the poet, essayist and propagandist John Hall of Durham. In exploring the latter's contribution to *A Brief Narration*, this article also seeks to trace the apparent influence of Milton's Irish writings on Hall's approach.

The work under discussion has attracted scholarly attention mainly for two reasons. The first relates to its vivid representation of the violence that ensued upon the outbreak of rebellion in Ireland in 1641. *A Brief Narration* belonged to the large cluster of books and pamphlets published in London in the 1640s and 1650s that reported, often in gruesome and exaggerated detail, attacks by Catholics on Protestants in Ireland. In common with widely read texts such as Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion*, Waring's work drew upon a key

source now known as the 1641 depositions. The depositions are witness testimonies collected from Protestant survivors of the rebellion and their veracity has long been a source of controversy. The recent editing and publication of the depositions online has resulted in increased scholarly engagement with that body of source material.¹ One outcome of this has been improved understanding of the interconnections that exist between the manuscript depositions on the one hand and contemporary printed works on the other. In this context, *A Brief Narration* has attracted renewed attention, for example in the work of Eamon Darcy (141-44).

The pamphlet has also proven useful for exploring English perspectives on Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century and, more particularly, the ideology that underpinned the Cromwellian conquest of the country. To take one example, Micheál Ó Siochrú has linked the publication of *A Brief Narration* with the English state's desire to prepare "the ideological ground for the resumption of brutal military tactics" (75). One of the better-known works concerned with vindicating England's right to rule Ireland in 1649 is John Milton's *Observations on the Articles of Peace* (*Complete Prose Works* [hereafter *CPW*] 3: 260-334). In their efforts to establish a context for analysis of Milton's *Observations*, scholars have understandably sometimes paid attention to the content of *A Brief Narration*. Such interest in the latter pamphlet has been encouraged by the fact Milton must have been familiar with it, because in January 1650 the Council of State instructed him to organise its publication (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* [hereafter *CSPD*], 1649-1650 474). For David Loewenstein and others, *A Brief Narration* has undoubtedly proven to be a useful aid for interpreting and situating Milton's "militant, nationalistic Protestant responses to the Irish crisis" (Loewenstein "Milton's Prose", 96).

At the same time, however, some striking aspects of *A Brief Narration* have not attracted due scholarly attention. The pamphlet contained two main sections: a thirty-eight

page “History” (1-38); and twenty-four pages of “Observations” (41-64). Close reading and comparison of these component parts reveals notable divergences in content, emphasis and style, the significance of which has not been previously recognised. The “History” set out a conventional Irish Protestant narrative of the rebellion of the sort that might be expected from Waring. In explaining the causes of the rebellion, he stressed the decisive roles supposedly played by the Catholic Church and by major European Catholic powers bent on the eradication of Protestantism in the Stuart realms (2-4). The content of the “Observations”, by contrast, reflected the priorities of a supporter of the parliament and defender of regicide. Here, the main emphasis was on blackening the posthumous reputation of Charles I by seeking to portray him as the “Author” of the Irish rebellion (48).

The ‘History’ that makes up the first part of *A Brief Narration* can be safely attributed to Waring. His initials duly appeared in print at the close of that section of the text (38). The various contrasts evident between his “History” and the subsequent “Observations” point, however, to the likelihood that a different writer composed the second half of the pamphlet. A crucial clue as to the identity of that second author can be found in a copy of the pamphlet housed at the Trinity College Dublin (hereafter TCD) Library. In this copy, the text printed on both the title page and the final page differ in certain respects from the more widely available version collected by Thomason and also hitherto used by scholars. Most significantly, in the TCD copy the initials “J.H.” appear at the close of the “Observations” ([TCD] 64).² As *A Brief Narration* received official backing from the Council of State in 1649-50, these initials indicate the involvement of John Hall, who was along with Milton one of the writers employed by the state at that time.

Hall was born in Durham in 1627. He was admitted to St John College, Cambridge, in February 1646, but just over a year later he left it for London and Gray’s Inn. In the same period, he made a name for himself by publishing first a collection of essays and then a

volume of poems. He also began to correspond with Samuel Hartlib. In 1648, alongside various scholarly pursuits, Hall founded a newsbook entitled *Mercurius Britannicus*, thus reviving a title that had been formerly used by Marchamont Nedham. From May 1649 he was employed by the Council of State “for answering pamphlets against the commonwealth” (“Hall, John” *ODNB*).³ Joad Raymond has pointed out that, unlike Milton, Hall was “not fussy in accepting commissions”, and he duly penned attacks on William Prynne, Christopher Love and others, as well as going to Scotland with Cromwell in 1650 (“Hall, John” *ODNB*). A number of the works that Hall published between 1647 and 1652 appeared under the initials “J.H.” (Shaw 204-11). The precise extent of his output as a propagandist for the state is, however, obscured by the fact that he sometimes wrote anonymously. His contribution to the version of *A Brief Narration* collected by Thomason was indeed anonymous, but the rarer and variant text preserved at TCD is fortunately more revealing concerning the key role played by “J.H.” ([TCD] 64).

Hall and Milton have been frequently mentioned together, especially within the past two decades as Hall’s work has begun to attract greater scholarly attention. Hall’s admiration for Milton is thus no secret. David Norbrook has referred to Hall as Milton’s “young disciple” (138), while Nicholas McDowell has suggested that Hall was “perhaps the most attentive reader” of Milton’s prose in the 1640s (9). Raymond has duly described Hall’s 1649 treatise *Concerning the Advancement of Learning* as written “in the spirit of Milton and Hartlib” (“Hall, John” *ODNB*). Blair Worden has, moreover, argued that Hall’s “elusive” career between 1649 and 1656 “suggests a pattern close, where not identical, to that to be found in Milton” (285). This pattern stretched from support for the regicide, through initial approval of the protectorate, to eventual disillusionment with Cromwell’s government. This article seeks to situate Hall’s “Observations” in *A Brief Narration* within the initial phase of this shared pattern, when both Hall and Milton vigorously defended the regicide in print,

while also devoting some attention to Ireland. Before comparing the two halves of *A Brief Narration* and exploring the relationship between Hall's text on the one hand and Milton's works on the other, it is first necessary both to establish a context for the publication of *A Brief Narration* and to shed some light on the obscure figure of Thomas Waring.

Background to *A Brief Narration*

All parties to the British and Irish wars of the mid-seventeenth century recognised the importance of print propaganda.⁴ Following the execution of Charles I in January 1649, the new republican regime had to defend itself on many fronts, not least against a seemingly formidable royalist alliance that had been constructed in Ireland by James Butler, marquis of Ormond.⁵ From the spring of 1649, the Commonwealth government's desire to justify its planned Irish invasion meant that it was willing to commission and to support the publication of relevant works. Milton's initial involvement in this official effort is well known. Shortly after his appointment as Secretary for Foreign Tongues in March 1649, the Council of State instructed him to write a response to recent developments in Ireland. The resulting work, *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace*, was published in mid-May (CPW 3: 260-334).⁶ By that point, several Protestant exiles from Ireland had approached the Council of State to seek its backing for additional publications designed to vindicate Cromwell's imminent expedition.

It was in this context that Thomas Waring came to the attention of the Council. On 9 May 1649, it learned that he had in his possession a collection of documents that "would much tend to the vindication of the Protestant cause and perpetuating infamy upon the Irish Papists" (CSPD 1649-1650 132). Waring's precise origins are unknown. He first appears in Dublin in the aftermath of the Irish rebellion, where he was appointed clerk to the

commissioners who were entrusted with collecting the 1641 depositions.⁷ In this role he would have encountered many Protestant victims of the rebellion and heard their sometimes graphic descriptions of murders, massacres and other outrages. The potential uses of such testimony for eliciting sympathy and for encouraging a decisive English military response were quickly recognised. Beginning in 1642 with Henry Jones's *Remonstrance of Divers Remarkable Passages Concerning the Church and Kingdome of Ireland*, the depositions informed the content of various books and pamphlets that helped to shape English perceptions of the Irish rebellion. The best known such work is Sir John Temple's *History of the Irish Rebellion*, published in London in 1646.⁸ In the mid-1640s, Waring made copies of a substantial number of the 1641 depositions. There are 972 such copies by him among the manuscript collection of depositions now preserved at TCD (Clarke 259). Waring eventually brought his collection of depositions to London, where he joined the many other Protestants who had fled from a war-torn Ireland (*Brief Narration* 35-36).⁹

The notoriety of what had occurred in Ireland in 1641 and the related prominence of works such as Temple's *History* meant that the depositions in Waring's possession were bound to attract attention. Temple's oft-cited book made the case for violent suppression of the Catholic rebellion and the establishment of Protestant hegemony in post-war Ireland. Over the course of the 1640s, Temple and other Irish Protestants who shared his outlook gravitated towards the English parliament, not least because of its commitment to a policy of outright military victory in Ireland.¹⁰ Along with Temple, Waring can be situated among the circle of Irish exiles present in London in the late 1640s. In his approach to the Council in May 1649, he was backed by 'good testimony' from Sir Gerard Lowther and Sir William Parsons (*CSPD, 1649-1650* 132). The latter pair were related to each other by marriage and they had earlier been closely associated with Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork. Both men were significant political operators in their own right. Lowther was formerly Chief Justice of

the Common Pleas in Ireland, while Parsons had held a variety of high-profile roles in the Dublin administration until the king ordered his removal from office in 1643.¹¹

It is clear, therefore, that Thomas Waring enjoyed the support of influential Irish Protestant figures in 1649. His approach to the Council also coincided with a period of Leveller-inspired unrest in the parliament's army, which was at least partly driven by opposition to the planned Irish expedition.¹² Waring's proposal to publish extensive material relating to the Irish rebellion thus appeared rather timely. A fresh rehearsal of apparent Irish savagery could help to silence dissent and to justify the conquest that Cromwell was about to attempt. The pamphlet that eventually emerged would, however, be rather different in character from what was envisaged in May 1649.

Over the following months, Waring seems to have made good progress in compiling his book of depositions, or "examinations" (*CSPD, 1649-1650* 474). On 8 January 1650 he came to the attention of the Council of State for a second time. On that occasion the Council ordered that "100*l.* to be paid to Mr. Waring, for his book containing examinations of the bloody massacre in Ireland" (474).¹³ It also instructed "Mr. Milton to confer with some printers or stationers, about the speedy printing of this book, and give an account of what he has done therein" (474). Like many other aspects of Milton's life, this link between him and Waring is well known. It has encouraged a number of Milton scholars to pay attention to Waring's writings. Most directly, Catherine Canino sought to explore how Waring's depiction of "devilish" Irish rebels might have informed Milton's subsequent writings, specifically aspects of *Paradise Lost* (15-23). As highlighted by David Loewenstein, however, Canino mistakenly directed her attention not to *A Brief Narration* but to a later pamphlet published by Waring in 1651 (*Representing Revolution*, 352-53).¹⁴ More effective has been the use sometimes made of *A Brief Narration* for the purposes of situating Milton's outlook on Irish matters in relation to those of his contemporaries.¹⁵ Raymond has, for

example, drawn a contrast between *A Brief Narration*'s "murderous hostility" to Irish Catholics on the one hand and the "significant shortfall of explicitly and fiercely anti-Irish sentiment" found in Milton's *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace* on the other ("Complications of Interest", 327-28). The employment of *A Brief Narration* in this way for contextual purposes has proven worthwhile, but it has not necessitated close reading of the sort that the pamphlet amply repays.

Milton's efforts on Waring's behalf to find a printer helped to ensure that in March 1650 *A Brief Narration* was "published by special authority" (title page).¹⁶ In the pamphlet's Preface, however, it was admitted that the project as originally conceived had run into major difficulties. Waring's edition of 1641 depositions was "swoln to a great largeness, and therefore cannot readily expect to pass the press" (A4v). In the end, *A Brief Narration* did not contain transcriptions of the hundreds of depositions that Waring appears to have edited for publication. It was instead for the most part comprised of Waring's Introduction to the planned book of depositions, as well as a partial synopsis of its blood-soaked contents (1-38). The section of the pamphlet containing this material was headed "The History of the Irish Rebellion", which was probably the title that Waring originally had in mind for his large book (1). The remainder of the pamphlet seems to have been originally intended as an appendix to Waring's substantial tome. Occupying the last twenty-four pages of *A Brief Narration*, this section was comprised of "Observations" on the king's alleged role in the Irish rebellion (41-64).

These materials together would, the Preface concluded, "heighten thy expectation of the greater volume, which with all diligence shall be hastened to thee" (A4r). A passing reference to this "greater volume" can be found in the second edition of Milton's *Eikonoklastes* (1650), in the chapter concerned with the Irish rebellion. For more information on the Irish context, Milton referred his readers to "another full volum of examinations to be

sett out speedily concerning this matter” (CPW 3: 477). This mention confirms that Milton had engaged with Waring’s project and that he recognised its usefulness. Although Milton and Waring presumably remained keen to see the “greater volume” of depositions in print, it would remain unpublished (*Brief Narration* A4r).

This evidence suggests that Waring’s project ultimately failed because it was too ambitious and the resulting text too large. The extent to which Milton’s choice of printer contributed to this outcome cannot be gauged. The imprint on the title page of *A Brief Narration* read “Printed by B. Alsop and T. Dunster. And are to be delivered at Bernard Alsop’s house in Grub Street” (title page).¹⁷ Bernard Alsop’s name can be found on a wide range of works published in London from the 1610s onwards; Thomas Dunster was less prominent (Plomer 3-4, 68-69). Apart from *A Brief Narration*, this Grub Street duo also collaborated on two other publications in 1650.¹⁸ Milton’s reasons for engaging Alsop and Dunster are unknown, but it seems possible that other printers had balked at the scale of Waring’s proposed book. With the publication of *A Brief Narration*, Alsop and Dunster at least showed themselves willing to test the market for a bulky volume on a subject that had already generated many reams of print. The choice of Alsop for the task was not remarkable in any case. He was one of the printers authorised under the Licensing Act of 1649 (CSPD, 1649-1650 523). In this period, moreover, his imprint appeared on several other works that had, like *A Brief Narration*, been endorsed by the government and therefore appeared with the words “published by authority” on their title pages.¹⁹

The “History” and the “Observations” Compared

Aside from the inclusion of two different authors’ initials in the rarer version of *A Brief Narration*, a variety of other internal evidence also indicates the involvement of a pair of

writers. In terms of content, the most striking contrast between the “History” on the one hand and the “Observations” on the other is in the divergent accounts offered of the background to the Irish rebellion and its early stages. This divergence was focused around an aspect of the rebellion that provoked much controversy both in the 1640s and in the longer term: the extent to which King Charles was responsible for the outbreak. From the off, the king’s opponents in England suspected him of having fomented the rebellion as part of a strategy to restore his authority across the three kingdoms (Shagan 4-34).²⁰ As the crisis in England worsened thereafter, this accusation came to be voiced more vehemently by the parliamentarians. By the late 1640s, the king’s enemies had firmly endorsed the notion that Charles was behind the Irish rebellion. In 1649, for example, the claim that the king had commissioned the Irish to take arms featured prominently in published defences of the regicide (Cook 29; *CPW* 3: 476-7). Needless to say, Charles’s supporters did not accept such a reading of events, and the charge was accordingly refuted in *Eikon Basilike* (81-90).²¹

The issue was complicated by the fact that in 1641 the Irish rebels initially claimed to be acting in response to a commission sent to them by the king, ordering them to rise in his defence.²² This was a simple ruse on the part of the rebels, designed to attract support locally and to weaken Protestants’ resolve to resist. For the most part, Irish Protestants saw through this gambit and dismissed the notion that a Protestant king could have been behind a Catholic rebellion. For them, the conflict could be better explained as the result of Catholicism combined with an inveterate Irish hatred of all things English. One early and influential account composed by an Irish Protestant was Dr Henry Jones’s *Remonstrance*, which was published in London in 1642. Jones depicted the rebellion as a “long-laid conspiracie”, the result of an international Catholic plot to subvert church and state in the Stuart kingdoms (4). He also reported that the rebels had “traiterously, and impudently averred and proclaimed, that their authoritie therein is derived by Commission from his Highnesse” (5). In this

account, although unnamed English and Scottish Catholics were apparently privy to the plot, it had nothing to do with the king. Temple's *History of the Irish Rebellion* similarly described a plot "of a very ancient date" and he claimed that "the very first principles of this inhumane Conspiracy, were roughly drawn and hammered out at the Romish Forge" (66). He did not attempt to implicate the king in the rebellion. Sir William Parsons also wrote a relevant tract in the mid-1640s, which remained unpublished. In common with other Irish Protestant authors at this time, he made no effort to connect his 'sacred' and 'pious' monarch to the rebellion, putting the blame instead on a blend of Irish barbarism and Catholicism (British Library, Sloane MS 1008, fo. 354v).

The depiction of the Irish rebellion offered a few years later in the pages of *A Brief Narration* encompassed both this Irish Protestant version and the competing parliamentary and pro-regicide reading of events. In the former interpretation, the king had nothing to do with the rebellion; in the latter he was responsible for bringing it about. Thomas Waring's "History" in *A Brief Narration* in many ways echoed the work of Jones and Temple. He likewise stressed long-term Irish Catholic plotting with a strong international dimension. Great sums of money had been raised in Italy and Spain, he claimed, while priests and friars had returned to the three kingdoms from "Spain, Italy, France, Flanders, and other places" to prepare for rebellion (2-3). Waring only hesitantly broached the issue of the alleged commission from Charles to the rebels. Even then, he did not include it where it was most pertinent, in his discussion of what had caused the rebellion. Waring instead mentioned the matter later in his narrative as an example of the frauds used by the rebel leaders to encourage their followers (31-32). He was evidently more concerned with criticising Catholic forgers than he with addressing the controversial question of whether Charles had sent a commission to the rebels.

In contrast to Waring's "History" which made up the first part of *A Brief Narration*, Hall's subsequent "Observations" were firmly rooted in the pro-parliament and pro-regicide reading of the Irish rebellion, in which the king was assigned a central role. In the "Observations", Charles was denounced as an "Uxorious perverse King", for whom the Irish rebellion was part of a "great design: for by the destruction of the Protestants, the Irish were intire, and at leasure for his service, and so might be assistant to him against the prevailing Puritan faction (as he called it) in his two other Realms" (46-47). The attack on the king was uncompromising:

if we find him the Author of the Rebellion, (as we shall bring some shrewd instances) we must needs affirm, that though his Theatricall piety and high dissimulation, hath deceived some of his followers into Adoration, yet to all men that have not a mist before their eyes, he will appear a person distained with so much bloud, and loaden with so many crimes, that he was equal to all past Tyrants in his iniquities, as he will be exemplary to all future by his punishment (48).

Concerning the Irish rebels, Hall argued that "the Kings cause and theirs, were fundamentally and really one" (56); "To people that had but the bare use of common sence", it ought to be clear "That for these things was this man rooted out of the Land" (58).

In this manner, Hall's "Observations" in *A Brief Narration* traced the origins of the Irish rebellion to the "Popish gangren'd Court" (46) at Whitehall, while Waring's "History" conversely traced them to Rome. The two parts of the pamphlet thus represented differing political priorities. Irish Protestants such as Jones, Temple, Parsons and Waring were primarily concerned with the need to crush the Catholic rebellion and to restore Protestant authority in Ireland. For them, the notion that the king was behind the rebellion was an unwanted distraction from the effort to defeat the Irish. The English parliament, meanwhile,

was determined to implicate Charles in the rebellion and thereby to weaken support for the royalist cause. Once the king had been “rooted out of the Land”, the claim of direct royal involvement in sparking the Irish conflict helped to fulfil the state’s need to justify the act of regicide and the existence of kingless government (58). The publication of Hall’s “Observations” in *A Brief Narration* was just one illustration of the extent to which that need continued to be felt early in 1650, as the Engagement provoked controversy and Charles II’s ongoing contacts with the Scots pointed to the risk of a further royalist resurgence. Hall’s “Observations” on a treacherous Stuart king arguably spoke more directly to this tense political moment than did Cromwell’s *Declaration for the Undeceiving of Deluded and Seduced People*, which he had issued in Ireland in January 1650.²³ In the latter text, Cromwell’s appeal to Protestants to distance themselves from the intertwined cause of the Stuarts and the Irish Catholics was overshadowed by his furious tirade against the Catholic bishops (A4r-v). Hall addressed the point more directly: Charles and anyone else who co-operated with the Irish had “either found their ruine” or were “a hasting towards it” (*Brief Narration* A3r).²⁴

If Hall’s preoccupation with the late king’s alleged misdeeds is taken to reflect the immediate propaganda requirements of the Council of State, this perhaps helps further to explain the demise of Waring’s ambitious plan to publish his substantial collection of 1641 depositions. While the fact that Waring’s work was “swoln to a great largeness” may have presented a practical obstacle to publication, the content of the depositions also had the potential to pose political difficulties for the republican regime (A3v). Take for example the deposition of Sir William Stewart from County Tyrone, sworn in 1643. Stewart reported the confession made to him by the Catholic bishop of Raphoe, who was Stewart’s prisoner, that the rebels had themselves forged the commission that they claimed to have received from the king (TCD, MS 839, fos 45r-46v). The deposition of George Stockdale also related an

admission, made by a Franciscan friar named Brandon Connor, that the Catholics did not have any commission from the king. Stockdale's deposition was among those that Waring planned to reproduce in his "greater volume" in 1650 (TCD, MS 810, fo. 88v). Waring also intended to publish the deposition of Robert Maxwell, in which the rebels were quoted as admitting that their actions were not authorised by Charles, while also insisting that "it was lawfull for them to pretend what they could in advancement of their cause" (TCD, MS 809, fo. 6v).²⁵ Without very careful editing and packaging therefore, the depositions, rather than reinforcing the case against the king, could only foster doubt regarding the controversial claim that he had prompted the Irish rebellion. Hall's "Observations" in *A Brief Narration* were designed to dispel any uncertainty around this issue.

Some differences in terms of lexical features in the "History" and the "Observations" respectively can also be highlighted. Unlike the "Observations", which made no direct use of the 1641 depositions, Waring's "History" was largely comprised of material taken from that source. The result was a descriptive narrative, which included an occasional biblical reference and a handful of words in Latin. In making his case for harsh punishment of the Irish rebels, Waring seems to have resolved to allow their Protestant victims to speak for themselves, via the testimonies recorded in the 1641 depositions. By contrast, the short preface to the "Observations" explicitly outlined Hall's more sophisticated approach:

I cannot fall upon a Method either more naturall or regular, then to take a view of the causes, concernments and circumstances, of that odious Conjuraton, and from thence descend to some such observations, as cannot (without stupidity) be passed, or impiety, neglected (41).

The "method" mentioned involved first outlining three circumstances that supposedly meant the Irish could not have rebelled of their own volition in 1641. The Irish were inherently lazy,

they stood no chance of success against the military strength of England, and they had no cause for complaint due to the supposed leniency of government policy towards them. Hall's logical conclusion was then outlined: "All this set together, must necessarily yield this result, that there must be some more secret course, or stranger *Coyuntura*, that quickned the seeds of this horrid Rebellion, and cherisht it into form and shape" (41-45). The stage was thus set for a rehearsal of Charles's supposed complicity in the rebellion.

Coyuntura is a Spanish word for "joint" or "conjuncture". It is just one of several words that featured in the "Observations" whose usage in English literature of the period seems to have been uncommon. Other examples are "Rodomontade" and "crepusculous" (59, 58). The former word signified "a vainglorious brag or boast" and is derived from "Rodomonte", the name of a character in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (*Oxford English Dictionary* [hereafter *OED*]). The latter word, defined as "of the nature of twilight; dim; dusky; indistinct", was formed from the Latin *crepusculum*. The *OED* indicates that "crepusculous" was coined by Sir Thomas Browne in 1646. The "Observations" also contained a compound word that may possibly be unique to that text: "Spartacryot" (43). This word, which appears to refer to the marauding actions of the slaves led by Spartacus in the Third Servile War, was used to draw a contrast with "a formall regular War" (43). These and other classical references, as well as the examples highlighted above of lexical invention and novelty, reflected the considerable extent of Hall's learning and his recognised skill as a writer. Such learned and creative features are notably absent from Waring's "History".

Aspects of the imagery used in Hall's "Observations" also mark it out from Waring's more mundane "History". The most eye-catching passage of the "Observations" is its opening sentences, which is the part of *A Brief Narration* that has been most often quoted from by scholars:

First then, whosoever will take the Irish at the right view, will find them a root of such a profound sloth, and lethargick Supinitie, that they will say, they are meerly a kind of *Reptilia*, things creeping on their bellies, and feeding on the dust of the earth, overborn with their naturall frigidity, and impossible to be excited into any heat, unlesse it be that fevorish distemper, which sometimes stirs up the most unworthy minds to violent executions. Adde to this, their Innate and Epidemick Lasinesse which for many ages hath been so inherent to them, that they could never be stirred, neither by their own necessities or discomdities of life, to that requisite industry, which even the most barbarous, and the best seated people are forced to make use of; Nor yet by the conversation and culture of the more polite English, could be shap't into any adumbration of Civility and tersnesse, but still remain a people so exquisitely savage, so barbarously lothsom, so monstrously enclyn'd, that they were as incapable of any impressions of virtue and honour, as they have shewed themselves susceptible of the most bestial lewdnesse, and consumate impiety (41-42).²⁶

In contrast with this colourful and fierce attack on the Irish, the opening of Waring's "History" was far more restrained (1-2).

The intensity of the rhetoric in the concluding section of Waring's "History" also fails to match that evident towards the end of Hall's "Observations". This can be demonstrated by comparing the use made in both cases of the same biblical verse: Jeremiah 48.10. Waring wrote: "And there is none into whose hand God puts the sword of vengeance, that can without extream contumacy and disobedience deny to execute his divine will" (38). In Hall's "Observations" the relevant sentence reads: "therefore let them into whose hands God hath put the sword of his wrath, take heed lest they use it either coldly, partially, or negligently; lest God smite them, and raise up others to execute his just vengeance" (63). Alongside his

call for the destruction of the Irish, Waring was careful to sound a more moderate note: “I speak not this that mercy should be denied to whom may be thought worthy of it” (37). Any such hint of leniency was notably absent from the closing lines of Hall’s “Observations”. God would “punish any luke warmnesse...And therefore, we may warantably, and righteously endeavour the extirpation of them, who by their hellish designs, and accomplisht Parricides, have endeavoured, and highly attempted, to make us to be *no more a people*” (64). As with the king, no mercy was to be shown to “his Rebels” (62). From Hall’s perspective, the execution of the king, ‘by lawfull and just means and pleasing to God’, was inseparable from Cromwell’s “two just and acceptable executions” at Drogheda and Wexford nine months later (63). Charles and the Irish rebels, both guilty of “notorious perfidie”, merited the like fate (62).

The identification of Hall as the author of the “Observations” has various consequences. Amongst other points, it means that the view of Thomas Waring offered by some Milton scholars needs to be revisited. Loewenstein has, for example, grouped the Waring of *A Brief Narration* with Milton, John Cook and George Wither as writers who blamed the Irish rebellion on “the Antichristian Charles” (*Representing Revolution* 198-99). It is Hall’s name, rather than Waring’s, that ought to appear in this list. Similarly, a large share of the ‘murderous hostility’ towards Irish Catholics that Raymond has attributed to Waring must be credited instead to Hall (“Complications of Interest”, 327-28). McDowell and Norbrook have shown that in the later 1640s Hall’s outlook was, like Milton’s, marked by anti-clericalism and anti-Presbyterianism. Both scholars have drawn attention to Hall’s attempt in this context to foster co-operation between the Independents and moderate royalists (McDowell 91-96; Norbrook 177-80). As part of this effort, he was willing in 1647 to stress the “incomparable excellencies” of Charles I and even to offer grudging praise for Henrietta Maria (Hall, *A True Account* 7). Hall’s subsequent readiness to criticise the king

and justify regicide, even while remaining on friendly terms with royalist acquaintances, has been explored in detail by McDowell (91-96, 239-41). While he was in Scotland in 1650, Hall wrote his *Grounds & Reasons of Monarchy Considered*, wherein he asserted that the late king was “the most consummate in the Arts of Tyranny that ever was” (125). Hall’s attack on Charles in the “Observations” was his most detailed and ferocious effort to denounce the late king, but it was not out of line with what he would write later in the same year while north of the border. Instead, it was Hall’s emphasis on Ireland that distinguished the “Observations” most clearly from his other writings, where mentions of the neighbouring kingdom were but brief and sparing. Given the Miltonic flavour of some of Hall’s other writings in the period, it should not be too surprising that, when he came to grapple with matters Irish, Hall seems to have looked once again to Milton for inspiration.

Tracing Milton’s Influence

In turning his attention to the late king and to Ireland, presumably around January 1650, Hall was taking up subjects that Milton had already engaged with at length in 1649. Milton had famously devoted considerable energy to trenchant criticism of Charles and to justifying his execution in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and in *Eikonoklastes*. In the latter text, Milton addressed the Irish context in some detail in chapter twelve, “Upon the Rebellion in Ireland” (CPW 3: 470-85). The other work that he published in 1649, at the behest of the Council of State, was *Observation Upon the Articles of Peace*. Keeping in mind the difficulties and temptations that can attend efforts to assess apparent similarities between texts, it is nonetheless worthwhile to compare some aspects of Hall’s “Observations” in *A Brief Narration* with both Milton’s *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace* and the relevant Irish chapter of *Eikonoklastes*.

Hall's uncompromising portrayal of Charles as a dissimulating tyrant was one that Milton had already firmly endorsed in his own work. In common with other supporters of the regicide, Milton also undoubtedly subscribed to the main argument that shaped Hall's "Observations", namely that Charles had had a hand in the Irish rebellion (CPW 3: 470-85). Beyond such general similarities, it is possible to highlight some more specific points of interest. It is apparent, for example, that the discussion of Irish affairs both in chapter twelve of *Eikonoklastes* and in Hall's "Observations" relied substantially on a publication dating from July 1643: *A Declaration of the Commons Assembled in Parliament Concerning the Rise and Progresse of the Grand Rebellion in Ireland*. This declaration had been the parliament's response to an emerging rapprochement between Charles and the Irish Catholics, one that threatened to tilt the military balance in England in favour of the royalists.²⁷ It highlighted various elements of the crown's lenient policies towards Irish Catholics from the 1620s onwards, while also focusing considerable attention on the early stages of the rebellion and the supposed evidence for the king's involvement in it.

The clearest instance in *Eikonoklastes* of Milton's reliance on the 1643 declaration can be found in the opening passages of chapter twelve. He began as follows:

The Rebellion and horrid massacher of English Protestants in *Ireland* to the number of 154000. by thir own computation ... For it cannot be imaginable, that the Irish, guided by so many suttle and *Italian* heads of the Romish party, should so farr have lost the use of reason, and indeed of common Sense, as not supported with other strength then thir own, to begin a Warr so desperate and irreconcileable against both England and Scotland at once. All other Nations, from whom they could expect aid, were busied to the utmost in thir own most necessary concernments (CPW 3: 470-71).

This content can be usefully compared to the conclusion of the July 1643 declaration, which read:

Upon the whole matter, no man can think that this Rebellion in *Ireland*, so barbarous and bloody, that one hundred and fifty four thousand Protestants, men, women, and children, English and Scotch, were Massacred in that Kingdom ... by the computation of the Priests themselves that were present... No man can beleeeve that this horrid and unpareld Rebellion should be the undertaking of the Rebels alone, being set on foot when a Parliament was sitting in *England* ... when all Nations professing the Romish Religion were at peace with *England*, and so engaged at home, that the Rebels in reason could not expect any considerable assistance from them, nor could think themselves able to incounter *England*, or *Scotland* either; much lesse both together...
(*Declaration* 21-22)

The points stressed in these lines of the declaration of July 1643 and subsequently in *Eikonoklastes*, including the lack of foreign support available to the Irish rebels, were further developed by Hall in opening section of his “Observations” (41-44). He argued, for example, that the Spanish defeat at the Battle of the Downs in 1639 had disabled Spain from giving any help to the Irish: “she could not afterwards drive any considerable assistance to the holy cause of Antichrist, and innocent conventions of Cannibals” (43).²⁸ It is also notable that in *Eikonoklastes* Milton had specifically recommended the 1643 declaration to his readers. Having outlined evidence for the king’s involvement in the rebellion, Milton stated: “I suppose no understanding Man could longer doubt who was the *Author or Instigator* of that Rebellion. If there be who yet doubt, I referr them especially to that Declaration of July 1643 concerning the matter” (*CPW* 3: 477). Milton recognised that this source contained a large amount of information pertinent to his argument, “the particulars wherof are too many to be

inserted heer” (477). In Hall’s “Observations” it was precisely these same “particulars” that were set out in some detail. At one point, Hall admitted that he was using “the very words of that excellent Declaration of the 25. of *July* 1643” (52). It seems likely that in this instance Hall had taken his cue from Milton. His borrowing the declaration ultimately allowed him to appear relatively well informed on Irish matters, as he reflected on the character of Strafford’s government in the 1630s and pointed also to the wartime activities of royalist Irishmen such as Lords Dillon and Taaffe and Colonel John Barry (44, 47, 51-57, 62).²⁹

Just as Milton had done in *Eikonoklastes*, Hall also sought to rebuff the claims made regarding Ireland in chapter twelve of *Eikon Basilike*, the famous defence of King Charles published shortly after his execution. He justified this brief engagement with *Eikon Basilike* as “necessary digressions” (51). Although Hall may well have resorted directly to *Eikon Basilike* without consulting *Eikonoklastes*, it is worth noting that the approach adopted by him was similar to Milton’s; he highlighted the king’s apparent dishonesty and stressed the contrast between Charles’s words on the one hand and his deeds on the other. Hall’s “Observations” contained five quotations from *Eikon Basilike*, each of which also featured in some form in *Eikonoklastes*. Four of these extracts were set out in quick succession as a prelude to one of the more forceful condemnations made of the king: “Obdurate man given up to thine own blindness and hardness of heart, thou couldst not have said any thing fuller of Atheisticall spleen, or uncharitable looseness” (49-50). One of the specific images of the king that Milton cultivated in *Eikonoklastes* also occurred in Hall’s “Observations”, namely that of Charles as a legal advocate pleading for the Irish rebels. Milton argued that “If the whole Irishry of Rebels had fee’d some advocate to speak partially and sophistically in their defence, he could hardly have dazl’d better” (CPW 3: 478). In the same vein, Hall stated that the king in *Eikon Basilike* “brings arguments so passionate and emphaticall, as the greatest advocate might make use of” (*Brief Narration* 50). Furthermore, in line with Milton’s

polemical strategy in *Eikonoklastes*, and contrary to the approach taken by some other contemporary anti-Royalist writers, Hall proceeded on the basis *Eikon Basilike* was written by the king himself (60).

Parallels with Milton's other Irish-related work from 1649, his *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace*, can also be traced in Hall's "Observations". For example, Hall suggested that the Irish, despite the example supplied by "the conversation and culture of the more polite English", had resisted all efforts to shaped them into "any adumbration of Civility and tersnesse" and had thus proved themselves "uncapable of any impression of virtue and honour" (42). These comments can be read as echoing Milton's claims that the Irish were of "a disposition not onely sottish but indocible and adverse from all Civility and amendment" and that they had persisted in "rejecting the ingenuity of all other Nations to improve and waxe more civill" (CPW 3: 304). A more specific parallel can be detected in the manner of Hall's engagement with the terms of the 1649 Ormond peace treaty. In *Observations Upon the Articles of Peace*, Milton dealt briefly with Articles 1, 2, 12, 22 and 9 of the relevant treaty, in that order (CPW 3: 302-4). In Hall's "Observations", the sequence followed in discussing the articles was 1, 2, 22 and 9 (*Brief Narration* 59-60). Milton described the twenty-second article as "more ridiculous then dangerous" (CPW 3: 303), while Hall referred to it as "ridiculous indulgence" (*Brief Narration* 60). The language used by both men in referring to the ninth article of the treaty was even more similar. Milton's *Observations* of 1649 read as follows: "the ninth Article entrusts with the Militia; a Trust which the King swore by God at *New-Market*, he would not commit to his Parliament of *England*, no not for an houre" (CPW 3: 304).³⁰ Hall wrote: 'The ninth entrusteth them with the Militia, which the King swore, or (in the Parliaments language) strongly assevered by God, at *Newmarket*, he would not trust the Parliament with, for an hour...' (*Brief Narration* 60). Hall's conclusion regarding the significance of the Ormond treaty also seems to echo Milton. In 1649 Milton

wrote ‘Now let all men judge what this wants of utter alienating and acquitting the whole Province of Ireland... (CPW 3: 305). Hall followed this line of argument, claiming that the articles of peace ‘signifies the alienation of all Ireland’ (*Brief Narration* 60).

Conclusion

Scrutiny of Hall’s “Observations” indicates that here, as at other points in his career, his approach was indebted to Milton. Whether this reflects a measure of direct co-operation or collaboration between the two state-employed writers can, however, only be guessed at. Yet given Milton’s presumed involvement in the effort to bring Waring’s 1641 depositions project to fruition, it seems unlikely that he could have been unaware of what Hall was up to. The identification of the “Observations” with Hall thus helps to shed some light on another strand of the dense web of interaction, co-operation and imitation, as reconstructed by Worden, McDowell and others, that encompassed Hall, Marvell, Milton, Nedham and other contemporaries. This “forward youth” was also willing to go beyond Milton in his attack on the Irish Catholics, whom God had “resolved to blow as chaffe from the face of the earth” (*Brief Narration* 63).³¹ Not for Hall was Milton’s caution in asserting that, having pointed to the fate of the Benjamites, he did not intend “that such measure should be meted rigorously to all the Irish” (CPW 3: 482).

Aside from representing one contemporary response to Milton’s 1649 writings, Hall’s “Observations” also offer a rich perspective on the interplay of rebellion, regicide and conquest at an enormously pressured political moment. As the English Republic fought for its life, its energetic embrace of the long-delayed re-conquest of Ireland provided it with a badly needed dose of legitimacy. The two contrasting halves of *A Brief Narration* reveal an interesting tension at the heart of that enterprise, one that arose primarily from the English

experience of civil war and regicide. Fortunately for the Commonwealth, the case for invading Ireland and for crushing Catholic power there seemed so compelling that its supporters did not need to reach a full consensus on the meaning of the Irish rebellion. At the same time, however, the authorities evidently decided that Waring's Irish Protestant version of 1641 should not be allowed to enter the world unaccompanied, or even to the printers unsupervised. Details of plotting, murder and massacre in Ireland, which Waring knew better than anyone else, undoubtedly provided fine material for propaganda. Yet from the regime's perspective, when it came to justifying regicide the 1641 depositions also had a destabilising potential that needed to be contained. The subjoining of Hall's "Observations" to Waring's text thus demonstrated an official concern, building upon Milton's efforts in *Eikonoklastes*, to ensure that the Irish rebellion would continue to be read as one of the more damning episodes in the life of a tyrant king.

Notes

¹ The 1641 Depositions are available online at www.1641.tcd.ie. Their publication in hard copy is ongoing. The first volumes in a planned twelve-volume series were published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission in 2014. Important works relating to 1641 and the depositions include Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion*, Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year* and Cope, *England and the 1641 Irish Rebellion*.

² This variant edition preserved at TCD is listed in that library's guard book *Accessions Catalogue*, 401, 82. The shelf number is 48.t.166. TCD also holds a second copy, which is identical to that collected by Thomason and preserved in the British Library. The two copies held at the National Library of Ireland and a copy at Queen's University Belfast are also identical to Thomason's.

³ The most detailed study of Hall's life and work is Shaw "The Life and Works of John Hall of Durham". Shaw did not mention Waring or *A Brief Narration*.

⁴ For an in-depth study see Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*.

⁵ Events in Ireland in and around 1649 are carefully explored in Ó Siochru, *God's Executioner*.

⁶ For a recent analysis that reflects the growing interest in *Observations*, see *Complete Works* 6: 46-57, 189-94. A useful summary of debate on *Observations* can be found in Maley and Swann 139-40.

⁷ Clarke (244) suggests that Waring may have been the son of Charles Waring of Berry Hill, Warwickshire, but this does not appear to be correct.

⁸ On Temple see Darcy 96-101, 143-47 and Gibney 29-34.

⁹ A pagination error means that after p. 32 the numbering reverts to a sequence beginning with 25. As a result, pages 33-8 are numbered 25-30.

¹⁰ The best study of Protestant Ireland in the 1640s, untangling the complex politics of the period, is Armstrong, *Protestant War*.

¹¹ For Lowther and Parsons, see the articles by Osborough and Kelsey respectively in the *ODNB*.

¹² On this, see Carlin, "The Levellers" 268-88.

¹³ Waring also received a further payment of £120 on leaving for Ireland in April 1653 (*CSPD*, 1652-53 489).

¹⁴ This was *An Answer to Certain Jesuitical Queres* London 1651. Analysis of this work is beyond the scope of this article. Its authorship also merits reassessment.

¹⁵ See Raymond, "Complications of Interest", 315-45 and Loewenstein, *Representing Revolution*, 194-95. Waring is also mentioned often in Daems, "*A Warr So Desperate*".

¹⁶ The words “published by authority” do not appear on the title page of the variant TCD copy.

¹⁷ The pamphlet was not entered in the *Stationers’ Register*. The imprint on the variant TCD copy does not contain the words “And are to be delivered at Bernard Alsop’s house in Grub Street”.

¹⁸ These were a metamorphic picture entitled *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* and a pseudonymous work: Thomas Peedle, *The Falacie of the Great Water-Drinker Discovered*.

¹⁹ For example, the 1651 verse work *The Hue and Cry*. All of the printers’ ornaments used in *A Brief Narration* can be found in other works by published by Alsop.

²⁰ See also O’Hara, *English Newsbooks*, 27-45.

²¹ The edition cited is Wing E311.

²² Numerous examples of such claims can be found in the 1641 depositions.

²³ On this episode, see Morrill 33-35.

²⁴ These quotes are from the pamphlet’s Preface, which seems far more likely to have been written by Hall than by Waring.

²⁵ The marginal notes in Waring’s “History” can be used to identify some of the depositions that he intended to publish in his larger work.

²⁶ Norah Carlin, for example, quotes this passage in its entirety in “Extreme or Mainstream?”, 216.

²⁷ For context, see Armstrong 69-94.

²⁸ Hall (43) and Waring (4-5) both referred to the Battle of the Downs but, in line with their divergent explanations for the rebellion, offered conflicting interpretations of its significance.

²⁹ A reference in the text of the “Observations” (62) to “the Collection of Declarations p. 250” can be cross-referenced to Husbands’s 1646 publication *A Collection of all the Publicke Orders*. This work made a broad range of official documents easily accessible.

³⁰ The episode referred to here was a meeting between the king and Lords Holland and Pembroke at Newmarket on 9 March 1642.

³¹ Several scholars have commented on Hall in connection with the anonymous “forward youth” of Marvell’s “Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”. See, for example, McDowell 224-25.

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