Political Ethnographies and Historical Narratives in Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1690-1766
Situating Charles O’Conor of Belanagare

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Political Ethnographies and Historical Narratives in Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1690-1766: Situating Charles O’Conor of Belanagare

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I, Macdara Dwyer, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

Studies of the theories of ethnicity, ethnology and ethnogenesis prevailing in early modern Ireland are noticeable by their absence. This dearth persists despite the fact that major periods of Irish history are understood as confrontations between differing, even incompatible, cultures or as conflicts between ethnic identities expressed as political ideologies – the Tudor expansion of the English state, the Cromwellian conquest, the Williamite War and even the Northern Irish Troubles are all interpreted in this manner. As there are few extant accounts of these theories, and their intimate connection to British and Irish political reality and practise, my research attempts to address this scholarly lacuna by charting the development of such ethnologies from the late Elizabethan period to the middle of the eighteenth century. Building on the work of Joep Leerssen and Clare O’Halloran, this research will look at the aspects of this topic that are still incomplete. Charles O’Conor of Belanagare is a significant presence in their accounts and, in the context of this thesis, his antiquarian works and historiography will be used to analyse preceding and prevailing ethnographical theories and ethnological attitudes.

It is intended to first contextualize the nature of this ethnology by looking at those theories prevalent from 1690 to 1766 and to underscore their politically charged nature by analysing how they were shaped by political developments. Chapter one commences with a brief reference to the Lucas affair of 1748-50 and the fourth chapter returns to this controversy, exploring it in greater depth in order to analyse the nearest ethnographical dispute prior to the publication of O’Conor’s *Dissertations on the Antient History of Ireland* (1753). This work, alongside a history of the scholarly rehabilitations of the theory of Milesian ethnogenesis, is the subject of the fifth chapter. The second and third chapters deal with the gradual alterations in attitudes to various ethnological theories in Ireland between 1690 and 1750. The last chapter deals with O’Conor’s historiography, explaining the ethno-political theories adumbrated in his work, their uncontroversial reception among Irish Protestants, his activism after its publication and his attempt to contribute to Hiberno-Scottish historiographical debates.
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Abbreviations

BL – British Library
ECI – *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Irish an dá chultúr*
EHR – *The English Historical Review*
FDJ – *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal*
IHS – *Irish Historical Studies*
HIB – *Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume III*
HJ - *The Historical Journal*
NLI – National Library of Ireland
P&P – *Past & Present*
PRIA – *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
RIA – Royal Irish Academy
Studies – *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*

Dublin is place of publication for all works unless otherwise stated.
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Richard Grayson of Goldsmiths College and Andrew Spicer of Oxford Brookes deserve special thanks for hiring me as an associate lecturer in their respective faculties. These opportunities gave me experience of lecturing and giving seminars – not to mention some much-needed income! Lastly, I should like to thank King’s College, the Royal Historical Society, the Eighteenth-Century Ireland Society, the Edward Worth Library and Notre Dame University for providing grants as well as funding to attend conferences.
Introduction

During 1749 Dublin was gripped by a controversy catalyzed by a dispute over the civic government of the city. Initiated by apothecary Charles Lucas, the dispute occupied most of 1749 and facilitated heated exchanges in print between Lucas and his opponents. A particular scourge of Lucas was Sir Richard Cox. In the first of his Cork Surgeon’s letters, Cox fulminated against the would-be reformer, calling him ‘a rank, notorious Counterfeit’, ‘the vilest INCENDIARY’ and a ‘seditious turbulent Man’.\footnote{Anthony Litten [Sir Richard Cox], The Cork Surgeon’s Antidote against the Dublin Apothecary’s Poyson, No.7 (1749), pp.5, 7, 10.} Several weeks later, the attack reached new heights of vitriol when Cox published a rebuttal of the overview of Irish history contained in Lucas’s Eleven Address to the Citizens of Dublin. Quoting Sir John Temple, Cox implored his readers not to depart from their customary vigilance against Papists. Lucas’s reckless sketch had sported ‘with the grievous Persecutions and Massacres of your Ancestors’\footnote{Ibid, VI, pp.5} and risked ‘provoking and inciting the PAPISTS of this Age, to renew the bloody Scenes of 1641’. Lucas’s extraordinary claim was that ‘The Mexicans were never used worse by the barbarous Spaniards, than the poor Irish were, for some Centuries, by the English’. Cox riposted that ‘An Englishman never begot thee. Thou Art the Offspring of an Irish-Popish-Priest.’\footnote{Ibid, VI, 5; Charles Lucas, An Eleven Address to the Free Citizens and Freeholders of the City of Dublin (1749), p.5.} Cox’s response to Lucas is best understood as arising from a deep antipathy to the historical examples that Lucas insisted upon mobilizing. Lucas was utilizing historiographical modes that most Irish Protestants would have recognized, but which violated the received wisdom and historical pieties of mid-eighteenth-century Ireland. Furthermore, Lucas’s Eleven Address had outlined a view of history derived from Sir John Davies;

the Irish, in general, were, absolutely treated worse, than the Victims of the most Savage Barbarians; as bad, as the Spaniards used the Mexicans; or, as inhumanely, as the English, now, treat their Slaves, in America: For, as they were looked upon, not only, as Slaves and Aliens, but they were reputed Enemies to the Crown of England, or, rather, Out-Laws.\footnote{Lucas, An Eleven Address, p.8.}
Cox’s response was not so surprising and was at once political and personal. For Cox’s grandfather had been instrumental in creating the Irish Protestant view of history, with its attendant ethnography, that Lucas’s demagogy appeared to be undermining. As we shall see, in terms of the conflict provoked and rhetoric produced this event was of some significance.

Several scholars – most noticeably Jacqueline Hill in her authoritative From Patriots to Unionists – have touched on this clash. However, current academic accounts of this episode stress that Lucas implied that Protestant subjects were being treated as ‘natives’ by the British state in Ireland – or that Lucas’s demagogy and promotion of plebeian agitation provoked a political elite into an assertively defensive posture. Additionally, scholars have often inflated Lucas’s ecumenical credentials or posited his patriotism as the first gasps of an incipient Irish nationalism. Another lively, if sporadic, debate has flickered for the past century over whether the affair saw one of Edmund Burke’s first excursions into print. Such a focus on personalities and sectarianism overlooks the anxiety created by Lucas’s manipulation of historiographical and ethnological narratives.

However, Lucas’s use of Davies, his resort to the ‘Black Legend’ of Spanish cruelty and his depiction of persisting ethno-religious division in Ireland were aimed at a broad section of Ireland’s political elite, comprising the aldermen of Dublin, members of Parliament and the Lord Lieutenant. Lucas, having engaged in anti-establishment polemics since 1747, mobilized such criticisms in order to traduce. One of his tactics was to criticize the Irish legislature and, the Castle and the aldermen for presiding over a polity in which deleterious ethno-religious

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5 Cox, Surgeon’s Letters; ‘My Time is too short… to admit to step out of my Way, to answer any personal Charges no way relative to the subject I am upon’; No.6, p.3.
divisions still operated – divisions which Lucas felt operated to the advantage of oligarchy. Indeed, Lucas was appealing to familiar and older narratives detailing the desirability of a unified ethnic polity and insinuating that Irish elites willfully failed in completing the primary goal of their state-building mission in Ireland. These were tactically utilized in order to remind Lucas’s readers of the incorporative language contained within this earlier literature. It was also used to question the ethnography that had attained after 1690 – one that was wholly segregationist in tone and content. Lucas’s resort to the rhetoric of political ethnography, particularly the use of Davies, harkened to an intellectual trend within Irish Protestantism that had gained purchase in the seventeenth century. This political ethnography enunciated a theory of ethnic similitude between the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland – an ethnology that legitimized the imposition of legal institutions and state structures and which pre-supposed the eventual assimilation of planter and ‘Gael’. This theory had adherents throughout the seventeenth century, but had been superseded from the 1690s, when a new set of theories were articulated to explain the necessity of segregation in Irish society. Lucas, in short, was embarrassing the political elite by playing on their colonial sensitivities; underscoring the failure to dissolve ethno-religious division, as well as implying that Ireland’s colonial status was not only political (in the sense that parliament was subordinate to Westminster) but was also colonial in the sense that it was an ethnically-divided society with a disadvantaged indigenous population.

This episode, which will be dealt with in more detail in chapter four, is illuminating. Beginning as a debate over the organization of municipal government, it is revealing insofar as it indicates the centrality of political ethnography and the speed with which ethnic background could become a cardinal issue in a debate over political status. The recourse to ethnicity and ethnological speculation are, this work will contend, illustrative of a key theme in Irish political thought throughout the early modern period. This research will analyse the evolution of Irish political ethnographies and historical narratives by locating them in the context of their expression and by indicating their relationship to differing programmes for Ireland’s social and political relations. This thesis will broadly look at ethnological narratives and seek to comprehend them through changing political, social, cultural and intellectual contexts, as well
as indicate the role ethnology (popular and scholarly) played in visions of Ireland’s future. Lucas’s truculent agitation acted as a catalyst for the articulation of long suppressed, but latent, political ethnographies that persisted into the eighteenth century. One individual who ventured into print (ostensibly in support of Lucas) used the controversy to revive seventeenth-century ideas regarding multi-ethnic polities. This was the antiquarian and pamphleteer Charles O’Conor of Belanagare.

This thesis is intended as a careful reconstruction of the political and historiographical contexts in which O’Conor wrote in order to understand his centrality to the creation and perpetuation of eighteenth-century political ethnographies – debates in which the accepted reality of a polity segregated along ethno-religious lines was gradually replaced by the idea that the Irish nation was the legitimate source of political existence and social organization. In the forthcoming chapters, I hope to highlight how the political function of such ethnological theories evolved over the course of the early modern period, contingent upon political developments, intellectual fashions and social contexts. This is done in order to situate and contextualize Charles O’Conor of Belanagare. Such an analysis is necessary when viewing O’Conor’s historiography, focusing as it does upon population movements and the political attitudes and institutions that these migrations and ethnogeneses carried and created. O’Conor re-fashioned older narratives during a period of identity redefinition. He was central to this recasting of political ethnographies. For when disputes over union or autonomy, exclusion or toleration, law or faith were articulated, origin myths and theories of ethnic composition were utilized as explanatory factors possessing a weight which, for us, can often seem perplexingly pertinent.

The concept of ‘political ethnography’ is paramount to this thesis and the terms ‘ethnology’ and ‘ethnography’ occur so frequently that a brief note on their meaning and importance is appropriate. The Oxford English Dictionary describes ethnography as the ‘systematic study and description of peoples, societies, and cultures’. This, however, refers to the disciplinary activity of rigorously and empirically studying specific groups designated as belonging to particular cultural communities. Ethnography is meant here to comprehend a rather more pedestrian – even commonplace – variant of a second definition by the OED, namely, the ‘ethnic character or constitution of a place, people, sphere of human action’.
Similarly, ‘ethnology’ is a term utilized frequently in this thesis. The difference is subtle. Indeed, the *OED* states that ethnography is ‘not always clearly distinguished from ethnology’ and is defined as ‘an analysis or study of a human society and culture’. Furthermore, ethnology has a comparative element (that is, it compares one community defined as an ethnic group with other similarly-defined groups) whereas ethnography (which tends to describe the characteristics of a single ethnic group) lacks this comparative element. Both deal with the origin of groups – ethnology aspiring to describe the peoples and migrations that contributed to the formation of a said group and ethnography (more often) describing the narratives of ethnogenesis that have a mythological purchase within that group itself. How, then, are these ‘political’? They are insofar as ethnological and ethnographical stories are often used to present people (in this case Irish and English people) in a certain way – to advertise lack of merit or to depict how certain ethnic qualifications make them amicable to or unsuited for certain legal systems, social hierarchies, political structures or economic practises. This is especially true of Irish political thought before nationalism – though it lingered due to unique Irish conditions in which different political attitudes had a tendency to be religiously determined. Additionally, this political ethnography was frequently relied upon to explain deleterious political or economic circumstances in Ireland. Most noticeably – and fruitfully explored later – was the emphasis upon the ‘Scythian’ descent of Irish Catholics preventing economic development prominent in the 1730s.

But this was not just a characteristic of the early modern period. After the Union of 1800 it became axiomatic that Ireland contained three incompatible groups whose inexorable characteristics were presumed to be a constant source of friction. Through the works of Francis Plowden, Denis Taaffe and Richard Musgrave at the beginning of the nineteenth century, ethnicity marches as an overarching explanatory factor. It is also apparent in James Mahaffy, W.E.H. Lecky and James Anthony Froude. The historiographical spat between Lecky and

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Froude is best viewed as a disagreement over the racial composition and, hence, the moral and physical attributes, of the Irish population. Froude asserted their un-Aryan and degenerate nature whereas Lecky responded with an assertion of ethnic similitude and a prevalence of ‘Saxon and Scotch elements’. Furthermore, Lecky asserted that ‘there is no difference of race between the native of Devonshire and the native of Tipperary.’

That these beliefs lingered into the twentieth century is to be expected; what is more perplexing is their expression after 1950. This has also been accompanied by interpretations of the Troubles that stress its ethno-cultural complexion. Instances utilizing the term ‘tribalism’ are too common to mention specifically but serve as revealing examples of the vulgar anthropology still used to explain the Northern Irish conflict—a predilection debunked by Richard Bourke. Political ethnography, then, is the processes whereby theories of ethnography and ethnology arise from specific social and intellectual contexts to serve political ends. This thesis, therefore, will deal with the political ethnographies that had significant purchase in early modern

10 W. E. H. Lecky, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (5 Vols., London, 1913), i, p.399-400; Lecky cautions against a reliance upon race as an explanatory factor and stresses ‘how superficial are those theories which attribute them [national characteristics] wholly to race or religion’; i, p.397.


11 A. T. Q. Stewart’s *The Narrow Ground*. Stewart states baldly that ‘The theory of a racial distinction between planter and “Gael” though it still dominates Irish thinking on the subject, can no longer be sustained’. However, he quotes E. Estyn. Evans that ‘The heaviest men are found in the westernmost peninsulas, and the broadest heads in Co. Kerry. These are probably the relics of an ancient strain of Irishmen who took refuge there.’ It is clear that this predilection is indicative of the ethnological ideas that have so marked Irish historiography. For instance, a children’s encyclopaedia published no earlier than 1960 described these three lingering racial types, albeit with the English element more advanced in assimilation; *The Children’s Encyclopaedia: Founded by Arthur Mee* (12 Vols., London, 1961?), v, p.3062. More interesting still are the excerpts from the Kilbrandon Commission, published in 1973, that stresses that the U.K.’s constitution would not have been so patchwork had certain parts of Britain been inhabited by ‘more logical and orderly races’; p.62.


Ireland. Key to this is the idea of consanguinity forged in the encounters between metropole and fringe during the Tudor re-conquest, of which the writings of Sir John Davies and Edmund Spenser form a seminal part. Davies, in particular, made an impact that is difficult to underestimate. By analysing the legacy of these authors, the frequent use of these theories of stock or origins and their alteration over time, it is hoped that interpretations of O’Conor’s work and socio-political discourse in Ireland during this period will be ultimately enriched.

**Historiography on Charles O’Conor**

In his lifetime, O’Conor was well known, respected and appeared to be one of the few individuals in Irish (or British) history to acquire the honorary prefix ‘the venerable’. This esteem was common across national and denominational boundaries; early praise came from Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Henry Brooke, Thomas Leland, Thomas Contarine and Bishop Berkeley. Later and posthumous encomia were equally forthcoming. An excellent example of his status is apparent from the furore created by Richard Twiss’s derogatory *Tour in Ireland* (1775), during which Irish public opinion was clear in expressing admiration for O’Conor as well as relying on him for a rebuttal of Twiss’s slanders. One writer to a newspaper lamented that Twiss would be unable to understand or appreciate O’Conor’s work and a poem published during the controversy wondered ‘Why sleeps O’Conor? Why, with powerful Arm, Will he not straight such Murderers disarm?’, before imploring ‘Rise! Rise! – Thy Country calls!’

One treatise, keen to promote an indigenous genius for art, even suggested a scene to novice painters depicting ‘The venerable O’Conor

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meditating over the grave of Carolan in the church-yard of Kilronan. It was a renown that percolated abroad. His obituary was reported in Venetian and Roman periodic journals and, more significantly, was written up in the Gentleman’s Magazine. Using the Burkean language then in vogue, the periodical described him as ‘a respected antiquary… possessed of all those amiable and engaging qualities which could secure friends, and of abilities which must command pre-eminence’ but lamented he was ‘debarred of every benefit which such qualities and circumstances could procure, by being a Roman Catholic’. But O’Conor had a substantial connection with Burke that went beyond the rhetoric of eulogy. They became friends in 1761 during Burke’s residence in Dublin and worked, varying in tandem and isolation, to encourage selected scholars to produce a ‘philosophical’ history of Ireland – and their acquaintance was renewed upon Burke’s brief return to Ireland in 1766. Burke also acted as an agent in London for O’Conor and Curry until he became desirous of distance in order to enhance his political career – or so O’Conor concluded. Similarly, O’Conor corresponded with Tobias Smollett, Lord Lyttleton and Ferdinando Warner. Arthur Young felt it worth mentioning Belanagare and its occupant in his monumental Tour in Ireland. O’Conor also unsuccessfully attempted to engage Hume in debate about Irish history, reflecting his increasing obsession with historiographical matters as he aged, after an early and impressive output of political pamphlets.

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17 Joseph C. Walker, Outlines of a Plan for Promoting the Art of Painting in Ireland (1790), p.36.
20 O’Conor to Curry, 7, 26 May, 12 June, 21 August 1772 in Catherine Coogan Ward and Robert Ward (eds.), The Letters of Charles O’Conor of Belanagare, (Washington D.C., 1980); all subsequent references to letters from Charles O’Conor are from this source unless otherwise stated.
It is on the strength of these pamphlets, and their overlap with his historical writing, that David Berman and Patricia O’Riordan include O’Conor as a significant, if secondary, thinker in the Irish enlightenment.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, the largest scholarly lacuna in accounts of O’Conor is regarding his political philosophy; a deficit which this thesis, sadly, shall not redress. Any analysis of his sophisticated excursions into political philosophy (manifest in his pamphlets) remains to be written in either article or monograph form. Indeed, it was his political pamphleteering that kick-started his writing career long before his ‘venerability’ was acquired for his work among ‘the rubbish of the ancients’.\textsuperscript{24} As mentioned, Bishop Berkeley praised the content of his \textit{Seasonable Thoughts} (1751) and he cooperated with Robert Clayton, the Bishop of Clogher, in the mid-1750s. Given O’Conor’s insistence upon anonymity when publishing, problems of ascription inevitably arise and it is difficult to know with certainty which works are his and which are not. Despite his grandson’s insistence that his first publications were ‘the hasty effusions of an angry moment’ during the Lucas affair, one work, from 1745, was definitely written by O’Conor in response to Brooke’s \textit{Farmer’s Letters} – and there are other strong candidates.\textsuperscript{25} Lastly, in stressing the heterogeneous nature of the Irish polity, but advocating the creation of a common political culture to corrode the deleterious effects of this diversity, as well as reviving older political ethnographies, O’Conor influenced the later development of Irish political thought. However, the ethnological theories and earlier political output that influenced O’Conor’s work have been neglected.

Instead, when considering Charles O’Conor of Belanagare, historians have tended to focus upon his role in facilitating later Irish cultural nationalism or used his increasing repute and esteem as a barometer for changes in mid-eighteenth-century Irish Protestant opinion regarding the penal laws. His acceptance as an affiliated founder of the Royal Irish Academy in 1773 and the entry in his diary

\textsuperscript{23} David Berman and Patricia O’Riordan, \textit{The Irish Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment} (2 Vols., Bristol, 2002)
\textsuperscript{24} Charles O’Conor to Edmund Burke, 24 April 1765.
\textsuperscript{25} O’Conor, \textit{Memoirs}, p.207; [Anon.], \textit{Some Considerations on the Laws which Incapacitate Papists from Purchasing Lands} (1739); [Anon.], \textit{A Letter to the Author of the Farmer’s Letters} (1745[?]); [Anon.], \textit{An Apology for the Roman Catholicks of Ireland} (1745[?]); [Anon.], \textit{Impartial Examiner or the Faithful Examiner} (1746).
describing the event as ‘a revolution in our moral and civil affairs’ are justifiably de rigueur in any account of the Irish eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{26} O’Conor’s familiarity with enlightenment discourses is usually mentioned in scholarly works but are rarely explored. Hilary Larkin’s recent work is a single honourable instance in a potentially fruitful topic suffering from ongoing neglect.\textsuperscript{27} When his history writing is considered, it is usually described as the antiquarian crutch of a didactic pamphleteering campaign to repeal elements of the penal laws and is therefore viewed as biased and discernable in that role. While this is partially true it is, however, a mistake to converge the two activities into a crude teleology that has O’Conor writing purely pro-Catholic historiography. Aside from anything else, this interpretation maroons O’Conor on an ultramontane island away from intellectual ebbs and tides of the time and, most incorrectly of all, places him as propagator of some Catholo-Gaelic historiography divorced from Irish Protestant historical consciousness, regurgitating the Jacobite myths learnt on his tutor’s knee or from Carolan’s harp.\textsuperscript{28} It should, then, be clear that there exists something of a scholarly lacuna when it comes to describing what compelled O’Conor to write, the ethnological and enlightenment forces that shaped his thought and, as the last great unmapped intellectual figure of eighteenth-century Ireland, it would be a disservice were his historiography and political output simply dismissed as


one component of a single-minded political mission. For O’Conor’s goals were broader and were singularly Irish in the only sense that his concern was not only to rehabilitate Catholics to a position of political privilege, but to present this as beneficial to Ireland’s society and economy and in conformity with British political cultures. Political ethnography was integral to this rehabilitation as ethnography had traditionally played a prominent role in justifying present conditions or planning futurity.

Thus, it is necessary to view Irish historiography and ethnology in the century and a half before the publication of his Dissertations (1753), in order to discern the contours of these disciplines and their perceived utility for reinforcing establishments in church and state, promoting political equality or facilitating national prosperity. Given O’Conor’s emphasis upon the ethnic diversity of pre-Norman Ireland, it is worth probing the ethnological quality of the works that preceded him in order to see if ideas of ethnic origins had a pre-eminent or important place in this output. It will be seen that the printed works from earlier in the eighteenth century increasingly emphasized the commonalities of faith, culture and language between English and Irish Anglicans and, in the process, abandoned older hopes of congruity with the ‘native’ population. The ethnology promulgated after 1690 is characterized, both inside and outside historical works, as representing the Anglican Irish as ‘one-people’ with the inhabitants of England, but has a more ambivalent conception of those Irish characterized as ‘native’ or Catholic. As it is both a historiographical norm and, if pamphlets, sermons and print opinions are considered, a widely held belief, it is worth expanding the parameters of analysis to the entirety of political ethnography and to observe O’Conor’s attempts to recalibrate a received opinion.

O’Conor was adept at reviving the message of canonical texts such as Sir John Davies’ Discoverie of the True Causes and manipulating subtle alterations in Irish Protestant ethnological beliefs to cast ethnology in a more favourable form – a form that O’Conor believed would restore Catholics to their lost political status and substantially benefit the Irish economy and polity. His approach was twofold.

First, in his pamphlets, he pointed to political theory, the potential for prosperity and the social and interdenominational reality prevailing in continental Europe. The contribution of Catholics to political life and the economy of European states, the inefficacy of the Pope’s power beyond central Italy, the record of medieval Catholics in opposing the Pope’s arbitrary designs, the principles of enlightened ecumenism and the wisdom of politique toleration all formed part of this didactic drive. Secondly, he illustrated in his historiography the contribution that ancient Ireland purportedly made to the development of the British mixed constitution and extrapolated from this that their descendants were ethnically suitable for the acquisition of political rights. Another was the proposition that Ireland had always been a multi-ethnic and, less frequently, a religiously pluralistic society. He emphasized that harmonious political environments and prosperity could be facilitated when there was a toleration of this heterogeneity that might further advance stability, justice and prosperity. His key contribution was to take advantage of older incorporative narratives and recast them during a period of Irish Protestant identity formation during the mid-eighteenth century while respecting the sensitivities of his target audience. This sensitivity is well known and O’Conor emerges in modern historiography for his later conviviality with Irish Protestants and his purported proto-nationalism. Little reflection is given to the origins of his thought or what, aside from the Catholicism which is posited as the prime determining factor in his output, made him take up the pen in his late thirties in response to a dispute regarding Irish history that had a distinctly ethnological quality, and one partially couched in terms of New World comparison. O’Conor’s work was as much concerned with origins as faith and, if not reaching for the ‘common name of Irishmen’, tried to supplant the imagined communities of ‘Ascendancy’ Ireland with a ‘political creed’ as a shared identity – one that could be nourished under the benign umbrella of the Hanoverian and Whig constitution of the eighteenth century.

One effort to redress this aspect of O’Conor’s life and work is Ian McBride’s *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, which locates O’Conor as a serious political theorist rather than a peddler of fanciful ethnographical narratives. McBride describes O’Conor as, at once, a ‘Gael, a Catholic and a Whig’ who was an example of the
porosity of political and religious identities in eighteenth-century Ireland.\textsuperscript{30} Highlighting O’Conor’s debt to Montesquieu and Locke, McBride underscores O’Conor’s adherence to conventional British political, economic and intellectual norms in an Irish context and the overlap between his political convictions and the printed output that he produced. That said, most of the work concerning O’Conor deals exclusively with his antiquarianism and historiography – as shall this study, albeit with a greater emphasis upon the political, intellectual and ethnological pedigrees of his work, as well as the context of its composition and publication. Another recent intervention again locates O’Conor in his British context. Thomas Curley’s \textit{Samuel Johnson and the Ossian Fraud} considers O’Conor’s response to the threat of Ossian to Irish antiquities and his shared antipathy to James Macpherson, the creator of the mythical bard, with the Great Cham. Curley’s volume gives a pithy description of O’Conor’s \textit{Dissertations}, noting that his ‘reading of Irish history seems closely related to his political pamphlets’. Coming from a post-colonial perspective, Curley obliquely criticizes O’Conor’s desire to acknowledge the Hanoverian regime, to modify his history to metropolitan tastes and his intention for Irish people to attain a degree of ‘fellow-feeling with their English masters.’ Despite this post-colonial stance, Curley recognizes that O’Conor wished to make Irish and British historical development compatible, while articulating a lasting impact of the former upon the latter. He also recognizes O’Conor’s desire to foster ‘unity with diversity for his country’, though this is not analysed in light of domestic intellectual traditions.\textsuperscript{31} Curley includes in his account an analysis of the politics of antiquarianism and literature, and the rivalry between Scotland and Ireland for precedence in these fields, previously undertaken by Joep Leerssen. Leerssen’s path-breaking \textit{Mere Irish and Fior Gael} charts Irish identities and propounds a convincing case for an increasing self-definition by Protestants in Ireland as ‘Irish’ by 1760. Leerssen, by far the most well-known researcher of Irish identities in the early modern period, insists upon the seminal role played by literature, drama, antiquarian works, poetry and other texts in the formation of ‘Irishness’. Whilst agreeing


\textsuperscript{31} Thomas Curley, \textit{Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud and Celtic Revival in Britain and Ireland} (Cambridge, 2009), pp.135-141.
with Leerssen’s findings, the present work will modify and clarify some of Leerssen’s conclusions. Leerssen’s *Mere Irish* asserts Irish Protestant identification as Irish was complete by 1760 – but here it is intended to flesh out the period of intense Anglocentric identification that preceded it, a phenomenon which is alluded to, but incompletely analysed in Leerssen’s account.\(^{32}\) Additionally, the switch to this identification was not smooth or sudden. From 1740 onward there was a growing tolerance, then acceptance and finally fascination among Irish Protestants with the ancient Irish past – reflecting a creeping identification with their Irishness. Leerssen’s work deals with a broad period (the year zero to 1800) and analyses alterations in Irish identities reflected in and created by literature. In contrast, this thesis is narrower in periodization and limited specifically to antiquarianism, historiography and those works that prominently feature ethnological narratives. Leerssen’s assertion that Irish Catholics increasingly began to be seen as fellow-subjects in political economy, if not yet politically active or enfranchised subjects, is confirmed here by a close and extensive reading of improvement literature before 1750. This, however, is pertinent here insofar as it was accompanied by a shifting ethnology; accompanying a burgeoning awareness of Catholic worth in the literature of political economy was a change in ethnographic description from a ‘Scythian’ or ‘Tartar’ derivation for Irish Catholics to a more meritorious ‘Milesianism’. As such, this thesis owes much to Clare O’Halloran – particularly her contention that ‘wild theorizing about origins and the nature of early society [had] a basis in contemporary concerns.’\(^{33}\)

O’Halloran’s *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*, building on a series of articles written by Walter D. Love in the 1960s, was indispensable for this study.\(^{34}\) In fact, this thesis is an attempt to analyse the narratives contained within antiquarianism, commentary and historiography in the century and a half before the period analysed in O’Halloran’s monograph. There is some overlap, not least


\(^{33}\) O’Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*, p.3.

in her description of O’Conor’s portrayal of ancient Ireland as an earlier example of the mixed constitution then prevailing in Great Britain. Furthermore, O’Halloran’s work illustrates the potential of articulations of consanguinity to function as arguments for specific political agendas. In this case, her analysis of Edward Ledwich’s antiquarianism reveals his insistence on a Gothic origin for the Irish – as Ledwich was a proponent of union during a time when Gothicist theories of ethnogenesis were believed to be the primary ethnological force in creating the British polity, his political ethnography was used to underscore the argument for legislative union.\(^{35}\) This is a late example of the same narratives of ethnic similitude that emerge in 1590-1630 and in 1690-1710 and which are studied in this thesis. O’Halloran’s book charts the ways in which contemporary politics, notably the Catholic question, legislative independence and the agrarian and political crises from the 1760s, shaped articulations of the remote and recent past. Despite agreeing with O’Halloran’s preliminary conclusions, this thesis differs and departs from her careful deconstruction of Irish antiquarianism in several key instances. Most obvious, there is a temporal difference; O’Halloran does not study in great depth the intellectual debts of O’Conor and neglects the lineage of the ethnographies mobilized from the sixteenth century onward. There is also a fundamental interpretative difference. O’Halloran’s work is designed as a corrective to Cadoc Leighton’s insistence upon Ireland’s status as an Ancien Regime state – a perspective this study will broadly reinforce, but which diverges from O’Halloran’s maintenance of a post-colonial outlook.\(^{36}\) Secondly, there are departures from her interpretation of the content and legacy of Davies and Spenser’s polemical works. O’Halloran adheres to the conventional view that Davies was an inveterate opponent, not only to Gaelic legal and cultural practices, but the ‘native’ Irish generally.\(^{37}\) O’Halloran assumes, from this vantage, that


\(^{37}\) The scholarship dealing with Spenser and Davies in a negative fashion is too long to list; one of the more influential examples is Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London, 1995); authors that treat the two in a more even-handed manner include Andrew Hadfield, *Spenser: A Life* (Oxford, 2012); Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (2000), pp.99-100; Richard Bourke, ‘Edmund Burke and the Politics
O’Conor was antipathetic to Davies and Edmund Spenser. However, the opposite is the case; O’Conor wished to revive those goals enunciated by Davies and Spenser and first articulated at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This desire to invoke the policy proposals of Davies is clearly evinced by O’Conor’s pamphlets and historiography. Lastly, I will do little to investigate O’Conor’s later friendship with Protestant scholars, not only as O’Halloran has admirably analysed this aspect of O’Conor’s life, but also because this thesis will focus on O’Conor’s intellectual lineages, rather than his later milieu.

None of these publications are devoted entirely to O’Conor’s life and works. This patchwork presence in published research is indicative of O’Conor’s significance, but he has yet to be treated in monograph form.38 Indeed, the effort has been fraught from the first – in 1796, his grandson attempted one such biography, but managed to displease everyone, including the O’Conor family, Dublin Castle and O’Conor’s Protestant friends. That it was published in the politically turbulent 1790s did not help; the first edition was destroyed and the proposed second volume – unsurprisingly given these circumstances – did not see the light of day. Catherine Sheehan has written an (unpublished) account of his life and works that is now held by the Royal Irish Academy. Encouragingly, a collection of essays relating to his life recently published has redressed some of this neglect.39 This collection is largely biographical and historiographical and tends to bypass O’Conor’s pamphleteering and political activities.40 Additionally, the collection posits that O’Conor was anti-colonialist – a position that cannot be supported by reference to the content of O’Conor’s work, where the legitimization of colonization as a pattern in Irish history is consistently advanced. Nevertheless, the collection adds valuable research to our knowledge of O’Conor, as well as raising contemporary awareness of his significance.

38 Curley, Samuel Johnson, p. 135.
The primary focus of this thesis shall be the political and intellectual considerations that attended the ethnology of early modern Ireland – the early examples of which massively influenced O’Conor and which he condensed and exploited in his work to argue for Catholic relief and a cohesive Irish political identity. Thus, by situating O’Conor as a conduit between early and later ethnologies, it is hoped that this study will view the media – such as historiographical, literal, polemical, antiquarian and economic works – in which such ethnologies figure so prominently in order to comprehend its early modern importance and subsequent pertinence in Irish political discourse.

Narrowly defined, this is an intellectual history dealing with the way ethnicity was understood and utilized in historiographical, antiquarian and political discourses in Ireland and Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Given this broad chronology and use of an extensive array of early modern literatures, this thesis must negotiate a wide variety of contemporary historiographical outputs and sub-disciplines including histories of philosophy, political thought, antiquarianism, enlightenment intellectual cultures, nationalism, state-building and, most importantly, the ethnological narratives of the early modern period. The last is a topic treated in some detail by Colin Kidd in his studies of identities in Britain, Ireland and the Atlantic world in the same timeframe. Such a study necessarily entails reviewing the meaning of ethnicity, its significance and the evolution and status of ethnology in the same place and period. Indeed, it is indicative of the dearth of theory and analysis of early modern ethnology that Kidd’s pioneering output is one of the only extensive studies of this phenomenon – though it is supplemented by work dealing with other periods from Anthony Smith, Susan Reynolds, Adrian Hastings and John Gillingham.\footnote{Kidd’s excellent \textit{British Identities before Nationalism} begins with a historiographical review of the literature about nationalism, rather than an evaluation of extant output concerning early modern ethnicities.\footnote{Colin Kidd, \textit{British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World} (Cambridge, 2004), pp.1-4.}} Kidd’s excellent \textit{British Identities before Nationalism} begins with a historiographical review of the literature about nationalism, rather than an evaluation of extant output concerning early modern ethnicities.\footnote{Anthony D. Smith, \textit{National Identity} (Reno, 1991); Adrian Hastings, \textit{The Construction of Nationhood}, (Cambridge, 1997); Susan Reynolds, ‘Medieval Orignes Gentium and the Community of the Realm’, \textit{History}, Vol.68, No.224, pp.375-390; John Gillingham, ‘The Beginnings of English Imperialism’, \textit{Journal of Historical Sociology}, Vol.5, No.4, pp.392-409.} Kidd’s
extensive primary source material, including anthropology, antiquarianism, archaeology, scriptural exegesis, historiography, chronology, political polemicism and mundane economic pamphlets are also utilized in this study as examples of the surprising places where ethnological theory might be found in the early modern period and underscores the intellectual respectability of the same.

**Historiographies of Nationalism and Ethnicity**

Studying ethnicity as a social reality and political concept in the past is an endeavour liable to leave the researcher open to misinterpretation and hostility – particularly by the less exacting criteria of public opinion and popular discourse. Colin Kidd has acknowledged this difficulty and Malcolm Chapman has also noted that ‘all modern discussions of “ethnicity”’ take place in the shadow of earlier discussions of “race”’.43 The public often reacts with animosity to novel interpretations or perceived challenges to self-assured or cherished identities. Additionally, if misunderstood or wilfully misconstrued, researchers leave themselves open to accusations of offending a particular group or, worse, that they have presented a racial history or eugenics-infused polemic masquerading as detached and neutral scholarship. Within the academy itself, there are preferred theories about the nature, characteristics and origins of nations; indeed, the most fashionable and widespread theory insists that ‘nations’ enjoy no objective existence but are ‘invented’ or ‘imagined’ at particular historical junctures. While it is not intended that this thesis should address this issue, a brief review of the discursive status of ethnicity and nationality would be beneficial. Briefly, there are three schools of thought.

The residual presence of Victorian notions of nationhood and ethnicity is prevalent in the primordialist interpretation. This school believes that nations, in their current form, gain their social acceptance from a widespread belief in a near timeless existence stretching deep into prehistory. Primordialists stress that these nations underwent periods of alteration, inclusion and absorption while maintaining their basic integrity as linguistic and cultural groupings. Naturally, they emphasize popular ideas of descent of these attributes through time – an

emphasis that implies a belief in biological descent that is quite out of vogue.\textsuperscript{44} The pioneer of this school – Edward Shils – stressed the importance of an awareness of the ‘tie of blood’ as key to the cohesion of ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{45} These are contrasted with the modernists, who insist that nations are resultant upon alterations in political consciousness and developments in printing during the modern period. In particular they stress that an awareness of a national community is impossible without widespread literacy and territorially-defined print cultures that can standardize languages, facilitate mass political movements and instil the idea of a wider community of belonging, all grounded in a ‘national’ language or assumption of shared cultural predilections. They date the emergence of nations to, at the earliest, the period of the Atlantic revolutions in North America and France or, at the latest, to the eve of the First World War.\textsuperscript{46}

A via media is apparent in the conclusions of the ethno-symbolists, who insist that nations have existed at varying points through time, often depending on literacy (rather than print) to fix their vernacular identity and that the nations we see today, at least in Western Europe, have their origins in the medieval period. Many ethno-symbolists tend to be medievalists, a period in which they find that a heightened awareness of the distinctions between nations was apparent from the post-Roman period onward. In the British Isles, these became more acute during the English expansion of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Certainly, J.A. Watt’s work on the medieval Irish Church highlights the smothered animosity between clerics that identified with particular ethnic communities.\textsuperscript{47} It may seem strange for a thesis stressing the impermanent, changeable nature of the idea of


\textsuperscript{45} Edward Shils, ‘Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties: Some particular observations on relationships of sociological research and theory’, \textit{The British Journal of Sociology}, Vol.8, No.2, pp.130-145.

\textsuperscript{46} The literature on this is extensive but an excellent analysis from an Irish perspective is Ian McBride, ‘The nation in the age of revolution’ in Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer, (eds.), \textit{Power and the Nation in European History} (Cambridge, 2005), pp.248-272.

Irishness and the complicated, politicized theorizations that underpin it over a long period that it affiliates with the ethno-symbolists. This arises from deep reservations about the conclusions of the primordialists and the modernists. The primordialists’ thought appears too similar to older, pseudo-scientific notions of the fixity and significance of racial descent that are not only specious but also extremely dangerous. Primordialism also ignores the mercurial nature of identity, especially national identities, over time. Primordialist conclusions are persuasive when applied to tribal groups, perhaps, but not to modern nations. The primordialist school – represented by scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Donald Horowitz – enjoyed a revival in the twenty-first century. This might be ascribable to the resurgence of ethno-religious conflict in places as diverse as Kosovo, Rwanda and Iraq where – like the Northern Irish conflict – topicality provokes straightforward narratives of atavism that tend to be favoured over more complex, and less comforting, analyses. However, the findings of the modernists have become orthodox in intellectual treatments of nationalism, nations and the idea of ethnic descent. Yet, if the primordialists are old-fashioned or traditional in their conceptualizations of the nation, modernists are (as their name implies) impossible to divorce from the post-modern context of their prognostications that nations are ‘imagined’, ‘invented’, ‘constructed’ and so on. Their conclusions are best comprehended as an over-zealous deconstruction of the idea of ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’ dependent upon the historical context of their ‘modernist’ articulation.

A more pertinent question might be why hostility to the objective existence of nations gained such purchase after 1980. After all, ideas about the contingency and mutability of national identities were not original. The contributions of Ernest Gellner are obvious enough. But even before Gellner, in both popular and academic discourses, nationalism began to be heavily criticised – and by extension, so too did the idea of the existence of nations. Hans Kohn, Carlton Hayes and Karl Deutsch were three trailblazers – yet their programmatic intent and ideological commitments are apparent in titles such as Nationalism and its

Alternatives and Nationalism: A Religion.⁴⁹ In the English-speaking world, the massively influential George Orwell could reduce nationalism to a catch-all term denoting extremist, fundamentalist and totalitarian systems such as ‘Communism, political Catholicism, Zionism, Antisemitism, Trotskyism and Pacificism’.⁵⁰ Elie Kedourie criticized this phenomenon in the late 1950s and by 1961 Sir Ivor Jennings could note that nationalism was becoming a ‘slightly naughty word.’⁵¹ Even Ernest Renan’s classic definition – the notional ‘daily plebiscite’ – implied construction, acquiescence and contingency rather than timelessness.⁵² Analyses like these, once increasingly accepted, gave way to an exuberant revisionism and nations as an objective category for groups of peoples, their cultural practises and their institutions – rather than nationalism as a political ideology – became the object of criticism. But this still does not explain the growth in respect and continuing purchase that modernist interpretations have attained over the last thirty to forty years.

Contextually speaking, of paramount importance was the reaction to the racial theories that enabled the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Europe, the eventual defeat of which resulted in a rightful repugnance for totalizing racial claims.⁵³ There was also the post-war influx of migrants into Great Britain and the process of decolonization of Western European imperial structures, particularly those of the United Kingdom, France and Portugal. These phenomena served to cast doubt on previously self-confident imperialist narratives such as the ‘white man’s burden’ and made such claims domestic political issues that might fuel xenophobic or fascistic political movements. Furthermore, developments in Western identities indicate the context of modernists’ conclusions. These reflect a shift in Western

senses of self from purported immutables like race or nationality, political ideologies that centred on class-structures and from previous orthodoxies such as heterosexual marriage toward the re-orientation of identities into areas such as sexual orientation, gender or lifestyle. Modernists have also failed to realize their role reflecting and facilitating alterations in economic reality and ideology. The process of globalization, accelerating after 1980, coincided with classic modernist texts like Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) as well as Hobsbawm’s *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) and *Nations and Nationalism* (1991). This brings us to the ideological commitments of the modernists – by and large, they tend to be left-leaning or Marxist. As Anderson stated in his *Imagined Communities*, his design for the work was to arrest the nationalistic loyalties apparent in ‘the prospect of further full-scale wars between socialist states’ during the Cambodian-Vietnamese War. That modernists tend to be Marxist reflects their emphasis on materialist or hierarchical origins for nations and nationalism – though most modernist accounts characteristically blur the distinction between the two phenomena. Self-definition, historical depth and the subversive potential of nationalism to established hierarchies tend to be elided – as is the idea that nations are mainly convenient descriptive abstractions that rest on cultural criteria and historical accretions which have congealed into a variety of institutions and loyalties that are rarely contested and very real to their adherents. This is, of course, the phenomenon of so-called ‘banal nationalism’ first analysed and explored so fruitfully by Michael Billig. In short, it is an operating conclusion of this thesis that races are invented but, despite being subject to alteration, ethnicities and nations are not – they are, as John Lonsdale states, ‘a world-wide social fact.’

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55 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.3.

An antidote to modernist attitudes is found in Anthony Smith and, to a lesser extent, Adrian Hastings’ work. Smith’s *Ethnic Origins of Nations* and *Cultural Foundations of Nations* insists upon the existence of nations at varying periods through time, but claims that their existence depends on their historical context – so they are mutable over time and display variation in their forms. Hastings employs a concept which he sees as imperative for the formation of national identities; that of territoriality. In addition, Smith enumerates one subsidiary characteristic that marks nations or, at least, a national consciousness; myths of origin.\(^{57}\) The potency of myths of origin is now an anthropological axiom and both these facets, of territoriality and origin-stories, would be of paramount importance to later Irish nationalism and concepts of the Irish nation as well as informing the political ideology that underpinned them.

The Gaelic-Irish versions of these narratives of ethnogenesis were outlined in the eleventh-century *Lebor Gabála* (‘The Book of Invasions’). While this narrative contained consistent elements, it was subject to alteration given specific historical contexts or political needs. The traditional myth goes something like this: Ireland was inhabited by a vaguely-defined aboriginal group, who defeated or existed alongside ‘giants’, after which a mythological group called the Parthlonians arrived, followed by the Nemedians and Fomorians (a Philistine-like seafaring race). These groups engaged in conflict but all were defeated by a branch of the Nemedians (the Fir Bolg) who returned from slavery in Greece and held the island for some time. These, in turn, were defeated by the Tuatha de Danann who enjoyed an ascendancy lasting one hundred and fifty years.\(^{58}\) Finally, the Milesians arrived and subdued the island after their initial arrival was greeted with insult from the reigning group. These people purportedly originated in Scythia and spent the intervening time in peregrinations around the Near East, combining familiarity with Greece, the Levant and Egypt (including Scota, a Pharaoh’s daughter, who married into the group) with military prowess before settling in North-Western Spain. A synthesis of scripture, classical writings on the

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people's of Europe, early-medieval ethnology (Isidore of Seville was a particular influence) and native pagan myths, this account of Ireland’s ethnic history was multi-functional and mutable in its utility through time. Commencing life as a means to create a comparable ethnogenesis for Irish Gaels with the Israelites and to locate Ireland within a biblical schema, it later became a useful tool for normalizing and explaining the island’s secular history of invasion, settlement and ethno-religious heterogeneity. As Bernadette Cunningham has noted, this account ‘retained its popularity through successive generations because it was an historical framework that legitimised change’ and which ‘allowed the various peoples of Ireland to be incorporated into a shared origin legend.’ Thus, beginning as an ethnological narrative to validate Ireland’s conversion to Christianity, this story was formalized on the eve of the Anglo-Norman invasion and was re-formulated by Geoffrey Keating in the mid-seventeenth century as means to absorb the Old English within a composite and protean Irish nation. Keating would pioneer the approach adopted by Charles O’Conor, albeit with a different audience in mind; for the latter, it was Irish Protestants of the mid-eighteenth century, whose ethnological beliefs began one of their periodic shifts after 1740.

This Gaelic narrative of variegated ethnogenesis co-existed with an English and, later, Irish Protestant set of ethnological theories. This thesis will be largely concerned with these theories; locating the context of their expression, their relevance to political programmes, their importance for debates about Irish social structures (especially regarding assimilation or segregation between English/Irish or Catholic/Protestant populations) and to highlight the longevity of these theories and the ambitions underlying them for later Irish political thought. For what is particularly noticeable about these Irish Protestant and English ethnic theorizations is their similar political and social function as Gaelic myths of ethnic travail. However, as the latter sought to explain the occasionally bewildering political upheavals that early modern Ireland was subject to, and the influx of peoples accompanying these upheavals, comparable Protestant ethnologies were more versatile and dependent upon developments within the

59 Francis John Byrne, Irish Kings and High Kings (2001), pp.9-10.
60 Cunningham, Geoffrey Keating, p.6; Hastings, Construction of Nationhood, pp.69, 85.
early modern disciplines of antiquarianism, political economy, chronology, history and even numismatics. Twinned with this flux was the influence of external scholarly and intellectual developments and fashions. But they were also more fluid in an extra-disciplinary sense, subject to alteration in certain contexts and became a battleground for differing visions of Ireland’s present state and future course. Lastly, the need for particular ethnologies in an Irish context could, in turn, impact on wider literary, political and religious controversy. The work of Sir John Davies, Edmund Spenser and Archbishop Ussher are exemplary in this regard, Davies making an indelible mark on considerations of governance and law in empires and Ussher massively influencing contemporaneous biblical exegesis and the discipline of chronology.

The evolution of Irish Protestant ideas of Irish ethnicity can be delineated chronologically. While Tony Claydon and Ian McBride have noted that ‘Ireland was not included in the Brutus legend… nor did Tudor or Stuart propagandists attempt to re-write the history of the British Isles from an inclusive, three kingdoms standpoint’, this observation is only partially correct. The Brutus myth of ethogenesis gradually fell out of vogue, swept aside by developments in antiquarianism, whereby the medieval texts that perpetuated it were challenged by new interpretations that incorporated disparate classical and esoteric texts made available through the print revolution of the sixteenth century. Furthermore, while Ireland maintained a low profile in English historiography, in the burgeoning antiquarianism, topographical and chorographical works flourishing after 1550, Ireland’s ethnography was reconsidered and recalibrated. From the late sixteenth century onward, Irish ethnicity came to be increasingly understood in terms of consanguinity with ancient Britain and its inhabitants. This was a departure from medieval constructions of Irish ethnicity. That ubiquitous purveyor of anti-Irish animus in the medieval period, Gerald of Wales, fully adhered to the Milesian thesis of Irish ethnogenesis and was keen to stress the intrinsic inferiority of the Irish – his mission in Ireland was justified, not as an acquisition of subjects deserving of equal or equitable treatment, but as a reformer of the church in deference to Rome enforced through English suzerainty. This was ‘othering’ in strict ethnographic terms – the Irish were given an alien

61 Claydon and McBride, Protestantism and National Identity, p. 22.
and different ethnic origin from the Anglo-Norman newcomers. Indeed, John Gillingham has argued that Gerald and the twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury are crucial to the creation of a hostile English attitude toward Irish people. However, while early modern writers referred to Gerald, his influence derived from his uniqueness as an eyewitness to earlier invasion but his actual sentiments about Irish people were rarely endorsed. In other words, it was residual rather than influential – as we shall see a new breed of humanist and antiquarian writers were the primary motivators of new ways of thinking about polities and peoples.

Regarding efforts to abolish ethno-cultural heterogeneity, a few tenuous precedents are observable. Some historians believe the Statutes of Kilkenny (1366) were designed to homogenise cultural practices within English territory in Ireland. Similarly, David Green locates the statutes within a little-noticed effort to expand and consolidate the Plantagenet state by ‘standardizing behaviour within the English dominions’ because of a contemporaneous belief that the ‘members of the state formed (it was believed) a corporate body linked by shared cultural and political identity.’ Nevertheless, Peter Crooks is mistaken in asserting that the early modern Englishmen engaging in settlement, administration and soldiering were ‘versed in the foundational ethnographic texts of Gerald of Wales’; Machiavelli and Camden were the lights that guided these individuals, not those of the querulous Cambro-Norman. While ethnographic writing is scanty for most of the late Middle Ages in Ireland, the project of absorption, assimilation

and equality associated with later articulations of consanguinity is apparent beforehand. The attempt of Richard II to reduce Ireland and his reception of submission from the Gaelic Irish has been instanced as an attempt to comprehend the Gaelic Irish generally as fit and equal subjects. This effort to dilute differences in legal status accelerated during the state-building project of the Tudor re-conquest – particularly Henry VIII’s creation of the Kingdom of Ireland in 1541, which demolished many of these legal ambiguities. At first, during the reigns of Henry, Mary and the early years of Elizabeth, a policy of placating, pacifying and acculturating the Gaelic elite was applied, manifest in the granting of titles and the policy of ‘surrender and re-grant’. As this was only partially successful throughout the sixteenth century, a capability for innovative, open and expedient policy-making began to be valued. The administrations of Sussex, Sidney and Perrot are important in this regard. But the tenures and policies of these governors were significant as indicators of a monumental shift in Tudor policy from courting Gaelic lords to conciliating the remainder of the population, mainly through re-organizations of land tenure, promises of access to English law and freedom from obligations owed to their chiefs. Contemporaneous with this shift in policy was a readiness to consider the Irish population ‘British’ – this much is at least apparent from the content and titles of chorographical, historical, geographic and political works published after 1570. Prior to this, any account of ‘Britain’ either did little to consider the Irish or, if they did, expressly denied their British status; Polydore Vergil was a good example of the former and Humphrey

Lhwyd was of the latter. Yet Camden’s massively influential *Brittania* (and a host of lesser works) expressly comprehended Ireland as belonging to this geographic entity. But, more importantly, they stressed that Irish ethnicity was comparable or equivalent to British ethnicity in its ethnogenesis, experience of invasions and its settlement patterns.

Thus, as Tudor policy gravitated toward central political control, the blanket application of common law, the dilution of religious dissent, the mitigation of English strategic weakness to continental enemies and, in short, as a programme to create an Irish state emerged a new ethnography began to coalesce. Nor was it coincidental that these theories stressed similitude, as they began life as a way of justifying (in ethnological terms) the extension of English sovereignty over Ireland. Constructing such consanguinity was, as Hastings has noted, ‘basically rooted in the human requirement for relatedness between cultural ethnicity and political power, a requirement grounded in the truth that the latter is in principle intrinsic to the former.’ Andrew Hadfield, through an intensive reading of the ethnological content of Edmund Spenser’s work, has done more than most historians to chart the theories of ethnicity and nation-building efforts of these Tudor scholar-adventurers. Hadfield has shown that ‘English writers under the Tudors looked back to their own British origins and claimed that these validated a right to the possession of the Irish crown.’ This thesis will elaborate on this – by the inclusion of Davies and by locating the beginning of Irish political ethnographies in this period.

But there is still much to be done on this topic – not least as Davies and Spenser have acquired a reputation for intolerant cultural supremacism and have even been cast as proponents of genocide in Ireland. The most recent contribution to this debate – Ian Campbell’s *Renaissance Humanism and Ethnicity before Race* – endorses this perspective. Campbell focuses on the relationship between

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Aristotelian-influenced renaissance humanism and early modern concepts of heredity and ‘race’. Some threads emerge, the most important of which for this thesis is the idea of mutability – Campbell consistently emphasizes that this humanist discourse is characterized by a belief in human development that indicated the malleability of man and that this malleability might be pressed in the service of civility. For our purposes, more interesting is Campbell’s contention that the ‘ideologies of domination which mattered in Ascendancy Ireland were not racist but sectarian’. While largely correct, this statement needlessly simplifies a complex environment in which a consciousness of ethnic origin still lingered – as this thesis will hope to prove. Nevertheless, Campbell’s impressive research is a valuable contribution to this debate and is indicative of the increased attention paid to both antiquarian writing and theories of ethnicity in the Irish past.\(^2\)

Despite this work, research regarding how the English state and its agents thought about native populations and planned the future during state-building exercises in Ireland remains to be written. Theoretically speaking, Michael Hechter outlined a ‘state-building nationalism’ that attempts to ‘assimilate or incorporate culturally distinctive territories of a given state.’ This is, according to Hechter, a culturally-inclusive characteristic of Western European states from the sixteenth century onward and is readily apparent in the oft-expressed desire by English writers that Irish and English populations become ‘one-people’ in an Irish kingdom annexed to the English crown.\(^3\) However, this desire to legitimize sovereignty through articulations of ethnic consanguinity was not the sole preserve of English rule in Ireland. Take three high-profile examples: one from Spain (the dominant maritime and military empire of the sixteenth century); one from Sweden (a precociously advanced Northern European state and aspiring great power) and one from England. In a work traducing the conquistadors and justifying the extension of royal writ in South America, Augustin de Zarate stated that the Incas originated from a mythological island off Spanish Gibraltar who had traveled westward from their original homeland off Iberia. Similarly, when in


the employ of the Swedish crown, Hugo Grotius reinforced Swedish claims to the Delaware Valley by describing Native Americans as the descendants of Vikings.\textsuperscript{74} Additionally, English claims over North American territory were supported by equally spurious ethnological fancies. Richard Hakluyt, John Dee and Meredith Hanmer all claimed that Madoc, a medieval Welsh prince, sailed to America, resulting in a prior discovery, and hence possession, of North America for the English crown.\textsuperscript{75} As Spanish, Swedish and English empire-building endeavours in the New World were given ethnological support with these claims of ethnic consanguinity, so too are similar tendencies apparent in Ireland. Nor were these constructions limited to individuals justifying English sovereignty and legal structures – the Gaelic Irish proved equally adept as manipulating ethnological narratives. For instance, Gaelic propagandists and emissaries to continental European courts utilized the Milesian thesis of Irish ethnogenesis to appeal for Spanish military support – and even used this theory to claim that ‘the Irish crown rightfully belonged to Spain.’\textsuperscript{76} As appeals to consanguinity were utilized when legitimizing sovereign claims in early modern Europe, similar ethnological constructs are apparent when English contemporaries grappled with sovereignty over Ireland. English attempts to fashion an Irish state in England’s social, political and economic image were twinned with a potent ethnological narrative that perceived English development to be indebted to the essential maintenance of strict legal and political traditions within the English ethnos itself. The extension of the same institutions to Ireland, in tandem with the early modern predilection for using ethno-cultural similitude to enhance the credibility of sovereign claims, understandably necessitated the mobilization of distinct theories of ethnicity. Furthermore, the axiom of contemporary English political


discourse was the customary nature and autochthonous development of their common law and was strongly identified with civility, the English nation and the extension of sovereignty in Ireland. Thus, this was not only a norm in European contexts, but subject to an English particularity – something supported by extant analyses of state-building processes.77

However, embedded within this assertion of consanguinity was another potential ethnicity – one which was theorized as an impending ethno-cultural convergence under the influence of particular policy adjustments that would complete the unification of ethnicity promised by earlier, ancient and archaic similitude. Thus, the political ethnographies of early modern Ireland were at once actual and anticipatory and these theories of ethnicity quickly became surrogate or auxiliary arguments for different opinions regarding the correct composition of the Irish polity and the groups that could access the privileges of civilized subject-hood. These theories also altered over time according to context and the political needs of the Irish Protestant community. At the beginning, a belief in consanguinity served at once to legitimize Tudor and Jacobean sovereignty, but also to articulate a belief, here called ‘incorporationist’ thought, which insisted upon a basic ethnic commonality that could enable the eventual acquisition of common rights and equality before the law for all inhabitants of Ireland. These narratives stressed that Ireland’s deleterious heterogeneity could be diminished, mitigated or extinguished by the application of legal or political solutions – solutions which were feasible due to the pre-existing ethnic origin and composition of the Irish population. A degree of diversity was tolerable, according to these theorists, provided that certain goals were attained and targets met, foremost of which was the creation of a prosperous, stable and peaceful Irish state under the common law and with a market economy. Particular cultural and religious changes – understood today as ‘Anglicization’ and ‘Protestantization’ – were subsidiary to these goals. Nevertheless, they were results that it was presumed would follow the application of such political and legal policies. In

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opposition to these were a group best described as segregationists, who insisted on the rigorous separation of ethnic and religious communities in early modern Ireland or else demanded that solutions be total, absolute and all-encompassing rather than gradual, piecemeal or achieved by concessions. For the most part, they elide issues of ethnology until the late seventeenth century, content to presume the inveterate animosity of the Gaelic Irish and argue for something that roughly approximated to a system of perpetual apartheid. Another thing that emerges from this literature is that the determination to proselytize for Protestantism was relatively weak.

In fact, proselytization was not prioritized as most of the administrators and policy-makers were committed to pacification and the Irish state-project or to personal material gain and social advancement. While a Protestant Ireland was recognized as a desirable outcome, reformist tracts on this topic are coy, vague and indifferent – an indifference manifest in results. Aggressive conversion policy also did not gel with Elizabeth’s gradualism or James I’s policy of persuasion. It was also anathema to the segregationists, whose dismal prognostications upon communal relations first emerge during Tyrone’s Rebellion. This, at least, was the state of affairs before 1641. Prior to that year, a flourishing belief in the upward trajectory of the Irish polity and a faith in the increasing convergence of ethno-cultural norms, manifest by proximity, prosperity and neighbourliness, was close to dominant in Ireland. After the 1641 rebellion a more potent ‘segregationism’ begin to emerge. During the seventeenth century, claims of consanguinity tend to be the preserve of incorporationists like Spenser, Davies, Petty, Gookin and Greatorex while segregationists like ‘T. C.’, Temple, and Lawrence did not engage in ethnological speculation. By 1690, the segregationist cause embraced a species of ethnology, expressed most forcibly by Sir Richard Cox, who articulated a particular ethnology designed to validate anti-Catholic legislation, directed at a metropolitan audience, and which stressed consanguinity but articulated an idea of religiously-delineated ethnicity for the purpose of locating Ireland’s experience in a European, rather than a colonial, context.78

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Lastly, these ethnological narratives were refined in the early eighteenth century, here designated the ‘segregationist supremacy’, which ascribed the continuing poverty of Ireland as being due to the ‘Scythian’ origin of the Irish. This further functioned as a way of denying a more reputable ‘Milesian’ origin by selectively locating Gaelic ethnic origins among the more savage Scythians of classical literature. This attitude to Irish Catholics altered after 1740, when a series of disasters, the continuing reality of Irish developmental failure and a cult of politeness in denominational relations assisted a revaluation of anti-papist sentiment and its concomitant ethnological narratives. Irish Protestants increasingly began to identify and be associated with Ireland as their home and their ethnicity. Richard Cox, despite his initial antipathy, is an exemplar of this phenomenon but it is also manifest in drama, polemical works and personal reminiscence. Additionally, an Irish state had been created and stabilized by 1700; and, as an Irish state existed, it consolidated, even invented, the Irish nation and there was an increased inclination to embrace a ‘common Irishness definable only in territorial terms’. Furthermore, this incubated the circumstances whereby ‘when an ethnicity develops into… a territorial nation it becomes possible to throw aside the claim to genetic unity and glory instead in a multiplicity of origins.’

This process is apparent in the increasing receptivity of Irish Protestants to alternate, diverse origins for Ireland’s people after the early eighteenth century. This alteration, manifest in the output of the Physico-Historical Society and improvement literature, was exploited by Charles O’Conor to revive the incorporationist narratives of the seventeenth century by combining them with traditional Irish myths of ethnogenesis that portrayed the incursion and settlement of disparate peoples as normal in Irish history. O’Conor wished to resurrect an idea of equality before the law and toleration of ethno-religious heterogeneity manifest in the Spenser and Davies.

Concluding Remarks

Organized along chronological and thematic lines, each chapter will detail the role of ethnology within a particular debate or controversy, underscoring the

pertinence of political ethnography in early modern Ireland. This focus on disputes and personalities is partially a device for structuring narrative within the thesis – but it is also true that dissections of origins, discussions of ethnic groups and theories of ethnicity tended to be mobilized during controversies and cluster around issues of moment in the period being reviewed. This thesis is an effort to discern how ethnicity – and its attendant origin narratives, theories and identifications – were mobilized in early modern Ireland’s discourses when questions of legal rights and political prerogatives arose. Methodologically speaking, this thesis will adhere as closely as possible to Quentin Skinner’s clinically articulated emphasis upon contextualizing intellectual output within its contemporary environment – particularly his insistence that context ‘determines the meaning of any given text’ and provides the ultimate coordinates for comprehending its import and significance.\(^{80}\)

Structurally speaking, chapter one will deal with sovereignty, but commence with several themes relevant to the remaining chapters; the first of these is the utility of ethnography for justifying and explaining English state-expansion in late sixteenth-century Ireland. Another is the degree to which these ethnographies contained visions of the projected civil and communal state of post-conquest Ireland in which normative English practises such as common law, centralized governance, arable agriculture and a market economy were imposed or imported. These early English analysts and settlers indicated the British ethnogenesis of the Irish population – an insistence that is evident in Spenser, Holinshed, Hanmer, Gilbert, Camden and Davies. This had a dual function; to justify sovereignty and to indicate the suitability of the Irish indigenes for English institutions and norms, thereby anticipating a future of ethnic convergence, peace and prosperity conditional upon equitable treatment and equal access to law. As conflict punctuated the stability of seventeenth-century Ireland, intransigent adherents to a more rigid and absolute understanding of communal division superseded the early settler-administrators who had insisted upon a gradualist approach. This ‘segregationism’ advanced in the late seventeenth century as the political ethnography grounded in consanguinity was re-oriented to advocate legislative

incorporation with England and to rebut accusations of Ireland’s colonial status. Furthermore, this contributed to the creation of an outlook that was ethnically determinist in matters of faith. Chapter two deals with ethnographies mobilized by these segregationists through analysis of the debates attendant upon a prospective union between England and Ireland – anticipating legislative incorporation, these writers articulated a species of ethnography that propagated an idea of consanguinity between the populations of the two islands, while insisting upon designating confession in ethnological terminology. It also reflected the replacement of gradualist, incorporationist attitudes to Irish ethno-religious difference with a more rigid mentality that expected conversions on a mass scale, rather than promoting homogeneity through incentives grounded in policy, legislative initiatives and ecumenical concessions. The legacy of this will be the focus of the third chapter, particularly the quandaries presented to the Church of Ireland by a mass of recalcitrant Catholics during the new segregationist supremacy. Their dilemma was to decide between conversion by accommodation with ethno-cultural diversity or continuing to insist upon a rigorous Anglicization of Ireland that might complete the civilizing mission evinced in the earliest English attempts to transform the island. Furthermore, an Anglocentric ethnology was mediated to the Irish Protestant population through popular festivities and sermons, percolating ‘segregationist’ attitudes to a wider, less lettered and literate audience. It will then be instructive to look at the ethnological speculations of Swift and Berkeley before segueing into similar material contained in the earliest ‘improvement’ literature. Thus, the third chapter will deal with debates internal to Church of Ireland establishment, the permeation of ethnic determinism into Irish Anglican society and the newer theories of distinct ethnogenesis in polemical form.

This will carry into the fourth chapter, looking at the shift in attitudes towards Irish Catholics apparent in improvement literature before 1750. It will be seen that ‘improvers’, despite their early inclination to allot culpability based on the intrinsic characteristics of ‘natives’ and Catholics, were a major force in popular reconsiderations of Irish Catholic status within this segregationist polity. The remainder of the chapter will deal with the change in Irish Protestant attitudes to their Catholic compatriots, and the altered ethnological narratives this entailed, by focusing on the Dublin theatre riots of 1747 and the Lucas affair of 1748-1750.
The fifth chapter will chronologically overlap with the preceding chapter, but outline the scholarly developments that coincided with the protean and popular alterations in ethnological narratives by the middle of the eighteenth century. Both are intended to indicate an atmosphere of receptivity to reputable theories of Irish ethnogenesis and ethnicity that were not derogatory or inimical to an acceptance of ethno-religious heterogeneity. Thus, after dealing with the social and political context of a partial rehabilitation of Irish Catholics and a recalibration of Irish Protestant attitudes, the fifth chapter will deal with developments in ethnology, antiquarianism and historiography. It is hoped this chapter will reveal, not the point when Irish Protestants finally submitted to the reality of their Irishness, but to depict an environment in which an awareness of Irish ethno-religious diversity was accepted – and even began to be celebrated.

Lastly, the sixth chapter will analyse the content and preoccupations manifest in O’Conor’s two editions of his Dissertations, using these texts to reveal his ambition to make inward migration and ethno-religious toleration normative in Irish history. It will also look at the British context to his political ethnography by looking at his obsession with David Hume and his reaction to the Ossian poems of James Macpherson.

A final word is warranted on the inspiration for this project. While there have been numerous, indeed, manifold analyses of Irish identities in the early modern period most have been constrained to limited time periods and, within that, have had a narrow focus on specific periods in the eighteenth century. Conversely, a very real process, the ethnogenesis of Gaelic Irish and Old English into Irish Catholics during the seventeenth century remains to be researched. Instead, historians are content to presume that shared political concerns, dynastic loyalties and compatible religious predilections powered this ethnogenesis. By contrast, the Irish component of Protestant identities in Ireland has been intensely researched, historians being keen to dissect the relationship between self-identification, perception, environment, lineage, religion and descent. In this, there is a certain presumption of the inevitability of a Protestant drift toward accepting the reality of their circumstances; that upbringing and domicile in Ireland rendered their identity Irish and they had trouble accepting this for a significantly lengthy period. Historians, notoriously prone to arguing over hypotheses that are plausible, but ultimately impossible to prove, have located
this realization at varying times between 1700 and 1800. This thesis, however, is not a teleological narrative seeking to pinpoint the juncture at which Irish Protestants thought themselves ‘Irish’. This is an inclination that has hitherto prevailed in the historiography of Irish identities and tells us more about contemporary obsessions than early modern realities. Rather, I hope to chart a motif or theme that inheres in Irish political thought and is manifest in political ethnologies dissecting Ireland’s multifarious ethnic and religious communities - a heterogeneity that is acknowledged in the mid-eighteenth century during a period of unprecedented stability and peace in Irish history. Concurrent with the growth of an over-arching and composite British identity, after 1760 all could be comprehended as being able to ‘access’ Irishness – whether they self-described ethnically as English, Gaelic, Old English or Ulster-Scots or religiously as Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian or Dissenter. With this thesis, I hope to develop the ideas of other academics that have recognized these trends. Adrian Hastings, during his Wiles Lectures at Queen’s Belfast digressed upon the assimilative or normalizing potential of ethnological narratives in Geoffrey Keating – something expertly probed and presented by Bernadette Cunningham.81 Sadly, Hastings insinuated a lack of reciprocation of these irenic tendencies on the part of the New English – a mistake that I hope this thesis will address. Similarly, Toby Barnard, in a number of articles and essays on 1641, Irish Protestant identities, Vincent Gookin, William Petty and the improvement movement, alludes frequently to characteristic expressions and predilections that marked mentalities amiable to becoming ‘one-people’. Lastly, in one of the most important works on the interdependency between British national identity and Protestantism, Ian McBride and Tony Claydon contend that not only is articulation worth analysing but that we must ‘redirect attention away from description to aspiration.’82 I hope to include both within the compass of this work. By attempting to understand early modern descriptions of the Irish population, their ethnic composition, origin and predilections we might reveal how Irish Protestant aspirations comprehended Ireland’s futurity – and indicate the legacy these visions had for Irish political thought to the present.

Chapter One
Incorporating Thought and the Origins of Irish Ethnography

The seventeenth century cast a long shadow over the subsequent course of Irish history but was – for obvious reasons – of particular formative power for the development of the eighteenth century. The seventeenth century was equally formative of intellectual and political discourses. This was partially because these discourses dealt with the objective and persisting reality of a politically-divided community whose political divisions tended to be ethno-religiously determined. But these discourses can be understood as political ethnographies – depicting and describing ethnic groups and origins in Ireland in order to justify particular political positions. The intentions of these discourses are discernable by their binary distinctions and they heavily influenced subsequent thinking about Irish society and government. These ethnologies were of paramount significance to Irish Protestant identity and historiography and they were - broadly speaking – of two kinds. The first of these are ‘incorporationists’ – those who intended to create a unified ethnos in Ireland. The second – known here as ‘segregationists’ – used similar tactics to justify the ongoing and perpetual separation of Gaelic Irish and newcomers or the segregation of Catholics and Protestants. Both shall be understood as precursors to the ethnological rhetoric that took place in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps some qualification is in order with regard to the above terms; though they appears somewhat clumsy, and are used here largely out of terminological convenience, it is probable they are the most apt descriptions of these strands of thought within Irish Protestantism. Regarding the term ‘incorporationist’, ‘equality’ is slightly different and has a contemporary ring, with connotations of multiculturalism and ‘political correctness’ which prizes cultural difference but demands indifferent treatment in the allocation of social and economic resources. Instead, ‘incorporationist’ modes of thought tend to desire an universal identity amicable to the good governance of the country. ‘Integration’ could be used, but it seems an erroneous term given that many of the ‘incorporationist’ accounts stressed that there was pre-existing consanguinity, indicating ethnic homogeneity was latent and easily achieved. Additionally, it comprised highly specific prescriptions such as religion, language, law, economic practice and customs –
rather than the vague commitment to breaking down difference evinced in contemporary ideas of assimilation. While ‘incorporation’ can refer to a legislative union (in the sense of an ‘incorporating union’) that meaning is not intended here – despite the desire for legislative union between Britain and Ireland creating a variety of ethnological theories. Despite ‘race’ being very differently understood then compared to now (and being chary of any further novel phraseology or neologisms) the salient connection between biological descent, be it ‘blood’, genes, lineage or stock and cultural practice holds constant. It is worth discerning how ethnological constructions arise and uncover its relationship to political contexts, ambitions and its legitimizing and mobilizing power, particularly in light of the added complication of faith in Ireland. For ethnographical descriptions took alternate forms under the pressure of political developments but would remain ingrained in the political discourses of Protestant Ireland through to the United Irishmen. Lastly, ‘incorporationist’ modes of thought within this discourse attained varying degrees of purchase depending on intellectual fashion, social etiquette and political reality throughout the period studied.

Therefore, any analysis of this political ethnography needs to sharply distinguish between several periods. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries supplied the conceptual raw material that led to its modification and use in the eighteenth century, its centrality to the Lucas affair which, in turn, prompted O’Conor to respond by reviving Spenser and Davies’ older incorporative idea of organizing Irish identities. First, incorporative theories had their high point between 1603 and the 1641 rebellion. The output of this period was marked by an effort to reconcile a paradigmatic intellectual discourse with a messy ethno-religious reality in Ireland. Of foremost importance was also the justification of English rule that conformed to these ethnological, legalistic and political narratives. The dictates of political legitimacy in the extension of rule over foreign or alien peoples demanded that the Irish and Ireland be understood as a people and portion of the British Isles previously belonging to and having consanguinity with the rest of Britain. This is apparent in the antiquarian and chorographical works that poured off English printing presses in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Most striking is the insistence that the Gaelic Irish had a shared ethnogenesis – or at least, a similar historical experience of settlement and
invasion – with the inhabitants of Britain. This was necessary in order to maintain
the integrity of English intellectuals’ particular self-conception of the indigenous
nature of the common law and the widespread early modern belief that ‘laws
fitted the people’ due to centuries of communal experience being manifest as the
application of accreted wisdom in the form of contemporary laws. This need to
approximate extant (or imposed in the case of Ireland) legal systems with
particular communities of people is readily apparent during the effort to construct
legal and government structures after 1600. This political ethnography is also
readily apparent in the literature produced relating to Ireland in this period.

As previously noted, in early modern Europe consanguinity had a legitimizing
function when extending rule over disparate peoples. However, in the case of
state-building in Ireland, there was a particular English intellectual position which
reinforced the relationship between ethnic descent and the extension of
sovereignty – particularly the application of common law. This relationship
between ethnography and the common-law legal system was doubly important.
First, it preserved the integrity of an English intellectual tradition that insisted that
those subject to common law were ethnically qualified to be so ruled – namely,
that there was an association between legitimate rule and ethnic descent in a body
of political and juristic thought that gained its intellectual coherence from
insisting upon the autochthonous nature of English law. Its legitimacy was
contingent upon its development through the application of centuries of
accumulated experience by an aggregate of individuals, officials and plaintiffs.
More importantly, common law was not a regnal prerogative but derived from the
people – through precedent and legislation. This law was proffered as a solution
for Ireland’s ills. Common law would naturally be extended in tandem with state
institutions – but equality for all Irish subjects would undercut the power of
Gaelic magnates, mitigate ethno-religious frictions and create conditions
conducive to economic development (in the form of land tenure, chartered
boroughs, markets and a monetized economy).

Ethnographical accounts were not static and were altered for a variety of
political purposes. This particular type of political ethnography was characteristic
of the early seventeenth century. While accounts of ethnic origins and description
before 1690 tended to be the preserve of those wishing to legitimize English rule
and extend its benefits to the Gaelic Irish, political ethnography was also used to
justify religious establishments, prospective legislative union, the Protestant ‘Ascendancy’ and plantation schemes. One theme, however, stands out and that is that it was used by groups with radically different conceptions of the future of Ireland. One, dominant in the period up to the Restoration, was the ‘incorporationists’ – that is, they anticipated using equality before the law, equal access to markets and enfranchisement to create loyal subjects whom would ultimately identify with English settlers and imitate their civility. The second group – the segregationists – was dominant from the late seventeenth century and insisted that strict separation be observed between communities in Ireland. This term, as with ‘incorporationist’ is utilized here for convenience – and they certainly bear no relation to the segregationists of twentieth-century American history. However, segregationists were keen to insist that the persistence of ethno-religious division was inevitable and the best that Protestant Ireland could do was to insulate themselves and prevent other ethno-religious groups from gaining political power. This latter group also used ideas of ethnic descent – for instance, the infamous ‘Scythian’ descent of the Gaelic Irish – to justify their position. While both differed in their aims, both used ethnological theories to reinforce their respective political programmes. Lastly, while each type of political ethnography enjoyed periods of supremacy, both existed simultaneously in the political discourses mobilized by Irish Protestants from the late sixteenth century.

The Beginning of Irish Political Ethnography

As ‘incorporationist’ thought became increasingly apparent from 1590 onward, an examination of the trend is best begun with Edmund Spenser, one of the most well known of the settlers to benefit from the Muster plantation.83 Latterly Spenser has been labeled an inveterate despiser of all things Gaelic84 but he also

83 Nicholas Canny posits that ‘the most elegant and coherent expression of that particular set of ideas’ utilized by Spenser would be adhered to by ‘English settlers in Ireland, at least until the end of the seventeenth century’; ‘Edmund Spenser’, p.2.
stated, through Irenaeus in his dialogue with Eudoxus, that, ‘by the sword which I named I do not mean the cutting off of all that nation with the sword’ as ‘Ireland is full of her own nation which may not be rooted out’. Spenser’s remedy instead entailed the use of a modified legal system retaining some minimal native elements so that ‘the Irish be will better drawn to the English than the English to the Irish government’. In Spenser’s schema this would eventually create the conditions to morph the disparate ethno-religious groups of late-Tudor Ireland into a unified ethnology. It is an irenic ambition that would have a long lineage and is one worth exploring in detail. Despite there being traces of equitable subjecthood in the legislation of Henry VIII concerning Ireland and in the writings and administration of Sir John Perrot, the ambition to create a unified ethnology was also expressed forcefully by many in the Dublin administration and the new plantations in Munster and the Midlands. The Act of 1537, mentioned in the introduction, was similar in its scope and ambition. However, those planning and partaking in early colonization schemes insisted upon separation between peoples rather than espousing a mission of growing affinity enabled through contact that would culminate in civility. Thomas Smith, when organizing the disastrous Ards plantation, specified that no officer ‘nor any of his soldiers [were] to marry with the wild Irish.’ Sidney’s appeal to the Irish House of Commons in 1570 pleaded with the Old English, rather than the Gaelic Irish, to ‘incorporate into one body with us’. Likewise, the early proposals for the Munster plantation ranked any remaining Gaelic presence whatsoever as the least desirable outcome and demanded that planters be ‘mere English persons without any intermixture of the mere Irish’. However, by 1590 Spenser’s friend Richard Beacon hoped the natives would ‘be drawn and enticed by little and little to embrace the manners and government’ of the Tudor settlers. A more complete proposal was that of Sir William Herbert, who counseled the use of Gaelic to proselytize and, bizarrely, to

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86 Ibid, p.141.
Anglicize the natives. More importantly, he stressed the application of justice whereby ‘they will both become united, first in habits, then in mind.’

But it is in Spenser that this hope was first articulated in a systematic and totally non-allegorical manner. In a trope that would also persist Spenser outlines the original peopling of Ireland and portrays the settlement as a motley enterprise;

Now thus fare then, I understand your opinion, that the Scythians planted here in the north part of Ireland: the Spaniards (for so we call them, whatever they were that came from Spaine) in the west, the Gaules in the South: so that there now remained the east parts towards England, which I would be glad to understand from whence you doe think them peopled.

This Scythian element has tended to be overemphasized in analyses of the View. Nicholas Canny interprets Spenser to mean they were ‘the most potent of the succession of invaders that went into making this bastard people.’ Alan Ford concurs and states that Spenser believed in the ‘Scythian origin for the Irish’. Ciaran Brady agrees that the Scythians of the View are the ‘ancestors of the majority of the island’s inhabitants’. Brady concludes that due to this ethnogenesis the Irish, in Spenser’s opinion, ‘could never be made amendable to another [i.e. common] law’. Yet a close reading shows they are but one of four groups that arrive and, significantly, Spenser portrays these ‘bastard people’ as deviant Englishmen – nor are the Scythians stressed as the primary component in Irish ethnos. Barring the Scythian migration specific to the north – parallels between the Scythian savagery of classical antiquity and the contemporary Ulster revolt are obvious – all those who settled in ancient Ireland along with the ancient peoples of Britain were ‘Gaules’. Furthermore, this shared ethnic heritage was

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apparent in the Gaulish use of darts, long-swords and shields as well as the respect accruing to bards which ‘was also common amongst the Britans.’ Thus, these customs are extant and comparable because the main point of the dissemination of peoples in the British Isles was from Gaul. Clothing, coign and livery, etymology and banditry are used to validate the comparison, with Ireland at a slower stage of development. Lastly, native theories of ethnogenesis are totally false because ‘there was never such a Kinge of Spain called Milesius, nor any suche colonie seated with his sonnes’.

Spenser also utilized ethnogenesis and settlement as a way to justify political governance of the island from England. In volume one of his Faerie Queene, an ancient British king (Gurgnt/Gurgantius) ‘gave to fugitives of Spayne/Whom he at sea found wandring from their waies/A seate in Ireland safely to remayne/Which they should hold of him as subject to Britayne.’ Furthermore, Spenser was profuse in his praise of Irish letters, preaching and missionary work and acknowledged that the ancient Irish possessed such skills ‘long before England’ and even grants some integrity to the native manuscripts. It was, in an account that would be echoed later, the Anglo-Normans who arrested the growth of this civility; ‘the chiefest abuses which are now in that realm are grown from the English’. What Spenser proposed was the utilization common law to bring the latent ethnic qualities of the Gaelic Irish into the civil realm and induce harmony between neighbours. Short shrift was given to religion (it ranks third on Spenser’s priorities) and more stress is laid upon the use of Irish to render the inhabitants conformable to the established church. Spenser emphasized jurisprudence and legislation as the solvent for such a discordant realm. Origins are utilized to explain current customs, but a common source for the populations of both Britain and Ireland is clearly enunciated and thereby underscored Spenser’s belief in the essential ethnic compatibility of both British settlers and Irish natives and their mutual amenability to a type of ‘common law with an Irish tinge’.

Spenser is worth considering, not merely because of his position along one of more spectacular fault-lines in the British-Irish entanglement, but because of his

95 Spenser, View, pp.39-41; this is qualified by an uncertainty regarding the Milesian theory. However; ‘out of Spain they came [i.e. the Gauls], that do all the Irish chronicles agree’.
ownership of an Irish estate, his residence there, his military commission and his administrative involvement with his place of habitation – a position that designates an interest in Ireland beyond that of traveller or official. Another Munster Englishman, one ‘T.C.’, would pen an alternate cure for England’s Irish problem during O’Neill’s Rebellion. This too contained attitudes that would linger, especially the idea of segregation and emotive language that could be read as ambivalence regarding any retribution that might be meted out to the population at large. Regarding that revolt, ‘T.C.’ recommended that the ‘revenge may be both generall and famous’ and cautions against the ‘mingling of themselves wth the daughters of o’t natural borne enemies’.96 This animus, redolent of Temple’s later jeremiads, continued by damning the ‘native’ Irish for failure to reciprocate the ‘one-peoplist’ sentiments promulgated by the settlers. This mirrors contemporary opinion which was far more radical than Spenser – some advocating draconian measures such as massed force exile and deportation.97 However, the purported rejection of the settlers’ benign incorporative ambitions by the Gaelic Irish would have an equally long lineage – Temple in particular believed that English magnanimity and good policy had ‘consolidated them into one body’ before these tolerant tendencies were rejected by the irredeemably rebellious Catholic Irish. Furthermore, after periods of conflict even long-time devotees of incorporative solutions could become intransigently segregationist – such disillusionment was characteristic of incorporationists until the early nineteenth century.98

Likewise, as much as Spenser sidelined religion, ‘T.C.’ enlarged it into unimpeachable salience. Compared to this author’s segregationist proposals, such as, ‘y’th should not have a papist in a towne’, Spenser was unequivocal;

Eudoxius: … it shoule be better to parte the Irishe and the Englishe then to mingle them together.
Irenius: Not so Eudox: but wheare there is no good staie of

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gouernement and stronge ordinaunces to hold them there indeede the fewer will follow the more: but wheare theare is due order of discipline and good rule there the better shall go foremost and worste shall followe. And... [it will] by a vnion of manners and conformitie of myndes, to bringe them to bee one people, and to put away the dislikeful concepте but of one and the other, which wilbe by no means better than by this enterminglinge of them, that neyther all the Irishe maye dwell together, nor all the Englishe, but by transplantinge of them, and scatteringe them in small numbers, amongst the Englishe, not onlye to bringe them by dalye conversation vnto better lykinge of each other, but also to make both of them less able to hurte... 

Noticeable for its optimism about human conduct, this passage has been elided in many treatments of Spenser’s work. Francis Bacon, in a number of epistles and texts undoubtedly influenced by Spenser, would make the same recommendations in 1601-02, even going so far as to propose religious toleration in ‘some principal towns and precincts’. But Bacon also articulated other ambitions for Ireland that would resonate with another writer who would create a key text for early modern Ireland. Bacon and his correspondent Sir John Davies were equivalents as attorney-general for England and Ireland respectively. Bacon counseled that the re-constituted legal system should be ‘as near as may be to the laws and customs of England’ for ‘the carrying of an even course between the English and Irish’. As Bacon later advised King James, this was entirely consistent with Ireland ‘being another Britain.’

This would have been entirely agreeable to a king wrestling with the problems stemming from the difficulty of ruling three disparate kingdoms. James himself was enthusiastic about diluting differences between his northern home and his southern power-base, as evinced by his visions of a united British kingdom and his anticipation of a future ‘uniformitie of constitutions of both body and minde’ between Scotland and England. Spenser’s influence (or a shared humanism) permeated Bacon’s writings on Ireland; foregrounding savage customs and the extension of common law to mitigate them, garnished with a qualified praise of

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the natives and a strong disapproval of ‘an extirpation of that people’ all indicate his perusal of, and agreement with, the View. 102 But in his writings on naturalization that Bacon can be seen to influence or reflect the attitudes of Davies. There is also the shared use of horticultural metaphor. 103 Bacon similarly advocated ‘Plantation in a pure soil; that is where People are not displanted to the end to Plant others. For else it is rather an Extirpation than a Plantation.’ 104 Additionally, in reference to safe and undisturbed realms being nurtured after conquest or absorption, Bacon’s maxim that a ‘union of laws make them [i.e., the conquered] entirely as ourselves’ and ‘doth take away distinction’ is an instance of a mutual belief in the transformative power of law. 105 This was a sentiment shared by Sir John Davies. It was a cornerstone of his Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued in which Davies’ echoed Bacon and Spenser by advocating a combination of equality before the law and a reorganization of land tenure as integral to his vision of Ireland’s settled state and future.

‘That they might grow up together in one Nation’; Sir John Davies and Incorporating Thought

Davies, writing roughly fifteen years after Spenser, offered a similar account of the reasons why Ireland had never been absorbed into the normalcy of English crown and society. The tone and content of his seminal Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued, with its mix of policy proposals and general history, propounded with a juristic logic precisely how such a submission might be achieved, namely, by the total reduction of resistance and the just and equitable application of English common law across the entirety of the island. Davies’ argument was that English distraction and indifference had resulted in a partial conquest, thereby creating two ethno-culturally determined systems of law that frustratingly overlapped or which were selectively utilized by

102 Canny, Making Ireland British, pp.58, 203 fn.76.
104 Quoted Anthony Pagden, Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France, c.1500-c.1800 (New Haven, 1995), p.79.
105 Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon, iii, pp.463-464; Francis Bacon to Sir John Davies, 26 December, 1606.
plaintiffs and the prosecuted to gain unjust verdicts. There are similarities with Bacon and Spenser, but Davies (as we shall see) was particularly influenced by William Camden’s antiquarianism.\textsuperscript{106} Davies’ work, compared to Spenser’s, is relatively bereft of diversions into ethnographical speculation but there are some, much less elaborate prognostications. The first of these asserts that ‘there have been since that time [1169], so many English Colonies planted in Ireland, as that, if the people were numbered at this day by the poll, such as are descended of the English race, would be found more in number than the ancient Natives.’\textsuperscript{107} The inhabitants of Davies’ account are apparently the medieval English, whose gradual degeneracy Davies expands upon in his volume.\textsuperscript{108} Key to understanding this passage are the words ‘people’ and ‘poll’. The former is often understood by historians to mean those qualified to act as responsible members of political society. Perhaps so – though this is not watertight, as chapter two will illustrate – but the word ‘poll’ is more interesting. While the poll was, and still is, used to calibrate those enfranchised, the ‘poll’ also applied to the individuals that qualified for extraordinary taxation. The 1641 poll, for instance, was used in this context. ‘Numbered by the poll’, therefore, indicated any adult member of society that might be taxed in certain circumstances. So, the degeneration indicated by Davies seems to have created a composite ethnos, which frequent colonies from England had leavened with more settlers. Furthermore, this ethnic group rested on a bedrock of British ethnogenesis that all, native and newcomer, shared.

It would also be an error to categorize Davies as totally hostile to those he terms ‘Irishry’; he opined that the Irish are ‘of great antiquity and wanted neither Wit nor Valour’ as well as being ‘Lovers of Musick, Poetry and all kind of Learning.’\textsuperscript{109} More significantly he states ‘no nation of people under the sunne… doth love equall and indifferent Iustice, better than the Irish’.\textsuperscript{110} Rather, the

\textsuperscript{106} Bacon, ‘Certain Considerations’, pp.171-172; Sir John Davies, \textit{Historical Relations: Or, A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued} (1751), pp.122-123.
\textsuperscript{107} Davies, \textit{A Discovery}, p.4.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, pp.13-18, 86-92, 94, 97, 111.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, p.74.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, p.112; Something similar is echoed in an account by Robert Payne several years earlier; ‘Nothing is more pleasing unto them than to hear of good justices placed amongst them’, quoted from Lecky, \textit{Ireland in the Eighteenth Century}, i, p.20-21.
haphazard nature of English policy was the root of the problem in Ireland. Davies would pioneer a number of motifs repeated in later years, namely the submission, on terms, of the Irish to be admitted to the privileges of subjection under Henry II in 1171. In doing so, he resurrected the account provided by the medieval chronicler, Giraldus Cambrensis, though Davies did not insinuate the deviousness and the inveterate barbarism of the Irish, as Giraldus was wont to do. Indeed, Davies located Ireland’s problems with Cambrensis’s generation – during the subsequent period of Anglo-Norman control, ‘the Crown of England did not from the beginning give laws to the Irishry’ and did not ‘communicate their Laws unto them’ of which the Irish would ‘gladly have embraced’ and ‘did desire to be admitted’. The result, according to Davies, was grotesque injustice that allowed petty English tyrants to ‘kill a meer Irish Man in the time of Peace’ without fear of consequence as they were ‘reputed Aliens’. The denial of subject status was the kernel of this problem as ‘to give laws to a People is the principle Mark and Effect of a perfect Conquest’. Davies was not merely concerned with the subjugation of dissent; conquest was military in the moment and granted justice in perpetuity. Similarly, Spenser’s promotion of the ‘sword’ should also be understood in those terms. Roman and civil law played an important part in this legal groundwork. As Pawlisch points out, ‘Davies’ employment of Roman Law provided the necessary precedents and legal principles to confirm and legitimize English rule in Ireland.’ That said, the example of Roman imperial governance would prove equally inspiring for Davies’ vision for Ireland, one that emphasized the connection between law, ethnicity and loyalty;

the Romaine state, which conquered so many nations, both barbarous and ciuill; and therefore knew by experience, the best and readiest way of making a perfect and absolute conquest, refused not to communicate their laws to the rude and barbarous people, whom they had conquered; Neither did they put them out of their protestation, after they had once submitted themselves.113

112 Davies, A Discovery, pp.18, 44-52.
113 Davies, A Discovery, p.127; Bacon stated that, when conquering, their policy should be that of the Romans, namely, naturalization in law which would lead to a compatibility in customs and cultural practise. Spenser says something similar.
This is Davies’ main point; that a conglomeration of mutual interests, assisted by equity at law, could reduce the distinctions that bedeviled Ireland. Again, an English example (echoing Bacon) is used to further the point; after the Norman conquest of England, that regime ‘was established in the Hearts of all Men’ because native and conqueror were equal before the law.\(^{114}\) He elaborated on the policy of James I & VI in his plantation plan and the extension of the Tudor statutes, albeit with the modification of munificence in Jacobean efforts;

Again, his majesty did not utterly exclude the Natives out of this plantation, with a purpose to root them out, as the Irish were excluded from the first English colonies; but made a mixt plantation of British and Irish that they might grow up together in one Nation; Only, the Irish were in some places transplanted from the Woods and Mountains into the Plaines and open Counties, that being removed (like wild fruit tress) they might grow the milder, and beare the better and sweeter fruit.\(^{115}\)

Paternalistic and schoolmasterish, perhaps, but not inveterate, Davies refined Spenser’s hopes for assimilation into something resembling a definitive programme. Davies’ thesis was a solution for nullifying the contradiction of two nations in one kingdom; as with Spenser, law would be used, universal, equitable and of equal application, to reduce the factiousness stemming from two legal systems. Adhering to Jean Bodin’s maxim that ‘a king is not sovereign where others give law without reference to him’, Davies asserts that ‘there can never be Unity or Concord in any one Kingdom but where there is one King, one Allegiance and one Law.’\(^{116}\)

The flaw in past efforts at reduction was the patchwork and selective distribution of justice that hindered ‘incorporating’ outcomes. According to Davies, previous English policy had lacked the ‘enterminglinge’ extolled by Spenser; banishing the Irish to ‘Woods and Mountains’ were ‘great defects of Civil Policy’ and had ‘there been no difference made between the two Nations in point of Justice’ there would have been ‘a perfect Union between the two nations, and consequently, a perfect conquest of

\(^{114}\) Ibid, pp.57, 34.

\(^{115}\) Ibid, pp.182-183.

Ireland.'\textsuperscript{117} This was entirely compatible with Davies’ participation in the king’s naturalization policy toward his different realms. James’ belief was in a gradual acculturation to ‘British’ ways in his new unified kingdom (as well as being desirous to avoid ‘the impression that there was a general attempt to displace the original inhabitants’ in Ireland). He also intended to exploit the recent conquest in order to allow justice to function as an engine of positive sentiment causing ‘no Difference or Distinction, but the Irish Sea, betwixt us.’\textsuperscript{118} Ethnic consanguinity was compatible with conquest by facilitating of the extension of law to normalize Ireland’s deviant development from British norms; hence Davies’ keenness to point to English origins for barbarous custom in Ireland and the opening articulation of English pre-eminence in Ireland’s demography.\textsuperscript{119} The obloquy apparent in critical literature on Davies’ work might, perhaps, be due to interpretations of it by scholars in a wholly negative light, as a work of ‘legal imperialism’ or ‘judicial conquest’.\textsuperscript{120} This hostility and Davies’ agency in extending colonial rule has crowded out analyses of Davies based on the contemporary relevance or later influence.

One puzzling aspect of Davies’ work is the dearth of ethnographical speculation in either his \textit{Reports} or the \textit{Discoverie} – especially given his status as a founder member of the College of Antiquaries. Most historiography concerning Davies, though slight compared to the effusions devoted to Spenser, has tended to stress the juristic colonialism of his works, the mentalities they reflect and his exploration of common, canon and civil law – something Davies’ contemporaries also picked up on.\textsuperscript{121} Of the historians of intellectual thought that have dealt with Davies the best known are J.G.A. Pocock and Hans Pawlisch.\textsuperscript{122} Pocock, in a very influential book on historiography and its effect upon the political and legal

\textsuperscript{117} Davies, \textit{A Discovery}, p.53.

\textsuperscript{118} Pawlisch, \textit{Sir John Davies}, p.74; Davies, \textit{A Discovery}, p.117.

\textsuperscript{119} See, for instance, Davies’ agreement with Spenser that coign and livery are an Irish custom perverted by English avarice; Davies, \textit{A Discovery}, p.14.


\textsuperscript{121} William Clerk, \textit{Epitome of Certaine Late Aspersions Cast at Civilians} (1631).

thought of the seventeenth century, suggested that Davies was one of a number of jurist-historians that represented the ‘common law mind’ – a mentality that insisted upon the primacy and perfection of a common law legal system for England stretching back to ‘time immemorial’. This mentality was instrumental in fostering an English exceptionalism which opposed any perceived arbitrary or regal transgression of customary power (vested in ‘the people’). Pocock’s account of Davies’ outlook derives, almost exclusively, from the introduction to his Reports and the Discoverie, a reliance criticized by Pawlisch for its apparent neglect of Davies’ utilization of civil law. Both skirt ethnicity and ethnic origins; this omission is more surprising in the case of Pocock, given the ‘time immemorial’ thesis and its corollary, the vesting of legitimacy in custom derived from the continuing and perpetual practise of one people in one place being given force of law. Neither bestow the native, Brehon law with any potential to provide an obstacle that Davies might have to grapple with; Pocock breezily dismisses it as having ‘no effect upon his thought about English legal history’.123

Yet Davies or Spenser were by no means pioneers on this topic. Most noticeably, William Herbert insinuated a connection between the native Irish and the ancient Gauls and also insisted upon ‘impartiality in the administration of justice’ and that ‘conformity in laws, dress and habits together with similarity in customs would create harmony, unity of spirit and friendship’.124 Davies was also prefigured by earlier writers who had wrestled with the problems presented by the Brehon legal system and perceived a political need to extend common law. William Darcy and Patrick Finglas are two previous writers who argued for similar solutions before Davies and it is probable that their writings exerted some influence upon him when he was diligently researching in the archives of Dublin Castle. Certainly, Davies’ cites Finglas as a key interpreter of the drift from English law after Ireland’s imperfect conquest through the machinations of the Anglo-Norman lords.125 Finglas, like Darcy before him, recommended establishing justices of the peace throughout Ireland and lamented that;

125 Davies, A Discovery, p.84; Edmund Burke, A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe on the Catholics of Ireland (1792).
It is a great Abusion and Reproach, that the Laws and Statuts made in this Lond are not observed and kept after the making them eight Days; which matter is one of the Distructions of Englishmen of this Lond; and divers Irishmen doth observe and kepe souche Laws and Statuts which they make upon Hills in ther Country firm and stable, without breking them for any Favour or Reward\textsuperscript{126}

The influence of Irish writers upon Davies might be said to be related to a particular need and arising from his circumstances – that is, they dealt with a messy Irish reality that Davies and these writers attempted to ‘solve’ using legal solutions. Therefore, it seems too common a demand, too similar an analysis and too comparable in tone to be considered without reference to Irish circumstances and the insular tradition of contemplating the problems arising from several legal systems in one realm. But, aside from Davies’ Irish predecessors that considered this issue from the perspective of English law, native law in itself was problematic for both Davies and, more importantly, the political ideology that he represented. The supplanting of Brehon law and the extension of common law to Ireland, and Davies’ eloquent argument for the same, presented dilemmas to the ‘time immemorial’ theory. ‘Time-immemorial’ mentalities have been described by Pocock as the belief of seventeenth-century Englishmen that ‘the common law was the only law their land had ever known.’\textsuperscript{127} Namely, that common law was coeval with English ethnos, that it was so ancient that records of its origin did not survive and that it was not imposed by royal diktat – that is, it was the accreted wisdom of centuries of life in England and was strongly associated with the existence of an English nation.

Neither Pawlisch nor Pocock point to Brehon law being ‘customary’ law in Ireland; how Davies overcame this, along with settlers like Spenser, is not elaborated upon, nor are the responses of his fellow Englishmen in Ireland recorded, thereby decontextualizing Davies from his Irish environment. Only Ciaran Brady has recognized that these administrators were – through the establishment of a similar polity utilizing common law – in danger of ‘developing

\textsuperscript{126} Patrick Finglas, \textit{A Breviat of the Getting of Ireland made by Patrick Finglas Squire, Chief Baron of the Exchequer in K. Henry the VIIIth’s Time} in Walter Harris [ed.], \textit{Hiberncia: Or, some Antient PIECES relating to IRELAND} (1770), pp.96, 101.

\textsuperscript{127} Pocock, \textit{The Ancient Constitution}, p.30.
a political entity that was in sharp contrast to the deepest assumptions of English political thought’. 128 If ‘common law writers took their law to represent the immemorial custom of their country and did not derive it from any source outside their own coasts’, the late Elizabethan and Jacobean jurists were faced with a problem when considering Ireland in that the neighbouring isle was now under English writ. 129 As an important element in ‘time immemorialism’ demanded that the ‘people’ were the flesh and blood lineage through which common law, as custom, was carried down the ages, its application in Ireland might appear inappropriate, not least as it was imposed under the auspices of the crown. Davies draws this relationship between race, or lineage, and law early on in the Reports;

And here I may observe for the Honour of our Nation, and of our Auncestors who have founded this Common-weale wherein wee live, and enjoy so many felicities, That England having had a good and happie Genius from the beginning, hath bin enhibrated always with a virtuous & wise people, who ever embraced honest and good Customes, full of Reason and conveniencie, which being confirmed by common use & practise, and continued time out of minde, became the common lawe of the Land. 130

This had severe implications when common law was applied to Ireland – not least for the integrity of a system that denied that law was an ancestral gift of the king’s predecessors. If common law was a ‘bequest’ by the king to seventeenth-century Ireland, it could be a vulnerable area susceptible to arbitrary rule for as a people, through their ancestors, had a right to maintain customs-as-law, so too did the king’s lineage retain the right of repeal for liberties granted in the past. 131 If law immemorial originated in Britain, antecedent even to the Anglo-Saxon settlement, then Ireland was a threatening conceptual flank as much as a strategic one. If, as Davies stated, common law is ‘so framed and fitted to the nature &

128 Brady, ‘From Policy to Power’, in Mac Cuarta (ed.), Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700, p.41
129 Ibid, p.58.
130 Sir John Davies, Le primer report des cases & matters en ley resolues & adiudges en les courts del Roy en Ireland. Collect et digest per Sr. Iohn Dawys Chiualer Attourney Generall del Roy en cest realme (1615).
disposition of this people [the English], as wee may properly say, it is connaturall to the Nation’, the extension to Ireland might seem an ‘unnatural’ imposition.

Key to understanding this puzzle is Davies’ insistence that Ireland should have developed or obtained common law at a much earlier date. Davies’ argument was that the failures of the Old English created a degeneration that arrested Ireland’s development along usual legalistic and societal lines. Davies was concerned with the legal hybridity resulting from incomplete conquest and deviant ethno-cultural development; coign and livery were corruptions stemming from medieval English malpractice, ‘gavelkind’ in Ireland was the same as the Kentish custom and he used the term ‘gossiping’ to describe Irish traditions of fosterage – the latter two represented as archaic British practises extant in Ireland. The differing outcomes of the Norman conquest in both countries was another example of Ireland’s deviance. Thus, despite producing the ‘most outstanding piece of historical writing achieved by an Englishman during in James I’s reign’, it might appear that Davies avoids the de rigeur exposition upon origins which could raise thorny questions about common law’s immemorial nature. However, the absence of any ethnographical speculation is not an evasion on Davies’ part. It was explicit in Spenser’s writings and implicit in Davies that the Irish were ethnically equipped for the transmission of common law due to shared origins and patterns of settlement – even if Irish development must be placed back on its permanent way after reckless derailment by the Old English. Spenser’s maxim – quoted earlier and derived from Francois Hotman – that laws must ‘be appropriate for the nature and circumstances of the people’, was an obstacle overcome by narratives of shared ethnos which, given the ubiquity of such narratives, Davies took for granted.

It might be apt at this juncture to introduce the source for Davies and Spenser’s concept of shared stock and mutual ethnogenesis; the antiquary William Camden. The ‘almost universal reverence with which Camden was regarded by his contemporaries’ is marked in the literature of these Anglo-Gaelic encounters and he was mentioned and referenced by, among others, Spenser,

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132 Davies, Discoverie, pp.76, 79.
133 Ibid, p.57.
135 Ibid, p.33.
Davies, Barnaby Rich and Fynes Moryson.\textsuperscript{136} The latter, in his account of Irish origins, admitted he would ‘follow Camden as formerly’.\textsuperscript{137} Likewise, he was used in both the \textit{View} and the \textit{Discoverie} to buttress the arguments of the authors. This influence is significant because Camden posited a British origin for the Irish indigenes – namely, that both islands had been inhabited from continental Europe and shared the same invasions and patterns of migration.\textsuperscript{138} Dismissing the ‘mere poetical all fictions & Milesian toies’ of the Gaelic annalists, Camden concluded Ireland was a ‘Little Britain’ and that,

Surely, as I doubt not but that this Island became inhabited even of old time, whenas man-kinde was spred over all quarters of the world, so it is evident that the first inhabitantes thereof passed thither out of our Britaine. For (to say nothing of an infinit number of British words in the Irish tongue, together with the ancient names which savour of a British originall), The Natures of the people and their fashions, as Tacitus saith, differ not much from Britaine.\textsuperscript{139}

Camden’s picture of Irish origins and customs became the orthodoxy. Camden’s greatest contribution was to ethno genesis and, by insisting on a British origin for Irish inhabitants, his work became a standard reference in such treatments. Spenser incorporated the Saxon absorption of Irish learning and the movement of a later warrior elite from Spain into the \textit{View} and into his poetry and Davies also referenced Camden.\textsuperscript{140} But Davies and Spenser’s knowledge of Camden was not merely that of admirers and readers, but that of intimates that corresponded – Davies and Camden were both founder members of the short-lived College of Antiquaries.\textsuperscript{141} Another correspondent was Archbishop Ussher who wrote the

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\textsuperscript{136}Rudolf B. Gottfried, ‘The Early Development of the Section on Ireland in Camden’s \textit{Brittania}’, \textit{ELH}, Vol.10, No.2 (June, 1943), p.117.

\textsuperscript{137} Fynes Moryson, \textit{Itinerary} (4 Vols., London, 1617), iii, p.156.

\textsuperscript{138} Hadfield, \textit{Spenser’s Irish Experience}, pp.95, 100-101; Donlan has noted the reliance upon Camden; ‘Little Better than Cannibals’, p.2.

\textsuperscript{139} William Camden, \textit{Brittania}, trans. by Philemon Holland (London, 1637), pp.64-65; when, in turn, Holland needed to validate the writings of Camden, he used Davies to illustrate Camden’s accuracy, p.141.

\textsuperscript{140} Davies, \textit{A Discovery}, p.68; Spenser, \textit{View}, pp.45, 54.

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Discourse on the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish – though of a later
date, this work did for Ireland’s ecclesiology what Camden and Spenser did for
its ethnography.142 Indeed, the ubiquitous references to Camden throughout the
works dating from 1585-1615 indicate that his thesis of British origins was
widespread and accepted. The obvious advantage of such an ethnogenesis lay in
legitimizing the presence of the English state and settlers in Ireland; but it also
facilitated the application of common law without violating the ‘time
immemorial’ theory while denying validity to any thesis of recent regal grant. For
instance, upon his return to England (in what Pawlisch cites as an example of his
‘planter mentality’) Davies objected to royal diktat being imposed upon Ireland as
‘they have there a parliament of their own.’143 There was a point of principle here
– namely, that Davies was trying to avoid possible ramifications for English legal
and political reality by Irish conditions in which regnal prerogative could
supersede common law and ‘time immemorial’ beliefs in one of the realms of a
three-crown British Kingdom. Additionally, it is explicable also by Davies’ wish
to preserve the political rights of English settlers – but it also had applicability in
maintaining the integrity of the common law system. In short, in Davies and
Spenser, consanguinity in origin ensured compatibility in law and legitimacy in
exercising sovereignty.

The brilliance of Davies’ history, and its longevity, derived from the
ideological need it was servicing – not delving into antiquarian opinion but
focusing on medieval social development to explain the need for radical reform.
His avoidance of plotting origins gave it a tone and malleability that contributed
to the appeal of the work long after his demise. This goes some way to explaining
the absence of any explanatory framework for terms in the Reports and A
Discovery; essentially, Davies assumed a belief in mutual ethnogenesis by his
readers. Therefore, despite this chaos, or because of it, the work of the Jacobean
jurist-administrator would maintain an effective hold upon the Irish
historiographical imagination – but its early modern and eighteenth-century

142 Archbishop James Ussher, Discourse on the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish (1631).
143 Pawlisch, Sir John Davies, p.32.
relevance was more pronounced.\textsuperscript{144} Even today, our interpretation of medieval Ireland essentially cleaves to Davies’ insistence upon sporadic Plantagenet interest, disparate legal systems and Anglo-Norman acculturation to Gaelic ways.\textsuperscript{145}

One component of this ethnological framework was a positive view of conquest and polities that had experienced the ethnogenesis of diffuse groupings into one unified cultural and political community. In Davies, it is conventional enough to pass without in-depth textual elaboration; in Spenser, it is a uniquely English view of conquest strengthening nations for greatness. As Davies presents conquest as an extension of benign sovereignty, Spenser conceives it bestowing a host of qualities and having ‘a productive as well as destructive impact on nations.’ Using the dialogue between Britomart and Merlin in the third book of the 	extit{Faerie Queen}, Jeffrey Knapp shows how Spenser used the pregnable Britomart (i.e. Britain) as an allegory for benefits stemming from violated borders – how the Danish, Anglo-Saxon, Norman and Roman invasions ultimately worked to England’s advantage. It was a view shared in Lyly’s and Shakespeare’s portrayals of the positive heterogeny deriving from peoples penetrating the island; likewise, William Camden, referring to the Roman occupation of Britain, believed that a ‘grievous yoke’ could be ‘of very good consequence’.\textsuperscript{146} As the Irish were understood to have a compatible consanguinity, sharing the same stock and the same invasive patterns, Spenser underscored the contemporary belief that ‘invasion can be empowering for the invaded.’\textsuperscript{147} It was a perception of history that agreed with the Gaelic historical tradition that emphasized invasion as the

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\textsuperscript{144} Sean O’Faolain adhered to an interpretation of Irish history directly derived from Davies; ‘under this half-Gaelic, half-feudal system they had hardly any moral (or immoral) compensations… for the increasing exactions of their chieftains’; similarly, ‘the Irish built no towns’; O’Faolain, 	extit{The Irish} (London, 1947), pp.31, 73-74.
primary dynamo of Irish history. But another, less ancient, conquest loomed large in the consciousness of the Elizabethans and Jacobains in Ireland.

Scholars have noted how Englishmen promoting and engaging in American adventure and settlement consciously fashioned Spain as an ‘imperial other’ to measure their better and, implicitly, more Christian behaviour. This comparative conceptualization of conduct and ‘England’s insistence on the differences between itself and Spain as colonial powers’ naturally had an effect on the contemporaneous English involvement in Ireland. Moreover, ‘England’s anxieties about the Spanish threat increased substantially after the Armada crisis’, that is, in the period in which the interaction with Ireland and Virginia accelerated and precisely when Spenser and Davies were writing. Certainly, the outpouring of works seem to indicate such an obsession as Hakluyt, Daunce, De Bry, Arnaud and a host of anonymous pamphleteers were published during 1580 – 1595, most in the second half of this period. Additionally, the controversies over papal grants, conversions and conquest within Spain’s religious orders and universities generated a substantial body of literature that was mined by the anti-Spanish writers of late Elizabethan England. Foremost among these was Las Casas’s classic *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, but also the writings of Zarate and Gomora.

Thus, the incipient ‘Black Legend’ functioned in the forefront of the new colonists thought as an example to avoid, an instance of possible comparison that would return to haunt the imagination of Protestant Ireland. Additionally, many writers were at pains to dissuade the Irish from any allegiance to the Spanish. Hakluyt, in his *Principal Navigations*, pointed to the execution of ‘Cornelius the

150 Antoine Arnaud, *The coppie of the Anti-Spaniard made at Paris by a French man, a Catholique* (London, 1590); Edward Daunce, *A briefe discourse dialoguevise shevving how false & dangerous their reports are, which affirme, the Spaniards intended invasion to be, for the reestablishment of the Romish religion* (London, 1590); Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations* (London, 1589); Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia of the commodities and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants* (London, 1589).
Irishman’ in Mexico City after his capture aboard an English expedition in 1572. Likewise John Budden, in a poem-prologue to Beacon’s Solon, hazarded that ‘ferocious Spain, predator of Eastern people’, would never gain a foothold in Ireland.¹⁵¹ Robert Payne, in a panegyric to Ireland’s potential as a locus of plenty and prosperity, stressed that the Irish had no common cause with Spain and ‘do deadly hate the Spaniardes’ after their ‘monstrous cruelties in the west Indians.’ In what Andrew Hadfield has described as ‘a contribution to the ‘Black Legend’’ Payne advised the readers of his report to peruse a small volume listing Spanish atrocities ‘written by a leaned Bishop of their owne country’ - that is, the book by Las Casas.¹⁵² Matthew de Renzy, a propagandist for plantation in the Midlands, was convinced that the greatest victims of any Spanish invasion would be the Gaelic Irish who would, like the Moriscoes, be expelled to ‘look out for new land’ – though de Renzy envisaged this as a desirable outcome.¹⁵³ Bacon also distinguished Irish state-building from New World settlement to emphasize the un-colonial characteristic of the former endeavour. It was ‘an enterprise in my opinion differing from this, as Amadis de Gaul differs from Caesar’s Commentaries’. Spain’s success, according to Bacon, was ‘because they have ravished from some wild and unarmed people mines and stores of gold.’¹⁵⁴ The effect of the ‘Black Legend’ upon Davies and Spenser is equally palpable, if less explicit.

That Davies was familiar with the Black Legend scarcely needs demonstration. This is apparent from his education (he entered the Temple in year of the armada, 1588), his stay in Leiden with Paul Merula in 1592 (with letters of

¹⁵¹ P. E. H. Hair, ‘An Irishman before the Mexican Inquisition’, 1574-5, IHS, Vol.17, No.67 (March 1971), p.302; Richard Beacon, Solon His Follie or A Political Discourse Touching the Reformation of Common-wale Conquered, Declined or Corrupted, by Clare Carroll and Vincent Carey (ed.) (Binghamton, NY, 1996); ‘Non te Hispane ferox, populi prxdator Edi’ – the reference to the east is puzzling, but he probably had the native Americans in mind, though perhaps the reference is to the Moriscoes.


¹⁵⁴ Francis Bacon, ‘Certain Considerations touching the Plantation in Ireland’, p.181; Bacon, ‘Concerning the Article of the General Naturalization of the Scotch Nation’, p.72.
introduction from William Camden), the translation of Las Casas’ *Brevisima relación* which appeared in 1583 and the visceral condemnation of humanists like Montaigne – all of which an educated man of his age and status would have known.\textsuperscript{155} While there is little overt exploration of the gulf between each state’s practice, Davies’ work was designed to contribute to the formulation of policies that were the antithesis to contemporary perceptions of Spanish barbarity; the withholding of law from the natives, the compulsion to engage in manual labour without redress and an imperialism predicated upon greed rather than a civilizing mission. Moreover, this barbarity was not limited to the New World. The Spanish treatment of the Moriscoes in Iberia served as a further, Old World example of such brutality. Sarah Barber’s contention that Davies bears comparison with Fray Bleda, the apologist for the expulsion of the Moriscoes from Spain, is at odds with the programme enunciated in Davies’ writings.\textsuperscript{156} Despite stating, in what one scholar calls a ‘recommendation’ of Iberian practice, that ‘the Spaniards lately removed all the Moors out of Granada into Barbary, without providing them with any new seats there’ it was, in fact, one of Davies’ few direct invocations of the ‘Black Legend’ and not a call for imitation. For it was immediately followed by an assertion of English magnanimity as ‘these natives of Cavan have competent portions of land assigned unto them, many of them in the same barony where they dwelt before’ – namely that the distance was so short that it could not count as an expulsion and new land, albeit under new tenure, was provided. In the absence of any explicit condemnation, it must be remembered that Davies published his *Discovery of the True Causes* during a thawing of Anglo-Spanish hostility, the incipient rapprochement under James I that would culminate in the execution of Raleigh and the failed Spanish Match; the


condemnation quoted above was in a private letter to Robert Cecil and not intended for public consumption.\textsuperscript{157} The entire tone of the \textit{Discoverie} also indicated that Davies sought a re-organization of tenure, rather than an \textit{encomienda} system or genocide, sentiments in sync with Spenser and Bacon’s denunciation of ‘rooting out with the sword’.\textsuperscript{158} Spenser too would have been familiar with the 1583 edition of Las Casas and the second book of his \textit{Faerie Queen} includes a description of a South American mine, in which the now de-humanized Indians slave for their colonial masters. Sir Guyon, the hero, abstains from sullying his hands with the gold gained through captive sweat and blood, presenting a picture of English temperance against Spanish voracity.\textsuperscript{159} The ‘Black Legend’ and Las Casas, and the model of colonialism they condemned, would alternatively remain a potential criticism aimed at Irish Protestants and, conversely, of some malleability in defending against such criticism.\textsuperscript{160}

The works of Spenser and Davies are recognized as having a potent formative influence upon Irish Protestant historical consciousness, yet these and other works of the seventeenth century are crowded out in favour of the more hyperbolic \textit{History} of Sir John Temple.\textsuperscript{161} Raymond Gillespie has objected to this emphasis, disputing the singular or monolithic manner in which Temple has been read and both Toby Barnard and Deana Rankin recognize the ‘perennial’ popularity of Davies’ work throughout the period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Praised by Archbishop William King in the 1680s,\textsuperscript{162} there were republications of Davies’ \textit{Discovery of the True Causes} in Dublin in 1664, 1666, 1704, 1733, 1751, 1761, 1787 and 1789 and in London editions of 1747 and 1786. Moreover, Davies’ \textit{Law Reports} were republished in 1762, in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}

\bibitem{157} Sir John Davies, \textit{Historical Tracts} (1787), p.284.
\bibitem{158} Fuchs, ‘Spanish Lessons’, pp.50-51; Pocock, \textit{The Ancient Constitution}, p.62.
\bibitem{159} Campos, ‘West of Eden’, pp.263-267.
\end{thebibliography}
translation from the 1615 and 1628 Dublin editions (written in legal French).\textsuperscript{163} There was also – just in time to influence the radicals of the 1790s – a collected edition of Davies’ letters and speeches published in 1787.\textsuperscript{164} Spenser could muster one reprint of the \textit{View} in 1763, tellingly after the editions of Davies in 1761 and 1762, but numbered many editions of the \textit{Faerie Queene} and assorted poetry publications from London and Dublin during the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{165} Many were alienated by the purported draconian nature of Spenser’s recommendations; when Ware prepared the \textit{View} for print in 1633, he felt it necessary to omit sections critical of Gaelic culture, adding ‘we may wish that in some passages it had bin tempered with more moderation’.\textsuperscript{166} It is worth remembering that Ware wrote in the period when ‘incorporating’ principles were in vogue; to be sure, in the preface to his edition of Spenser, he made the bold claim that ‘we may truly say ‘iam cuncti gens una sumus’ [we are now one whole people]’.\textsuperscript{167} When the poet’s descendant Edmund Spencer tried to capitalize on his ancestor’s fame in the mid-eighteenth century, he failed in even the modest tasks of reprinting the poet’s works by subscription or gaining employment in the administration.\textsuperscript{168} By 1807 Maria and Richard Edgeworth praised him as one the ‘good colonists’ that promoted justice, education and ‘the civilization of the Irish’.\textsuperscript{169} Yet Karl Marx’s ‘arse-kissing poet’ was disliked by Catholics; the Reverend O’Conor claimed he painted Ireland as a place of ‘more eligible

\textsuperscript{163}Sir John Davies, \textit{A Report of Cases and Matters in Law, Resolved and Adjudged in the King’s Courts in Ireland} (1762).

\textsuperscript{164}Sir John Davies, \textit{Historical Tracts}, by George Chalmers (ed.) (1787).

\textsuperscript{165}Edmund Spenser, \textit{A View of the State of Ireland as it was in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth} (1763).

\textsuperscript{166}Sir James Ware, \textit{Ancient Irish Histories} (2 Vols., 1633), i, p.3; Ware reprimanded Spenser for ‘aspersion[s] upon some families, or generall upon the Nation.’

\textsuperscript{167}Sir James Ware, \textit{Two Histories of Ireland}, (1633).

\textsuperscript{168}T. C. Barnard, ‘Edmund Spenser, Edmund Spence and the Problems of Irish Protestants in the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, \textit{Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641–1770}, (2004), p.292; see also ‘The Life of Mr. Edmund Spenser’ prefacing the edition of the \textit{View} from 1763, in which his reputation as a poet is foregrounded and his role in Ireland ignored.

\textsuperscript{169}[R. L. Edgeworth and M. Edgeworth], \textit{Review Article: The Stanger in Ireland; or, a Tour of the Western and Southern Parts of that Country in the year 1805} by John Carr in \textit{Edinburgh Review} (April, 1807).
plunder’ than Virginia.170 Hugh MacCurtain, almost alone among Catholics, referred to Spenser in favourable terms.171 Tellingly, Charles O’Conor portrayed less moral indignation and appreciated Spenser’s commentary as coming from the ‘the best Poet, and consequently the best Judge, of his Age’.172

Conversely, Davies was favoured by most Catholics as a sympathetic observer, despite reservations about his dislike of Gaelic culture; Geoffrey Keating used Davies to argue that Catholics, Old English and native, were essentially law-abiding ‘provided they have the protection and benefit of the law when upon just occasion they do desire it.’173 Despite his antipathy to them, Old English commentators from the same period did likewise; John Cusacke, imitating Davies and foreshadowing Molyneux, stated that Ireland was ‘inhabited for the most part by the English race… to whom the incorporation of the Irish natives by way of Denization [acquisition of legal rights]’ meant that ‘your majesties subjects of the realm of Ireland are to be properly stiled Anglo Hiberni’.174 For Hugh Reily, writing in exile after 1691, Davies was the singular exception to anti-native rule that dominated commentaries about Ireland and he was also quoted approvingly by Matthew O’Conor and Reverend O’Conor. As late as 1792 Edward Sweetman, an Old English Catholic from Wexford, could describe Davies as being ‘certainly possessed of a better understanding, and had more honesty than most Englishmen’. The period between legislative independence in 1782 and the Act of Union, in particular, saw an efflorescence of Davies-influenced histories, in which he was specifically foregrounded. Thomas Campbell referred to Davies as ‘an excellent writer’. In an earlier work of some levity he imagined an Englishman would find in Davies ‘such books, as relative to Ireland, as seemed fit to prepare’ himself for travel there. Likewise, James Mullala wrote in 1794 that the Anglo-Normans had been a ‘set of turbulent free-

booters, who denied the unfortunate natives the benefit of English law, and of all laws human and divine’. The pro-Catholic English writer Francis Plowden similarly underscored Davies’ merits. As Richard Bourke has highlighted, during the debates over the Quebec Act in May and June 1774, Davies was utilized throughout, particularly by Edmund Burke and Solicitor-General Wedderburn, to highlight the benefits of a similar extension of law to the conquered Canadian province. The Edgeworths also devote more space to Davies than Spenser in their fulsome descriptions. Lecky, too, lauds him. Davies’ imprint is often more visible in interpretations of the Irish past rather than being manifest in direct attributions and citations. William King and William Atwood at the beginning and James Mulalla at the end of the eighteenth century all presented an unequivocally Davies-derived interpretation of Irish social, legal and political development – and a host of other, more marginal writers and pamphleteers throughout the century did so too. Despite Spenser’s disputed legacy, consensus surrounds Davies as an observer worth preserving and quoting. This would be of some relevance when O’Conor came to write his histories.

The foregoing excerpts, if tedious to the reader familiar with them, are necessary for highlighting the significance of Davies’ work as his interpretation remained remarkably static for the remainder of the century. One aspect of this status was that his works become, along with Temple’s, one of the core texts for Irish Protestant mentalities, a status that is clear from constant reprints and the

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absence of other contemporaneous works.\textsuperscript{180} This absence is understandable; there were more immediate concerns after 1640 and it is largely Catholic and, of these, Old English writers that engage in history writing during this period, works which were largely exercises in justifying their existence and faith to the English crown.\textsuperscript{181} Keating and Micheál O’Cleirigh were active in Ireland but the majority of output came from continental centres of exiled Catholic learning, such as Louvain, Salamanca and Douai, where Catholics had the place, position and patronage to facilitate such activities.\textsuperscript{182} But neither were Irish Protestants wholly inactive and the breathing space of the Interregnum allowed for expression of ethnological beliefs. Nor was this victory for the Protestant interest marked by a monolithic supremacism; the mutability that characterized Irish Protestant policy proposals was stimulated by the realities of Cromwellian and post-Confederate Ireland. True, Temple’s hyperbolic History appeared and was buttressed by the ancillary research of the ubiquitous Dr. Henry Jones. However, the previous marginalization of Temple in research of Irish Protestant mentalities, at first regretted by Toby Barnard, has subsequently been overcompensated for and has consequently drowned out the alternate voices Barnard attempted to highlight.\textsuperscript{183}

Yet, despite the inordinate focus lavished upon Temple, there were other, less audible voices present during the Cromwellian interruption and after. It is for this reason the Connaught debate, when one would presume Irish Protestant resolution to be near unanimous in advocating suppression, consolidation, even the extirpation of Irish Catholics in order to perpetuate their new supremacy is significant. Though mirroring the disputes in the Dublin administration between ‘Old Protestants’ and the newer English of the army and bureaucracy, this debate considered at its fundamental level the nature, place and status of both Irish

\textsuperscript{180} For the flexibility of Davies’ piece, see the preface by Thomas Sheridan from the Dublin edition of 1751, in which the ‘Irishry’ are recast as Irish Anglicans excluded from occupations in the establishment by English place-men; in conformation with the brand of ethnic identification then prevalent, the author complains that they are ‘nearly allied to the Subjects of England, in Religion, Laws, Descent, Situation; and every Circumstance, which should unite us, as Members of the same Body, without Distinction’, pp.i-vii.

\textsuperscript{181} See Leersen, \textit{Mere Irish}, p.278; Canny, \textit{Making Ireland British}, pp.462-463.


\textsuperscript{183} Barnard, ‘Crises of Identity’, p.48.
Protestants and Catholics. Indeed, the period saw the emergence of two distinct groupings with differing visions for the Irish future. Needless to say, many Irish Protestants were chastened by the experience of travail and a new hard-heartedness was visible, not only in Temple, but in many individuals abandoning the ‘incorporationist’ preferences prevalent before 1641. One instance was a nephew of Sir William Parsons, Temple’s fellow chronicler of the rebellion, who expressly prohibited his offspring from marrying ‘with any of the Irish papists.’ Barnard has characterized this shift as one between ‘optimists’ and ‘pessimists’ – though, for our purposes, we can describe them as ‘segregationists’ and ‘incorporationists’. One controversy can be taken as representative. The main area of dispute was the fate of the mass of the defeated ‘papists’ and the antagonists were, on the polemical side, Colonel Richard Lawrence and Vincent Gookin and, on the policy-political side, Lord Deputies Charles Fleetwood and Henry Cromwell. The essentials boiled down to a disagreement over the 1652 Act for the Setling of Ireland, which specified that it was ‘not the intention of the Parliament to extirpate that whole nation [i.e., the Irish]’, but instead proposed a coerced migration of Catholic landowners into Connaught. Gookin, a second generation Corkonian whose ancestors benefitted from the Elizabethan plantation, was an incorporationist of the same stamp as Spenser and Davies. His first pamphlet, *The Great Case*, updated Davies’ interpretation to the pre-Confederate era, positing that the rebellion had begun because ‘of the English who at the beginning reckoned an Irish man and a Rebell tantamount, and on that score forced many into war’. (This would be stressed as the cause of the rebellion when Curry and O’Conor entered their partnership of revisionism after the Lucas affair.) Gookin, like Spenser, used anatomical allegory of patient and doctor to present the mixed settlement of Irish and English as a Christian duty combining the expedience of long-term pacification and the prospective amalgamation of both peoples via ‘incorporationist’ solutions.

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184 Quoted from Barnard, *Improving Ireland*, pp.29, 14; Brian Mac Cuarta uses similar terminology; ‘Sword’ and ‘word’ in the 1610s: Matthew de Renzy and Irish Reform’ in Mac Cuarta (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700*, p.129.


Colonel Richard Lawrence, who mobilized the criticism that ‘incorporationist’ policies had existed until the 1640s, but had failed due to ‘native’ hostility, fiercely opposed Gookin. According to Lawrence, ‘the chief cause’ of the near-annihilation of Irish Protestants in 1641 was ‘their promiscuous scattered cohabitations among the Irish.’ His solution was the same that outlined earlier by ‘T.C.’ and had much in common with Temple’s exclusionary methods, demanding that ‘no more Irish Papists… live [among] them.’

Gookin disagreed. In rejecting Lawrence’s call for a movement of the Catholic population beyond the Shannon, Gookin’s response was at once pragmatic and principled, pointing out the catastrophic economic effects of such a policy and the danger of concentrating Catholic power in Connaught. This, according to Gookin, would create another Ulster as a bulwark that would have to be broken; Spenser’s ‘enterminglinge’ walked again. For, as Gookin stated,

What can they do? What may not they be made suffer? What fear is left for us, or hopes for them? Our condition is not so desperate, as that we need run to extremities to guard it; we may safely taste the good of the Irish without fearing the ill; they have more reason now to fear us, then we had to fear them.

But secondly, Advantages we have of doing them good; they are few, the English many; we may overspread them, and incorporate them into our selves, and so by an oneness take away the foundation of difference and fear together; we may breed up their youth, habituate them to our customs, cause a disuse of their Language: we have opportunities of communicating better things unto them, and probabilities they may be received, the Priests being gone that did harden, and affliction on them which may soften: I had no temptation to say these things, other then proceeded from a prompting reason, and a convinced conscience; I have lost as good an estate almost, as Collonel Laurence has got by them…

The sting in this last comment was obvious and would be a possible categorization that haunted Irish Protestants; that of appearing as avaricious

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interlopers. Gookin’s Irish rootedness firmly established, he implied Lawrence’s lack of roots on the island was the source of his zealous stance on the Connaught question. Writing when the memories of 1641 were still relatively fresh, though not yet inflated into evergreen remembrance by Temple’s account (triumphant after the Restoration), Gookin is represented as expressing ‘unfashionable’ opinions.  

Yet there is no reason to presume they were so, not least among Irish Protestants, where the belief in incorporation remained strong throughout the century. Lord Orrery, Valentine Greatorex, Robert Phaire and Dr. Worth (senior), all expressed similar views and Lord Broghill, Gookin’s one-time patron, seemed to share them.  

This era is also marked by the first Irish Protestant flirtations with union after the brief taste of incorporation gained under Cromwell – by 1660, the status of the Irish Parliament relative to Westminster had already become ‘That Great Question’. Tellingly, a pattern which would be repeated in the period between 1690-1710 is observable here; Irish Protestant demands for equitable union are expressed, usually in terms of shared origins, faith and culture, and then followed by loud assertions of legislative equality when this ambition failed to shift English policy. Such posturing would occur again in the aftermath of Boyne – but with a modified historical ethnography to support it.

Neither can an inclination toward oppression be wholly attributable to the New Protestants like Lawrence; indeed, there never appears any binary distinction between the upbringing and background of individuals and their predilection for ethnic convergence or perpetual segregation. Irish Protestants such as Temple allied with the ‘New English’ Lawrence, while Munster-born Gookin could utilize the writings of the Anglo-Welshman Davies to refute the latter. But one striking example was the polymath Sir William Petty, who gave

189 Barnard, ‘Crises of Identity’, p.69.
tacit support to Gookin and both of whom were intimate with and patronized by Henry Cromwell. Indeed, associations based on shared incorporationist/segregationist opinions can be seen in these figures from the Interregnum; Temple and Lawrence associated with the dissenting communities in Dublin and individuals such as Faithfull Teate and Stephen Jerome (Lawrence was a Baptist), whereas Gookin, Petty and Orrery, (the latter disdained to read Temple, but was fond of Spenser) were friends and political allies.

**Sir William Petty: Incorporation and Transmutation**

The career of Petty is surprisingly under-analysed, particularly in his Irish context, despite being located by Marx as the source of the discipline of political economy and he mainly appears in recent historiography, attended by his ‘Number, Weight and Measure’ quote, as one of the progenitors of the discipline of economics. Elsewhere, Petty had attempted to calibrate the value and worth of the multitudinous members of humanity – something that informed his analysis of Irish people. In addition, Petty’s proposals for incorporation have a tendency toward the chimerical, none more so than his hope that the awesome matriarchical power of imported Englishwomen would transform Irish households into a reflection of their Wiltshire or Berkshire originals. Petty was writing in age of respectability for social engineering schemes; even in this, his

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proposals seem less fanciful than Harrington’s desire to re-populate Ireland with Jews, thereby creating a type of North Atlantic Israel.198 Recent work by Ted McCormick has done much to enlighten the darkened corners of Petty’s career. A firm advocate of union, his works were only printed in 1690-91, three years after he died whilst attempting to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the crisis preceding the Glorious Revolution. It is in these writings we can gain an insight into some of the ethnography of the Irish seventeenth century, for Petty expressed sentiments remarkably similar to his predecessors, albeit couched firmly in the language of natural philosophy. Petty’s work is saturated with ‘incorporating’ thought, but two things concern us here; from whence this derived and the influence it had.

Frequently represented as Baconian in the strictest sense, this is only partly true, for Petty applied other influences from contemporaneous science that were at once a continuation and modification of the Baconian tradition and ‘incorporationism’. One of the most important of these relates to his training as a physician, especially his presence in Oxford with William Harvey, discoverer of blood circulation in the human body. But he was equally influenced by Boyle’s alchemical transmutations and inchoate atomic theory.199 Though of a classic Baconian mode, relying upon conclusions derived from observation, in his conception of trade, traffic and motion, Petty differed from Bacon due to his academic experience.200 As Bacon conceived of the movement of matter being a zero-sum game (that is, movement from one area to another benefiting the receiver to the detriment of the loser)201, Petty altered this view and it shaped his understanding of Ireland; the scientific advances of Harvey and Boyle introduced, first, circulatory systems into the body and corpuscularian theories into matter. Petty applied these medical-scientific ideas to the relationship between Britain

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200 Barnard, Improving Ireland, pp.41, 46-47.
and Ireland; transmutation and the circulation of capital, people and goods constituted the new political arithmetical place of Ireland and a blockage on that island (frequently conceptualized as a limb) constituted a menace to the whole. Petty began to synthesize and express this relationship on a new conceptual footing as a natural pan-island system.\textsuperscript{202} Thus, Petty could promote homogeneity of manners, ethnicity and law as guaranteeing the smooth running of the system - or, if you prefer, a healthy ‘body politick’. For this new anatomical re-conception was influential far beyond Petty’s notebooks and stretched up to union and beyond.\textsuperscript{203} It was conscious and cultivated by Petty; even the name of the work expressing it was the \textit{Political Anatomy} and this medical metaphor continued within, detailing Ireland as a ‘Political Animal’ upon which a fit practice could be applied.\textsuperscript{204} This became, in time, one of the natural corollaries for the brand of one-peoplism that would emerge after Petty’s death, namely, the idea that one people, agreeable in blood, contained the prerequisites necessary for being one ‘body politick’ with all its accruing rights and constitutions – including legislative union.

While channeling this ‘transmutation’ through natural philosophy, he also stayed well within the bounds of previous Protestant expressions of wished-for ethnic unity, a facet that has been analysed by his most recent biographer, Ted McCormick, who implies a revolutionary new ecumenical import to Petty’s writing, albeit in the course of highlighting the important scientific conceptual frameworks he applied to Ireland and its people.\textsuperscript{205} McCormick asserts that, given the frequent use of the word ‘impediment’, it is probable that Davies was the source of this strand in Petty’s thought – indeed, Bacon and ‘Iohn Davys’ are amongst the few mentioned by name in text.\textsuperscript{206} However, it is likely that Spenser

\textsuperscript{202} Even the author of the latest popular work outlining the springs of Marxian philosophy and politics begins his account with William Harvey; David Harvey, \textit{The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism} (London, 2010), p.vii.


\textsuperscript{206} Petty, \textit{Political Anatomy}, p.27; Nicholas Canny also states that Petty was more influenced by Davies than Spenser; \textit{Making Ireland British}, p.577.
was at least an equal, if not a more influential agent in this – while Davies was significant and acknowledged as such in Petty’s writings, the term ‘impedimentes’ was used by many writers upon this topic, including Barnaby Rich, who exhibited very few of unifying tendencies of Spenser, Bacon, Davies, Gookin and Petty.\footnote{Barnaby Rich, \textit{A Short Survey Of Ireland} (London, 1609); Barnaby Rich, \textit{A New Description of Ireland} (London, 1610); In this Rich focuses more on Ireland but the author is keen to fend off accusations of Hibernophobia – obloquy is instead heaped upon Roman Catholicism. He hopes for a time when ‘wee might all ioyne together as well English as Irish’; p.116.} Spenser’s objection against Englishmen that wish ‘all that land were a sea pool’ was echoed in Petty – as Bacon also mentioned this complaint, it might have been a commonplace or possible that Spenser’s thought may have been refracted to Petty via this source. As Petty stressed the role of plantation using females, so too Spenser cautioned that ‘the child taketh most of his nature from the mother’.\footnote{Spenser, \textit{A View}, pp.3, 68, 151; Petty also chastises those ‘furious spirits [who] have wished, that the Irish would rebel again, that they might be put to the Sword’; \textit{Political Anatomy}, p.26.} Additionally, and unlike Davies, Spenser engaged in a type of very rudimentary political arithmetic in the final stages of the \textit{View}, detailing the expenses and surpluses that would accrue to the exchequer from a speedy conquest.\footnote{Spenser, \textit{View}, pp.126-140.} The intention was the same; the means and methodology are different. Petty stated his intention to ‘cut up the Roots of those evils in Ireland, which the Differences of Births, Extractions, Manners, Languages, Customs, and Religions, have continually wasted the Blood and Treasure of both Nations for above 500 years’ with his political medicine and, in the \textit{Political Anatomy}, proposed ‘what we offer shall tend to transmuting one People into the other, and the thorough union of Interests upon national and lasting principles.’\footnote{William Petty, \textit{Political Anatomy}, p.29; McCormick, \textit{William Petty}, pp.257-258.} As the last quote illustrates, Petty’s writings were not merely some fanciful theorization, but an exercise in ‘incorporating’ thought with an eye to creating a real programme for governance that would result in legislative union. It is also worth examining whether Petty contributed to the brand of ‘incorporationism’ prevalent in the eighteenth century. McCormick grants to Petty an innovation in this strand of thought in that he does not stress biological difference – but, then, neither does Davies, Gookin or Spenser.
However, Petty’s application of a Baconesque ‘body politick’ to Ireland in relation to Britain created a conceptualization of the polity that was pregnant with potential biological paradigms. One component of this was the shared use of anatomical metaphor; Davies, Bacon and many others used allegories based in the silviculture and horticulture of orchards or gardens and while Spenser frequently used one of patient and physician. But Petty’s metaphors employ anatomy to underscore the prospective completeness of Ireland and Britain’s respective political states inhering in the promises held out by political arithmetic. If the state, law and civil society are conceived as living ‘bodies’ comprising uniform human matter of ‘blood’, language and culture there is always the possibility that those without the correct ethno-cultural qualifications (soon, as we shall see, to include faith) can be justifiably excluded. This would be relevant for the origin myths and ethnology of the eighteenth century.

Thus, Petty moved within the ‘incorporating’ tradition and modified it. But Petty, as with most of the ‘incorporationists’, still felt the need to include the near-obligatory reference to origins. In Petty’s schema the indigenes were still British but this time it was proposed ‘that Ireland was first peopled from Scotland than all the other remote parts aforentioned [i.e. England and Wales].

211 The reason for Petty’s shift is uncertain; nevertheless, it adheres to the British genesis plotted for Irish ethnology that had been orthodox since Camden. Given the propinquity of Antrim and Argyll as the nearest physical points between the ‘bodies’ of Britain and Ireland, it was undoubtedly logically self-evident to Petty that this narrow strait would be the most probable point of transfusion. However, Petty had a contemporary opponent, able and pugnacious, in Sir Richard Cox, a fellow Munster Protestant. Cox, in an appended series of objections to Robert Southwell’s manuscript copy of the Political Anatomy, disputed Petty’s Caledonian origin narrative; ‘it is allowed by all antiquarys that Scotland was peopled from Ireland and therefore called Scotia Minor: and the names of (firbolg or Belgae) and (Tuah de danaan or Danmoii) and other [names?] of England doe

211 William Petty’s manuscript of Political Anatomy in BL MS Add. 21127, f. 54, 83-84.
manifest that those people wch first dwelt in Ireland came from England. Cox’s assertions only superficially relate favourably to ‘incorporating’ opinion – the political environment of the late seventeenth century, when some form of union was in the air, gave an added impetus to the old narratives of British ethnogenesis. Cox’s appropriation of the Gaelic thesis of Irish origins for the Scots clearly relates to a prioritization of Ireland as better equipped, in ethnic terms, for incorporation with England via a stage-theory of settlement whereby Scotland lagged behind Ireland and England. But Cox was not, like Spenser and Davies, extolling common origins for irenic ends. Cox was, instead, a segregationist of the same kind as Lawrence and Temple and, like most segregationists, relied upon the 1641 massacres to prove the folly of admitting Irish Catholics into the polity – his section refuting Petty’s downward revision of the numbers killed in 1641 and his objection to the latter’s sceptical remark that ‘as for the Bloodshed… God knows who best did occasion it’ is the most truculent and lengthy of his hand-written endnotes. He also provides his own computation of the proportions of British and Irish in Ireland, supplanting Petty’s proportions of ‘native’ Irish (82%) with his own figure (66%). In another one of Petty’s distributed manuscripts, which Cox probably would have been familiar with, he asked the first of a series of forty-one questions;

2. From what other Lands or Countreys did the first Inhabitants of Ireland come? From whence the next Colony of above 1000 Soules? From Whence the next? Till the comeing of the English Anno 1170. 3. What is the proportion between such in Ireland as descended from those who dwelt there before the year 1170, & from the English who went thither since?

Cox answered this question in a more rigorous and concise manner in the decade after Petty’s death and, in the process, fashioned a modified ethnology for Irish Protestants; one that propounded a British ethnography but with a

contemporaneous relationship between ethnicity and faith that offered an alternative ethnology for the political needs of *Hibernia Anglicana*.
Chapter Two
Post-Boyne Politics and Irish Ethnologies, 1689-1710

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the reality of social, political and constitutional relations in early modern Ireland produced a variety of ethnological theories. These theories were overlapping and multifunctional, acting at once as justifications for English jurisdiction over Ireland and envisaged as the basis for a unified identity shared by all inhabitants of the island at some (usually ill-defined) point in the future. A variety of methods were mooted as the surest means to obtain this goal; it must, however, be noted that the perceived obstacles to sound governance and the incubators of discord were almost always seen to be the persistence of ethnic divisions. As the excesses of Humphrey Gilbert and Arthur Grey gave way to the relatively sedate early seventeenth century, in the assumption that Ireland was won the administrators, settlers, clerics and soldiers sent from Britain plotted their ethnological past and envisioned the result as a peaceful, productive (but not necessarily Protestant) community safe for civility and prosperity. The following century and a series of brutal wars, particularly mid-century, did much to dent this ecumenical ideal but it never entirely vanished. This chapter will analyse how the political and polemical utility of consanguinity altered after the Williamite War as Ireland entered the long peace of the eighteenth century.

It is unsurprising that historians of Ireland should find this period an attractive area of study. In particular, the consolidation of an Irish state and an ‘Ascendancy’ after 1690 and the process of radicalization, rebellion and union after 1780 have drawn much attention. To the historian of Irish identities, this period has an especial allure; being the century in which ‘Ulster joined Ireland’, Irish Protestant (Anglican and Presbyterian) identifications and mentalities have been much debated, usually with reference to the nature of their ‘Irishness’. Nicholas Canny and S.J. Connolly date an identification as Irish to the turn of the century, the latter insisting that Irish Protestant pretences to Englishness were, by 1700, ‘less satisfactory’ – though whether unconvincing to themselves,

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metropolitan observers or modern historians is left unclear. Jim Smyth insists upon such an identification after 1710. Similarly, Roy Foster and David Hayton date an embrace of Irishness to the 1720s – though Berkeley and Swift use this term for self-description, it is far from certain that either can be taken as representative of Irish Protestant opinion generally. Toby Barnard and Joep Leerssen have asserted that this period saw a more lengthy and complex evolution toward identification as Irish. For all these dissections of identity, one convention has emerged relatively unscathed in this historiography, namely, the desire of Irish Protestants for a parliamentary union between Britain and Ireland between 1690 and 1710. Surviving evidence is clear in this regard. However,

some historians – notably David Hayton - doubt the sincerity of this desire, believing it to be a political tactic, the fulfilment of which was unlikely given the circumstances prevailing at the turn of the eighteenth century. 224 There is also widespread agreement that religion gradually usurped ethnicity as the principal method of social and political identification in the Irish polity – interpretations which stress the increasing component of Protestantism in national identity in eighteenth-century Britain and which assume an unproblematic ethnogenesis of Gaels and Old English into Irish Catholics – or, even, the ‘Irish Catholic nation’. 225 Additionally, accounts tend to focus upon ethnicity primarily in terms of senses of self, contesting when precisely Irish Protestants arrived at an awareness of the fact of their ‘Irishness’ as the most significant component of their identity. This perspective omits the political, constitutional and religious details relevant to understanding these expressions of ethnicity and identification.

Claiming Englishness, however, was not novel – what was innovatory in Irish discourse after 1690 was its new exclusivity. Those Irish Protestants articulating political ethnography from the very late seventeenth century now tended to emphasize ethno-religious commonality with English Protestants across the Irish Sea, abandoning any effort at constructive incorporation between ethnic groups in Ireland. The language of consanguinity grows increasingly elusive but, where it does occur, it tended to be aimed at an English audience and utilized tactically to argue for union or other political privileges. This was achieved by insisting that

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there was an essential and shared ethnogenesis between all nations or ethnicities in the Atlantic Archipelago, thereby insinuating that Ireland was a conventional British kingdom with only heightened religious distinctions. Thus, the political climate after 1688 had altered to the point that ethnological narratives in Ireland – and therefore the underlying ambitions that motivated such narratives – were radically modified. However, the intellectual climate – particularly political philosophy – had also created an imperative for reconsideration. Integral to this was John Locke, whose growing reputation in the decade after the Glorious Revolution meant his writings had to be considered by Irish Protestant proponents of union and segregation – particularly his concept of an unwritten political ‘compact’ as well as his writing on conquered populations.\footnote{Martyn Thompson, ‘The Reception of Locke’s Two Treatises of Government, 1695-1705’, \textit{Political Studies}, Vol.24, No.2 (June 1976), pp.181-195.} It will be apparent that consanguinity was now mobilized to serve the political ambitions of Protestant Ireland in a period of intensified centralization of power rather than for benign visions of an ecumenical and a prospectively ethnically homogenous Ireland.

Also underexplored in the secondary literature is the animus directed at Irish Protestants by metropolitan commentators after the Glorious Revolution. This literature reflected resentment engendered by operations in Ireland during the Williamite War, the presence of large numbers of refugees in England during the same war and the widespread belief that Irish Protestants had collaborated with the Jacobite regime in Dublin.\footnote{Bishop of Meath Anthony Dopping to the Bishop of London Henry Compton, 12 Nov. 1690 TCD MS 2467, f.1; Theodore Moody, Francis X. Martin and Francis John Byrne [ed.], \textit{Oxford History of Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691} (8 Vols., Oxford, 2006), iii, p.499; Bishop of Meath Anthony Dopping’s entry in the \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography} (Oxford, 2004); T.C. Barnard, ‘Reforming Irish Manners: The Religious Societies in Dublin during the 1690s’, \textit{HJ}, Vol.35, No.4 (December 1992), p.811.} After the war, hackles were raised by the restoration of estates won by ‘English’ armies, the calling of parliaments in Dublin (and the acrimonious sessions of 1692 and 1695), the reluctance to vote supplies during the War of the Spanish Succession and the view that Irish
Protestants aimed toward ‘independence’. Episodic controversies such as the Woollen Bill furore and the resumption controversy exacerbated this hostility. All these factors tended toward an unsavoury reputation in England that soon found public expression. While the usual Hibernophobic stance is to be expected with regard to Irish Catholics, Irish Protestants were denigrated, not as Irish, but as English *arrivistes*, a minority presiding over a conquered majority. This perception presented Irish Protestants with unique ethnological problems insofar as they were forced, by the pressure of English animus and the desire for legislative union, to mobilize assertions of ancient consanguinity with the inhabitants of Britain in order to mitigate the alien nature of the ‘natives’ while simultaneously stressing their own attributes of ethno-religious entitlement, foremost amongst which were language, descent and faith. Essentially, as the previous chapter illustrated, the function of narratives of shared origin earlier in the seventeenth century was to act as a legitimization of English jurisdiction and settlement with the anticipated (and, to its proponents, self-evidently pragmatic) extension to the ‘native’ population of an equitable treatment ultimately conducive to an absolute absorption into the body politic. Faith was less significant than a reduction in perceived ethno-cultural incompatibilities. This theory of shared origins would be put to a radically different use after 1688; indispensable in this re-calibration is Sir Richard Cox’s *Hibernia Anglicana*.

**Sir Richard Cox and Segregationist Ethnography**

Cox’s life was typical of his generation, class and faith; an upbringing in a coastal urban settlement created in the Elizabethan plantation, English ancestors, a brief, and lucrative, administrative post (as the Recorder of the port of Kinsale) and a modest estate nearby. He also endured exile in England during the Williamite War, settling in Bristol and cultivating ties with Sir Robert Southwell and the Duke of Ormonde – the former provided him with Keating’s history in

228 Burridge, Isaac, *A Short View of the Present State of Ireland... Written in the Year 1700* (1708), p.21.
It was in this milieu that Cox was probably exposed to Petty’s visionary ‘transmutation’ schemes. In his opposition to Petty’s female transplantation plan, Cox wrote:

The expedient of Transmutation is mistaken in the Sex, for if a million of Women were married to as many poor Irish & that in a few Years, experience proves my Assertion, besides in reason it must be soe, for women unless elevated by education & a principle of honour are less virtuous than men, that is they are more easy, & sooner allured by temptation or frightened by any thing that is like terrible, they are naturally more slothful & love their ease, besides the Irish naturally Lord it over their wives, & are not so uxorious as we English.

Cox proposed an alternative method whereby ‘boys bred after the English manner’ (i.e. not specifically English) were exchanged annually because they ‘would not marry but with women so bred, wherefore the Irish women would betake themselves to English service to qualify themselves for such husbands.’ This does not indicate an antipathy to ‘incorporation’ but the modification is significant. It was a variation on Petty’s theme, but one that sought to diminish the impact of traditional appeals to ‘incorporating’ attitudes – by which is meant the institution of policies conducive to drawing English and Irish together, with an emphasis upon equitable treatment for the latter. He was certainly convinced that the English ‘(naturally and by custom) had an ascendant over the Irish’ and was the first to cogently express a full-blooded segregationist historical narrative that additionally attempted to argue for the fitness of a legislative union with England.

This emerged most clearly in Cox’s historiography, the most important of which was the two-volume *Hibernia Anglicana* published in London in 1689-

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231 Cox’s comment are appended to Southwell’s manuscript copy of *Political Anatomy*, BL MS Add.21127, f.54; McCormick, *William Petty*, p.200.

1690 during the author’s sojourn in Bristol.\textsuperscript{233} Obviously, given the environment after 1688, it was probably not mere leisure that compelled Cox to write. Commercial as much as propagandist motives may have played a part, given the natural metropolitan interest aroused by the latest Irish expedition. But Cox’s motivations are partially revealed by pointing out that ‘it is strange that this Noble Kingdom, and the Affairs of it, should find no room in History’ aside from the ‘silly fictions’ of Gaelic scribes.\textsuperscript{234} Cox may also have anticipated that union would follow conquest in 1690-91 as it had in 1649-51 and recognized the need for a favourable ethnological narrative to encourage this eventuality.\textsuperscript{235} However, he had been writing a history since at least 1685 – itself a year of significance.\textsuperscript{236} How, then, was Hibernia Anglicana to function in these new political circumstances? The intent was clear, not least from the title, and was laid out at length in the preface and early pages of the work; there were no native Irish, only a collection, or composition, of peoples that all had their origin in Britain, or a shared ethnology with the larger isle:

As for the English, they are undoubtedly a mixt Nation compounded of Britons, Gauls, Danes, Saxons and Normans: And some think the Irish are also a mingled people of Britons, Gauls, Spaniards and Easterlings, and therefore called Scots, i.e. an Heap: And ‘tis certain they are at this day a mixt people, if it were for no other Reason, but that there is hardly a Gentleman among them, but has English blood in his Veins.\textsuperscript{237}

This admixture unfolds deeper into the work; even here, however, we can see the shared ethnogenesis is tempered only by ‘Spaniards’ for the Irish and ‘Normans’ and ‘Saxons’ (Cox’s ‘Easterlings’?) for the English. Expanding on the theme with greater confidence, Cox asserted that ‘it is rational to believe, that England


\textsuperscript{237} Cox, Hibernia Anglicana, i, p.x.
peopled Ireland, being the nearest country to it’ and ‘so the Inhabitants of Ireland were compounded of many Nations… ‘tis certain, That most of the Original Inhabitants of Ireland came out of Britain.’ Furthermore, ‘Ireland was anciently called a British Island’, ‘it is certain that the Religion and Manners of the Irish and Britons did not differ much’ and ‘their Language did very much agree.’ Cox offers an array of detail to support this thesis, including the ancient tribes of the Belgae (Fir-bolgs), Danonii (Tuatha de Dannan) and the Brigantes in classical writing and use of ‘the Saxon Character’ as well as ‘Bows and Arrows, Boyles, Mantles and Gibbs… all derived from the Britons.’

In the body of the piece Cox outlined the key motif with assurance, ‘That four parts in five of the Inhabitants in Ireland are of English Extraction, and have settled here since the Conquest and by vertue of it.’ Likewise, the work begins by outlining settlements deriving from grants by Kings Arthur, Edgar and Gurgun and Cox baldly stated ‘the first inhabitants of Ireland were Britains’. For those more inclined to the pithy, Cox published his *Aphorisms Relating to the Kingdom of Ireland* the same year, compressing the contents and repeating the same contentions in pamphlet form. Over six pages and twenty-eight enumerated maxims, Cox sketched the place of Ireland as ‘a Kingdom subordinate to it [England]’ there being ‘no difference between Ireland and the Isle of Wight, or any other part of the Crown of England.’

We can conclude with some certainty that Cox’s work had a significant influence on this new way of conceiving the Irish population, if not from his status as the first to systematically articulate it, then at least from the large amount of surviving copies of *Hibernia Anglicana* in contemporary archives, which indicate the popularity of the work; the Belfast Public Library, the Linenhall Library, Marsh’s Library, Harvard Library, the British Library, the University of Illinois and the National Library of Ireland as well as the Huntingdon collections all have copies, sometimes several. Cox’s history was complementary to Temple’s and featured prominently in anniversary sermons and

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accounts of the 1641 massacres.²⁴² It was also mentioned in printed works and was a frequent entry in libraries and book-sellers’ catalogues in the eighteenth century.²⁴³ Cox was also well-positioned politically to promote his interpretation – ultimately rising to become Queen Anne’s Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice in Ireland. The work was, therefore, a profound re-orientation of political ethnography in Ireland and its utilization of homogeneity of ethnicity for entirely different ends than the ‘incorporationists’ of the seventeenth century. This thesis was gradually adopted by Irish Anglicans, the tempo of articulation increasing from the turn of the century and the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707. There were certainly tenuous precedents; Davies’ observation about English being ‘numbered by the poll’ and a 1673 pamphlet that quotes the same are two prominent examples.²⁴⁴ Yet these assertions were intended for different political purposes compared with Cox’s more thorough and systematic work.

Two things thus coalesce in Cox’s work in the period 1689-91, namely, a modified political ethnology and desire for union; both are interdependent. He intended to explicate segregation in a European confessional context to an English and Irish Protestant audience. Cox superseded Petty’s arguments by emphasizing instead the primacy of religious divisions as, ‘we know of no difference of Nation but what is expressed by Papist and Protestant; the most Ancient Natural Irishman be a Protestant, no man takes him for other than an

²⁴⁴ [Anon.], The Present State of Ireland, Together with Some Remarques upon the Ancient State Thereof (London, 1673); the Irish categorically came ‘out of Britain’; another is the Remonstrance of 1640 from the Irish parliament that extols the population as being ‘now for the most part descended of British ancestors’; quoted from Lecky, Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, i, p.399.
This was reflective of both a new hardening in interdenominational relations and an abandonment of older incorporationist ambitions. In Cox’s work, it is apparent from his derogatory descriptions of Irish Catholics. Furthermore, he explicitly dismissed Davies’ and Spenser’s work (despite quoting extensively from both) as ‘commentaries rather than histories.’ After the perceived failure of incorporating policies and the experience of warfare in the seventeenth century, Cox was not alone in this disillusionment. For one thing, Temple’s hyperbolic history began the ascent to prominence it attained during the early eighteenth century. As Raymond Gillespie has shown Temple ‘underwent something of a revival’ after 1690, having his first Irish print-run in 1698. Prior to this, interest was sporadic and disparate sources were used to depict the rebellion; for instance, the only copy in Trinity College (donated by Temple himself) was borrowed a mere four times in twenty years before 1690. This renewed interest signifies the supremacy of the segregationist discourse that appeared as the antithesis to ‘incorporationist’ trends throughout the seventeenth century. Likewise, the same segregationist trends are apparent in individuals once committed to incorporationist policy. Bishop Dopping is an excellent example. Dopping, once a firm supporter of proselytization in Irish in order to eradicate difference, was thrown off the Irish Privy Council in 1691 for directing ‘the most bitter invectives… that could be invented’ against Irish Catholics. He, along with Lady Ranelagh and other Irish Protestants, ‘shared in the upsurge of passionate intolerance that the events of the late 1680s and early 1690s re-ignited.’

In light of this context, the assertion of underlying consanguinity, the belief that religion determined ethnicity and the derogatory depictions of Catholics that were prominent in Hibernia Anglicana are more comprehensible. After publication, these tropes became increasingly representative of Irish Protestant opinions generally. For instance, the frontispiece to the second volume quotes from Clarendon, referring to 1641, ‘Was not the Rebellion begun and carried on by the King’s Roman Catholick subjects? Was there but one man but Catholicks

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245 Cox, Hibernia Anglicana, i, p.xii.
that concurred in it? And did they pretend any other cause for it but religion?'' Despite this hostility, there is some mystery about Cox’s feeling towards, and relationships with, Roman Catholics. He appears to have been acquainted with Catholics, even if quite intolerant of their faith and his writings display the Protestant supremacism triumphant after 1690. This might be ascribable to the intense discomfort engendered by Catholic ascendancy during 1685-90. However, by 1699, Cox had restored the Catholics of Galway to the property and privileges they had been promised during the surrender of that town in 1691. This reveals contradictions between the theories in *Hibernia Anglicana* and Cox’s practise during his professional career, as the legal judgement was grounded upon the fact that the elite of the town were of English ethnic origin. Toward the end of his judgement, he stated that they were ‘an English Plantation [and], every one of them is of English Extraction.’ He referred an anti-Catholic polemic he wrote, *An Enquiry into Religion*, to ‘several bigoted Papists’ of his acquaintance, causing them to ‘stagger’ when they read its contents. If not entirely ecumenical, he at least appears to have known Catholics intimately enough. Furthermore, he introduced one ‘Mr Dowdall (a Rom Cath)’ whom he knew to Southwell as a ‘very ingenious man’. Another Catholic, the antiquary Tadhg Ó’Rodaighe, could refer to him as ‘my honoured friend, Sir Richard Cox’.248 Yet, for all that, Cox was undoubtedly the instigator of a new historical narrative to audiences metropolitan and domestic; one that was deeply hostile to significant Catholic participation within Irish political and social life and which was created for that very end. This familiarity and milieu suggests that much of the denigration – as well as his political ethnography – in *Hibernia Anglicana* was entirely tactical and designed to serve specific political ends.

While Irish circumstances and an Irish penchant for political ethnography were influential upon this new ethnology, English contexts did have a major effect – but not as Smyth and Hayton argue that it was used to justify the ‘Englishness’ of Irish Protestants to a metropolitan audience.249 Such arguments

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248 Address to Galway Aldermen, c.1699, BL Add.MS 38153, f.21; Cox to Southwell, 1st November, 1709, BL Add.MS 38156, f.99; Cox to Southwell, 29 January 1709 BL Add.MS 38156.f.48; Ó Rodaighe quoted from Cunningham, ‘Historical Writing, 1660-1750’, *HIB*, iii, p.272.

also foreground origins as ethnic *identity*, implying that such contemporary obsessions were a first-order concern for Irish Protestants at the turn of the eighteenth century. In fact, Cox was consciously trying to avoid depicting descent as paramount in the determination of loyalty — Ireland, according to Cox, was normative and comparable to Europe insofar as religion delineated conflicting parties and went some way to determining ethnic identity. Cox proved this by highlighting the heterogeneous nature of the conflict after 1641, citing,

> an Army of all meer Irish (not an English Papist amongst them) commanded by the Bishop of Clogher, and another of meer English (all Papists) under General Preston. And secondly, There was an Army of Old English and Irish, under the Lords, Mountgarret, Taaf, &c. and an Army of New English, commanded by the Earls of Ormond, Inisquin, &c. And Thirdly, there was an Army of Papists under the Nuntio, and an Army of Protestants, commanded by the Marquis of Ormond.  

In doing so, Cox attempted to represent faith as a determinant of ethnic labels and as a primary delineator of political stances. Cox’s own autobiography contains instances of this perception, including his recognition as English of several of his peers on the bench with Gaelic origins who were ‘Anglicized’ through Anglicanism. According to Cox this acquisition of particular linguistic, but especially religious, attributes obviated origins — which, in this unionist ethnology outlined, were from Britain in any case. Underlying consanguinity, though, was still useful in constitutional arguments creating a legacy of rights for Protestant Ireland, as the submission of the Irish chiefs in 1171 could be accessed by an Irish Protestant elite agitating for legislative rights after 1692 and desirous of union on equal terms. With this, Cox departs from Davies, Spenser and Petty, who all tended to rate faith rather low in their list of priorities but it speaks volumes about context; in Cox’s schema, both the Old English and Gaelic Irish were descended from British ancestors but had combined unconditionally as Catholics in 1688-91 and post-war Ireland would be shaped by this fact. Cox’s foremost aims were to negate any claim to an equal share in political representation, while preserving the cogency of constitutional arguments for parliamentary parity and Protestant

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control of the nascent Irish state.

Thus, this work of history played another role than that of justifying the incipient penal laws against Catholics. Obviously, Cox’s emphasis upon sectarian division was a component of this drive. What of his assertion that the ‘Irish’ were of British derivation? This might appear, superficially, to undermine the case for the penal laws. However, the members of this new ascendency were intensely conscious of the possibility of being labelled as parvenus profiting from the misery of a native group. As we have seen, Gookin tarred Lawrence with the same brush. In addition, there were alarming comparative contexts which could be used, most noticeably that of the Spanish conquest and empire in the Americas. The utilization of this comparative framework functioned in early modern England as a means to discredit Spain in their increasing global competition and thus possessed an intellectual and ideological repute of some pedigree. Cox would also have been familiar with the ‘Black Legend’ of Spanish cruelty; he also would have been keen to avoid such uncomfortable comparisons being extended across the Irish Sea. The fact that Las Casas’s *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* was fortuitously published in London in 1689 indicates the appetite for these stories of colonial cruelty in England. It is also clear that this view did gain some leverage in English perceptions of Ireland, as the description of Irish Protestants as ‘men of desperate fortune and the scum of the nation’ testifies. This, as much as constitutional considerations, probably played a part in the acute sensitivity of Irish Protestants to accusations of colonial status. An active stance of associating the Irish past with North American present was utilized – Cox portrayed the ‘good’ empire against the ‘bad’ South American empire by positing Gaelic Irish as ‘Kings, but such as the Indian kings of Virginia.’

But there were other objections to Irish Protestant place and status beyond the Christian humanism of Las Casas, De Solis and their imitators;

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255 [Anon.], *Considerations Concerning Ireland in Relation to England and particularly in Respect of an Union* (London ?, 1690-1692 ?), p.2.

Lockean concepts of natural right, original compact and the knotty issues surrounding conquest would place obstacles in the path of Irish Anglicans when articulating a justification of claim for parity.

This comes into sharper focus during the series of political disasters that struck Protestant Ireland over the decade 1697-1707. The first serious episode was the Woollen Bill of 1697 and the eventual passing of that bill into law. The bill was prompted by the fears of Irish competition in the woollen trade by English commercial interests. Anglican Ireland was understandably fraught at this threat to the integrity of its economic existence and a dual campaign of lobbying and polemicism commenced.\(^{257}\) While Jonathan Swift, Ormonde and Anglesey badgered MPs in the lobby of Westminster, others began a pamphleteering effort aimed squarely at an English audience.\(^{258}\) Any discussion of this development would be remiss if it failed to consider William Molyneux’s *The Case of Ireland being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated*. While the body of the text is somewhat dense and legalistic, it contains brief forays into history and ethnology and was clearly influenced by Cox, William Domville (Molyneux’s father in law), Patrick Darcy, Archbishop Dopping and Richard Bolton.\(^{259}\)

Throughout, Molyneux displays an ‘ideological promiscuity’ blending Lockean compacts and social contracts, ancient charters and liberties, precedent and past legislation to prove his case.\(^{260}\) Nevertheless, early on in the work, he engaged directly with the foremost ethnological problem of his topic, describing in a well-known passage the composition of the Irish population:

> Now ‘tis manifest that the great body of the present people of Ireland are the progeny of the English and Britains, that from time to time came over into this kingdom; and there remain but a mere handful of the ancient Irish at this day; I may say, not one in a thousand: so that if I, or anybody else, claim the like freedom with the natural born sons of England, as being descended from them, it will be impossible to prove

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259 Dopping, Cox, Domville and Bolton were specifically mentioned. See William Molyneux, *The case of Ireland being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (1698), pp30, 35-36, 63, 83
260 Connolly, *Divided Kingdom*, p.211.
Smyth and Hayton present this as a willingness to disregard the Gaelic Irish or to marginalize them as non-persons in Ireland. It is clear that Molyneux was using a Coxian ethnography and the Case, as with the Cox’s work, linked this ethnography to an ambition for union, famously described by the writer as the ‘happiness we can hardly hope for’. There is no reason to assume that with this ethnic theory Molyneux is specifically arguing for the exclusion of Catholics from the polity; such exclusion was axiomatic according to contemporary norms and extant legislation and needed no explanation by Molyneux. From their perspective, more pressing was the need to frame what appeared as colonial power structures and social relations to an English audience by dissuading that Ireland was a colony. Thus, Molyneux had a different purpose in representing such a barely undifferentiated mass of population; proving that union was compatible with Irish ethnic reality and an argument that Ireland was not a colony, nor the ‘Anglo-Irish’ a colonial elite.

While the mobilization of political ethnography was a characteristic of Irish political discourse, Molyneux’s metropolitan orientation is revealed by his use of John Locke’s work. Molyneux had a unique exposure to Locke’s philosophy – bordering on adulation – manifest in the long-running correspondence between the two intellectuals and Molyneux’s successful effort to have the Essay on Human Understanding included on the curriculum of Trinity College. Concomitant with this personal familiarity was an excellent grasp of Lockean theory – and, despite the noticeable reliance on historical exempla, Molyneux did his best to make the Case ‘firmly cast in the non-historical idiom of reason and

261 Molyneux, Case, p.20-21.
263 Moylneux, Case, p.97-98.
natural rights’. However, most of the work contains instances of precedent, history and ethnology – topics that ‘still dominated political discourse’ in the immediate aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.266 If, as Patrick Kelly has asserted, Locke’s political philosophy had little purchase beyond the intellectual life of the University of Dublin, Irish writers nevertheless had to consider his popularity when writing for an English audience.267 Issues of terminology are here important – particularly the meaning of ‘people’ when we consider this political ethnography. It is assumed that this term refers solely to the body of the political nation qualified to sit in parliament. With Cox’s ethnography this cannot be sustained as he uses the expansive term ‘inhabitants’. It is also commonly accepted that contemporary Irish Protestant writers mean the aggregate of individuals that comprise the political nation when they refer to ‘people’ – Molyneux included. However, a close reading of the Case finds numerous mentions of ‘people’ with a broader meaning; for instance, when Molyneux refers to ‘the barbarous people of the island’ or the compact between ‘Henry the second and the people of Ireland’.268 Responses to the Case stressed a broad meaning - indeed, Simon Clement’s critique of Molyneux takes him to mean everyone on the island, including the now disenfranchised Old English and ‘natives’. Furthermore, as Lois Schwoerer has shown, Locke’s conception of the people was sufficiently broad to mean that he ‘did NOT equate it with a representative body’. Correspondence between the two also indicated a wide comprehension of the word ‘people’.269 The English republicans of the Commonwealth and seventeenth-century Whigs also seem to have understood the word ‘people’ with some latitude – or were evasive – though when they did discuss it, they usually warned of the inadvisability of devolving power socially downward.270 While Molyneux might have meant the ‘political nation’ (however broadly comprehended) it is unclear whether he understands its creation as a process of

268 Molyneux, Case, pp13, 38.
absorption or gradual and ongoing exclusion.

A much trickier interpretative issue arises with Molyneux’s use of conquest theory. Repudiating Petty’s argument of ‘gamester’s right’, Molyneux utilized Locke’s *Two Treatises on Government* to argue for the legitimacy of his claims.\(^{271}\) That he should do so seems to be incidental to the argument; yet it was integral if Protestant Ireland were to argue persuasively for its political prerogatives. Following immediately from his explanation of demographic homogeneity, Molyneux discoursed upon conquest theory that, along with the assertion that representation was one of the inviolable ‘Common Rights of all Mankind’, were the twin pillars of his argument borrowed from Locke. First, citing the submission of the Irish chiefs to Henry II, he dismissed the claim that Ireland was conquered.\(^{272}\) This, obviously, was presented as a Lockean compact between ruler and ruled that was, according to Molyneux, transferred to the later settlers – somehow surviving through a lengthy process of social upheaval and political revolution. Molyneux differed from Locke in making this compact or submission explicit, rather than being organic and developing incrementally – it took place in a specific point and place in time, namely, in Dublin in 1172.\(^{273}\) In light of his use of this compact, one of Molyneux’s auxiliary arguments appears puzzling. He proposed that, even if Ireland were a conquered country, legislative or commercial handicaps should not extend to the progeny of the conquerors. Such a position was not surprising, particularly given Locke’s contention from the *Second Treatise* that any prospective conqueror-as-tyrant ‘gets no Power by his Conquest over those that conquered with him’.\(^{274}\) But Locke also stressed that descendants of the conquered should not be subject to the oppression and forfeiture that their rebellious forefathers received. This partially explains the effort to indicate that confession tended to determine ethnicity and that this, in turn, was superficially misunderstood as a conflict between two differing ethnic groups rather than religious communities. In terms of ethnogenesis and ethnic composition, it can also be interpreted as an effort to indicate that the entire population can claim either consanguinity or descent from the conquerors –


\(^{272}\) Ibid, p.13-14.


\(^{274}\) Ibid, §177.
thereby qualifying them for the conventional European distinctions through which exclusion was determined according to faith, rather than ethnicity. The pains taken by Cox, Molyneux and other writers over the groups that constituted the contemporary political community or the historic inhabitants of Ireland indicates the prominence of – and the difficulties presented by – these narratives of conquest.

As should be apparent, Irish circumstances demanded that issues of diverse ethnic groups had to be addressed when engaging in political discourse. However, this was a common and accepted feature of British and European political thought in the period under discussion. Indeed, Molyneux’s hybrid treatise – a combination of universal themes and historical particulars – perfectly agreed with the written justifications for the realities of post-revolutionary Britain. As Charles Tarlton has shown, Locke only began to gain intellectual cachet around 1698 – the year Molyneux’s work was published – and a combination of historical exempla and Locke’s more cerebral justifications of 1688 were common thereafter. This mix, of course, mirrors the content of Molyneux’s *Case*. Molyneux’s and Cox’s use of ethnological and historical themes can be explained by the legacy of such debates from seventeenth-century Ireland and the immediate context of the Glorious Revolution. As we have seen, Irish circumstances forced writers to consider the role of ethnic division in the past and present. Regarding the former, most noticeable was the strand of Irish Protestant ethnography that insisted upon consanguinity and used this to argue for the legitimacy of English rule and optimistically propound an ecumenical vision for Ireland’s future. Similarly, an opposing strand – the segregationists – tended to elide ethnological speculation and argue for separation between different groups. By the 1690s these groups were Irish Catholics and Protestants – but these groups were increasingly comprehended as ethnic communities deriving their ethnic integrity from their religious beliefs and their concomitant political loyalties. Cox’s uniqueness arises from his segregationist convictions and his use of ethnography to posit consanguinity as well as reconceptualising confessional identity as ethnic kinship.

As R.J. Smith has shown, ethnological and historical justifications for the Glorious Revolution had an intellectual cachet that has been extensively analysed in the historiography of seventeenth-century English and British political thought.
These were saturated with ethnological speculation about Britons, Goths and Normans and the political cultures, legal structures and original institutions that they carried to or cultivated in Britain. Additionally, rival theories clustered around each group. Britons tended to be associated with ‘time immemorial’ theory, namely that the British constitution had an autochthonous development stretching back to before the Roman Conquest. Gothic theory – which gained increasing purchase after the Restoration – insisted that post-Roman Saxon settlers were responsible for most of England’s heritage of liberty. As such, Gothic history moved from being a discrete field of enquiry for antiquaries and chorographers to being a ‘mainstream, politically motivated way of thinking about the past’ by 1688 and would enjoy predominance as a means of legitimizing the events of that year.\(^{275}\) The Norman Conquest was frequently utilized by Royalists to argue that England’s political structure was determined by this conquest and that every subsequent granting of parliamentary privilege was the King’s gift – and hence could be revoked or superseded though royal prerogative. Lastly, the theory of the ‘ancient constitution’ insisted that the sum total of English statutes, common law precedents and royal pronouncements made up the irrevocable spirit and content of English political reality. While political ethnologies tended to be the preserve of groups espousing specific political agendas, they were occasionally utilized by partisans for other causes – including creative attempts to suborn Gothic theory to the rehabilitation of English Catholicism.\(^{276}\)

These ethnologies (in isolation or combination by varying parties) were usually the primary and immediate means of condoning or condemning the installation of William and Mary – long before Locke’s more abstruse justifications gained widespread purchase after 1698. Indeed, justifications tended to be ‘carefully grounded in the specifics of the English constitution and employ concrete English political examples’ or were ‘based in English history and/or


legal precedent’. In England, of course, such fanciful ethnologies might be indulged in without the danger of opening up ethnic fissures in the body politic. Nor were there existing ethnic divisions that need to be justified or explained. In Ireland circumstances were different. This different need and the shift in contexts in the 1690s partially explained the difference between Cox and Molyneux’s work. The former was writing in an earlier context – and undoubtedly aware of the resentment engendered by yet another Irish war – and wrote to create an ethnology at once conducive to received metropolitan narratives and Irish circumstances. Cox, having spent the aftermath of the revolution in Bristol, was cognizant of the diminishing political returns accruing to the theory of the ‘ancient constitution’. Instead, as the Whigs ‘increasingly abandoned the Ancient Constitution’, ethnological narratives such as the Gothic theory attained increased potency. Cox’s explicitly consanguine ‘inhabitants’ thus share a similar ethnogenesis with England, with the explicit caveat that English religious and cultural attributes delineated his contemporary political community. The most apparent ambition in Cox’s ethnology was to present Ireland as a community in which confessional differences and hence political rights were intertwined with, but not determined by, ethnic origin. Mitigating metropolitan assumptions of Ireland’s colonial status was a shared endeavour of the two writers.

Additionally, these attempts were a marked feature of political discourses outside Ireland and historical ethnography functioned for similar political ends. Henri de Boulainvilliers similarly formulated a theory of race-as-class that positioned the aristocracy and noblesse d’épée in France as Frankish invaders that governed entirely by right of ancient conquest. Likewise, Humphrey Hody, undoubtedly influenced by Brady’s revision of the legitimacy of the Norman conquest, argued such rights and liberties accrued to ‘us who are descended not only from those that are supposed to have been conquered but also from their


conquerors’. 279 This ‘conqueror’s rights’ theory is, however, secondary in the Case and Molyneux was at pains to disprove conquest and colony and keen to portray the population as homogenously British in origin. When Molyneux argued that ‘Ireland cannot properly be said so to be Conquer’d by Henry the Second’ it is as a pre-condition to his assertion that Ireland was not a colony, a proposition that he sniffily dismissed as containing ‘so many absurdities, that I think it deserves nothing more of our Consideration’. 280 For colonial status (theoretically) being subordinate to the mother country and peopled by settlers who disenfranchise the ‘aboriginal’ population, was a weak vantage from which to argue for parity and one that provided ammunition to those seeking to discredit. 281 It was more productive to use Locke’s natural rights and to fashion an Irish ancient constitution through legal precedent and presenting the ‘people’ – the Irish political nation – as an undifferentiated mass of ‘Britains’.

Nevertheless, Molyneux’s selective rifling of Locke illustrates the challenges faced by Irish Protestants with Locke's work; precepts such as majoritarian consent, the rights of the conquerors and the rule that the posterity of the conquered should be free from punitive measures were troubling concepts. The best strategy was to present Ireland as a thoroughly normal member of a European system of religious exclusion within the context of a society with a shared ethnogenesis in which sectarian divisions were casually comprehended using ethnological terminology. Therefore, it was not the metropole-imposed Irishness of Irish Protestants that these writers wished to disprove, but to disprove ‘Irishness’ as a category that primarily determined ethnic discrimination for those outside the rights of the polity. Instead, in Cox and, to a lesser extent Molyneux, Irishness was explained as casual label for Catholics that might lead to the confusing idea that Ireland was a classic colony in which the indigenes were persecuted. Thus, it was not a process of making Irish Protestant ‘English’; that was self-evident and a secure identity for most Irish Anglicans. Rather, it was to make the claim that Irish Catholics had a ‘British’ ethnogenesis and to posit a


280 Molyneux, Case, p.149.

singular ethnicity as a pan-island phenomenon riven only by religious division. Richard Cox persistently returned to this topic and was instrumental in the creation of this modified ethnological landscape. Cox’s *Essay for the Conversion of the Irish* of 1698 contained the thesis he propounded in 1689, that ‘I think you are Originally English and of British Extraction’ and ‘that your Character is Saxon, and your Language Originally Welsh’.  

There is an overlap in this work with both his *Aphorisms* and *Hibernia Anglicana*, but Cox elaborates further upon a denigration of the Milesian model, ascribing misguided loyalty to the Pretender being due to this purported ‘Milesian Blood and Lineage’. The work of Cox and Molyneux bears striking resemblances that have not been thoroughly explored before. Certainly, Cox had reservations about ‘Mr. Molineux’s work’ specifically regarding Molyneux’s insistence on legislative autonomy and believed ‘the Doctrine was false, & unseasonably publisht, and would have ill consequences’ – undoubtedly referring to its impact upon any prospective union. However, what is strikingly noticeable in the output of these pro-union writers is how often they deemed it necessary to engage with problems of ethnicity when addressing their audiences, using political ethnography to buttress simple, strident assertions of their rights as Englishmen. William King, Archbishop of Dublin, held similar beliefs that ‘the Danes first, and then English, destroyed the people’ leaving only British settlers as the major ethnic group divided by faith and superficial culture differences. A minor spat that occurred over this issue (between the Archbishop and John Toland) highlights the parameters of Englishness within which it operated. Toland attacked the

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284 ‘As to the Union, I think it necessary for both Kingdoms’; Cox to Southwell, 14 November, 1699, BL Add.MS 38153.

commercial and political rights of the Anglican community, demanding that ‘they hold no Parliaments, but be governed by the Parliament Laws of England.’

King’s (unpublished) response, sent to that ubiquitous terminus of Irish Protestant correspondence to London, Sir Robert Southwell, utterly rejected the deist’s stance; ‘As to his expedient that No Parliaments be held in Ireland, but that it is to be governed by the Parliament Laws of England, we shall like it very well, provided we be allowed our representatives in the English Parliament as I find it has been formerly’. This is the nub of King’s argument and one that precedes Molyneux’s account, published in April of that year, that ‘the Liberty of English Men… consists in being Governed by Laws to which they have given their Consent Either in person or by their representatives.’

Sensitivity to accusations of colonial status – as well as a desire for union – was equally apparent in the bishop’s response. King was concerned that, during this height of hostility toward Irish Protestants, the latter appeared to be underscoring the colonial characteristics of which they were accused during the ill-advised and unenforceable attempt to prohibit the Irish language in 1697. King fretted that this drive to abolish a language could appear, to metropolitan eyes, like an attempt to abolish a nation. He was also anxious about the effect of such excesses upon continental European opinion when bills for further restrictions and impediments for those of Roman Catholic faith were proposed in 1697, 1719 and in 1723. Thus, in private writers tended to be much less obtuse and less erudite in their presentation of Ireland’s ethnology, eliding the complex narratives of ethno genesis, descent and the institutional integrity deriving from that descent which they penned for English readers – underscoring the strategic edge of this new political ethnography. Cox, for instance, wrote to the Earl of Nottingham that

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287 Ibid, p.81; Southwell to King, 14 March 1702, A Great Archbishop of Dublin, p.67.
290 Regarding the proposal to castrate unregistered priests; ‘we shall have the scandal of a barbarous Law without any benefit from it’; King to Edward Southwell, 2 Dec. 1723, from Ian McBride, ‘Catholic Politics in the Penal Era: Father Sylvester Lloyd and the Devlin Address of 1727’, ECI, Vol.25 (2011), pp.115-146.
‘if the English here feel themselves oppressed, they will return to their mother country, as many as able; and the rest, prompted by indignation, necessity, or despair, will turn Scotch or Irish. There is no remedy so proper for both kingdoms, as some sort of union.’

‘Natural Irish’ and ‘Adventurers’: English Responses to Irish Ethnography

Pace Hayton and Connolly, the writings of Molyneux and Cox were not created as textbooks for Irish identities, but didactic works aimed at an English audience – though their formative effect upon the former must be appreciated. It is, then, worth considering the English response to these works. That this didactic drive was necessary is evident from the English attitudes visible prior to the union of 1707. An early example of viewing Irish Protestants as colonials is apparent during the Williamite War; one (Irish Protestant) writer complained of ‘Male Contents and Factious Ill-spirited’ Englishmen willing to negotiate with Irish Catholics for a swift end to the war and from a mistaken sense that they were an unjustly oppressed people. Another pamphlet gained the ire of an ‘English Gentleman of Ireland’ by suggesting that ‘the Irish may not much delight in their subjection... and to speak impartially, there is some reason for it. To see the English crowd into their country, who are continually growing upon them and eating them out; who also have all Authority and Preferments while themselves are Contemptible’. The present rebellion derived, according to this writer, from fear of Irish Protestant insatiableness for land and a desire of the Irish to ‘recover their ancient and native Liberty’.

There are very few of the Natural and Original Irish, who have a Propriety in any Estate, their Ancestors having in every Reign successively forfeited them by Treason and Rebelllion. The Owners of all, or most of the Estates there, are either Ancient, or Modern English, and Scots; of the first sort whereof, tho many have degenerated into

291 Cox to Nottingham, 13 February, 1704, from Froude, The English in Ireland, i, pp.303-304.
292 [Anon.], Mephibosheth and Ziba: Or, The Appeal of the Protestants of Ireland to the King Concerning The Settlement of that Kingdom (London, 1690), p.i.
293 [Anon.], Some Ways for Raising Money, Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Parliament, by a Person of Quality (London, 1690), pp.11-12.
Irish manners, and apostatized from their Religion; yet they cannot extinguish their names, or alienate their descent, or deny the honour of their Consanguinity with the English Nation. And now after all this, after a plenary Conquest by the Sword, and an Establishment by Law, after a long Prescription, and undisputed Possession for 500 years; Shall that be call’d their Country? Shall the English be affronted with the opprobrious Name of Intruders, who thrust our selves in among them?294

Charles Leslie, a non-juring clergyman from Monaghan, agreed with Cox’s ethnological thesis. To Bishop King’s complaint that Catholics ‘would makes us hewers of wood and drawers of water’, Leslie portrayed an Irish society with a unified stock that was only divided by sect-based notions of ethnos;

I might instance here too the Case of the Gibeonites, whom Saul sought to destroy, after their being 400 Years under the Government of the Jews, or Incorporated into one People with them, as the Irish are with the English in Ireland. And their Case was exactly what the Author puts, viz. of a King’s designing to destroy one People under his Government in favour of another, whom he loves better; for the Text tells us, That Saul sought to slay the Gibeonites in his zeal to the Children of Israel and Judah, and that he consumed them, and devised against them, that they should be destroyed, from remaining in any of the Coasts of Israel.295

The Woollen controversy exacerbated this hostility and, in particular, Molyneux’s work attracted numerous rebuttals (from both Whigs and commonswealthmen as well as Jacobites or Tories like Leslie). In these works John Dunn detects Locke’s influence as ‘the man whose doctrine in his own lifetime was seen as the indictment of the British Ascendancy in Ireland.’ The truth is more mundane, particularly as John Cary, the textile magnate responsible for sponsoring the Woollen bill, penned the most significant of these works.296 Cary, in his prefatory argument, did not wave Poyning’s law or Lockean argument in Molyneux’s face. Nor was it a realist assertion of the locus of power in the British Isles; that surfaced later in the work. Cary’s opening statement cut

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295 [Charles Leslie], An answer to a book intituled, the state of the Protestants in Ireland under the late King James Government (London, 1692), p.54.
to the heart of Cox’s and Molyneux’s ethnography; ‘Although you are by far the least in Number, you are yet esteemed as the much more considerable part of the Inhabitants of that Country, in respect of your Power, and the Authority which you bear there.’ After highlighting demographic weakness, he continued with a bald denial of Molyneux’s ethno-historical claims; ‘…because you are not (generally speaking) descended from either of those People, but their Progeny still in being, and acknowledged to be such; all the Rights and Privileges which Mr. Molyneux hath so strongly contested for, should be due to them’. Not only did Cary call the Irish Protestants ‘Criolians, or People born there’, he used recognizably colonial paradigms to accuse them of the typical expropriating activities of other settler groups ‘by considering the Irish as a People… subdu’d and brought into subjection by the English government’. The corollary of this was that ‘those concessions were made to the Native Irish and Old English settled there… the modern English Protestants can have no Interest in these Ancient Grants; they are still our own People’. 297 Molyneux was further accused of disingenuously dabbling in specious constructions of ethnic identity and descent; ‘Mr. Molyneux takes no notice of the Distinctions that ought to be made of these different Interests, but that he may carry his point, blends and confounds them all together; as if they were to be considered alike, as one intire People, establisht and continuing upon the same bottom of Government.’ 298 Not only was Ireland's society patently colonial, according to Cary, but constitutionally it was too; in an analogy that hints at an association with the Spanish in the New World, Cary equated Ireland's polity with that of the ‘kingdoms’ of New Spain and Peru. 299

This assault against an ungrateful colonial elite continued in another pamphlet. Attempting to explain ‘why the Old Irish and Native English have been so severely handled in that Kingdom’, Simon Clement gleefully demolished any pretence to an Irish Protestant state of equality that Cox and Molyneux animated though ethnology and constitutional history. This was accomplished by presenting

298 Ibid, 4; he also traduced Molyneux for abusing ‘Mr. Lock, or whoever was the Author of that Excellent Treatise of Government’, p.30; Leslie also notes the use of Locke, ‘from whom Mr. Molyneux takes it’ (i.e. the theory of compact) in Considerations of Importance to Ireland, p.3.
299 [Cary], Answer to M. Molyneux, pp.142-143.
Irish Protestants as a group that regarded their own interests above those of their constant protectors. Clement demanded that a new oath be sworn at the beginning of every Irish parliament (he was definitely no unionist) that the honourable members,

always remember, that this Island (or Province) is a Colony; that England is our Mother Countrey; that we are ever to expect protection from her in the possession of our Lands… but not to Trade with any other Nation without her Permission; and that ‘tis our incumbent duty to pay Obedience to all such Laws as she shall Enact concerning Us. 300

Leslie likewise warned that many in England had ‘already Grown Jealous of them, and Declare they Must find ways to Humble them’. 301 The position and wealth of Irish Protestants, stated Leslie, were inexorably connected to their colonial status. Non-juring ecclesiastics aside, other individuals in England leapt upon Molyneux’s punctually presented opportunity for ‘humbling’. William Atwood, a moderate Whig known for denying Locke’s argument that the Glorious Revolution was a compact between ruler and ruled grounded in popular will, refuted *inter alia* Molyneux’s belief in a medieval quasi-union by reducing the supposed Irish members to mere lobbyists. He sidestepped Molyneux’s claim of ethnic similitude by the simple expedient of ignoring it, in its stead arguing for sovereignty grounded in an older, and hence worthier, jurisdictional claim deriving from King Arthur and King Edgar. Charles Davenant cast the Protestants of Ireland as ‘Planters’ and ‘Adventurers’ who could not keep the native population in check, thereby warranting the description – and status – of a colony. 302

The resumption controversy reinvigorated this antipathy. The nature of the dispute (the restructuring of the Williamite settlement) meant that questions of

300 [Cary], *An Answer*, p.26; [Simon Clements], *The Interest of England, As it stands with Relation to the Trade of Ireland, Considered* (London, 1698), p.23.

301 [Charles Leslie], *Considerations of Importance to Ireland, In a Letter to a Member of Parliament there; upon the Occasion of Mr. Molyneux’s late Book* (London, 1698), p.8.

colonial status should arise, particularly relating to the possibility of Catholics receiving land forfeited after 1690. What was more surprising is the virulence of the English castigation against Irish Protestants that emerged. The original petitions, to the King and Commons, were highly provocative to the latter, detailing the inaccuracies of the Commissioners’ Report and alleged arbitrary behaviour by the Trustees. John Trenchard, representative of English opposition to this perceived insolence, was quick to respond and he, like Clement before, smeared Irish Protestants as colonial interlopers. Molyneux’s work was a particular target and Trenchard condemned his ambition to ‘set up a Title in the Irish’ against the authority of the Westminster parliament.\(^{303}\) Another objection was demographic, as they were ‘A Handful of People, beset with seven times the Number of Irish who are their mortal enemies’. He reminded, too, of the colonial subordination that so irked Irish Protestants and focused on proving ingratitude and their purported *arriviste* quality. They were ‘a few private men, who by Rapine and Oppression have raised themselves on a sudden to great estates’ and whose real unhappiness was that ‘the Act has given the Papists, as well as the Protestants, a Right to claim all that is due to them in Law or Equity’.\(^{304}\) In yet another Spanish comparison, Trenchard complained of ‘these Trinculo’s, and fantastick Vice-Roy’s, these errant Sancho Pacho’s and Squire-like governors of their wild and inchanted Island’.\(^{305}\)

In the raw, then, it does not appear that the political ethnography of the immediate post-Boyne period was very compatible with English sensibilities - certainly, they were insufficient for even the limited goal of altering English attitudes to the possibility of politico-constitutional parity. It is probable that these English writers were not oddities or manufacturing animus but pandering to the pre-existing prejudices of their audiences. Some sympathy existed; Edward Northey, then Attorney General, expressed dislike for the economic restraints placed upon Ireland – to the surprise, it must be said, of the designated Irish lobbyist in London.\(^{306}\) Yet the antipathy was deep by the early eighteenth century.

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\(^{303}\) [John Trenchard], *A Letter from a Souldier to the Commons of England* (London, 1702), p.5.

\(^{304}\) [John Trenchard], *The Several Addresses of some Irish Folkes to the King and the House of Commons* (London, 1702), p.2, 7.

\(^{305}\) Keen, *Las Casas*, pp.19-20.

\(^{306}\) James, ‘The Irish Lobby’, p.543.
Boldness in asserting prerogative was one cause and assertions grounded in consanguinity were attacked as the weakest link in this stance.\textsuperscript{307}

The development – and transitory nature – of a new Irish political ethnography was visible in the pamphlets that accompanied prospective Anglo-Irish legislative union. Despite this transitory nature, a clear trend is evident. Therein, we can see a subtle but perceptible change in the ethnological consciousness of Protestant Ireland, which shifted from an affirmation of homogeneity across the British Isles to one between those of English descent on either side. The usual devices were mobilized; appeals to solidarity, mutual benefit, adherence to common norms, traditions, laws and customs, emphasis on the Welsh example, anti-Scots sentiment and veiled or ginger warnings of common cause or combination with the ‘Irish’. There were also the usual familial, sororal, fraternal, paternal and conjugal allegories as well as expressions of bemusement over the disagreements of 1697-1703. Indeed, large segments of the literature agonized over how such an estrangement had managed to take place while, characteristically, blaming English writers for its occurrence.\textsuperscript{308} But the alteration is palpable and emblematic of the transitional period between an older ecumenism and an ancien regime state of disappointed unionists in which there emerged a more rigid and exclusive idea of ethnicity.

The first of the new pro-union pamphlets appeared during the Williamite War. Written by an Irish Protestant, the work starts as a proposal for an incentivized scheme for English settlement in Ireland. It was something of a relic from the increasingly marginalized language of assimilation from the previous century, illustrated by the qualification that ‘the Irish shou’d partake (in some degree) of the same privileges in order to unite as one People with the English in this


This recommendation for union advanced that it would ‘greatly conduce to Unite the Irish and English in this Country’. However, traces of the growing Anglo-centric exclusivity are present in the lament that English people confuse the two ethnics, viewing them ‘without regard to any difference between the English and Irish Inhabitants’. A similar work, dedicated to Robert Molesworth and explicitly echoing Petty, is indicative of how consanguinity was pressed into the cause of union. Claiming the approval of Molyneux, the author stated Ireland had experienced a degree of assimilation that rendered redundant all hostile assertions of colonial status and indicated the significant English infusion into the Irish ethnos. In short, ‘it cou’d be shown, that above half the Names of Ireland, which are now of the Language, Customs, Religion, and Interest of the Irish, were old English’. The reason being that, when the ‘Colony’ arrived, they hoped to ‘grow one both in their interest and affections with the people’, but were thwarted by the prejudice of the existing inhabitants – another recurring theme in the segregationist literature. The author followed Cox’s thesis, foregrounding faith as the primary point of division in Ireland; the Irish had, like Molyneux’s ‘natives’ become absorbed into a single ethnicity, without retaining or evincing the civility possessed by Church of Ireland members. The affinity between Britain and Ireland was ethnic and the difference was religious. Francis Brewster, while not wishing to trouble ‘the Reader with the Historical part of its Conquest, Laws and Constitution’, attempted to show the erroneousness of subjecting the English in Ireland to ‘Poynings Law... use[d] to subject the Irish’ and insisted that Irish Protestants would, through such an application ‘lose the Birth-right of an Englishman’. By ‘Irish’ in such a context, one can only presume Brewster has collapsed the Old

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309 [Anon.], Considerations Regarding Ireland, p.1; the caveat ‘in some degree’ might presumably refer to religious restrictions upon the exercise of office, but this is not mentioned in the text, surprisingly given the environment of its publication.

310 Ibid, p.4; one pamphlet written during the same period as this, could use the rhetoric of incorporation that would disappear by 1710, ‘that the Commonality [of the Irish] will be united as one people with the British’; Mephibosheth and Ziba, p.45.

311 Ibid, p.3.

312 [Anon.], The True Way to Render Ireland Happy and Secure (1697); Petty is mentioned by name, as is his environmentally determined notion of ‘native’ Irish lethargy; p.5.

313 Ibid, p.15.
English into a category that embraced all Catholics. Additionally, he endorsed Cox’s segregationism and the new variety of ethnic identification with English Protestants. One key passage insisted that;

Keeping Ireland a separate Kingdom, hath supported the Irish in the pretence of their right to it... but if that were Abolish’d, and the Kingdom United as Wales, we should become one People, which we never can be, tho we are one blood, whilst we live under different Laws and Government.

Similarly, like Cox, Brewster designated faith as an ethnic label as ‘they consist of Popish English Families, as well as of the ancient Natives of that Kingdom, in which sense I desire to be understood… when I mention the Irish.’

Henry Maxwell’s unionist pamphlet has been a frequent object of attention, probably because it is possible, in the stream of anonymous proposals and schemes, to grab hold of an Irish Protestant and claim him for early unionism. Maxwell, in common with Cox’s assertion of Ireland’s status as a westerly Isle of Wight, stated that Ireland was a ‘Province’, a ‘Devonshire or Kent’, that is, a typical territorial and ethnic member of the British dominions. Ethnicity is only cursorily explored but (apart from the conventional emphasis upon ‘Blood and Dependence’) he postulated that ‘the People of Ireland are naturally the Offspring of England… and therefore the Irish have a Title to the Portion of a Child.’

Likewise, despite this apparent lack of differentiation he distinguished between the ‘Popish Irish’ and ‘the British Inhabitants’.

Another intriguing survival is The Queen an Empress, a pamphlet sadly marginalized, partially due to its anonymity and partially due to a dismissal as ‘quasi-Utopian’ and ‘fantastic’.

316 Yet another pamphleteer, during the Woollen controversy, could refer to Ireland as an ‘enlarged part of England... to be reputed no more separate from the care of the monarch of Great Britain than Yorkshire, Cheshire or any other part of England’; [Anon.], A Discourse on the Woollen Manufactury of Ireland (n.p., 1698), p.10-11.
317 [Henry Maxwell], An Essay Upon An Union of Ireland with England (1703), pp.11, 12.
318 Ibid, pp.13, 22.
Yet it illustrates the negotiation of ethnic constructs then underway and the religious complications that accompanied such historical and political discourse. The main thrust is the Cox-influenced contention that there was a pan-British homogeneity of race that purportedly prevailed before artificial division and ‘intestine Broils’. The existence of this consanguinity, according to the author, compelled the creation of an Anglo-Irish union. Put baldly, the ‘great advantage towards a Union is, that we are all the same’.³²⁰ ‘People’, the author explained,

…throughout England, Scotland and Ireland, as much, and perhaps more than the Inhabitants of any other country, are of the like extent. Our being toto divisos orbe Britannos, or Alter Orbis, as we have been stil’d… has kept us freer from foreign Mixtures than most Country’s upon the Continent.

Furthermore, the Irish exist in a state of more pristine ethnic purity than the rest of the archipelago, as ‘they have been less exposed to Foreign Mixtures than We of this Island.’³²¹ Union was not only practicable but logical as,

We having before-hand the same Queen, the same Language, the same Laws in the main, the same Great Councils, the same Religion, the same Nation or Stock of People, being all true Britans throughout the two Islands, descended with very little mixture from the Ancient Stock of Natives, who first peopled England, Scotland and Ireland.³²²

Despite affecting an English identity (as Maxwell and others do), some internal evidence indicates an Irish origin, particularly the simultaneous publication in Dublin and London. Not only does the author minimize any Catholic threat, a common thread throughout this pro-union literature (indeed, like Cox’s the argument appears as a means of nullifying it to potentially hostile readers by downgrading the ethnic otherness of the ‘natives’), but the author was also familiar with the Milesian lineage of the reigning house. Irish Protestants would have been familiar with the supposed Milesian lineage of the Stuarts, but this

³²⁰ [Anon.], The Queen an Empress and Her Three Kingdoms One Empire (Dublin & London, 1706), p.9; The author of the pamphlet is also familiar with Petty, discussing the parochial re-organization that Petty discussed.
³²¹ Ibid, p.10.
anonymous author stated that ‘we have for 103 years past been under the same
Monarchs, descended from the Ancient Princes of this Island.’ For the author,
the fact that superficial ethno-religious divisions had become so pertinent was
regrettable – he pointed to the Irish habit of calling the English ‘Sassoons’ as a
symptom of misguided antipathy within ‘the whole British race.’

Some Thoughts Humbly Offer’d is doubly interesting as it articulated the
segregationist sentiments that would pertain for the next thirty years, while
retaining some of the ethnic irencism of the seventeenth century. Published after
the act of 1707, the author presumes an ineradicable distinction between Irishness
and Englishness and the work is void of any reference to shared ethnogenesis or
absorption since medieval settlement. Imputing an alienness to ‘People of
Ireland’, it hazarded they would, after union, ‘in time, be made entirely British,
nor will the Sea between them be longer made an Argument of their Foreignness’
and every Irish person will be ‘made a Britain’. Given the strength of
Anglocentric identification among the Protestants of Ireland, it is unlikely that the
‘people’ here refer only to Irish Protestants. Thus, the author clarifies the ‘people’
by presenting – as Petty did – any prospective union as an engine for transmutation;
‘And when the Native Irish (hitherto kept under servitude) find
themselves thus admitted into your Trade, your Liberties, and Navigation, and
inseparably united to you; their inclinations, as well as Interests, will, by Degrees,
be made your own, and consequently their Religion too.’ There was in this
analysis, no common ethnic base – by this stage (1708) it seems entirely
predicated on faith. Nevertheless, through admittance to British privileges, such a
process, culminating in Anglicanism, could ultimately occur. It would, however,
be the first, more exclusive idea of ethnicity that would survive into the first half
of the eighteenth century.

This pamphlet nevertheless supports the new Irish Protestant segregationism
that was geared toward metropolitan identification rather than domestic
assimilation. As the author stated; ‘So that it seems natural, as well as the Interest
of Great Britain to unite that Kingdom to its self, and render it a part of its own

324 [Anon.], The Queen an Empress, p.16.
Body’, it thereby exemplifies the rhetoric that dominated the first half of the eighteenth century.\(^{326}\) One poet, writing upon the occasion of the act of 1707, expressed it thus;

I am *HIBERNIA*, unregarded Isle!
She said, Far distant from my *ANNA ’S* Smile.
As a Sick Lamb, tho’ still in Pain it be,
Feels less, if all beside it Self be free.
I all your Sickness, and your Pleasures share,
And when you grieve, a double Portion bear.
The vital Spirits diffus’d thro’ ev’ry Part,
If your Hand shakes, I have an Aking Heart:
But now your Tumults and Distractions cease,
See what a florid Vigour paints my Face.
Thine sure must be an *ominous* Disease!
For you Behold with *Unrelenting Eyes*
That I am Sick, and do not Sympathize.
She smil’d, thro’ all her *Clouds*, a sudden Joy
O’erspread her Face, on *Britain’s kind* reply.\(^{327}\)

Comprehending Ireland in this manner – presented here as the telepathic familiar of the British body politic – remained the foundation of ethnographical constructs in the period up to the 1740s. This stasis, however, would begin to crumble by the late 1740s, when Charles Lucas began his libertarian activism against the aldermen of Dublin. Another Charles would see this rupture as an opportunity and begin to write; Charles O’Conor of Belanagare would begin to cautiously undermine the ethnological shibboleths of Hibernia Anglicana.

\(^{326}\) Ibid, p.2.

Chapter Three
Eighteenth-Century Stasis and the Segregationist Supremacy

The year 1707 was a fateful one for the proponents of Irish ethnogenesis from British origins and placed them in the contradictory position of finding their thesis validated in scholarly terms but failing in political terms. Cox, Maxwell and Molyneux all wrote before the publication of Edward Lhuyd’s seminal Archeologica Britannica in 1707 that posited this origin. This work was complemented by the work of continental scholars such as Pezron, who argued for a similar pan-Celtic ethnos spanning France and the British Isles.328 The subsequent evolution of Irish Protestant ethnological rhetoric might seem odd, given the conclusions of Lhuyd – essentially a corroboration of Cox’s idea of Irishness being descended from some pan-archipelagic ethnic antiquity and who reached his conclusions by cross-referencing Irish and ‘Celtic’ languages for common vocabularies to arrive at this belief. However, after this point, the dominant idea of ethnicity for most Irish Anglicans would more fully consolidate into an affirmation of commonality with the metropole, rather than their Catholic or ‘native’ compatriots. In political terms, the prospect of a union steadily diminished and the animosities that marked the 1690s abated, lessening the imperative to argue for a common ancient ethnogenesis for Irish people in the British Isles.

Intellectual developments similarly inflected ethnological narratives. Daniel Woolf has noticed a decline in the importance of descent as a rationalization for both the wielding of power and as a legitimizing historical narrative. Similarly, Locke’s First Treatise may have done something to undermine descent and scripture as touchstones of legitimacy – though research on this is inchoate, if not non-existent.329 However, scripture did not function in Ireland as one of the

328 Edward Lhuyd, Archeologica Britannica (2 Vols., Oxford, 1707); Pezron’s thesis, similar to Lhuyd’s, was translated as Antiquities of Nations, more particularly of the Celtae or Gauls, taken to be originally the same People as our ancient Britains (London, 1706); O’Halloran, Golden Ages, p.21.
moulds of ethnic consciousness or ideology in the same manner as it did for Europeans’ American, African and Oriental encounters. Furthermore, where such biblical paradigms are cited, they tend towards Babelian dispersal rather than Noachic division. Additionally, it remained the case that when ethnic origins were discussed, Noachic division was not prominent. It was simply presumed that the natives were of Japhetan origin and it was politically expedient for all commentators to do so – for Irish Protestants to claim a consanguinity that deflected prospective colonial criticism and for Catholics to claim parity in the European descent of nations. The scholar has waded through the Goths, Easterlings, Heremonians, Partholians and Milesians (and so on) that populate the accounts of Ireland’s ethnic history might be confounded by Colin Kidd’s assertion that ‘Mosaic history persisted as a fundamental constituent of the patriotic histories propagated by Ireland’s Gaelic community.’

While largely unarticulated in these Mosaic terms, the obsession of some clerics with the Irish language as a method for evangelicalism could be interpreted as an attempt to address, and overcome, an ethnic division expressed linguistically which, in turn, inhibited the proselytization that would be a true ‘incorporating’ solution. By acknowledging the language issue, some churchmen appear to have created an unwelcome delineation by implying the existence of ethnic divisions divorced from religion. Simultaneously, while acknowledging this diversity, they pursued a particular agenda that implied ethnic distinctions but which anticipated the prospective conversion of the native Irish. Yet, in expressing this diversity, such clerics may have been influenced by the aforementioned intellectual developments – certainly, there appears to have been a strong Lockean adherence among members of the Church of Ireland that lasted into the late 1730s. Many of these clerics became increasingly impatient at the slow pace of conversion by 1710 and began agitating for proselytization as a private duty, a state necessity and a spiritual obligation. They adhered to the articulations of Anglocentric identity dominant after 1710, but also stressed the mutability of ethnic characteristics. These trends – of Anglocentrism and

330 Kidd, The Forging of Races, pp.54-78.
331 See, for instance, even hostile accounts agree with this; [R.B.], The History of the Kingdom of Ireland: Being an Abridgement of Dean Story’s Wars in Ireland (1746), p.11.
332 Kidd, British Identities, p.65.
proposals for conversion – are apparent in their sermons. Indeed, they were not contradictory in their eyes. The argument was that ethnic distinctions in Ireland were primarily religious distinctions. Proselytizing in Gaelic would necessarily hasten the process of Anglicization as it would allow the ‘natives’ to acquire Protestantism – something now so ingrained in English and Irish Protestant identities that the former would, it was presumed, undoubtedly lead to the latter. This belief appears to have been the preserve of a significant portion – though not a majority – of the Church of Ireland hierarchy in the same period. It was almost certainly at odds with wider ethnographical shibboleths in early eighteenth-century Ireland that placed a primacy on maintaining the commonalities between Irish and English Protestants.

Numerous historians have noted this predilection from 1700 onwards.333 Political developments played an undoubted role in this change and so does the settled state of Irish society until the 1790s. S. J. Connolly has asserted that Ireland altered from ‘a territory inhabited by settlers and natives to that of a single society divided along lines of religion and class’ – however, ethnic labels increasingly began to be expressed in religious terms.334 Joep Leerssen is right to state Irish Protestants ‘of the early eighteenth century saw themselves as Englishmen born in Ireland and never grew tired of proclaiming the fact.’ Likewise, Ian McBride has pointed out that ‘confessional differences in Ireland were intertwined with ethnic divisions absent from the English situation’.335 Ethnological rhetoric was also marked by secure and self-confident assertions of consanguinity and kinship with English Protestants. However, for the period between 1700 and 1720 there is an efflorescence of incorporating thought similar to the seventeenth century. This, however, was geared toward faith rather than ethnicity, was not gradualist and still emphasized the punitive segregationism which characterised wider developments in Irish legislation during this period. This movement was brief and did not extend beyond 1720. After this, expressions became largely dominated by ideas of ethnicity that explained or even excused

335 Leerssen, Mere Irish, p.294; Ian McBride, unpublished paper quoted with kind permission of author.
continuing division on the grounds of an incompatible set of characteristics that
inhered in descent and which were, hence, inexorable. As Protestantism was
perceived as having some palliative power upon this ethno-cultural rigidity, and
Ireland was a society divided upon conventional European lines (albeit with the
Irish peculiarity of the majority faith being disenfranchised), clerical activity shall
be foregrounded.

This chapter shall analyse the attitudes to ethnic and religious division
engendered by and the strategies embraced in this new environment. As the
official political distinctions in the Irish body politic now were delineated by
confession, it is worth assessing the implications of this situation upon
ethnological ideas and rhetoric. It will be seen that that this new context presented
opportunities and challenges for the Church of Ireland. First, the clergymen of the
church were instrumental in the creation of this new ethnology that stressed the
inveterate hostility of Catholics – both Gaelic and Old English. Secondly, it also
presented them with challenges – particularly when it came to debates about
conversion and proselytization. This placed Irish Protestants in a delicate
position, as the acquisition of political power and social position often depended
upon the attainment of patronage and place based on their religious beliefs.
Nevertheless, many of them were aware that the establishment in church and state
would be perpetually precarious if no effort were made to ‘protestantise’ Ireland.
As such, they were forced to address proposals concerned with solutions that
depended on ethnic engineering (that is, Anglicization) or purely religious reform
(Anglicanization). Lastly, as union became increasingly unlikely, there was less
need to appeal to an English audience or mitigate perceptions that Irish
Protestants were a grasping colonial elite through the mobilization of ethnological
consanguinity in the distant past. This increased the insularity of ethnological
debates and led to a willingness to comprehend all Catholics as ‘natives’ whose
ethnic lineage determined their innate characteristic or their obstinate refusal to
become either English or Protestant. This chapter will deal with these debates and
portray the political ethnographies that these debates facilitated. This was a time
of flux in political ethnographies and historical narratives – at the beginning,
preachers and commentators were keen to emphasize that Catholicism and
Protestantism were religious labels that covered a number of ethnic groups.
However, during the period after 1710, it was widely presumed that ‘Irish’ was a
supplementary term for ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ functioned similarly for ‘English’.

Anglization and Anglicization

Given the early modern potency of pulpit pronouncements these pontifications are valuable resources for viewing how Protestant Ireland wrestled with ethnicity, politics and, perhaps more obviously, religion and religious division. As expressions of Irish Protestant ethnography they are paramount. Additionally, given the dearth of Irish Protestant contributions to Irish historiography during the period 1690-1740, they must be the mainstay of any analysis of ethnological theories and attitudes to religion and ethnicity. Thus, as the likelihood of incorporation (both ethnic and political) receded, the pamphlets prompted by the brief possibility of such an event trickled out, and it is to commentary, clerical pronouncement and the few examples of historiography produced that we must turn to provide the best illustration of how considerations of ethnicity coloured or reflected political thought-processes.

The hardening of confessional attitudes and the abandonment of incorporating attitudes manifest in Cox and Dopping was equally visible in the increased segregationism evinced in sermons. As early as 1692 Bishop Wetenhall of Cork demanded a segregation of sorts between the two main groups on the island. Many, if not most of the sermons in the immediate aftermath of the Boyne, were of this kind, warning against Irish perfidy and extolling the necessity of eternal vigilance. Wetenhall displayed the usual type of hostility wherein ethnicity predominated; while Catholicism was still upbraided as an antipathetic force, it was ‘Irish tyranny’ and the inveterate hatred of the latter for the English that motivated rebels. Furthermore, the abhorrence of the Irish even extended to Old English, ‘for they had no regard to them’ due to their ethnic origin. John Travers, in a sermon of 1695, could speak of ‘our Native Enemies’, without reference to the Old English, while painting the massacres as being due to both

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innate characteristics of the Gaelic Irish and the Roman Catholic religion.\textsuperscript{338} In most of the immediate post-war period, preachers expounded upon Ireland in much the same terms as their Cromwellian predecessors, in terms of native savagery and promoted by a Catholicism that was compatible with their knavish nature.

By the turn of the century, however, the anniversary sermons’ focus starts to shift onto Catholicism itself as the main engine of Irish iniquity. In 1698, the Bishop of Waterford, Nathaniel Foy, cited the cause of the 1641 massacres being due to Catholicism’s ability to imbue barbarism. The Irish nation was presumed to be ‘Catholic’ – albeit amenable to conversion – and the Old English were not mentioned.\textsuperscript{339} The same year, John Travers had moderated his stance to include the soon-to-be recurring character of Owen O’Connolly, the ‘native’ Anglican who had revealed the 1641 plot to the authorities, as a way of highlighting the now evangelically redeemable natives.\textsuperscript{340} A further example of the abeyance of strictly ethnic interpretations in favour of religious ones was the impressment of the Old English into 1641 sermons and other literature; not ethnically degenerated, as in the past, by proximity to or affinity with the ‘Irish’, but fatally compromised due to their tenacious Catholicism. Edward Smyth surmised,

\begin{quote}
But I take their Hatred against us, as supposing us to be Hereticks... for we find the English Offspring of the Pale, to be drawn into this Rebellion, against their own Country men, because they were Papists; and it cannot be imagined that the whole Irish Nation could have drawn into such barbarous Practices, if they had not been set on Fire by the furious Principles of the Church of Rome.\textsuperscript{341}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{338} John Travers, \textit{A Sermon Preach’d in St. Andrew’s-Church Dublin; Before the Honourable House of Commons the 8th Day of October, 1695} (1695); Irish character ‘corresponded with the nature of their Religion’, p.7.
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\textsuperscript{339} Nathaniel Foy, \textit{A sermon preached in Christ's-Church, Dublin, on the 23d. of October, 1698} (1698), pp.25-28.
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\textsuperscript{340} John Travers, \textit{A sermon preached in St. Andrew’s Church, Dublin} (1698), p.2-3; George Story, \textit{A Sermon Preach’d before his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant and a Numerous Assembly of the Protestant Gentlemen of Ireland} (London, 1714), p.12; Henry Maule, \textit{A Sermon Preach’d in Christ-Church Before his Grace Lionel, Duke of Dorset} (1733), p.9.
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\textsuperscript{341} Edward Smyth, Bishop of Down and Connor, \textit{A Sermon Preach’d in Christ-Church, Dublin on Saturday the 23rd of October, 1703} (1703), p.16.
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Similarly, ‘the Rage and Activity of Popery Spirited up those of English Extraction … all other Interests were swallowed up in that of Religion’. Moreover, ‘the English by Descent who were Papists, joined … in the contrivance of that horrid Design.’ This use of the Old English appears designed to align the sectarian and xenophobic complexities of 1641 with a simplified reality of the early eighteenth century – namely, that faith was the primary divisive issue. The same author stated baldly that there was ‘clear, and undeniable Evidence, that the horrid Rebellion of Forty-one, was contrived, and fomented by the Popish Clergy.’ George Story, author of an eye-witness account of the Williamite War, was unequivocal; ‘those Things were really the Effects of their Religion and Principles, rather than of their personal Animosities.’ One preacher stated, more succinctly, ‘Religion alone was the Quarrel’.

The increased popularity of Temple underscored this new nullification of ethnicity as the sole operating turbine of savagery, as he portrayed the Old English and Irish bonding together to extirpate the Protestant settlers. In Temple’s account this represented a fundamental shift away from the primacy of ethnocentric divisions and solutions (as understood then) and the lamentations about degeneracy that mark earlier commentaries, towards a system of segregation constructed entirely upon faith. In Temple’s *Irish Rebellion* an awareness of Davies is apparent in the rejection of the jurist-poet’s ecumenical ambitions and by Temple’s condemnation of the Jacobean assimilative policy as counter-productive. This rejection was explicit in the text; ‘The two Nations had now [i.e. 1641] lived together for forty Years in Peace, with great Security and Comfort, which had in a manner consolidated them into one Body… as might make a constant and perpetual Union between them.’ According to Temple, this harmony was severely disrupted by troublesome priests who enflamed Catholics

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345 John Temple, *Irish Rebellion; or an history of the beginning and first progresse of the generall rebellion raised within the kingdom of Ireland upon the … 23 Oct. 1641* (London, 1644)
to rebel. This interpretation was reflected in the anniversary sermons. After 1603 ‘all the inhabitants Blended into one People’ and ‘allied to one another by intermarriages in their families’ before 1641 convinced Irish Protestants never to intermingle or embrace incorporationist policies again. Indeed, those belonging to the incorporationists ‘believed that the protestants had sinned by neglecting the indigenous Irish [but] were outnumbered by a group which believed that God would humble the protestants of Ireland for consistently treating the restless Irish too leniently’. The latter were the segregationists whom would dominate the first half of the eighteenth century.

There is a surprising degree of sophistication in the sermons and the preachers appeared keen to justify the penal laws as conforming to then-established philosophical, social and political norms. One motivation was to portray the laws not as ethno-culturally but religiously-based, an Irish expression of the faith qualifications common across Europe, but also ‘to defuse the explosive potential of racial difference as a weapon in the hands of religious heterodoxy.’ Locke was important in this regard – most noticeably his argument against toleration of Catholicism, namely, the purported ability of those professing this religion to break contracts and oaths made with Protestants. This ‘Injury done to Mankind by the Breach of Covenant’ was a serious matter to these preachers and they utilized Locke, arguing that such purported practises were ‘Destructive to Human Society.’ As Michael Brown has pointed out ‘Irish Protestants were concerned with – not to say obsessed by – the question of whether Catholics could keep faith with heretics and with the supposed deposing power of the pope’. This preoccupation was repeatedly mentioned in printed sermons. But Locke’s thought, like his use of conquest theory, was double-edged for Church of Ireland

One cleric, Ralph Lambert complained about the Catholic and Dissenter assumption of Lockean counter-argument as early as 1705 when complaining about those ‘who cry out upon our Religion and Laws, as Oppressive and Persecuting Men Conscience sake.’ Yet Locke was also utilized in other ways. Scholars – most noticeably Patrick Kelly – have cast doubt on the widespread adherence to Lockean political philosophy in Ireland in the early eighteenth century. However, Locke’s epistemology and his study of human psychology had a considerable cachet and stimulated Irish Protestant thought in the period after their publication. Of foremost relevance here is Locke’s insistence on a *tabula rasa* (or blank slate) that he propounded as the total absence of any innate ideas in the human mind – with certain qualifications such as the natural human desire to seek happiness and avoid misery. This resulted in an effort among some Irish Protestants to seriously consider and initiate possible conversion schemes. And as Irish politics and society was ostensibly divided along religious lines it was in this realm that the last serious efforts at assimilation were attempted. Furthermore, given the religious nature of this movement, it was harnessed by members of the Church of Ireland, whose efforts exposed serious divisions in Irish Protestant opinion in the early eighteenth-century – including divisions within the Church itself.

Such a Lockean consciousness invariably affected views on both the potential of conversion and ethnology. No-one, according to this view, is born a ‘Papist’. This cast the formation and implementation of the penal laws in sharp relief – namely, that they were social-engineering schemes – indeed, they were ‘one of most persistent legislative efforts ever undertaken to change a people’. This Lockean aspect was recognized by one of the earliest revisionist historians of the

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So, among early eighteenth-century Protestants, there were some divergences of opinion over the precise nature and aims of the penal code. While all were segregationist – in that they were voraciously opposed to the ethnic acculturation through encounter and legal gradualism characteristic of incorporationists – they differed over whether conversion or perpetual exclusion was the ultimate intent of the laws. Additionally, it was widely accepted that the basis of the laws should be punitive exclusion in order to incentivize conversion through rewarding only total submission. Lastly, differing social groups propounded differing goals and methods. Church of Ireland members seemed in agreement over the lack of innate characteristics and need for conversion – though they disagreed on whether Anglicization should precede conversion or vice versa. By contrast, the landed Protestant interest – manifest in the House of Commons – insisted on the inveterateness of Irish Catholics and were reluctant to devote resources to conversion.

Outside Ireland, ethnological and colonial paradigms were still regularly utilized – particularly in the sermons preached to Irish Protestants in London. Railing against those ‘whom may deny [the] facts’ of 1641, Ralph Lambert used the justification of expedient necessity and mobilized a New World example of Catholic cruelty, positioning Irish Protestants as native Americans, in an inversion of the accusations that had been applied in the previous decade. Something similar was related to another audience of Irish Protestants five years later, referencing ‘the Millions of Indians [who] had no Choice but to be Baptiz’d or Murder’d’. Toleration was zero-sum in these representations – allowing such freedom would only give Irish Catholics the room to discriminate. Essentially - as William Stephens alleged – ‘A sensible Christian knows that there is no Medium between Persecution and Toleration; if you will not tolerate, you must persecute.’ A discordant note in this series was displayed by the only Irish preacher of these sermons. Roscommon-born St. George Ashe, instrumental in

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355 Lambert, Sermon to the Protestants of Ireland, p.5; John Ramsay, A Sermon Preach’d to the Protestants of Ireland, Now in London, At the Parish Church of St. Mary-Le-Bow (1713), p.6.
the adoption of Locke’s work onto the Trinity College curriculum during his tenure as provost, was probably far more in conformity with Irish Protestant opinion when he asserted that ‘penal Laws and Severity have hitherto proved ineffectual.’\textsuperscript{357} As the only Irish-born preacher, it was also significant that he was the only one to call for a legislative union.\textsuperscript{358}

This new emphasis on Catholic iniquity – rather than inherent disabilities – by many members of the Church of Ireland ran in tandem with serious efforts on the part of much of their establishment to commence a comprehensive programme of conversion among Irish Catholics. The literature of this movement reveals associated ideas of ethnicity and historical mentalities. Ashe himself, citing the penal statutes, advocated ministering to Irish Catholics by ‘complying in some measure with their Infirmities, by allowing them the Word of God in our excellent Liturgy, and other Protestant books in their own Language’. As the penal statutes failed in their ostensible end, namely, the extirpation of Catholicism, those of a reformist or assimilative bent looked to evangelization in Gaelic.\textsuperscript{359} This effort, however, had a distinct ethno-cultural flavour beyond the simple desire to ‘perform the Offices of Religion to them in their own language’.\textsuperscript{360} These reformers deemed Protestantism as best to pacify Ireland and advance prosperity; they similarly claimed faith took precedence as it was ‘the Popish Religion, and not the Irish language that is repugnant to the English Interest’. This attempt to use vernacular methods of conversion was formally approved – the Lower House of Convocation (for the junior clergy) resolved in 1709 and 1710 that ‘a competent number of ministers duly qualified to instruct the natives’ were essential in order to convert the population using Irish.\textsuperscript{361}

Others disagreed – and prioritized ‘Anglicization’ over evangelization. The

\textsuperscript{358} St. George Ashe, \textit{A Sermon Preach’d to the Protestants of Ireland, Now in London, At the Parish-Church of St. Clement Dane, October 23, 1712 (1712)}, pp.22, 23.
\textsuperscript{360} John Richardson, \textit{A Short History of the Attempts that have been made to Convert the Popish Natives of Ireland, to the Establish’d Religion} (London, 1712), p.lxxvii.
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid, pp.37-40.
Upper House of Convocation (the bishops of the Church of Ireland) rejected this resolution on the grounds that it was ‘destructive of the English Interest’. Similarly, Nathaniel Foy argued against conversion in Gaelic as an ‘expedient as little fitted to promote the Conversion of the Irish’ because ‘It is readily granted that to unite us in Religion, is a good Expedient to unite us in Speech; but then this must be done by uniting them to us, not us to them’. Similarly, another objected that respecting Gaelic would have the effect of consolidating Irish culture and arrest Anglicization. Henry Maule, Bishop of Dromore and one of the progenitors of the charity school movement, similarly stressed the necessity of instruction ‘of the Irish Natives, in the Principles of the True Religion, and the English Tongue’ without using the Irish language. This scepticism was also leavened with fatalism about the prospect of either conversion or acculturation. Richard Thomas, a clergyman in rural Galway, wrote a letter to his bishop questioning whether ‘we can expect any substantial progress… in this great work in our generation’. John Richardson, one of the prime movers of the vernacular scheme, when waylaid with demands that acculturation precede conversion, objected that, ‘The Inhabitants of Wales are generally Protestants; and the reason is, because they are instructed, and have Religious Offices performed in Welsh’. Nevertheless, he published his book of sermons with alternate English and Gaelic pages as a concession to his critics. Similar schemes were promoted by the Bishop of Down and Connor, Francis Hutchinson. Hutchinson faced backstairs and epistolary upbraiding from his ecclesiastical peers for his attempts to

367 Barnard, ‘Protestants and the Irish Language’, p.253, Richardson, A Short History, p.67; he also felt it necessary to have a section of the text headed ‘Preaching in Irish not contrary to Law’; John Richardson, Senamora ar na Priom Phoncabh na Creidieamh [Sermons upon the Principle Points of Religion] (London, 1711); Sneddon, ‘“Darkness must be Expell’d”’, p.45; Leersen, Mere Irish, p.320.
modernize the language into a new phonetically sound form.\textsuperscript{368} Indeed, the whole enterprise, which did not last beyond the 1720s (barring the ineffectual and exploitative charity school movement), was met with a large degree of ambivalence on the part of both hierarchy and parliament that served to stymie any development of coherent evangelization effort.

The reasons for this should be clear. Preaching in Irish presented a unique set of problems to the Irish Protestant elite. Conversion using the vernacular could simply create a still-hostile majority clinging still to their language and cultural norms, whom now had the confessional qualifications to hold office and place upon the establishment. Should an exclusionary political and social system persist – in which only ethno-cultural distinctions determined the allocation of patronage and resources – Irish Protestants might be seen to profit from colonial privilege. This sensitivity persisted beyond the accusations of colonial status levelled at Irish Protestants during the 1690s. Preaching in London, Lambert could object to accusations that reluctance to evangelize among Irish Catholics was ‘Worldly’; ‘since the Laws have already settled our Maintenance; and tho’ every Papist in the Kingdom were converted to us, yet our Sallaries would be neither Less nor More than they are; no, we seek not theirs, but them’. Another insisted that ‘the common People, who are no way concerned in Point of Property, but must continue Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water, whoever prevails, and are as full easy under Protestant Landlords, as under those of their own Religion’.\textsuperscript{369}

Thus, early eighteenth-century Protestants agreed in principle that collective or large-scale conversion was a fine and noble thing, but in practice it might threaten much-prized livelihoods. This, in turn, was affected by the frequently hostile relationship between the hierarchy and the Irish gentry – the latter were upbraided by many clerics for acting as obstacles to conversion from primarily financial motivations. Archbishop King of Dublin, scourge of the gentry, was aware that failure to proselytize could be interpreted as colonial complacency – that is, continuing to base exclusionary practises on ethnic determinants would underscore perceptions that Irish society and politics was colonial and derived

\textsuperscript{368} Sneddon, ‘Darkness must be Expell’d’, pp.49-50.
\textsuperscript{369} Lambert, \textit{A Friendly Admonition}, p.9; Edward Synge, \textit{A Vindication of a Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons on Sunday the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of October, 1725... In answer to Rev’d. Mr Radcliffe’s Letter} (1726), p.79.
from conquest. This explains his embarrassment over legislation that attempted sudden and drastic ethno-cultural measures embedded in the penal statutes – specifically, that they appeared as attempts to discriminate between ethnic groups rather than distinguish between religious communities. This concern was shared with other proponents of proselytization – its main publicist, Richardson, lamented efforts to ‘Convert the Irish, by attempting to abolish their Language, or by any severe and disagreeable methods.’\(^\text{370}\) King and Edward Synge in particular, frustrated at the lack of movement on conversion, did their level best to obstruct new penal legislation in the House of Lords - an effort for which they were thanked by the Gallican priest of Dublin, Cornelius Nary.\(^\text{371}\) King further asserted that the real reluctance to convert was due to Protestant gentry ambitions to oppress Catholics and ‘get their lands and make them Hewers of Wood and drawers of water.’\(^\text{372}\) In contrast, opponents of the conversion schemes mobilized the idea of Anglicization as a way to highlight that the demotic schemes exemplified an unwise inhibition upon assimilation; with only a religious conversion, the consequent vitality of Gaelic culture would stymie the fusion of the two peoples. For, as Toby Barnard, points out, Irish Protestants in this period were trapped by their unique position and were ‘prisoners of race and theology, [who] monotonously opposed coercion to conciliation and veered erratically between the two.’\(^\text{373}\)

These differing programmes – however loosely classifiable as ‘programmes’ – were complemented by differing theories of human nature. Clerics stressed the long-term expedience of their aims by stressing the mutable nature of all men and the ameliorating power of Protestantism to transform Irish Catholics into civil, productive and rational members of society. The ethnology of the landed interest – ultimately triumphant – instead stressed the inveterate characteristics of savagery and sloth in the ‘natives’ that little might be done to mitigate. This idea was manifest most eloquently in the improvement literature of the period 1710-1740. Though – as we shall see – this literature eventually transformed into a

\(^{370}\) Richardson, \textit{Short History}, p.12.

\(^{371}\) [Cornelius Nary], \textit{The Case of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland} (1724) from McBride, ‘Catholics Politics in the Penal Era’, pp.4, 7.

\(^{372}\) William King to William Wake, 19 July 1715, TCD MS 1489/1/25.

\(^{373}\) Barnard, ‘Protestants and the Irish Language’, p.244.
body of thought that thoroughly castigated the landlord class, in the beginning it
served to instil an awareness of the inevitable futility of attempting any but the
most harsh or drastic forms of social organization. Land clearances, rack-renting
and the imposition of pastoral farming all resulted from this ethnological outlook
– something noticed by William King.\textsuperscript{374} King’s impatience with the landlords
and his belief they failed to perform their Christian duty due to perceived greed
was a motif in his correspondence and writings. It was a perspective similarly
shared with Edward Synge.\textsuperscript{375} However, King was also aware that an ethnology
mobilized to argue for political privilege – as Englishmen – had created an
associated ethnology that excused economic failure by rendering the ‘natives’
culpable. King observed that the ‘poverty of the people and neglect of education
of children do not always proceed from the Laziness of the people or their
unwillingness to give them learning, but much more from the cruelty of the
Landlords who rack their Tenants’.\textsuperscript{376}

Where, then, does political ethnography fit into all this? The sermons serve –
not just as justifications for the growing body of legislation known as the penal
laws – but as compelling warnings against too idealistic an embrace of the
incorporationist principles articulated during the seventeenth century. These
previous ‘incorporationists’ were willing for a large degree of religious and
cultural heterogeneity to exist provided stability was assured and acculturation
occurred over time. Conversely, in the proposals of the segregationists, the
standards for ethnic and religious relations were set so high as to be near
impossible – and would have required significant resources to effect. So, the
thrust of post-1700 ethnology was intended to caution against a return to earlier
incorporationist attitudes. The supposed ecumenical idyll before 1641 was, like
the Old English, pressed into use to service this ideological need. The ‘Sunshine
of Ease and Prosperity’ had shone on Ireland until Popish cruelty had manifest
itself against all the dictates of natural law; ‘the Irish Papists liv’d with their
English Neighbours, under the open appearance of all neighbourly Friendship’

\textsuperscript{374} William King to Edward Southwell, 12 November 1719, TCD MS750/5 f.210-12.
\textsuperscript{375} Edward Synge to William Wake, 19 November 1719, Gilbert MS28, f.120-1.
\textsuperscript{376} King to Rev. Edward Nicholson, 20 December 1712 quoted from Susan Reilly, ‘William King
and the Idea of ‘Improvement’’ in Christopher J. Fauske, Archbishop William King and the
and had ‘liv’d together in all appearance of mutual Security’. Indeed, argued the segregationists, since the Henrician submission, it had been the ‘Policy and Laws which the English Introduced, shewed their desire to Incorporate with the Irish, and to grow up into one and the same People.’ Furthermore, ‘they admitted the Irish to equal Privileges, and there were Laws provided to remove all differences, in order to make us one People.’ Having discarded the ‘gentle Yoke of our Reasonable Laws’ to which ‘so freely they had subjected themselves’ they therefore, effectively, betrayed the altruistic and assimilative ambitions of Anglo-Protestant Ireland. The only lesson to be learnt from this was, according to John Ramsay, to ‘Let us never join in Interest with the People of these Abominations, strengthen those Hands that have always been lifted up against us, or act in Concert with Men, who have always bore a tyrannous Hate against us.’

These clerical outputs displayed some coherence in their preoccupations but there were nevertheless divisions over long-term goals. Despite a strong historical consciousness that congealed into sufferance narratives and segregationism in Irish Protestant mentalities, purely scholarly writing on ethnography is relatively scant in this period. However, this period was marked by a dominant attitude to previous ethnological schemes. As the above examples show, historical events were used to warn against an assimilation that was not absolute – that is, in which Irish Catholics did not became at once ‘Anglicized’ and ‘Protestant’. Nevertheless, scholars wondered why in other nations the distinctions, which so marked the Irish socio-political fabric, were lost whereas ‘in Ireland, we are still two distinct Peoples.’ During this period, there is little outright attempt to engage in scholarly ethnology or the history of population movements. While the antiquarian heritage that influenced O’Conor shall be the subject of another chapter, for the moment it is worth pointing to the absence of any such Irish Protestant histories in the period 1690-1740, the output of which consisted of reprints from the previous century. However, after the debates regarding the


378 Lambert, A Sermon...1708, p.8; Smyth, A Sermon... 1703, p.16.

379 Synge, Thankfulness to Almighty God... 1711, p.15; Ramsay, A Sermon... 1713, p.17.

380 Robert Howard, A Sermon Preached... 1722, p.23; Richardson, A Short History, p.143.
potential of conversion schemes declined after 1720, an ethnological obsession
with innate characteristics triumphed in its place.

**Creating the ‘Lazy Native’**

Whatever the discontinuity that may have existed between scholarly work and
conversion schemes, the world of officialdom was in no doubt as to which species
of ethno-religious policy should be enforced and to what end their exertions
should be directed. As we have seen, three appeals for union were dispatched by
the Irish parliament; during the sessions of 1703-4, 1707 and 1709 such petitions
were sent to the throne.\(^{381}\) At the same time parliament, after the initial heated
enthusiasm of 1697 that saw an attempt to legislatively prohibit the Irish
language, settled into a sporadic rhythm of creating a raft of measures that
attempted to create a segregationist state. Such endeavours, as McGrath has
shown, was at first grounded in genuine alarm, matched by a recognition of the
need for such measures from Westminster.\(^{382}\) However, the supremacy of
segregationist Protestantism over gradualist absorption began to take rhetorical
shape; in 1715, the Lords Justices (of whom Sir Richard Cox was one at the time)
requested the Commons ‘once more put an end to all other distinctions in Ireland
but that of Protestant and Papist.’ Likewise, the Lord Lieutenant (Carteret) could
state, ‘All the Protestants of the Kingdom have but one common interest, and…the same common enemy.’\(^ {383}\) The patent inability of the laws to succeed
perplexed many commentators, particularly churchmen, whose initial
disappointment in their failure was soon tempered by the evangelical schemes
enlisted above. However, older and specifically ethnic perspectives survive in
polemical works dealing with ‘improvements’ and political events and – despite
the desire to eradicate ethnic labels – ‘Irish’ increasingly became shorthand for
‘Catholic’. Irish Protestant identifications and ambitions increasingly rested upon
aggressive assertions of ethno-religious consanguinity with English Protestants.
Examples of this are overwhelming – and it has become a commonplace in

\(^{381}\) Hayton, ‘Ideas of Union’, *Political Discourse*, p.159; Cox was actively supportive of the
measure in the Commons; *Commons Journal*, Oct. 20, 1703 from Lecky, *Ireland in the Eighteenth
Century*, I, p.443.

\(^{382}\) McGrath, *Securing the Protestant Interest*, p.32.

\(^{383}\) Lecky, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, i, p.166; my italics.
scholarship that Irish Protestant identifications in this period were directed at the metropole. By far the most common, however, are contained in improvement literature before 1740. This complements presumptions of inveterate ‘native’ disability. For instance, Sir John Browne could talk of the ‘lazy Irish’ without elaboration. One contemporary assumed that the natives were ‘the most lazy and indolent people in the world.’ Another regretted that Irish Catholics had yet to be ‘cured of their native Sloth and Idleness.’

Swift was one such writer who exemplified the attitudes to Englishness of this period. He was, among the political voices of early eighteenth-century Ireland, certainly the most vocal that adhered to a definitive and consistent espousal of the principle that stressed Anglicanism as the determining factor in the allocation of rights. He also stuck fast to a strictly religious definition of division in Ireland. Yet Swift ignored Catholic threats and focused, as with many Anglicans, on Presbyterians as the greater threat to the Church of Ireland’s status; ‘The Papists are wholly disarmed. They have neither Courage, Leaders, Money of Inclinations to rebel.’ The implication was that the Dissenters of the north had an easier existence – and darkly insinuated that a similar fate should be meted out to them. Swift is best comprehended as someone painfully conscious of his rights as an Englishman, but was mugged by the reality of a continuing denial of parity, famously stating that,

We consist of two Parties, I do not mean Popish and Protestant, High and Low Church, Episcopal and Sectarians, Whig and Tory; but of those English who happen to be born in this Kingdom, (whose ancestors reduced the whole Nation under the Obedience of the English Crown,) and the Gentlemen sent from the other Side to possess most of the Employments.

384 Sir John Browne, Seasonable remarks on trade. With some reflections on the advantages that might accrue to Great Britain, by a proper regulation of the trade of Ireland (1729), pp.15, 32, 52, 104.
386 Jonathan Swift, A letter from a member of the House of Commons in Ireland to a member of the House of Commons in England, concerning the sacramental test (1709), p.6.
387 Jonathan Swift, Advice to the Freemen of Dublin (1733) from Joep Leersen, Mere Irish, p.311.
His default position, therefore, was one of righteousness made furious by lack of English acknowledgement of their blatant compatibility as ‘one-people’ with the Protestants of Ireland; ‘Am I a free-man in England, and do I become a Slave in six Hours by crossing the Channel?’ This, from the second Drapier’s Letter, was reiterated in the fourth; ‘let you see that by the laws of God, of Nature, of Nations, and of your own Country, you are and Ought to be as Free a people as your Brethren in England.’ These quotations are selective but Swift was not a programmatic thinker, but one who lived in state of perpetual indignation at violations of his English rights by a metropole that should have had more consideration. What is evident is his staunch belief in the determination of political rights according to the dictates of post-1710 political ethnography; his anger was fuelled by the feeling that this was being ignored by an aloof or supercilious England. As such, he was frequently more concerned with the polemical utility of emphasizing his Englishness and using this to denigrate Dissenters.

Other ‘improvers’ were less likely to match Swift’s outrage, but stated, in rather more placid tones, the dominant ethnology. This was expressed in meek statements like the following from Samuel Madden, ‘We resolve, as we never forget what we owe to England, so that we will ever hope that she will what Benefit and Advantage she does, or may receive, by encouraging us.’ Furthermore, ‘We will ever sincerely wish for, consult, and promote the Happiness and Welfare of Great Britain as our common Parent.’ Another was eager to emphasize that ‘as the People of Ireland, as Descendants of the transplanted English, [and] their affinity to us in Blood... lays us under the

388 Jonathan Swift, A Letter to Mr. Harding the Printer, upon Occasion of a Paragraph in his News-Paper of 1 August, relating to Mr. Wood’s Half-Pence by M. B. (1724); Jonathan Swift, A letter to the whole people of Ireland. By M. B. drapier. Author of the Letter to the shop-keepers, &c (1724); at the same time, Primate Boulter grumbled that ‘I have little to complain of but that to many of our own original esteem us Englishmen, as intruders’; Boulter to Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, 24 Nov. 1724, Letters Written by His Excellency Hugh Boulter, D. D., Lord Primate of All Ireland (2 Vols., Oxford, 1769), i, p.1-2.

389 [Samuel Madden], Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland (1738), pp.111, 107.
strongest Obligations’.\(^{390}\) This was not a vague, ill-defined banality, or flattery to an urbane metropolitan audience, but a reminder to his Irish readership to distinguish themselves as equipping adequate cultural characteristics and a heritage of liberty. Indeed, ‘we might hope for a large share of all those blessings may have been our Lot, and descended down to us as the Inheritance of our Ancestors, who were sent hither to enlarge the British Empire and Commerce.’\(^{391}\) As Madden commiserated with his readership for ‘the pity of having English Blood in their Veins, [and feeling] the Burthen of Irish Poverty galling their Backs’, Arthur Dobbs counselled against ‘being Splenetick or grumbling at any Restrictions put upon us by our Ancestors’ and should console themselves with hoping to ‘chearfully contribute to support the Power, Wealth, Fame and Commerce of the British Empire of which Ireland is no inconsiderable member.’\(^{392}\) Dobbs commenced his popular work of improvement using, again, bodily analogies to highlight the benefits accruing to mutual dependence, which he naturally extends to Britain and Ireland ‘whose Interests are inseparable.’ The natural end of all this would be to ‘unite our Affections with our Brethren in England’\(^{393}\). Note, however, the creeping awareness that this unification of blood and interest was inchoate. Indeed, the language of the political ethnography of Protestant Ireland became similar to the incorporationist thought of the seventeenth century – namely, that it became increasingly aspirational as the century progressed. The obvious difference was, of course, that at this time it was directed the population of England rather than envisioning placid ethnic relations in Ireland. One improver observed that ‘Thus stands the Jealousy between the two Countries [Ireland and Britain], and it were greatly to be wished, that by Concessions of one Side and the other, it might be so managed that, as to remove the Dispute, and make us one People, with one Interest and one Will.’\(^{394}\) Additionally, some resentment was felt about commercial restrictions. In


\(^{393}\) Ibid, I, p.3 & II, Dedication, pp.2-3, 6; the phrase about ‘uniting our Affections’ reoccurs on page 8 of the Dedication.

particular, improvers emphasized that ‘the people of Ireland, are Descendants of the transplanted English’ and that this affinity in ‘Blood, Religion and Government’ demanded equality of treatment in accessing markets. Other improvers took up Dobbs’s cry about the restrictions placed upon them by people sharing the same ‘ancestors’, and objected to the Irish obsession with the handicaps placed on the woollen trade. Again, this raised English hackles - one metropolitan observer alleged that ‘tho’ mostly Descendants of other Nations’ Irish Protestants had imbibed ‘the despotic Qualities, peculiar to the Old Irish’.

The latter complainant cited the constant declamations against the act of 1699 as an irritant, something that Bishop Berkeley shared when he reprimanded his compatriots for this fixation. Berkeley wondered,

95. Qu. Whether our hankering after our own woollen trade be not the true and only reason which hath created a jealousy in England toward Ireland? And whether anything can hurt us more than such jealousy?
96. Qu. Whether it be not the true interest of both nations to become one people?
97. Qu. Whether the upper part of this people are not truly English, by blood, language, religion, manners, inclination, and interest?

The political ethnography of Protestant Ireland had warped; from an aspiration of the seventeenth-century Irish Protestants to tolerate heterogeneity in the anticipation of future ethnogenesis, to a plea for a recognition, in political and economic terms, for their Englishness to be observed. Likewise, the predilection for supplementing religious qualifications for ethnicity is apparent in a number of Berkeley’s queries, most noticeably one that asks, ‘And whether it be not a vain attempt, to project the flourishing of our Protestant Gentry, exclusive of the Bulk of our Natives?’

396 George Berkeley, *The Querist, Containing Several Queries Proposed to the Consideration of the Public* (1725 [1735]), p.20.
Conclusion

The conversion movement was essentially the last gasp of an older incorporationist ideology transformed for the new religious orientation of the Irish polity after 1692. The high profile of Owen O’Connolly and the Old English in sermons illustrated this development. Some of these initiatives owed much to Lockean ideas of psychology and human nature imported and altered for specific Irish ethnologies. Dean Story, in a sermon in London, could state confidently that ‘Nature hath made no Distinction between Men of that Persuasion and any other’ to indicate potential conversion among the obdurate – though not inveterate – Roman Catholics of Ireland. But it was, nevertheless, informed by older desires for incorporation, albeit altered into an unrealistic desire for mass conversion and marred by squabbles over the purpose and intent of the legislation designed to accomplish – or not – this incorporation. Edward Synge, proponent of proselytization in the demotic and a Lockean by conviction expressed this ambition in terms remarkably reminiscent of the gradualists of the seventeenth century;

Once remove their priests and place some Protestant ministers amongst them, who may be able to read our liturgy, and some few plain homilies composed in Irish…. And they would all become Protestants in a little time. And when once they come to embrace our religion, they will presently be willing to learn our language also, and glad to become one people with us.

Synge’s remark is nevertheless revealing of the dilemmas faced by those proposing such schemes. They wrestled with the multi-ethnic character of their polity and society, vacillating between Anglicization and Protestantization and, ultimately, failed to convince their hardheaded and resource-strapped institutions that one would inevitably follow the other. This naivety, along with the pecuniary considerations and rigid ethnological theories of the landed interest, effectively abolished these optimistic plans. But it did channel interest into antiquarian research amidst a dominant ethnological paradigm that stressed the triumph of Anglocentric supremacy in representations of descent and ethnic worth.

398 Story, Dean Story’s Sermon, p.15.

399 Edward Synge to William Wake, 13 April 1715, Gilbert MS28, f.23-7.
The decades of the 1720s and 1730s can be best viewed as the peak of this Anglocentric identity. After enjoying a long period of predominance, these assertions of English lineage remained potent. Even Berkeley, with his relatively respectful tone reserved for Irish Catholics in his Word to the Wise of 1749, could still revert to the old correlation that posited an ethno-cultural origin for division as ‘The Scythians were noted for Wandering, and the Spaniards for Sloth and Pride; our Irish are behind neither of these Nations from which they descend.’

Elsewhere, he referred to ‘the original Irish’, the ‘true Aborigines’ and the ‘natural Irish’ as opposed to the ‘English’. These constant assertions did dent English attitudes somewhat; in Meige’s influential Present State, it was stated that the present inhabitants ‘are only English and Irish’, the former being ‘very conformable to the customs and Laws of our Nation’.

Another English pamphlet, of 1754, discriminated between the ‘Natives’ and ‘their Landlords’.

The irony of all this was, as an English enthusiasm, or willingness to acknowledge the benefits of union grew, Irish Protestants had grown so alienated by the prospect that the possibility of such a measure passing could create riots and an occupation of the Commons in 1759. However, doubts had begun to set by the mid-1740s about the utility of Anglocentric expressions geared for political concessions and self-assurance. It was the Lucas affair that these first cracks in the monolithic edifice of Irish Protestant Anglocentrism first appeared – but they were apparent in pamphlets and ephemera before this controversy. The following

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401 Ibid, p.17.
403 [Anon.], A Candid Enquiry why the Natives of Ireland which are in London are more Addicted to Vice than the People of any other Nation (London, 1754), p.4.
404 For English sentiment for union, see Malachy Postelthwayt, Britain’s Commercial Interest Explained and Improved; in a Series of Dissertations on Several Important Branches of her Trade and ... the Great Advantages which would Accrue to this Kingdom from an Union with Ireland (London, 1757), pp.268-400; Wills Hill, Viscount Hillsborough, A Proposal for Uniting the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1751); For the Irish response, see [Anon.], Alarum to the People of Great Britain and Ireland in answer to a late Proposal for Uniting these Kingdoms (1751); Sean Murphy, ‘The Dublin Anti-Union Riot of 3 December 1759’ in Gerard O’Brien (ed.), Parliaments, Politics and People: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History (1989), pp.49-68.
chapter shall deal with the growth of this disillusionment and analyse the decline in self-confident Irish Protestant assumptions of the superiority of Anglocentric expressions of identity and ethnicity.
Chapter Four
The Lucas Affair and the End of the Segregationist Supremacy, 1740-1752

Admittedly, up to this point Charles O’Conor has been somewhat elusive. This absence has been necessary in order to trace the intellectual backdrop to his pamphleteering and history writing. It is also needed to contextualize the segregationist supremacy from 1690 to c.1740 as a discrete period within the eighteenth century and to see how this supremacy was supported by relatively immutable and largely unchallenged historical writings and attitudes to ethnic theories. As outlined above, there existed since the Elizabethan conquest two or more modes of thought in Protestant Ireland concerned with the problematic existence of heterogeneous religious and ethnic populations. The prescription that these groups become ‘one-people’ was a persistent theme throughout this discourse, but was matched by strident espousals of total segregation or wildly impractical methods of assimilation by many commentators. The latter trend tended to hold greater sway during and after periods of conflict, the former during periods more pacific and congenial to inter-denominational intercourse. Those favouring ‘incorporation’ tended to be more diverse and gradualist in their solutions, privileging economic incentives, organic acculturation, equality before the law, tolerance of differing faiths and the socio-economic marginalization of the Irish language as the best means of de-compartmentalizing ethnicity in Ireland. By contrast, the segregationists were singular in their prescription and victorious after 1690, though they often wrestled with problems of distinguishing between Irishness as faith and as ethnos. They eventually developed a sophisticated set of theories that transferred ‘incorporating’ rhetoric from aspirational kinship with the ‘native’ Irish to glorifying existing kinship with the population of England. This Anglocentric identity, however, began to break down by the 1740s. The settled nature of Irish society, the amelioration of hostile rhetoric directed at Irish Dissenters, an increasingly vocal Catholic middle class and lack of English reciprocation all contributed to diluting the potency of this identity. More pertinent still was the emergence, or revival, of an alternative historical narrative from within Protestant Ireland, through Charles Lucas, and the entrance of Charles O’Conor to the public sphere. The key events in question are the Kelly Riots of 1747 and the Lucas affair of 1748-1750, events illustrative of
the importance of historical narratives and vulgar ethnography to political controversy.

The Lucas affair has garnered some attention from historians, usually and narrowly concerned with personalities or viewed as an event in which the origins of an incipient Irish nationalism are detectable. Some of the most sustained academic attention has focused upon whether certain pamphlets published during the affair were the work of a young Edmund Burke.\textsuperscript{405} Both trends are evident in the work of Sean Murphy. While most of Murphy’s conclusions are undeniably sound, less assured is his insistence that Burke contributed to the affair and many of the ecumenical and patriotic attitudes he ascribes to Lucas fail to convince.\textsuperscript{406} Another stance has been to view the affair exclusively in its municipal setting. Patrick Kelly has analysed Lucas’s use of Molyneux and concluded it was more relevant to the context of ‘Dublin municipal politics, rather than that of relations with England.’\textsuperscript{407} Jacqueline Hill follows suit in her authoritative \textit{From Patriots to Unionists}, though given her subject matter this is hardly surprising.\textsuperscript{408} However, Hill directs some attention to the fact that the mobilization of historical examples shaped much of the debate. Again, Lucas’s purported contribution to nationalism is noted and the tendency to be enamoured of the agitator or disparage his methods is evident; Hill refers to him as an ‘eclectic rather than original thinker’ – a judgment echoed by Jim Smyth’s accusation of ‘verbal


\textsuperscript{406} Murphy, ‘Charles Lucas, Catholicism and Nationalism’ pp.83-84, 88, 102; Murphy, ‘Burke and Lucas’, pp.143-156.


incontinence’. While Hill emphasizes Lucas’s significance to Irish politics at large, this is not thoroughly explored, nor is his iconoclasm of sacred historical myths questioned. While Hill makes passing reference to Lucas’s use of Davies, this is confined to his efforts to undermine oligarchy and is not linked to broader ethnological shibboleths. Hill expertly locates Lucas’s work and activity in belief in the ‘ancient constitution’ through which all contemporary British liberties journeyed to Lucas’s present – with the assistance of English ‘blood’ and common law. Vincent Morley has expanded upon the unique historiographical bent of the controversy more thoroughly. Morley persuasively argues for Lucas’s uniqueness as an Irish thinker by pointing to his use of Davies and the influence of his friendship with the Jacobite historian and poet Hugh MacCurtain. This chapter is highly indebted to Morley’s account, but locates the affair within the existing discourses of Protestant Ireland stretching back to Spenser.\footnote{Vincent Morley, ‘Charles Lucas and the Irish Past’; unpublished article, quoted with the kind permission of the author.}

What is often recognized but rarely explored is precisely how saturated the Lucas affair was with historical narratives. These wider historiographical or intellectual contexts have not been explored. Historians of Ireland recognize that 1750 marked a ‘mid-century amelioration’ in the animosity displayed in historical works and depictions of the ‘native’ Irish and Roman Catholics. Smyth rightly recognizes the significance of the 1740s in altering attitudes and changing debates, even going so far as call it a ‘Lucasian moment’.\footnote{Smyth, ‘Republicanism before the United Irishmen’ p.253.} Similarly, David Dickson – in his seminal \textit{New Foundations} – suggestively entitled the chapter dealing with the period 1714-1760 ‘Hibernia Anglicana’.\footnote{David Dickson, \textit{New Foundations: Ireland, 1660-1800}, (2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, 2000), pp.67-108.} Most historians agree that this was the beginning of a period in which the study of the Irish past, but particularly that of the distant past, became a relatively sedate arena of discourse between Catholic and Protestant scholars. Yet scant heed is paid to the political controversies and social developments concomitant with these changes. For instance, Clare O’Halloran’s excellent \textit{Golden Ages and Barbarian Nations} does
not mention Charles Lucas at all. Likewise, the chapters upon historiography in *The Oxford History of the Irish Book* are chronologically delineated by the year 1750 but pay little attention to Lucas – despite the strenuous efforts of a historian (Walter Harris) to convict him for seditious libel in 1749. Even Jacqueline Hill, having integrated historical consciousness into her account of the affair, excludes him from her insightful article on Irish historiography during the eighteenth century.413 The equally disinterested *New History of Ireland* limits his presence to three references and a few pages.414 Yet Lucas’s revision of received historical logic (and his opportunistic revival of an older incorporationist narrative) and the atmosphere of the 1740s certainly seemed to have spurred interest in Irish history and its associated ethnic theories compared to the preceding fifty-year dearth; Ware, Davies, Harris, K’eeogh, Comerford, Molyneux, Curry, O’Conor and Reily were all published or re-published in the period 1739-1753.

Yet the controversy itself essentially revolved around a historiographical dispute; in fact, it comprised a variety of history-related challenges and responses. The first was that which occasioned the controversy, namely, Lucas’s insistence that the liberties of Dublin be restored and that power be transferred from the alderman’s council to the commons in conformity with the city’s ancient charters. A second one was the purported Saxon, medieval and seventeenth-century constitutional developments that Lucas presented as a legacy of rights and liberties for British subjects. Another was the centuries-old political and constitutional relationship between England and Ireland, in which Lucas mobilized Molyneux to great effect. Lastly, there is his use of the ‘incorporating’ rhetoric from the previous century, in abeyance since 1690, to criticize the Anglican establishment as remiss in fulfilling their obligations of governance. The last two were the most contentious, in that Lucas’s critics more easily assailed them than his mobilization of a Whiggish language of Anglo-Saxon liberty and his espousal of ‘revolution principles’ regarding the rights of


representation. Caroline Robbins has described Lucas as a popularizer of received ideas and in the case of the first two historical narratives this is undoubtedly true. 415 The third is problematic; Molyneux’s legacy in eighteenth-century Ireland is still a topic of debate. The fourth is the least understood; Lucas’s motivations for using it, its potency in eighteenth-century Ireland, its relation to the other historiographical narratives and its degree of influence or underground popularity shall be the subject of this chapter.

**Turning the Ethnographical Wheel**

This chapter will address a number of issues. The first issue is that of context; why did the post-union form of Anglocentric rhetoric fracture during the decade 1740-1750? That there was a further evolution in ethnographic mentalities is certain; what is most noticeable is the decreasing confidence of Irish Protestants in the superiority of English ancestry and a growing willingness to accommodate to Ireland’s ethnic and religious heterogeneity. This chapter will analyse the alterations in pedestrian or more popular ethnographical mentalities that reflect such reconsiderations. The following chapter will focus on this change in antiquarian and historical disciplines. In essence, the rigorous association of Irish Protestantism with Englishness shifted from assertions of similitude as fact, to one of demand, anticipated convergence or aspiration. A key component of this was the repeated ‘rebuffs and instances of high-handed behavior from London’ that ‘diminished the attraction of the appeal to English blood.’ 416 Nevertheless, this appeal had a long purchase in Irish Protestant consciousness and it was persistently utilized – with diminishing frequency and success – through to the 1740s. One pamphleteer, distraught at the suffering wrought by the 1740-41 famine, directed his plea to converge as ‘one People, with one Interest and one Will’ at his metropolitan readership rather than the objects of starvation. Similarly, another demanded that Chesterfield, the incoming Lord Lieutenant, ‘make our sep’rate Interests one’ in 1745. 417 As Bishop Dopping was representative of the alteration in sentiment in Anglican Ireland as a whole after

417 [Anon.], *The groans of Ireland*, p.7; *Ierne’s Answer to Albion*, (1745), p.7.
1690, so too is a focus on personal mutations warranted here. Recent work by Sean D. Moore points to Jonathan Swift’s late re-orientation from an ethnocentric identity focused on England to a more ‘Irish’ conception of self. This was, according to Moore, as much to do with calculation as a sense of affinity; Swift anticipated that a sustained defence of Irish interests would best preserve his legacy and posthumous repute.\textsuperscript{418} In this respect Swift’s alienation from Anglocentric posturing to a growing sense of Irishness seems to reflect a genuine Irish Protestant experience in this period.\textsuperscript{419} That such appeals to consanguinity failed appears to be a contributing factor in altering ethnic identities. Despite this, Sir Richard Cox the elder’s ethnological argument for the repeal of commercial restrictions was reprinted in 1740 and repeated the appeals to consanguinity that marked his historiography. Pamphlets from 1741 and 1745 survive arguing for the same.\textsuperscript{420} However, these opinions were eclipsed by arguments that Irish solutions, rather than persuasion directed at Westminster, were of more utility. Berkeley is an obvious complainant in this regard, but Madden followed suit; ‘By reflecting on our unhappy circumstances, I have been long firmly persuaded, that the remedies of all our evils, must begin from ourselves, rather than our neighbours’.\textsuperscript{421}

This growing disillusionment in Protestant Ireland with commercial restrictions, political marginality and absenteeism is well known – but there were other contributing factors in the dilution of a potent Anglocentric identity. Active opposition to popular assumptions about innate ethnic characteristics also played a part. Another factor contributing to a decline in Irish Protestant confidence in a secure and superior identity came from Roman Catholic writers. From 1739 onwards Catholics increasingly challenged the confident assertions of Irish

\textsuperscript{420} [Richard Cox], \textit{Some Thoughts on the Bill Depending before the Right Honourable the House of Lords} (1740); [Anon.], \textit{A Short Account of the State of our Woollen Manufactures from the Peace of Ryswick to this Time} (1740).
\textsuperscript{421} Berkeley, \textit{Querist}, Qu.73; Samuel Madden, \textit{A Letter to the Dublin Society on Improving their Fund} (1739), p.8; \textit{The Groans of Ireland}, p.5; [Anon.], \textit{Remarks on some Maxims, Peculiar to the Antient, as well as the Modern Inhabitants of Ireland} (1730), p.5.
Protestants regarding their supposed intellectual weakness, disloyalty and ignorance.\footnote{John Gibney, “Facts newly stated: John Curry, the 1641 Rebellion, and Catholic Revisionism in Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1747–80”, *Eire/Ireland*, Vol.44, Fall/Winter 2009, pp.248-277; [Anon.], *The Impartial Examiner Or, The Faithful Representor* (1746), pp.4, 10, 39; [Anon.], *An Apology for the Roman Catholicks or Ireland* (1746); John Curry, *A Brief Account from the most Authentic Protestant Writers of the Causes, Motives and Mischiefs, of the Irish Rebellion* (1747); John Gother, *A Papist Mis-represented and Represented; or a Twofold Character of Popery* (1750).} These writers, of whom O’Conor was the exemplar, utilized counter-arguments based in a culture of politeness, expediency and good conduct to great effect, putting hostile polemics on the defensive and making them wary of blind assertions that could be represented by their opponents as uncharitable or detrimental to the polity. They also insisted that domestic reform was the key to prosperity, as opposed to the insistence upon the repeal of commercial restrictions, which pleas of ethnic consanguinity were closely attendant upon. Petty and Molesworth’s idea that attitudes thought to be irrevocably embedded in ethnicity were in fact contingent upon environment was also used by pamphleteers to indicate the capacity of Irish Catholics for loyalty and labour should the laws be modified.\footnote{[Charles O’Conor ?], *Some Considerations on the Laws which Incapacitate Papists from Purchasing Lands* (1739), p.7.} These Catholic writers understandably resented assertions of inveterate laziness and endeavoured to stress the social, legal and political impediments that Catholics laboured under.

The earliest example of this was Nary’s *The Case of the Roman Catholics* of 1724, ‘the sole significant statement of Catholic principles in the first half of the century’ – but the real upsurge was apparent from the very late 1730s.\footnote{[Cornelius Nary], *The Case of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, humbly represented to both Houses of Parliament, 1724*, in Hugh Reily, *The Impartial History of Ireland* (London, 1754); Ian McBride, ‘Catholic Politics in the Penal Era: Father Sylvester Lloyd and the Delvin Address of 1727’, *ECI*, Vol.25 (2011).} These works attempted to move away from reliance upon ethnicity as an explanatory device and instead stress environmental and structural factors. For comparative purposes, Irish Catholic achievement on the continent gave ‘a convincing proof, that the Indolence laid to their Charge is the Effect of accidental Causes, and of
some unhappy Circumstances under which the lye oppressed at Home.\textsuperscript{425} The half-century long inoffensive record of Irish Catholics was another theme, as was the absence of politeness apparent in the blind and general calumny contained in such sweeping ethnographical characterizations. The fact that such smearing was directed at fellow subjects was a further modification of this defence. Understandably, peaceable behaviour was stressed most of all. Brooke’s \textit{Farmer’s Letters}, often taken as indicative of Irish Protestant prejudice during invasion scares, did not accord with wider Protestant sentiment. Indeed, the rebellion of ’45 was greeted with a degree of calm by Protestant Ireland – something recognized long ago and which has now become accepted by scholars.\textsuperscript{426} Pastoral letters pleading for interdenominationalsl tolerance are the most obvious and well-known examples of this change. Lord Chesterfield was certainly confident of Irish Catholics’ loyal intentions, while Jacobites in Scotland were disappointed in their hopes of a sympathetic rising by Irish Catholics, acknowledging that ‘they are known to be attached to the present ruling dynasty’ – something similarly recognized by Irish Protestants.\textsuperscript{427} One pamphleteer did not plead with Papists to remain loyal, but pointed to weakness of the ‘Weight of the Popish Party among us’ and was comforted that ‘the Papists themselves would be imprudent to contribute to any Alteration in the present Constitution.’\textsuperscript{428} The tone was generally encapsulated by the statement that ‘of their own free Choice, they... mean to persevere in their usual inoffensive Conduct and peaceable Submission to the present Civil Government.’\textsuperscript{429}

Developments in social interaction and social mores also played a part in diminishing supercilious assumptions of Anglocentric superiority – certainly, it made blithe expressions of inveterate native sloth and Catholic inferiority more socially awkward. First, there was the increased penetration of Irish Catholics

\textsuperscript{425} [O'Conor?], \textit{Some Considerations}, p.12; this pamphlet was very popular and went into three editions by 1741; see [O’Conor], \textit{Impartial Examiner}, p.63.

\textsuperscript{426} [Anon.], \textit{An Answer to the Pretender’s Declaration, Or a Calm Address to all Parties in Religion, whether Catholic or Protestant} (1745).


\textsuperscript{428} [Anon.], \textit{Honest Advice to the People of Ireland} (1745).

\textsuperscript{429} [Anon.], \textit{Queries Humbly Proposed to the Consideration of the Public} (1746) pp.3-4.
into urban centres and hence into commercial life and domestic service – alongside the attainment of some minor political importance.\footnote{Patrick Fagan, ‘The Population of Dublin in the Eighteenth Century with Particular Reference to the Proportions of Protestants and Catholics’ \textit{ECI}, Vol.6 (1991), pp-121-156.} It would be naïve to presume that such interaction inevitably caused understanding and fellow-feeling. However, a growing emphasis on ‘politeness’ and ‘sensibility’ made violating tacit social norms more unacceptable and uncomfortable. This emphasis on manners and social equanimity was itself a metropolitan importation.\footnote{Paul Langford, \textit{A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783} (Oxford, 1994), pp.61-121.}

Similarly, Irish Protestants had to be circumspect in their social interactions – mainly because it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between Catholics and Protestants on encounter.\footnote{The \textit{Synge Letters: Bishop Edward Synge to his Daughter Alicia, Roscommon to Dublin 1746-1752} by M.L. Legg (ed.), (1996), p.300.} Catholics creatively exploited these developments when responding to polemics directed at their community. Given the conspicuousness of Brooke’s and others’ efforts the majority of responses were directed at them. In fact, the tactic chosen was to stress how uncharitable these attacks were and mock Brooke’s hysteria as dreadfully old-fashioned – one response outlined a visit by the author to a local Catholic gentleman (who appears to be a caricature of Charles O’Conor) wearing ‘the necessary precaution of a Coat of Mail’.\footnote{‘Misopapa’, \textit{A Caveat Against the Papists} (1745), p.2; this was written in response to Brooke.} Likewise, in a parody petition, published by Lucas’s printer James Esdall, George Faulkner was upbraided for concentrating his output in ‘some old Sermons against Popery’.\footnote{[Anon.], \textit{To The Nobility, Gentry and Clergy of both Sexes in the City of Dublin. The Humble Petition of George Faulkner and George Grierson} (1745), p.4.} A more earnest response, written by O’Conor himself, asked why Brooke defamed people ‘among whom [he] cou’d reckon upon many Friends, and from whom the Government has nothing to fear’. Accusations of insensitivity aside, O’Conor introduced historical paradigms, asserting the ethnic qualifications of Irish Catholics for liberty, asking ‘Were ever a people more free than the ancient Scots of Ireland?’. O’Conor presumed Brooke’s awareness of this ‘freedom’, as Brooke had attempted to purloin
O’Conor’s collection of ‘Ogygian Tales’ before publication.435 Elsewhere, Brooke was further castigated for trying to ‘disunite the strictest Ties or Friendship between the Protestants and Roman Catholics of Ireland.’436 This new tone of interdenominational sensitivity was by no means dominant, but did raise an awareness of possible challenge in the small world of Irish letters. Moreover, most of the sentiments displayed in these Catholic defences appear to agree with Anglican perspectives of contemporaneous Ireland. The placidity and quiescence of Catholics during 1745 was one area of agreement. Another was the amicable relations enjoyed between members of the two sects. Some of the more vitriolic writers distanced themselves from their work when their anonymity was rent – and it is telling that most of the anti-Papist pamphlets went without a name on the frontispiece. Later still, Henry Brooke had cause to regret his rashness in damning Catholics and wrote that Catholics were in ‘unanimous and chearful Obedience to our Civil Government’ and should be rewarded with a mitigation of grievances.437

As outlined earlier, during the peak of Anlgocentric identification in the 1730s, the different origin of the ‘natives’ was used as one reason to explain the poor performance of the Irish economy. Essentially, Ireland's faltering economy was explained in accordance with the traits inhering in the aboriginal blood of Irish Catholics that, as they had not yet been transformed into noble Milesians, were diagnosed as Spanish sloth and Scythian savagery.438 These explanations for failure, based in theories of ethnic intransigence, dominated until the introspective turn that improvement literature took in the 1740s. Some ethnological reflexes remained (an article in Burke's Reformer referred to ‘strolling beggars’ adhering to ‘the Custom of the ancient Scythians’). Similarly, the casual association of ‘Irish’ with ‘Catholic’ meant that blood-based laziness was often correlated with productivity stoppages resultant from the observance of holy days. But

436 [Anon.], The Impartial Examiner or the Faithful Representer of the Various and Manifold Misrepresentations upon the Roman Catholics of Ireland (1746), p.39.
438 Berkeley’s Word to the Wise and Querist (Qu. 85, 87, 489, 513) are the good examples of this predilection, but it is also apparent in Swift's A Short View of the State of Ireland (1728), p.9.
increasingly writers instead chose to focus on environmental origins for such phenomena, and to place less emphasis on ethnographical explanations for poverty. One writer, echoing Petty and anticipating later works, stated ‘We are apt to charge the Irish with laziness... but then we don't consider they have nothing to do.’

Efforts to advance Irish economic performance thus evolved beyond allotting culpability to greater emphasis on constructive suggestion. This ‘improvement’ literature was a marked phenomenon in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland; though in the latter it took on a particular and unique form. Much of the improvement movement was closely analogous to the rhetoric of Anglocentric identification insofar as improvement was a conscious effort to re-create Ireland in an English mould. As Ian McBride states, improvement stood ‘for the extension of metropolitan manners into the provinces’ and stemmed from the confidence of Irish Protestants in ‘the superiority of their own culture.’

Transplantation was one part of this effort, particularly the movement of foreign labour or Ulster weavers to the rest of Ireland; the idea being, as with the programmes of the 1580s, 1610s and 1650s that these individual and familial units would interact with their neighbours and influence them into assuming a set of desirous attributes and attitudes. Thus there was a definite component of social engineering that marked these small-scale population transfers; this time, however, they were outside the purview of the state and, hence, were not as extensive or efficient. Instead, they were assumed to be the duty of private gentlemen for the public weal. Perhaps unexpectedly, it was the perceived neglect of this private duty that would contribute most to the re-assessment of ethnology manifest in the social and political debates of the 1740s.


441 This was not enforced by the government through forfeitures, but given legislative cognizance under the auspices of 2. Anne, c. 14 (1703) ‘An Act for Naturalizing of all Protestant Strangers in this Kingdom’ MacAuley, Some Thoughts, pp.22-23.
This improvement literature has been intensely analysed by Toby Barnard, largely on a micro-social level, detailing the logic behind and the actual processes of landscaping and horticultural reforms introduced by individuals or families onto their respective estates. Barnard has also stressed the significance of historiography, particularly in its core role of supporting Irish Protestant claims of cultural superiority, expressed as descent from English ancestors and continuing adherence to English practises.\footnote{Barnard, \textit{Improving Ireland}, pp.91-92.} As Barnard noted, improvement literature was not a value-free realm of discourse, recommending neutral solutions to perceived ills. Indeed, given its ubiquity in early eighteenth-century Ireland, with tillage, charter schools, commercial restrictions, the invocation of historical events, the importance of manufactures, land law and leaseholds, the utilization of ethnographical theories and obsessions over currency it is easy to find this strand of reformative thought in sermons, pamphlets, philosophical output, works of history and even numismatics.\footnote{Berkeley's \textit{Querist} and \textit{Sketch of a National Bank} are the best examples of innovative Irish thought regarding the nature of money and its functions, but this obsession is apparent in works by David Bindon and James Simon. Likewise, the pamphlet \textit{Groans of Ireland} advocates paper credit backed by grain.} The improvement corpus also had its practical, popular and philosophical aspects. On a philosophical level, this debate was about the proper ends of economic activity. On the one hand, there was Barbon and Mandeville’s promotion of tolerating vice in order to stimulate consumption. They were opposed by thinkers who stressed the inherent potential of commerce and trade to supply the everyday necessities of all, rather than catering to the dissipation of the few. Regarding the latter, Swift was one of its most famous Irish exemplars – famously, his \textit{Modest Proposal} scathingly proposed the consumption of poor children as a compromise between the desire of the wealthy to excessively consume and the need for a diminution of human misery. The anti-Mandevillean bent of Irish economic thinking is well known, not least as articulated by Francis Hutcheson, but also by Bishop Berkeley.\footnote{Patrick Kelly, ‘Industry and Virtue versus Luxury and Corruption’, \textit{ECI}, Vol.7, 69; Berkeley's late work, \textit{Maxims Concerning Patriotism} (1750) is the most concise example of his association of moral vices (such as gambling) with unpatriotic attitudes.} Private vices were not public virtues, both were at pains to explain; it was the universal
provision of the means of life and a modicum of pleasure for all subjects to which economic activity, and legislative intervention therein, should direct its energies. Berkeley’s entire output of economic writing is marked by this antagonism toward individual ostentation in preference to universal welfare and the second dialogue of the *Alciphron* is an extended demolition of Mandeville’s thesis. This public provision, Berkeley thought, was an obligation for powerful and wealthy men to achieve.445

This output by leading thinkers is significant because it percolated downward to inform a body of anti-luxury thought that permeated improvement literature. Over this period, a clear and apparent trend is observable; originating as a conglomeration of manifestos for development, and continuing as an agenda for gentry action, improvement literature morphed into a collection of texts that presented aristocratic attitudes as oligarchical and as an obstacle to prosperity. This potential to challenge particular social groups was present in the pioneering work of this assembly of recommending texts, Thomas Prior's *List of the Absentees of Ireland* (1729). As we have seen, aside from anti-Catholic and anti-native denigration, the earlier ‘improving’ pamphleteers tended to obsess over English commercial restrictions, and continued to do so into the 1740s. A major priority of this literature was to appeal to Britain’s interest and cite ethnic similitude as a compelling case for repeal of the legislation of 1698.446 Thus three themes predominate in this earlier phase; absenteeism, the unsporting lack of whole-hearted Catholic participation (explained in terms of the attributes of lineage) and complaints about the English reluctance to ease the plight of their transmarine ethno-religious brethren. All evolved into different critiques as political circumstances and social attitudes altered in the 1740s – namely, a decline in previously self-assured ethnographical narratives reflected in intense criticisms of the Irish Protestant gentry.

This anti-luxury and anti-landlord output represented a strand of thought as old as Richard Lawrence's *The Interest of Ireland* (1682).447 As early as 1730, one

446 [Anon.], *Seasonable Advice to Protestants* (Cork, 1745), p.4.  
447 Richard Lawrence, *The Interest of Ireland in its Trade and Wealth Stated* (1682); Toby Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: Irish Protestants, 1649-1770* (New Haven, 2003), pp.4-5; for
pamphleteer could blame ‘the Greedy Landlord’ for the poverty of his tenants; furthermore, his avarice was ‘the necessary Consequence of a Luxurious and Expensive Life.’ Berkeley, again, leads the van with his coy question whether ‘reflection in the better sort might not soon remedy our evils?’ More explicitly, he complained that ‘the vanity and luxury of a few [stood] in competition with the interests of a nation.’ Arthur Dobbs was inclusive in attributing ‘our own Indolence and Supine Negligence’ to all and refers simply to ‘our Luxury’ throughout, though it seems to apply only to ‘the middle and lower Ranks of Men.’ Samuel Madden was equally vague about who was responsible for this sumptuary excess. In his *Reflections and Resolutions*, he confined criticism of the gentry to excerpts from other authors, but categorized the vices of the better sort as ‘luxury and vanity’ and those of the ‘inferior sort’ as drunkenness and lack of probity. Culpability, then, was shared across social boundaries. There was a noticeable reliance on presumptions of native lethargy throughout; conforming to the new sentiment out of doors, Madden indicated that most were then being cured of ‘Political and Religious Madness’. Madden’s sequel (1739) was less obtuse. Observing the reluctance of the wealthy to fund the Dublin Society, he condemned their meanness as ‘acting against nature, against duty, against self-love and self-interest’ and compared the munificence of English donors to the charter school movement with Irish parsimony.

But, as Madden was not immune to alterations in mentalities, his lesser-known sequel to the *Reflections* uses an interesting terminology that matured over the following decade. This was the increasing comprehension of Catholics as part of the economic, if not yet the political, nation. One excerpt is illustrative;

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448 [Anon.], *Remarks on some Maxims*, p.4.
450 Samuel Madden, *Reflections and resolutions proper for the gentlemen of Ireland, as to their conduct for the service of their country, as landlords, as masters of families, as Protestants, as descended from British Ancestors, as Country Gentlemen and Farmers, as Justices of the Peace, as Merchants, as Members of Parliament* (1738), pp.76, 102, 237.
As a great part of this Kingdom languishes under a habit of sloth, such a society here will, in the best rouze them for their long dreaming indolence, and not only open their eyes, but direct and employ the hands of our People: and at the same time... prevent the industrious part of our Natives, from spending double toil and pains in performing half-work, for quarter profit.\textsuperscript{453}

While adhering to the conventional ethnological bent, he acknowledged the socio-economic value of ‘natives’ – but also that there were structural impediments to their industry. Of course, Madden, like many others before and after, still insisted on the obligations derived from English consanguinity but anticipated a change that would come after one of the most traumatic of events to strike eighteenth-century Ireland, an event that accelerated the incipient trends of anti-gentry feeling.

\textit{Exterminating Whole Families}

1740, and the frost-famine of that year, was a turning point in the process of blame-allocation.\textsuperscript{454} During ‘the Rigour of th’ injurious Year’, concerns were voiced about the widespread scale of death and the inadequate provision of relief. The language describing the victims, a probable majority being Catholic, gives no indication of indifference or complacence. Indeed, most lamented the exigencies experienced by fellow-subjects in very regretful – even angry – terms and seemed to view the boreal turn as a national disaster, encompassing all of the population without distinction.\textsuperscript{455} This event seems to have coincided with – or initiated – an increased willingness to consider the entire population as ‘the People’. One observer regretted ‘A Loss too great for this ill-peopled Country to bear; and the more grievous, as this Loss was mostly the grown-up part of the Working People.’\textsuperscript{456} Another stressed the necessity of ‘Compassion toward their Fellow

\textsuperscript{453}Madden, \textit{A Letter}, p.12.

\textsuperscript{454}David Dickson, \textit{Arctic Ireland: The Extraordinary Story of the Great Frost and the Forgotten Famine of 1740-41} (2\textsuperscript{nd} edition, 1998).

\textsuperscript{455}[Anon.], \textit{A Poem Inscibed to the Right Honourable The Lord Tullamoore Occasioned by the Late Charity} (1740), p.3.

\textsuperscript{456}[Anon.], \textit{Proposal for lessening the Excessive Price of Bread Corn in Ireland} (1741), p.4; \textit{Groans of Ireland}, p.4; anticipating a riposte from the ‘most zealous Protestants among us’, the
Creatures, Fellow Christians and Fellow Subjects’ and lamented the deaths ‘when so many of our People are dispirited or idle’ without discriminating according to sect.\textsuperscript{457} Another, defiantly hostile to Catholics, could refer to ‘the poorer Sort of Papists, which make the body of the People.’ ‘Our people’, lamented one, ‘die by the thousands for meer want of bread’. Even the more apocalyptic and millenarian works, perceiving the hand of a vengeful God in the famine, blamed profanity and dishonesty rather than the idolatry or bigotry that was purportedly characteristic of the ‘native’ Catholics.\textsuperscript{458}

Retrospective accounts display the same drift – even if Catholics were usually included under the ‘nation’ or ‘people’ as merely the poor or ‘meamer sort’. One writer, during the ‘45, referred to Irishmen in the French service as ‘those of our Nation’. Another lamented the ‘slow advances which the Protestant Religion, and a Spirit of Industry had made among the common People of Ireland’.\textsuperscript{459} One shocked observer remarked ‘It is astonishing to see such a Difference in the People of so small a Kingdom.’ It became so commonplace that Isaac Madox, Bishop of St. Asaph, could complain that by ‘the People of Ireland, I don't mean the wild undisciplin'd natives of the Country, but ... the bulk of those who carry on the Commerce of that Kingdom, are our own countrymen and their descendants’.\textsuperscript{460} This growing sense of the demographic value of Irish Catholics transferred quite visibly into outrage over the lack of support and relief measures during the 1740 famine. According to the majority of accounts, blame fell squarely on the shoulders of the landed.

While clergymen and merchants did not escape censure\textsuperscript{461} and women were

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\item \textsuperscript{457} [Anon.], \textit{The Distress’d State of Ireland, Considered} (1740), pp.29, 49.
\item \textsuperscript{458} [Anon.], \textit{Seasonable Advice}, p.27; [Anon.], \textit{The Necessity of Tillage and Granaries} (1741), p.58; [Anon.], \textit{The Judgements of God upon Ireland} (1741).
\item \textsuperscript{459} [Anon.], \textit{Honest Advice to the People of Ireland}, p.20; [Anon.], \textit{A Brief Review of the Rise and Progress of the Incorporated Society in Dublin} (1743), p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{460} Isaac Madox, Bishop of St. Asaph, \textit{A Sermon Preach'd before the Society Corresponding with the Incorporated Society in Dublin, for Promoting English Protestant Working-Schools in Ireland} (1740), p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{461} [Anon.], \textit{The Voice of the People} (1740), p.8; [Anon.], \textit{No Private Conspiracy}, p.15.
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berated for being unpatriotically clad in French garments, landlords were the main targets of this animus. Such a change can be ascribed to the social, political and martial traumas of the 1740s, as well as the increase in anti-elite sentiment generally across the British Atlantic world, engendered by Walpole’s lengthy premiership and the systems of patronage that supported it. But, unsurprisingly, in Ireland they took on a particularly national form, fed *inter alia* by the improvement movement. Additionally, a parochial aspect was added in Dublin by the long postponement of municipal reform. However, the gentry emerged as objects of extreme obloquy during and after the famine of 1740-41. The origin of this gentry denigration was, essentially, the accusation that a privileged minority had failed to provide for the majority in a time of necessity. But the criticism extended to their prolonged failure to improve that was believed to be detrimental to the nation at large; such dereliction of private duty was believed to have caused the famine, as much as meanness or indifference during it resulted in extensive depopulation. The failure to turn lands to tillage was a particular focus of the pamphleteers. Granaries, and their absence, were central to this critique and the gentry were deemed responsible for the self-evident reason that they alone possessed the capital to construct. The reluctance of landlords to invest in fixed assets and promote crop-rearing, as opposed to their concentration on lucrative livestock-products for export, caused a lack of ‘Corn to sustain the Lives of the Inhabitants.’ But many of the criticisms were not so specific and extended to the gentry as a luxuriating elite, willfully ignorant of their own and the national interest. While animus in the 1730s tended to be directed toward native lethargy and ‘the unnatural Affection of our Gentry to reside in and about London’, this anti-aristocratic antipathy ultimately shifted to those resident. During the famine

462 [Anon.], *To the Ladies of Dublin, A Poem* (1745); Berkeley's *Querist* demanded that fashion be moulded by the legislature rather than left ‘to the management of women and fops’; Qu.13.


465 [Anon.], *Proposal for Lessening the Excessive Price of Bread Corn*, p.3; [Anon.], *The Necessity of Tillage*, p.5; [Anon.], *A Dissertation on the Inlargement of Tillage, The Erecting of Public Granaries and the Regualting, Employing and Supporting the Poor in this Kingdom (1741); Groans of Ireland*, pp.9-17.
itself, one writer asked ‘What have the Landlords and Clergy, that live so much by [the peasants and farmers], done for their Relief?’ Nothing, according to the author, even though they got ‘the best part of the Gain.’\footnote{Anon., \textit{The Distress'd State of Ireland} (1740), pp.34, 16.} Another excoriated those ‘who would not make multitudes happy, by dividing what now lies waste and unimproved among them, and receiving from hence a sure and advanced Income, rather than exterminate whole Families.’\footnote{[O'Conor?], \textit{Some Considerations on the Laws} (1739), p.11.} One took a generational view, in which the landlords of the 1740s did not compare to their Williamite forefathers;

But that Generation being now in a Manner gone, their Sons in these more peaceable and prosperous times begin to forget the Miseries of their Fathers, and the Providence of God also that delivered them: His Judgments are now afar off, Vice and Luxury like a Torrent flow upon us, and a general Consumption for the Pride of Life being great, the Necessity of increasing our Substance, in order to be in the Fashion, hath brought in great exaction on Tenants by dear and high Rents...\footnote{[Anon.], \textit{No Private Conspiracy or Combination} (1741), p.9.}

Those that did engage in improvement, or donated during the dearth, were praised in unrestrained terms. Lord Tullamore and Primate Stone were two so praised and a encomium to Richard Wingfield characterized him as ‘Dispos’d to Think, to feel for humane Race/And still in this bad Age to shew some Grace/To act as Reason and good Sense inspire/Ah! how unlike the modern Country Squire!’\footnote{[Anon.], \textit{A Poem Occasioned by a View of Powerscourt House, The Improvements, Park & c.} (1740), p.13; [Anon.], \textit{Leixlip: A Poem. Inscribed to the Right Honourable William Conolly, Esq.} (1747), p.15.}

The landing of the Pretender in Scotland was greeted with a renewed outburst of anti-landlord criticism. However, it is also possible to observe the convergence of the trends previously manifest in the improvement corpus; the relative decline in anti-Catholic attitudes (even in that straightened year), vilification of the gentry and anti-absentee animus. While there was an increased effort to highlight the ‘Indolency and Laziness’ of the poor these, by 1745, tended not to be articulated in sectarian or ethnological terms and the negligence and purported excesses of...
gentry remained the foremost object of opprobrium.\textsuperscript{470} One piece of ephemera, headed ‘November 8, 1745’ (the date of the Pretender’s invasion of England), shrieked,

\begin{quote}
But as for the Absentees, who live and spend their Fortunes Abroad, they no way whatever Contribute to the Support of the Government; neither in paying any Part of the Duties of Customs and Excise... nor by joyning with the rest of their Fellow-Subjects here, in any Expense and Trouble attending this Time of Danger: And though their Estates are subject to the same Hazards, and must be defended at the charge of the Public, yet they avoid by their Absence, to pay any Part of the Burthen.\textsuperscript{471}
\end{quote}

Others were equally condemnatory, even to the point of bypassing accusations aimed at the traditional groupings such as priests, the regular clergy, Tories and Irish Catholics in general. Indeed, much of the animus expressed was less anti-Catholic than anti-French and wholly concerned with advising Catholics of the lack of wisdom in any support, open or covert, for the Pretender.\textsuperscript{472} One pamphlet (dedicated to the ‘People of Ireland’) hoped to dissuade readers from such support and maintained a tone of persuasive equanimity toward Catholics, addressing them as ‘Friends, Countrymen and Fellow Subjects’. Yet the author roundly castigated the gentry for their effective economic support for France and wished that ‘every Man of Fortune among us, might be taught to think, that every French Ornament about his Person, was, and ought to be considered as a Publick Declaration in Favour of our common Enemy.’\textsuperscript{473} Another writer took a comical view, stating that gentry inaction arose from ignorance, concluding that their domestic libraries were an ostentation and were really acquired to have ‘a sufficient quantity of waste Paper ready at hand for the sudden exigencies of the

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\textsuperscript{470} [Anon.], \textit{Remarks on the Present State of the Linnen-Manufacture of Ireland} (1745), p.4; [Anon.], \textit{A Short View of the Advantages which probably may arise from the Scheme for Encouraging Flax-Husbandry in Ireland} (Dublin, 1745), p.2.
\textsuperscript{471} ‘Philo-Patriae’, \textit{A Letter to a Member of the Parliament of Ireland} (1745), p.1.
\textsuperscript{472} [Anon.], \textit{Queries Humbly Proposed to the Consideration of the Public} (1745); [Anon.], \textit{An Answer to the Pretender’s Declaration: Or, A Calm Address to all Parties in Religion, Whether Protestant or Catholic} (1745), p.8; [Charles O’Conor], \textit{A Letter to the Author of the Farmer’s Letters} (1746).
\textsuperscript{473} [Anon.], \textit{Honest Advice to the People of Ireland} (1745), p.16.
\end{flushleft}
Even those antagonistic towards Papists castigated the gentry for being complicit in driving away Protestants, the latter ‘finding no Room under Gentlemen’. Frugality, this pamphleteer demanded, was the solution to ordinary Protestants’ alienation from their closest ‘avaricious Man of Power’ who was keener to get a high rent and fraternize with Catholics than to nurture and revive the Protestant interest. Yet another attempted to disabuse Protestants of their complacent faith in the probity of their Catholic neighbours and complained that ‘Popery and the Pretender are words mightily laugh’d at of late’. At the same time, George Faulkner could enlighten Samuel Johnson in London that £50,000 over the past half-century had come from ‘the blood and bowles [sic] of the poor people of Ireland.’

Catholic responses to the famine are less copious. But for one Catholic gentleman in the west the event, while cataclysmic, illustrated the security of belonging to an Atlantic trading empire with transoceanic links. Charles O’Conor commented that ‘famine in steady progress, without a grain of harvest, barley or potato, and without a bite of bread now except for what came beyond the seas. That is the most astonishing experience in the world.’ Aside from the limited survival of Catholic perspectives, the cumulative effect of this event in Protestant Ireland was to undermine confidence in extant ethnological pieties. This period, as Barnard has recognized, was when ‘Protestant landlords… were demonized as vicious, idle and vain, just as their Catholic predecessors had been.’ Even an aggressively Anglocentric writer such as William Henry (of whom more later) could traduce the Irish Protestant squire as ‘a petty tyrant’ reigning ‘over a herd of beasts and a few slaves more wretched than the beasts.’ In ethnological terms, this shift from ethnic to environmental concepts of stasis was succinctly

475 [Anon.], *Seasonable Advice*, pp.17, 24.
476 [Anon.], *The Question, Whether Great-Britain and Ireland, can be otherwise than miserable under a Papish King?* (1745), p.2.
478 L. M. Cullen, *The Irish Economy 1691-1750 in A New History of Ireland*, p. 147.
encapsulated in the description of one pamphleteer;

If you ask a Country Gentleman to explain the Reason of that Face of Misery which appears in most Parts of the Kingdom, he will instantly tell you, that it is owing to a native Sluggishness in our Inhabitants, whose Tempers are prone to Idleness and Inactivity; and then with a very doleful Countenance he will probably bewail the great Want there is amongst us of Protestant Tenants, which though really a Matter of most just Concern to every hearty well-wisher of Ireland, yet two to one upon making an Enquiry, you will find this same Country Gentleman, some swaggering little Bassa, who squeezeth out a daily Profit by exercising every Art of Oppression on all the poor Wretches round him.480

Similarly, reliance on appeals to English ancestry got shorter shrift elsewhere. One Dublin landlady, accused of mistreating an English visitor, was traduced as ‘one of those who highly value themselves on account of their not being descended from the old inhabitants of this kingdom.’481

Why is this significant? While we should be wary of presuming this pamphlet output as expressive of homogenous opinion, it is important in revealing the alteration in ethnological attitudes and inter-denominational relations. Gentlemen (rather than Catholic natives or woolen restrictions) incrementally became the bogeymen of the Irish political economy. Yet another change was the increasing willingness of Protestants, manifest in the improvement literature, to acknowledge Catholics as ‘the people’ or belonging to ‘the nation’. This is a telling indication that a more accommodating, and nuanced, conception of Irish identity was abroad – one that was less dependent on the strident assertions of Anglocentric ethnicity extant since 1690. Connected to this latter development is the strong historiographical and ethnological content of such ‘condition-of-Ireland’ literature. This must be seen in light of the lack of Irish Protestant history writing during the same period. In many respects, improvement literature served as a surrogate for historical works in the period 1700-1750.

Some celebrated this alteration of attitudes; at least, they believed that Catholics had embraced reality and were becoming engaged in the improvement

481 Dublin Daily Post, 22-23 August 1739.
project. Madden was one, but Robert Howard welcomed the abandonment of ‘imaginary possessions [i.e., forfeited estates]’ and commended that they were beginning to ‘improve what was truly their own.’\textsuperscript{482} However, this alteration in attitudes towards religious and ethnic distinctions did not go unobserved or unresented.\textsuperscript{483} Nor did vocal Anglo-centric identification disappear entirely – many of the pamphlets listed still asserted this identity.\textsuperscript{484} What is noticeable, however, is that it was less strident and uncritical and coincided with an increased willingness to recognize that diagnoses reliant on weak ethnological assumptions could not be sustained. Bishop Madox, Cox and Harris aside, the movement in improvement literature to anti-gentry vitriol was the predominant tone and informed the context of both the Kelly riots of 1747 and the Lucas affair of 1748-50.

\textbf{Enter Charles Lucas}

The Kelly riots punctured the deceptive placidity of political activity in early eighteenth-century Ireland. Ostensibly, the controversy was about the state of the Irish stage and the social status of those involved in theatre. This aspect has been well-covered elsewhere.\textsuperscript{485} But this alone does not adequately explain the discord aroused during the controversy. Hill describes it as a confrontation between ‘civic and aristocratic values’ – though social friction was undoubtedly important, the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{482} Robert Howard, \textit{A sermon preach'd in Christ-Church, Dublin, before the Incorporated Society for promoting English Charter Schools} (1738), p.12.
  \item \textsuperscript{483} [Anon.], \textit{Certainty of Protestants a Safer Foundation than the Pretended Infallibility of Papists} (1738), [Anon.], \textit{A Short Refutation of the Principal Errors of the Church of Rome, Whereby a Protestant of Mean and Ordinary Capacity may be able to Defend his Religion against the Most Subtle Papist} (1739); Sir Richard Cox to Walter Harris, 6 March, 1741, [2], k.II.14, Armagh quoted from Barnard, \textit{Improving Ireland?}, p.91.
  \item \textsuperscript{484} Macauley, \textit{Some Thoughts}, p.28; \textit{The Golden Fleece}, p.26; \textit{Groans of Ireland}, p.5; \textit{Mr. Marxwell's Answer}, 2; \textit{A Letter to a Member of Parliament at London}, p.5; \textit{Honest Advice to the People of Ireland}, p.7; [Anon.], \textit{Two Proposals of the Greatest Importance to the Navigation and Commerce of Great-Britain} (1745), p.4.
\end{itemize}
animosities occasioned and the torrent of print resulting from the controversy remains to be contextualized. The most concise account of the controversy, by Esther Sheldon, explodes the myth that Sheridan’s stage reform caused the disturbances.\textsuperscript{486} Another thorough exploration of the event can also be found in Helen Burke’s \textit{Riotous Performances}. Her exhaustive compilation of evidence and meticulous construction of context is, however, marred by a post-colonial perspective that casts the ‘gentleman’s party’ as dispossessed members of the Irish polity. However, the key player of that party – Edward Kelly – does not come across as particularly disenfranchised either socially or politically. Burke attempts to justify this stance by positing Kelly as ‘Irish’ and ‘Catholic’ in confrontation with ‘newcomers’ in a colonial polity. Indeed, throughout this work ‘Catholic’ stands as shorthand for ‘Irish’ – revealing interesting preconceptions of what constituted the ‘Irishness’ in this period. However, Burke’s confusion over terminology denoting ethnicity and identity inadvertently revealing the key parameters of this debate for its participants during 1747-48.\textsuperscript{487} Burke is essentially correct in her analysis of the anxieties laid bare by the controversy – but this cannot be boiled down to a Manichean conflict between the dispossessed and the powerful. Rather, the event reveals how anti-gentry animus saturated public discourse by 1747. It also reveals that cultures of culpability grounded in ethnological thinking had become deeply unfashionable by the same date and were superseded by blanket condemnation of the squirearchy.

Despite disagreeing with aspects of Burke’s interpretative framework, she is correct in asserting the importance of the event. For instance, the debate lasted far longer than a few nights of performances and generated a respectably large pamphlet output; not only squibs and stand-alone pieces for the differing partisans, but printed interventions by Charles Lucas and Thomas Sheridan, the manager of the Theatre Royal (where the disturbances occurred). Some were reprinted in London and the affair was mentioned in the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}.\textsuperscript{488} In addition to these contributions and defences, two regular, if short-lived, newsheets were occasioned by the controversy; Edmund Burke and

\textsuperscript{486} Hill, \textit{Patriots to Unionists}, p.93; Sheldon, \textit{Thomas Sheridan}, pp.82-83.
\textsuperscript{487} Helen Burke, \textit{Riotous Performances: The Struggle for Hegemony in the Irish Theater, 1712-1784} (South Bend, IN, 2003).
\textsuperscript{488} [Anon.], \textit{Dublin in an Uproar} (1747); \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, February 1747, p.123.
Beaumont Brenan’s cooperative venture *The Reformer* and Paul Hiffernan’s voraciously anti-Sheridan paper *The Tickler*. The former contained some of the first printed work (tenuously) ascribable to Burke and it is indicative of the affair's vitality that it commenced publication nearly a year after the first riot.

Less use is made of historical examples in the Kelly controversy than during the Lucas affair but there is, underneath the posturing against gentlemen rioters and declamations about theatrical vulgarity, a subterranean discourse correlating faith and origins that momentarily breaks to the surface. There also appears to have been a challenge to axiomatic ethnic identifications, previously confined to the improvement literature, that would mature over the Lucas affair. These disturbances are a preface to that controversy, particularly in the open expression of anti-gentry attitudes tangible in the improvement corpus, which served to undermine ethnographical and sectarian commonplaces. The Kelly riots commenced a series of political crises that convulsed Ireland and which culminated in the Money Bill dispute of 1753.

The riot proper began on the night of 19 January 1747 during a benefit performance for a debtor in the Marshalsea prison. One of the students of Trinity College, Edmund Kelly, crossed the stage during the performance and entered the green room, where he drunkenly insulted the actresses Mrs Dyer and George Anne Bellamy. Upon being ejected, Kelly returned some time later to repeat his disruptive behaviour. Sheridan intervened and ‘then received a great deal of abusive language from said mr. K—y without provocation’. Sheridan then beat Kelly, broke his nose and precipitated several disturbances when Kelly’s friends and the students of the College, feeling their corporate and social prestige affronted, returned to disrupt the functioning of the playhouse over the two following nights. These disturbances caused Sheridan to close the theatre for an indefinite period.489

Dublin split into pro-Kelly and pro-Sheridan factions; interestingly, however, the former went under the name of the ‘gentlemen’s party’ or the ‘Connaught

489 *FDJ*, Number 2072, 20th-24th January, 1747, p.2; *FDJ*, Number 2078, 10th-14th February, 1747; [Thomas Sheridan], *Faithful Narrative of what happened at the Theatre on Monday the 19th Instant* (1747); Thomas Sheridan, *A Full Vindication of the Conduct of the Manager of the Theatre Royal* (1747); Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, 21 February 1747 in Thomas W. Copeland (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* (10 Vols., Cambridge, 1958), i, p.82.
of party’. At root, the debate was caused by the assertion of Sheridan to be (as he was reported to have exclaimed) ‘as good a gentlemen as any in the House’ and the gentlemen troublemakers who took advantage of this claim to engage in antisocial activities.\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{Thomas Sheridan}, p.86; \textit{FDJ}, Number 2075, 31\textsuperscript{st} January-3\textsuperscript{rd} February, 1747; Thomas Sheridan to \textit{FDJ}, Number 2083, 3\textsuperscript{rd} - 7\textsuperscript{th} March, 1747.} As it appears that the majority of the citizens of Dublin, and most of the printed output, were either pro-Sheridan or anti-gentlemen it is unlikely this output was caused by so common an occurrence as a theatre riot or an incident of urban disorder.\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{Thomas Sheridan}, pp.96, 100-101; factions were ‘as violent as Whig and Tory’; Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, 21 February, 1747; Smyth, 'Republicanism before the United Irishmen', p.241.} It is more probable that the event acted as a catalyst for the open expression of anti-gentlemen and anti-gentry animus that had previously been confined to ephemera, sermons and improvement literature. But there was also a degree of ethnologically-charged criticism; we have already seen how one subtext in the gentry animus charged them with ‘imbibing’ the tyrannical inclinations of Gaeldom. As recently as 1745, the generational view was repeated as ‘too many of the Sons [of the gentry] have been since corrupted by the Natives who surround them’\footnote{[Anon.], \textit{Seasonable Advice}, p.24.}.\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{Thomas Sheridan}, p.87.} Lucas, in particular, adhered to this perspective, namely, that the ethnic hybridity or the failure to insulate Protestant Ireland from the native Irish had caused a mutation in characteristics. It also insinuated that the absorption of converts into Protestant Ireland had sown the seeds of degeneration into the arbitrary attitudes that had marked the Norman transformation into \textit{Hiberniores Hibernis ipsis}. The interchangable names of the most unpopular faction is also indicative of this correlation; ‘the gentlemen’ or the ‘Connaught party’.\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{Thomas Sheridan}, p.87.} Connaught had an obviously significant place in the imaginative anxieties of Protestants, vacillating between acute fear and fascination. Boorish, Papist and viewed alternatively as a wild desert of barbarity or of pristine simplicity, its characteristics in this case are manifest as a geographic nursery of nativity barely tempered by Protestantism.

This hostility to the gentry was far more apparent in pro-Sheridan literature. Their opponents, according to one popular comic poem, were ‘Long prov'd in
bold debauch’ and only went out of doors ‘when light-hating thieves begin/To seek their prey and GENTLEMEN to sin’. Another poem associated lower-class deviance with gentlemen in power, place-men and beggars were both their ‘country's Scandal and its Curse/Who vend a Vote, or purloins a Purse’. One writer, probably Sheridan himself, took the character of ‘a plebeian’ against the ‘gentlemen’ to characterize the latter’s inability to claim such a title. George Faulkner’s *Dublin Journal*, in contrast to the other papers (which remained neutral), was sympathetic to Sheridan from the start and published affidavits, letters and encomia in his honour; one letter listed Sheridan’s virutes and ironically concluded such qualities ‘disadvantageously distinguishes him from the *modern young Gentlemen*. *The Reformer* similarly stated that such gentlemen were ‘only externally distinguishable from the Vulgar’. Moreover, Sheridan's supporters were keen to compare his record as a ‘reformer’ of the stage to that of the thuggish gentlemen assailing him. The implication was blatant; he was successful in his endeavours while they were negligent in theirs, namely, in the improvement of Ireland. Sheridan defended himself through a clever public relations campaign, presenting the gentlemen as opponents of his theatrical reform – that is, commencing the ‘improvements’ that the landlord class had so signally failed to implement. Lucas’s dubbing of Sheridan as a ‘Reformer of the Stage’ was taken up sarcastically in the title of *The Reformer*. While Burke and his fellow editors’ anti-Sheridan stance was aesthetic, insofar as he thought the actor-manager's productions vulgar, this seemed to have been a cover for the slight felt when Sheridan refused to perform ‘The Lawsuit’ – a play composed by Burke's friend Brenan. However, *The Reformer* was used to argue for

494 [Anon.], *The Gentlemen. An Heroic Poem* (1747), pp.10, 12; Burke mentions this poem, but complains that it was sold out; Burke to Shackleton, 21 March 1747; [Anon.], *Honour. A Satire* (1747), p.9.

495 ‘A Plebeian’ [Thomas Sheridan?), *An Humble Address to the Ladies of the City of Dublin* (1747), p.16; *FDJ*, Number 2075; this was despite Faulkner's claim that he would impartially print the defences of both sides (Number 2072); Faulkner was criticised for his bias; [Anon.], *An Answer to Mr. S----- LETTER published in Faulkner's Journal the 7th Instant* (1747), p.1; ‘A Sch--- -t', *An Apology for Mr. Sheridan*, (1747), p.1; [Edmund Burke?], *The Reformer*, No.7, p.98.

496 Sheridan, *A Full Vindication of the Conduct of the Manager*, pp.5-7.

improvements, accompanied by the now de rigeur damnation of the gentry. 498 But one of the periodical’s main criticisms was of Sheridan’s uncritical regurgitation of English plays. It also outlined Irish resentment engendered by descriptions as provincial dullards by English dramatists, using the description ‘Boeotians’ (the boorish stock-characters of Attic drama) as a castigation of Irish tastes. 499

As stated, this controversy displayed occasional reflexive correlations of origins and faith. By far the most vocal champion of this connection was Charles Lucas – an apothecary based in Dublin, but originally from Clare. That Lucas was an aggressive partisan for Sheridan is clear; his pamphlets in support of the actor are evidence enough, but this partisanship was well known in Dublin at the time. For instance, during one of the confrontations in the theatre between Sheridan and the ‘gentlemen’ one of the supporters of Kelly exclaimed ‘Here’s an Apothecary comes with his Clyster-pipe, God demme!’ Another pamphlet asked that Sheridan ‘send your Apothecaries home to take care of their shops’. 500 Furthermore, Lucas’s vocal denunciations of the gentlemen resulted in an assault on Essex Bridge. 501 Lucas was attacking what he perceived to be the arbitrary tendencies of the ‘gentlemen’. More interestingly, he derived this conclusion from his idea of an infusion of ‘native’ blood into Protestant Ireland. The intervention of Paul Hiffernan, a Catholic physician trained in France, on the side the gentlemen further incriminated the gentlemen in Lucas’s eyes. Indeed, most of the pro-Lucas literature (for his growing celebrity prompted such texts during the controversy) are criticisms of Hiffernan – however, these tended to critique his prose style,

498 The Reformer, No. 6, pp.92-93; this edition encapsulated the changes evident since 1740. In it, the writer admonishes those who blame the indolence of ‘the unhappy Poor’; ‘Their Sloth, say those [the gentry], is the cause of their Misery. ‘Tis pleasant to observe, that this Objection frequently comes from those who in all their lives have not been serviceable to their Country’.

499 The Reformer, No.1, p.67; Edmund Burke and Richard Shackleton, ‘Ballitore’ in Samuels, Early Life, Correspondence and Writings, p.157; William Dunkin, Boeotia, A Poem (1747).

500 [Anon.], Dublin in an Uproar, Or, The Ladies Robb’d of their Pleasure (1747), p.11; [Anon.], An Answer to Mr. S----, p.2.

501 [Anon.], A Letter of Thanks to the Barber, for his Indefatigable Pains to Suppress the Horrid and Unnatural Rebellion Lately Broke out in this City (1747), p.5.
pretensions to literary fame and French education rather than his faith.  

Thus Lucas referred to ‘Gentlemen of the genuine ancient Milesian Race, [who] in a most violent and lawless Manner... go in Pursuit of this Fellow [Sheridan]’ under ‘the revived System of ancient Irish barbarity’. He asserted that he was someone ‘whose Ancestors came to subdue the Barbarity of the Natives of this Island... taught them Manners as well as Arts, and brought them under the best Government in the World’. Lucas propounded his fear that gentlemen would ‘have their Morals corrupted by conversing with Papists and Slaves’. Furthermore, all these efforts at crushing Gaelic barbarity would be quite futile unless vigilance was maintained against such backsliding. ‘Shall we’ Lucas asked, ‘suffer their offspring to relapse [i.e., converts and their children], and some of our Brethren, to degenerate into the old hateful, exploded Slavery and Barbarism?’. This was a reading clearly derived from Davies; elsewhere, he accused the ‘gentlemen’ of ‘assert[ing] their ancient Right, not only to Debauch, but to Murder such of their Inferiors as they thought fit’ and refers to their reputation for bilking tradesmen as comparable to ‘Coshering from House to House’.

It is indicative of the alteration in attitudes that Lucas’s use of an older historical narrative backfired and his jeremiads were dismissed as hysterical. An anti-Sheridan writer wished to tarnish both the actor and his defender, lamenting that they ‘endeavoured to set this Nation in a Flame... by sounding your loud Trumpets to warn the World that the Pretender was at the bottom of this Affair’. Satire tended to predominate. A scriptural parody echoed this accusation of cooperation;

And he [Sheridan] came unto L---s and said, what shall I do, for the Men of Conaught are upon me.  
And L---s said unto S------n, fear not neither be thou dismayed: Are there not Papists in the Land of Conaught? And are not the Papists Rebels?

502 ‘Mr. No-Body’, Mr. No-Body’s Anti-Ticklerian Address to Mr. Lucas (1748); ‘Scriblerus’, The Marrow of the Tickler’s Works (1748); Richard Dickson, A Faithful Narrative of the Barbarous and Bloody Murder of P—I H-ff-n, MD (1748).

503 [Lucas], A Letter to the Free Citizens of Dublin (1747), pp.4-6.

504 Ibid, pp.2, 5.
We will go forth into the Streets and into the Market place, and we shall say that the Men of Conaught are Rebels, so shall it be well with thee.

Another sarcastically regretted that ‘some few Protestant Gentlemen [were] drawn in by the dark Jesuitical Schemes’.\textsuperscript{505} Again, an insinuation of uncharitableness was utilized by Lucas's detractors, one of whom ironically accredited him with formulating hyperbolic tracts ‘against Irish Gentlemen of the true Milesian Race, the Offspring of Savages and Tyrants’.\textsuperscript{506} The fact that many of these individual had English-derived (or Anglicized) names and Sheridan had a Gaelic surname escaped Lucas’s attention. A more earnest (pro-Sheridan) response scrupulously ‘avoided making any Reflection in Family-Names, Cities, Provinces, or Religions’ as they were ‘idle, impolitic, and unseasonable... unjust and injurious.’ Furthermore, the author wished to banish the ‘Jealousies, which we entertain, or affect to entertain of converts’;

As to the Milesian Race, we are not without our O’s on our side of the Question, and some O’s are a Credit to us too. And in due time, I hope, we shall have many more to boast of. Let us have no antiquated Pale, of an hundred Years standing... restored or revived upon us. We owe no Thanks either for re-establishing old invidious distinctions or for making new ones. We owe no Thanks for obliging us to remember what it is our mutual Interest on all Hands to forget, things not to be placed to the Account of the present Age on any Side, tainting to the thousandth Generation.

Let us rather consider ourselves, as we are at this Day, one Nation, one People, the Subjects of the same gracious Prince, the Care of the same indulgent Father, tied to each other by common Interests, by common Laws, and by common Usages. If we are not united by a common Religion, that is nothing extraordinary; since such an Unity is not to be met with in any Nation under Heaven.\textsuperscript{507}

This chastisement was effective when Lucas's third and last contribution to the affair was produced; evidently stung by such criticism, this piece was more nuanced and bore close resemblance to his sentiments during the affair of 1748-49. In it, he objected to being charged with ‘representing all the poor conquered

\textsuperscript{505} An Answer to Mr. Sheridan, p.1; [Anon.], The Book of the Prophecies of the Prophet Lucas, (1747), p.7; [Anon.], Dublin in an Uproar, p.21.

\textsuperscript{506} [Anon.], A Letter of Thanks to the Barber; p.5.

\textsuperscript{507} [Anon.], An Humble Address to the Ladies of Dublin (1747), pp.17-18.
Irish... as a base, barbarous, savage people’ and ‘casting bitter invectives against Roman Catholics’. He dispensed with the latter charge by stating that he discriminated between ‘followers of the Bishop of Rome’ and ‘subjects of the Pope of Rome’, the former being a loyal subject, the latter a Jacobite. Some residual ethnographical shibboleths are apparent when he insisted he was ‘a descedent of Britons’. However, Lucas engaged in a comparison with Ireland and Britain, using invasion and settlement, like the Elizabethan humanists before him, as a means of highlighting shared inheritances. Furthermore, he denied conquest, supporting the idea of a Gaelic submission to Henry II but insisted on the validity of his previous critique, that nativist feeling had infected landlords, blaming this on their ‘antient pedigree’. 508 But this time a more ecumenical tone is tangible and he portrays these evils as ultimately mutable; moreover, he was at pains to state that ‘All the Roman Catholics of my Acquaintance deny the later imputation [of Lucas himself being purely anti-Catholic, rather than anti-Jacobite]. They are therefore with me fully acquainted, and cannot consequently be offended.’ 509 Despite his stubborness, Lucas would alter this stance during his campaign for municipal reform in Dublin. The transition from the Kelly riots to the Lucas affair is near seamless and they must be viewed as a whole; pro-Sheridan responses segued into defences of Lucas; and Lucas, either emboldened by the spotlight or defending his stance, commenced his campaign for municipal reform in earnest.

The Lucas Affair

While space does not allow – and nor would it be fruitful – to minutely analyze the hundreds of pamphlets published in 1748-50, it should suffice to say that the majority of pro-Lucas productions were very antagonistic in their anti-English sentiment and that the majority of his critics’ responses displayed a strong ethnological and historiographical flavour. 510 Lucas’s relevance for this study is due to his criticism of the historical examples of the ‘native’ Irish while his opponents stuck firm to the usual narratives of anti-popery and native-bashing.

510 Dickson, New Foundations, p.95.
Lucas’s intention appears to have been to opportunistically harness a historiographical narrative familiar to Irish Protestants (namely Davies’ account of the failure to apply law equally and indiscriminately) and invoke this narrative as a way of accusing them of behaving tyrannically and abandoning their historic objectives. Secondly, Lucas also intended to use the recent vogue for anti-gentry animus and to accuse the elite of Protestant Ireland of being remiss in the fulfillment of their obligations. In doing so, there was also an implication that reliance on ethnological theories (inveterate native laziness) and historiographical narratives (the 1641 massacres) were not sufficient to justify Ireland’s perceived deleterious state or modes of governance. While Lucas was not doubting the heritage of liberty that he, as an Englishman, was capable of accessing he did doubt the contemporary viability and self-assuredness of the record of the English in Ireland and presumptions of English superiority in all matters. This, naturally, alarmed the proponents of Anglocentric identification prevalent after 1710; it was in this arena that the importance of the affair resides. That is, it was the first time such criticism erupted into open controversy rather than being contained in contributions to improvement literature that questioned some of the historical and ethnological assumptions on which the establishment in church and state rested. Additionally, it was more than a municipal affair and had national and archipelagic complexions.511

Lucas’s Menocchio-like absorption of disparate texts indicate some of his sources, but two (in historiographical terms) predominate; William Molyneux and Sir John Davies. Sentiments and even distinct phrases are detectable from other works of the classical and Whig canon, particularly Trenchard, Hale, Locke, Coke and Acherley. These are largely regurgitations of contemporary platitudes, equally visible in the output of patriot thought in London and the Colonies. But this study intends to treat those historical paradigms that Lucas utilized or, more accurately, resurrected. Molyneux's presence in the Addresses and the Censor have received the most attention thus far, analyses reflective of the tendency to ‘treat the development of oppositional, patriot or “colonial nationalist”, ideas as a sort of

torch-passing relay’. It was Lucas's use of history, rather than Whig orthodoxy, which caused his condemnation and exile – it also provoked the greatest printed response and shall be analyzed here.

This historiography essentially consisted of the revival of Davies' and Spenser's older incorporationist narratives. Lucas was unabashed in this utilization, indicating through such unapologetic usage that Davies’ was a worthy and valued source – understandable given the above-mentioned saturation of Davies’ thought in the improvement corpus and in his republication history throughout the century. However, the recommendations of the text were repugnant to the ethnological paradigms dominant since 1690. The main sentiments in Lucas’s work were those outlined at the beginning of the first chapter and were modified from the criticism he had received during the Kelly riots. Indeed, these appear to have prompted Lucas to go the other extreme and stress instead the ethnological speciousness of presuming ‘native’ inability to receive common law. In this Davies was, of course, paramount. Most of Lucas’s addresses utilized history as a simple narrative of liberty’s travails and ultimate triumph in 1688 but depicted these hard-won freedoms as being under increasing threat during the 1740s. Amidst this deluge of output, unsurprisingly stressing Saxon and Gothic inheritance, two stand out. The tenth and eleventh addresses of Lucas each contain equal measures of Molyneux and Davies, though the latter is more prevalent in the eleventh. The tenth address deals with Anglo-Irish relations, heavily-influenced by Locke and contract theory; this address, garnished with the usual anti-gentry aspersions, attempted to prove that the native Irish had submitted to Henry II and was essentially a digest of Molyneux's *Case of Ireland*.

Similarly, his eleventh address was a condensed version of Davies’ *Discovery of the True Causes*. Not that Lucas is duplicitous in depicting such thought as his own; he openly acknowledged ‘that strenuous Assertor of Truth and Liberty’ (Molyneux) and ‘that great Ornament to his Profession’ (Davies).

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513 Patrick Kelly, ‘Conquest versus Consent as the basis of the English Title to Ireland in Molyneux’s *The Case of Ireland*’ in Jane Ohlmeyer (ed.), *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.334-356
This appears to be a conscious invocation of two seminal texts familiar to Irish Protestants. As he stated at the beginning of his tenth address, the two addresses were companion pieces ‘to lead You [the reader], into a regular Chain of Thought’ by focusing first on the Anglo-Irish setting, before looking into Ireland's past, specifically the legal system’s partiality.\textsuperscript{515}

His eleventh address was a dual critique; an overt attack upon English involvement in Irish political affairs and an implicit attack upon the Church of Ireland establishment for failing to fulfill the incorporationist programme of the Elizabethans. The insinuation was simple; that Irish Protestants were treating eighteenth-century subjects as the Anglo-Normans had treated medieval ‘natives’. While stressing that he had no ‘Consanguinity or Affinity’ with the ‘natives’, Lucas then proceeded to disrupt ethnological assumptions about the ‘natives’ of Ireland. His attempt to contextualize rebellion, his excoriation of injustice against those excluded from the law and his insistence that they earnestly desired legal protection were all lifted from Davies. Lucas compared the conduct of the Anglo-Normans to the segregationists extant since 1690;

\begin{quote}

The Irish were to hope no less, than their Lives, their civil and religious Liberties, their Properties and Possessions were safe and secure, upon the Principles of the Policy of England; and, that no further Distinction should be made, between the English and Irish, in the Kingdom, than was made, between the Normans and the English... the happy Fruits of which, must have been a perfect, firm Union of all classes of Men in the Island, in one common Interest.\textsuperscript{516}
\end{quote}

Culpability not only accrued to the English as distant administrators; were not Irish Protestants ‘who now avow or justify, more especially those, who add to, these Outrages of their Forefathers, involved in their Guilt?’\textsuperscript{517} Another New World example raised particular hackles, not only in that it compared the Church of Ireland establishment to the Spanish of the ‘Black Legend’ and accused them of being ‘insensible of the Beams in their own Eyes’ but that ‘the Irish were kept in this Ignorance and Slavish Subjection, probably, for the same reason, that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{515} Ibid, p.109.
\item \textsuperscript{516} Ibid, p.133.
\item \textsuperscript{517} Ibid, p.141.
\end{itemize}
Blacks in America are, at this Day’.\textsuperscript{518} All the above revisions, those of contextualizing rebellion, invoking older incorporative narratives, raising the 'Black Legend' as a critique and castigating assumptions of English amicability struck at the heart of the Anglocentric orientation in Irish ethnology. Not only that, Lucas openly attacked the reputation of its progenitor, Lord Chancellor Cox. He mentioned a previous incident to illustrate the sensitivities of the Irish Protestant elite. This incident was the publication of Hugh MacCurtain’s \textit{Vindication of the History of Ireland} (1717), which was intensely critical of Cox. In particular, Lucas referred to one ‘Mc Curtin, an inoffensive, honest, poor man, [who] was committed to \textit{New-Gate}, by one Cox, one of the \textit{knighted, ermined Villains of the perfidious Ministry of the late abused Queen ANNE… His sole Crime was writing a harmless, silly Book, which that \textit{corrupt Judge} did not like’.\textsuperscript{519}

The overall effect of Lucas’s historical revision, according to David Hayton, was to deny ‘one of the great principles of Protestant Irish political theory, that the frequency of rebellions in the kingdom had been due solely to the innate perfidiousness and bloodthirstiness of the natives.’\textsuperscript{520} The responses thus elicited by Lucas’s provoking revisions are revealing in terms of the political attitudes that attended them. Those still wedded to the segregationist thesis (geared toward extolling the benefits of blood and faith with the metropole) reacted with fury to Lucas’s re-drawn contours of Irish ethnology. Even before Lucas drew on South American comparisons, one critic lamented ‘How cruel, how base, how ungenerous it is to raise a Name for one self, at the Expence of our Neighbours?’\textsuperscript{521} William Henry – Rector of Urney, Co. Tyrone and strident Anglocentric - embraced a mode of denigration that involved the time-worn reflex of condemning the Irish cultural practices of the past as a means of underscoring the present affinity and similitude between the Protestants of both islands. Revealingly signing himself ‘Brittano-Hibernicus’, Henry began with the

\textsuperscript{518} Ibid, pp.132, 138.
\textsuperscript{521} James Taylor, \textit{Lucas Detected: Or, a Vindication of the Sheriffs and Commons of the City of Dublin} (1749), p.10.
accusation that Lucas ‘endeavoured to raise a Spirit of Jealousy and Discord between Great Britain and Ireland’ which would ‘disunite the happy Subjects of these Kingdoms’ before moving on to refute the agitator’s reconstruction of the past;

It [Ireland] was divided into several petty Kingdoms, which were continually at Wars with one another: And in each of these were a multitude of petty Tyrants, and their Septs, whose Hatred and Intestine quarrels were implacable and endless - Every Landlord, or little Kearn in his District was an absolute Tyrant, who by exacting Coyne and Livery, by Cosherings, and endless Oppressions, kept all under him in the most wretched Slavery. The Tenants, if such they may be called, were of all Human Creatures the most forlorn Slaves, whose Lives were at the Mercy of their Lords; their Wives and Daughters were the daily Sacrifices of their Lust, and their Sons obliged to run and die in their Quarrels, whenever a sudden fit of Drunkenness or Lust disposed any one of these Tyrants to plunder another.522

This deleterious state was rectified by ‘those first British Adventurers, who, like Gods, engaged in the arduous task of reforming this chaos’ and by the Tudor reduction which ‘replenished us with numerous and industrious British Colonies’. The sentiment displayed is only explicable by the acute sensitivities of the Irish Anglican elite to any transgression against a dominant conceptual framework of history and ethnicity that Lucas had sacrificed with his demagogy. The author asserted, following the manner of Maxwell and Cox senior, that ‘We are now ONE PEOPLE; nor is there any material difference between a Free Briton born in England, and one born in Ireland, more than between a Man of Yorkshire and a Man of Kent.’ Furthermore, ‘That we are looked upon by all England as one People in every Respect with themselves, is notorious from undeniable Facts’ one the forthcoming reasons being, not only faith, which is surprisingly marginalized in the text, but ‘our original Descent from Britain.’523

Cox the younger was more direct in his response to this violation of Anglocentric sentiment, accusing Lucas of breeding ‘a destructive Jealousy

523 Ibid, pp.9-10.
between Britain and Ireland. Cox dismissed Lucas's argument for Irish equality by using a pragmatic explanation of power disparity. Cox was stung as much by his challenge to extant ethnographic conventions as he was by the attack upon the reputation of his grandfather, for he had resurrected the occasion of MacCurtain’s imprisonment – an indication, perhaps, of Lucas’s awareness that by criticizing the former Lord Chancellor he was challenging the construct of the past that the latter had successfully propagated. Cox also accused Lucas of bias for confining his reading to ‘Mr. McCurtin’s History.’ In addition, Lucas’s use of the New World paradigms of Spain and Mexico raised the ‘Black Legend’ spectre that Cox senior and Molyneux had tried to avoid. Again, the usual biological utterances were used; ‘We are the Bone of their Bone, the Flesh of their Flesh, and have no Interest distinct from theirs’ and so on. Yet they were, in many ways, on the defensive. Henry’s designation that ‘Many Irishmen are Members and Ornaments of the British Parliament’ hints at a lack of confidence, unease even, in the security of previous ethnic labels. The best Cox could do was present this assimilation as an incomplete process, in which the happy dawn of convergence between Irish Protestants and English people was drawing near; ‘By Intermarriages, by Changes of Property, and by other Accidents, owing to our Increasing Trade, and perpetual Intercourse we are growing fast to be one and the same People’. Henry, too, finished his pamphlet with a plea that ‘I trust in God, that the happy Time is, when Judah shall not vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah. When Great Britain and Ireland shall look upon themselves as ONE PEOPLE.’

Lucas was, of course, eventually condemned and suffered a twelve-year exile in England and the Dutch Republic. Lucas’s opponents among members of

524 [Cox], *Surgeon’s Letters*, i, 6; he was also accused of fomenting ‘unhappy and unseasonable Disputes, between Britain and Ireland’, p.7.
525 Murphy, ‘Charles Lucas’, p.88.
526 [Cox], *Surgeon’s Letters*, vi, p.8.
528 [Henry], *Appeal*, 10; [Cox], iv, p.9.
530 [Henry], *Appeal*, p.15.
parliament and in the aldermanic council were keen to be shot of this troublesome ‘cit’. Cox was foremost amongst the former, assisted by his intimate Walter Harris. The Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Harrington, ‘spoke the Sense of the Ministry’ and animadverted to Lucas’s attempts at ‘independency’ in his speech from the throne, alluding to an ‘Attempt to create a Jealousy between the two Kingdoms, and to disunite the Affections of his Majesty’s happy Subjects’.

This coded approval prompted Cox to begin a prosecution of Lucas and his printer, James Esdall. At this stage, Lucas’s difficulties were compounded by his ill-advised publication of an edition of the Censor in which he explicitly endorsed ‘independency’ as being in conformity with ‘every Principle of Moral and Human Laws’.

Furthermore, he quoted excerpts from James Anderson’s Royal Genealogies, which drastically challenged received attitudes toward the Anglo-Norman invasion, the submission of the Gaelic chiefs and the 1641 rebellion. This was a veritable gift to his persecutors in the charged atmosphere of 1749, as Anderson’s two main sources for Irish history were Hugh Reily and William Molyneux – the former a Catholic sympathetic to Davies and the latter widely perceived as an advocate of ‘independency’.

It scarcely needs demonstration that Lucas was condemned for his historical writings. Michael Reily – O’Conor’s correspondent and agent in Dublin – stated that the eleventh address ‘was what the Parliament chiefly pointed at for his Condemnation.’

Parliamentarians decided that his first, second, fourth, eight address were obnoxious, but were keen to emphasize the tenth and eleventh addresses. The latter two were singled out for their historiographical content. A contemporary history pointed out that this was the excuse used by Cox as reason for a prosecution.

Lucas himself, in his collection of writings from the affair (the Political Constitutions) referred to his revisionism and the backlash it created;

This was one of the specified Articles of the Accusation trumped up

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532 Michael Reily to Charles O’Conor, 12 October 1749, RIA MSS B.i.1, letter 41, f.151; The London Gazette, 17-21 October 1749.
533 [Lucas], Political Constitutions, p.551.
534 ‘Civicus’ [Reily] to O’Conor, 21 April 1750, RIA MS B.i.1, f.158.
against the Author. He is not ashamed to avow the Truth of it, nor terrified by his Sufferings from repeating it. He appeals to all the Historians of these Times, particularly, the learned Sir John Davies and the ingenious Dr. Anderson, in his *Royal Genealogies*, to prove, that all the Rebellions in Ireland, since the English invasion, were raised by the persecution and Oppression of the English Governors, Judges and Military Commanders...⁵³⁶

The probable source for this interpretation was the *Impartial Examiner*, published two years before by a Catholic polemicist. Aside from containing a Davies-derived interpretation of Irish history, there were a number of similarities between Lucas’s tenth and eleventh addresses and this work that come close to plagiarism. The author of the *Examiner* (quoting Anglican and non-juror Thomas Deacon) distinguished Catholics according to followers of the ‘Court of Rome’ and believers of the ‘Church of Rome’ – criteria by which Lucas would soon after delineate loyal and disloyal Catholic subjects. Furthermore, in what appears to have had an influence upon Lucas, the writer wrote of ‘the old Irish Natives... being treated by the English little better than Slaves.’ There is even a New World example that would reappear in Lucas; namely by comparing Irish natives with ‘Indian Slaves’ and their ‘English Masters’.⁵³⁷ Similarly, Lucas’s suggestion that the rebellion of 1641 was motivated by self-defence appeared to have been influenced by O’Conor’s friend, Dr John Curry’s, revisionist historiography, which had been published in 1747.

There is compelling evidence that O’Conor wrote the *Impartial Examiner*. O’Conor began his publishing career in 1745 (or perhaps earlier) with a response to Henry Brooke’s *Farmer’s Letters* called the *Letter to the Author of the Farmer’s Letters*.⁵³⁸ While most scholars have followed his grandson’s assertion that the *Counter-Appeal* of 1749 was O’Conor’s first venture into print, it is now possible to justify ascriptions to O’Conor for earlier works.⁵³⁹ First, Michael

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⁵³⁷ [O’Conor?], *Impartial Examiner*, pp.34, 61, 62.
⁵³⁸ [Charles O’Conor], *A Letter to the Author of the Farmer’s Letters by a Country Gentleman* (1745).
⁵³⁹ [Charles O’Conor], *The Impartial Examiner. Or the Faithful representor of the Various and Manifold Misrepresentations imposed on the Roman Catholics of Ireland* (1746), [Anon.], *A
Reily frequently refers to the response to Brooke in his letters to O’Conor. Secondly, the nom de plume assumed by the author of this response was ‘Rusticus’ – a name O’Conor similarly assumed in his correspondence with Reily.

So O’Conor categorically published a response to Brooke signed ‘Rusticus’. Regarding the Impartial Examiner; in terms of content, the Examiner contained themes that would reappear throughout O’Conor’s political and historiographical work. Like his other works, it was designed to appeal to contemporary pieties while arguing for Catholic relief. However, there is outside confirmation that O’Conor wrote the Impartial Examiner; another satire – apparently written by a Protestant – which responded to an anti-Catholic pamphlet contained a caricature of a Catholic gentleman that was almost definitely Charles O’Conor. Moreover, the author stated at the end that ‘I cannot omit informing you, that the Papist had the Impudence, after a long and sullen silence, to undertake their Defence in two Papers; one intitled the Examiner, and the other signed Rusticus’. The author noted also that ‘such a Task must be extremely easy to one, who, for eighteen Months past, has been Wire-drawing the History of his Native Country out of an OGYGIAN TALE’. Thus, there is definitive evidence that O’Conor not only found an opportunity in the affair but influenced some of its more radical effusions.

The examples selected are slight in the swell of pamphlets that accompanied the disturbances, yet they are significant for a number of reasons. These authors (Cox, Henry, James Taylor) were some of the most well known and popular to venture into print from the anti-Lucas camp; certainly, Cox was the most powerful, being ultimately responsible for Lucas’s condemnation from the bar of Commons Reply to the Farmer’s Occasional Letter (1749); Additionally, the Rev. O’Conor claims he completed ‘some essays in 1747 & 1748’; Memoirs, p.207.

540 Robert and Catherine Ward and Janet and Gareth Dunleavy do not give this ascription; however, Charles O’Conor’s authorship was recognized in Catherine Sheehan’s (unpublished) biography of O’Conor. See ‘Life of Charles O’Conor’, RIA SR 12.X.2.Most succinctly; ‘I have received your answer to the Farmer’s Letter’, Reily to O’Conor, RIA MS B.i.1, f.125.

541 ‘Civicus’ [Reily] to O’Conor, 12 January 1745, RIA MS B.i.1, f.125.

542 [Anon.], Seasonable Advice to Protestants (Cork, 1745).

543 ‘Misopapa’, Caveat against the Papists, p.8.
the House that resulted in his exile. Furthermore, it was their extreme reaction that prompted Charles O’Conor to publish. Quite apart from their depiction of a barbarous Irish past, what had displeased O’Conor was Cox’s characterization that ‘I would as soon be a Papist and a Jacobite, for I see no difference between them’, which, in O’Conor’s eyes, threatened contemporary Catholics personally as well as – more abstractly – the truth. It was into this world that O’Conor ventured in 1749 with a clear didactic intent – a desire to promote Lucas’s use of Davies and an opportunity to attack Cox. Certainly, the use of Davies by Lucas was noted by Reily, who indicated to O’Conor that he ‘quotes a good Authority for what he advances’ that he was obviously familiar with and wished to emphasize. Reily himself, always willing to defer to O’Conor, had reservations about Lucas due to his anti-convert polemicism during the Kelly riots, but after his new turn toward ecumenism and historical revisionism O’Conor was quite keen to ‘wish him success’.

This well-wishing extended into the pamphlet O’Conor published in response to Cox and Henry's disparagement, calling Lucas ‘an ornament to his country and to human nature’. Entitled A Counter-Appeal to the People of Ireland, it scathingly attacked the ‘drivelling Author’ of the Appeal and ‘the abandoned Scribler from Cork, who calls himself Anthony Litten’. It is also apparent that O’Conor found the controversy an opportunity, not to attack Henry but to set the record straight regarding the ancient liberties of the ‘Tuathalian’ constitution, as well as to denigrate both Richard Cox senior and junior though the figure of the latter. Certainly, most of scholars of O’Conor’s work presume this was the case – some even inadvertently. O’Conor’s own grandson, in his biography of his grandfather, could state that the work was in response to Cox, without mention of Henry. Similarly, Francis Plowden quoted a letter (from O’Conor’s kinsman Hugh McDermott) in which O’Conor remarked that Cox senior was ‘the greatest

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544 Dickson, New Foundations, pp.96-97; Murphy, ‘Charles Lucas’, p.91.
545 [Cox], Surgeon’s Letters, iii, p.14.
546 Reily to O’Conor, 21 April, 1750, f.158; Reily to O’Conor, 12 October 1749, RIA MS B.i.1, f.141.
547 [Charles O’Conor], A Counter-Appeal to the People of Ireland (1749), p.7.
548 Rev. O’Conor, Memoirs, pp.207-211.
liar of all our historians’. Despite the *Counter-Appeal’s* use of a title that counters Henry’s work and the content of the latter being more specific upon the subject of Ireland’s antiquity, most of the fire is aimed at Cox’s work. This has resulted in the title of the work, for instance in the Ward’s collected correspondence of O’Conor, mistakenly being given as *A Counter-Appeal Against the Appeal… of Sir Richard Cox.* O’Conor viewed Henry as something of a crank and turncoat; he disliked that Henry had converted from the religion of his birth (Presbyterianism) and excoriated him as a ‘little prattling pulpit orator’. Moreover, the references that Lucas made to Cox in his paper and pamphlets appeared to have endeared the apothecary to O’Conor and he delighted at every ‘humorous stroke’ directed at Cox. O’Conor also despised Cox's intimate Walter Harris and refers to him repeatedly in his correspondence in the most derogatory terms.

O’Conor’s *Counter-Appeal* praised Lucas using heroic language. He was particularly keen to draw attention to Lucas’s use of history, insisting that those ‘Forgetful of the past’ were people who fail to ‘know the uses and feel the abuses of Government’ – that is, poor understanding of history was characteristic of ‘slaves’. Similarly, O’Conor alleged that the acceptance of established narratives engendered ‘lethargy’ in discourses of liberty – and the ‘active, honest and rational Spirit’ of Lucas was reviving discussions of Ireland’s political and historical state. Probably in order to reinforce his adopted Protestant mask, O’Conor tactically insisted upon the independence of the early Irish church. He also exploited a growing sense of Irish nationhood by the calculated use of

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551 O’Conor to Curry, 25 November 1761.

552 Reily to O’Conor, 12 [14?] October 1749, RIA MS B.i.1, f.139.

553 O’Conor to Curry, 2 June 1756; O’Conor to Curry, 16 July 1756; O’Conor to Curry, 13 January 1757; 17 August 1757; 5 October 1757.

554 O’Conor, *Counter-Appeal*, pp.3-4.
inclusive language – insisting that Henry and Cox had betrayed their nation through the ‘Poison thus shed by the Scribblers against their country’. The ethnography contained within the Counter-Appeal was anti-Gothic and in favour of the ‘time-immemorial’ theory. He lamented the ‘Heathen Goths’ as destroyers of Europe when Ireland had a government composed of ‘the Regal, the Aristocratic and the Popular’ elements of society and when it was purportedly ‘the Seat of Commerce to the Western World’. Indeed, this ancient Irish government appeared very like the government of contemporary Britain. This was in agreement with the ethnography espoused in the pamphlets. The first migrants into Ireland (the Milesians were not mentioned) were ‘Britons [who] lived here Freemen according to the popular plan of Government they brought along with them from their parent Country.’ O’Conor concluded; ‘I have taken and traced our ancient Government and Religion from their source; proved the one to be the freest, and the other the purest, that ever existed in the World.’

O’Conor’s Counter-Appeal was a startling affirmation of the compatibility of Irish past and British present and the pamphlet, being responsive to a specific provocation, is the most historically-concerned of all O’Conor’s pamphlets. Using what would become his usual tactic, he assumed a Protestant guise to maximise the work’s didactic impact. In what appears to be a concession to Lucas’s narratives of British liberties and the myths of ethnogenesis of the first ‘incorporationists’, O’Conor posited that ‘Ireland was first inhabited by the Damnonians and Belgians of Britain’. Similarly, as ‘These Britons lived here Freemen according to the popular Plan of Government they brought along with them from their parent Country. By this migration they forfeited none of their natural Rights, any more than the latter Colonies Planted here by Henry II.’

Thus, it was not only those professing an ethnological claim for precedence from the medieval Anglo-Norman settlement onwards, but the original inhabitants, those ‘aborigines’ of whom O’Conor felt himself to be one of the representatives, that were deserving of the British privileges of their ancestors.

The reaction to the piece was indicative of the acute sensitivities that

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556 Ibid, pp.8, 11-12.
557 This is achieved by the simple method of disparaging ‘Popery’; pp.9, 10, 11.
558 [O’Conor], A Counter-Appeal, p.8.
surrounded any attempt to resurrect the older ideas of assimilation and ethnogenesis. Reily stated that the reaction was immediate and hostile, calling it the ‘inflaming Counter-Appeal’ that ‘has been roared about the town all day yesterday’. Additionally, Reily warned of the menace O’Conor faced. First, O’Conor and Lucas shared a printer at one stage – and this printer was in danger of being called before the House because of his publications. Despite the pleasing fact that it would ‘gall the Corke Surgeon’, Reily was anxious as ‘many judge it [the Counter Appeal] to be treasonable’. Even more worrying was that some found it ‘of a more dangerous tendency than all Lucas’s Papers together’ and Walter Harris, nemesis of the revisionists, had threatened the publisher. Furthermore, so palpable was their animosity that Reily warned O’Conor to ‘guard against all Sir Richard's friends: he is not only warm, but malicious against Lucas.’\(^559\)

This pamphlet is something of an oddity in O’Conor’s work in that it combines both antiquarian and political writing in the same place. Afterwards, his work would be divided between the two, one dealing with Whiggish, enlightenment-influenced polemical work in the form of pamphlets that argued from the perspective of value-free expedience (often masquerading as a Protestant). The other was antiquarian work that tried to prove ancient Ireland (and, hence, contemporary Irish Catholics) had the requisite ethnic qualifications for admission to the Hanoverian polity. But this was also a peculiar effort in the sense that, as his grandson stated, it was ‘written in a hasty negligent manner’ and later works would more thoroughly enunciate his model of the past; when the more comprehensive work *Dissertations* appeared in 1753, it jettisoned the British ethnogenesis that was apparent in the Counter Appeal – but not quite, instead presenting a system of inter-island circulation of people and ideas that was not dependent upon Anglocentrism.\(^560\) In its stead, O’Conor disseminated an alternate idea of the area from whence British liberties derived, namely, the Milesian migration and ‘Tuathalian’ constitution of ancient Ireland that had, via Irish colonies in Britain and primeval British settlement in Ireland, contributed to

\(^559\) Reily to O’Conor, 12 October 1749, Letter 40; Reily to O’Conor, 4 November 1749, RIA MS B.i.1, f.151.

the development of the mixed and balanced Hanoverian state composed of Lords, Commons and King. O’Conor wished to present the compatibility of Irish Catholicism with a conception of Britishness entirely in keeping with the norms of ‘Tuathalian’ constitution (read Irish ‘Whig constitution’), conformable in belief with the Hanoverian constitution of Great Britain. Both, according to O’Conor, had systems of toleration in which faith had ‘no collision with the civil power’.  

Growing Irish Protestant insecurity in their post-Boyne ethnographical myths and an increasingly irenic interest in the Irish past was the royal path by which this interpretation of the past could be disseminated. For an Irish Protestant audience, this was attempted by writing a new history that made the migration and eventual accommodation of disparate ethnic groups in Ireland a normal pattern; itself an effort as old as Keating, Spenser, Camden and Davies. Thus, futile ethno-religious squabbling was, in O’Conor’s schema, to be replaced with ‘one creed of political faith’ in which any ethnic supremacism was to be superseded by consensual loyalty to civic society and political structures in order to attain economic prosperity. What O’Conor called for, through his work, was a return to the first expressions of incorporating thought, encapsulated in the writings of Sir John Davies. These advocated an equitable extension of law to all on the island as the surest means of creating a flourishing Ireland. Given his representation of invasive patterns, waves of settlement, stress upon the importance of a tolerant (even secular) state and his endorsement of Davies, O’Conor, then, is less of a return to a hazy Gaelic bardic tradition than yet another modification of the ‘incorporating’ strand that had a lineage stretching back to the late Elizabethan wars.

561 O’Conor, Dissertations, p.145.
Chapter Five

From Scythians to Milesians: The Rehabilitation of the Irish Past in British and Irish Antiquarianism, 1720-1750

During the course of the eighteenth century, ethnographic descriptions and historical consciousness of these descriptions gradually shifted – a shift that is reflective of a change of political sensibilities in this period. This development was viewed with alarm by those who maintained an investment in an older and more exclusive Anglo-centric political ethnography characteristic of Irish Protestant thought for the period before 1740. Yet – despite these anxieties – it was not just social and political contexts within Ireland that contributed to this change. Ethnographic consciousness and Irish historical narratives were altered under the influence of developments in antiquarianism, the classificatory impulse embedded in enlightenment discourses, the consolidation of a stable Irish state and the growth of a language of a Irish identity.

Explanations of the last phenomenon are usually vague and rely on a ‘passage of time’ theory to understand this change. However, this alteration tends to be assumed rather analysed. This interpretation is so pervasive precisely because it is so commonsensical and logical. As this thesis is concerned with early modern ethnographic and ethnological narratives, I shall concentrate on that arena – more specifically, the effect of political contexts and intellectual trends on accounts of peoples’ origins, movements and cultures. One very noticeable change in ethnological narratives after 1740 was the growing reputation accruing to the Milesian theory of ethnogenesis for Irish Gaels. As we have seen, around the 1710s Irish Protestants gradually abandoned the idea that the Irish indigenes had a common ethnogenesis with people in Britain. This was supplanted by the idea that Irish Catholics descended from ‘Tartars’, ‘Scythians’ or ‘Spaniards’. This also had utility in explaining the failure of the Irish economy – namely, that Irish Catholics’ innate laziness and sloth engendered by their ‘Scythian’ blood restrained economic development. However, what begun as a way of indicating superiority and explaining developmental failure mutated in this period into a more respectable ethnogenesis – a shift from derogatory Scythianism into reputable Milesianism (the latter were also described as ‘Phoenicians’). Also increasingly accepted in this period was the idea that Ireland was less a society
inhabited by ‘natives’ and ‘settlers’ but a country in which waves of inward migration were historicized and uncontroversial. This chapter will use articulations of historical awareness to describe these changes. It is, therefore, worth pointing out that labels of ethnic descent – usually designated in terms of the military leaders responsible for conquest or mass migration – gain an increasing purchase in Irish mentalities. Thus, ‘Milesian’, ‘Strongbonian’ and ‘Cromwellian’ appear in popular and intellectual discourses from the 1740s onward. Irish Protestants were no longer accounted as a settler group that erupted unto the island, but as one group among many that could access an Irish identity based on a normal historical narrative of frequent invasions and settlement. So, as chapter four dealt with the gradual decline in confidence in popular Anglocentric Irish Protestant identities, this chapter will deal with the growing scholarly repute of Milesianism.

These altered ethnological explanations are symptomatic of the growth of an over-arching Irish identity that comprehended multiple ethno-religious groups coalescing as an Irish nation. The historicization of past invasion and settlement was indicative of the maturing of an Irish sense of self in the eighteenth century – a prerequisite to the nationalistic ideology that would flourish from the 1790s onwards in the form of Irish republicanism and nationalism. As the last chapter dealt with the popular ethnographical concepts embedded in improvement literature and articulated during specific crises, this chapter will deal with strictly intellectual accounts of this growing Milesian prestige. This has been charted from 1720 to 1755 as a way of highlighting its capacity to reflect and influence the growth of this widespread sense of identity, manifest in historiography and popular discourse. This development will be revealed through the analysis of several entities. The idiosyncratic John Toland’s work adhered to older theory of British ethnogenesis; a stance that owed much to his anti-hierarchical religiosity and Irish background. While not always endorsing Milesian ethnogenesis, Toland’s work did attempt to rehabilitate the ancient Irish past. Secondly, the publication of a translation of Keating’s Foras Feasa ar Éirinn by Dermot O’Connor provoked hostility from Irish Catholic and Protestant antiquaries cooperating in scholarly descriptions of ancient Ireland. Lastly, the Physico-Historical Society commenced as an institution to validate Irish Protestant historical myths but, by 1750, ended up endorsing Milesian ethnogenesis.
Evidence of this change in ethnological narratives and historical mentalities is apparent from two of the most pugnacious proponents of Anglocentric supremacy. In March 1741 Richard Cox wrote to Walter Harris to propose a new history of Ireland. This was necessary, as Cox saw it, due to the increased scholarly acceptance of an ancient Milesian settlement of Ireland and rehabilitations that stressed the prestige of the pre-Norman past. Cox believed a history should be written so that ‘the Irish themselves [can be] taught how much they have changed for the better’ because of English settlement in Ireland. What motivated Cox was partially a desire to protect the legacy of his grandfather – though filial loyalties were not the only factor. According to Barnard, Cox and Harris ‘planned – both in tandem and separately – to reimpose an interpretation friendly to the Protestants and unflattering to the Catholics.’\textsuperscript{563} This arose out of a concern regarding the growing reputation of a previously excoriated ethnological theory that threatened once-dominant narratives of Protestant interest and English civility. Cox was particularly sensitive to such alterations and, from this sensitivity, had an acute awareness of the importance of such political ethnographies. Harris and Cox were exemplars of the Anglocentric ethnography extant after 1710, stressing the political necessity of enduring dependent status in the hope of ultimate absorption (or union) on the basis of consanguinity. In other words, adherents to Anglocentric segregationism wedded this ethnography to a variety of political strategies and status anxieties, producing an ethnological narrative that both explained and justified continuing divisions and constitutional statuses, manifest as an exclusionary set of theories.

The ethnological alterations that Harris and Cox feared had a long, but steady, gestation and began in literature and historiographical works over twenty years previously. However, they commenced life as rehabilitations of the Gaelic past, rather than Milesian ethnogenesis. They were similarly inflected by the political attitudes and ambitions of their authors. The first flurry of writings that rehabilitated the Irish past occurred in the period 1716-1726. In 1722, a Gaelic

\textsuperscript{563} Richard Cox to Walter Harris, 6 March 1741 [2], k.I.II.14, Armagh quoted from Barnard, \textit{Improving Ireland?}, p.91.
character in a play about the Norman invasion, looked forward to when the Anglo-Normans would ‘… mix their Blood with ours; [and would] one People grow/Polish our Manners, and improve our Minds.’ Tellingly, the play redeemed the pre-Norman political leaders of Gaelic Ireland while, unsurprisingly, condemning the behaviour of the Catholic Church. The main characters were the courageous Rotherick O’Connor, King of Connaught (Charles O’Conor’s ancestor), and his nefarious clerical adviser, the Archbishop of Tuam. This play was itself revealed the increasing fascination over such pre-Norman accounts of Ireland. An earlier example of this fascination was Sarah Butler’s *Irish Tales* of 1716, which romanticized the activities of two of the earliest ‘Milesian’ princes. Another was Thomas Shadwell’s *Rotherick O’Connor*, depicting the same topic and with the similar platitudes to Phillips’ play. An even earlier account, which did not mention Milesians, but acknowledged romantic and meritorious aspects of pre-Norman Ireland, was the novel *Vertue Rewarded*; the anonymous author also drew parallels between colonial South America and the post-Williamite settlement of Ireland.

Butler’s early articulation was atypical, though in the long term it would be influential for validating Milesian ethnography. The work had several re-prints and the title eventually morphed from *Irish Tales* into the *Milesian Tales* when published in London in 1727. However, the earliest antiquarian rehabilitations of ancient Ireland (though not Milesian ethnogenesis) in English came, like the above literary productions, from an Irish source – John Toland. Toland’s antiquarianism reflected his Irish background and his religious and political obsessions. Toland was particularly promiscuous in his denominational

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567 [Anon.], *Vertue Rewarded: Or, the Irish Princess* (London, 1693), pp.44-48; the author attests to civility of the ‘Inhabitants of Ireland (how barbarous soever the partial Chronicles of other Nation report ‘em)’; p.47.
568 Sarah Butler, *Milesian Tales* (London, 1727); the Dublin edition retained the ‘Irish’ title when published there in 1735; [Anon.], *A catalogue of books to be sold by auction for the benefit of the poor* (1729), lot 365.
preferences – ending up as a pan-theist via Anglicanism, Presbyterianism and deism. This output reflected Toland’s unique world-view, particularly his pantheistic interpretation of God-as-reason, his insistence that revealed religions of all stripes were anathema to true faith and his conspiracy-inclined mentality.\(^{570}\)

One of his aims was to rehabilitate Irish prehistory to a position of esteem. Toland’s contribution was contained within two works – *Nazarenus* and *A Specimen of the Critical History of the Celtic Religion and Learning* (known as *The History of the Druids*). *Nazarenus* reinforced the conclusion of Archbishop Ussher that Catholicism had no legitimate antiquity on the island.\(^{571}\)

While unremitting praise of the early Irish church pervades his *Nazarenus*, Toland’s posthumously published *History of the Druids* deals with pre-Christian Ireland. Justin Champion has suggested that Toland’s Irish background was subordinate to his overriding commitment to cosmopolitanism, the republic of letters, libertarian political polemics and collaborative networks of patronage and political influence. That is, Toland’s assertion of belonging to ‘no place or country’ is taken at face value.\(^{572}\)

Champion’s thesis is designed as a corrective to the purported formative influence of Toland’s Irishness upon his philosophy, exemplified in the work of Terry Eagleton, David Berman and Richard Kearney (among others).\(^{573}\)

However, Clare O’Halloran is essentially correct in describing his antiquarianism as ‘the most overtly Irish and personal of his works’.\(^{574}\)

In fact, Toland’s work indicated some sensitivity regarding his origins – a bias that was noticed by his contemporaries.\(^{575}\)

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575 Thomas Innes, *Critical Essay on the Native Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain* (London, 1729), pp.420-422.
Nazarenus was a defence of Irish learning and antiquity masquerading as a corrective to Catholic and Anglican accounts of the institutionalization of early Irish Christianity. A litany of early Irish churchmen were given quasi-heroic status and rational, free-thinking religion was presented as a natural offshoot of the island’s genius before the corruptive influences introduced by Rome and Henry II’s Council of Cashel. Milesianism formed no part of Toland’s argument; ‘I laugh at the Romance of Gathelus, Scota, Simon Breac and their fellows’.576 That is, in Toland’s schema the Irish and the British stem from similar stock deriving from an ancient and reputable North-Eastern European civilization. Furthermore, Toland was making an explicit claim for the centrality of Ireland to this civilization; by exploiting Caesar’s comment that the druids of Gaul learnt their trade in Britain, Toland makes a claim that Ireland was the ancient metropolitan seat of this rational religion. Toland was also keen to draw parallels between contemporaneous superstition in England and Ireland that favourably contextualized the latter in a British framework of persisting backwardness. This extended to religious matters; Toland, wished to prove the irrationality of all priest-craft, Protestant or Catholic. But this was wedded to an emotional investment in correlating purported Irish Catholic naivety and slavishness to contemporary credulity in Britain. The survival of druid-legends and remaining respect for druidic monoliths in Ireland were equivalent to the ‘English notion of Fairies’ and was contextualized with ‘the notion the vulgar have in Oxfordshire of Roll-wright stones, and in Cornwall of the Hurlers’. He also defended ‘my own countrymen’ as ‘neither more ignorant nor barbarous in this respect than the poliest of nations’.577 ‘Nor’, Toland stated, ‘is there any thing more ridiculous than what they relate of their Egyptian stock; except what the Britons fable about their Trojan ancestors.’578 ‘Superstition’, Toland concluded, ‘is pritty equal on both sides.’579

576 Toland, Nazarenus, pp.17-18, 45.
578 Ibid, p.117.
579 Martin Martin, A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland (London, 1716), BL c.45.c.1, 313-314.
However, questions of ancient civility and ethnology are addressed more expansively in the *History of the Druids* – which was, according to Michael Brown, Toland’s ‘major life project’.\(^{580}\) This work details the declension of civility in the ancient British Isles, with a particular focus upon Gaelic-speaking areas, from a pristine Abrahamic beginning to a state of barbarous bigotry. Toland presented this as a salutary warning – commensurate with this decay, the priestly predilections of the druids destroy their once-civil polity. Again, Toland’s goal was twofold; to rehabilitate Irish antiquity, and thereby enhance the reputation of Ireland, and to tactically use aspects of the Irish past in an attempt to hit contemporary religious and political targets. As in *Nazarenus*, he makes his origins clear and described himself as ‘a man born in the most northern Peninsula of Ireland’.\(^{581}\) That Toland was praising ancient Ireland and denigrating priestcraft is clear from the text. Instances abound. In a subversion of one of Cambrensis’s criticisms (that no Irish people were martyred in the process of Christian conversion), Toland points out that this was precluded by ancient Irish civility and reasonableness. His desire to refute Cambrensis places him in the tradition of Gaelic scholars who obsessively opposed the medieval cleric.\(^{582}\) Furthermore, Toland’s ethnology propounded a British origin for the indigenes of Ireland in the *History of the Druids*. More precisely, he re-articulated the theory of ethnogenesis first encountered in Spenser; that the Irish are composite group of Britons and Gauls. Despite the broad title, the work quickly shifts to Ireland, remaining his main focus throughout; moreover, Ireland’s antiquity emerged as the key to understanding a lost, literate North-Western European civilisation encompassing Gaul and the British Isles. Ireland’s inhabitants had a written culture, commercial acumen, free trade, education systems and political structures (a type of legislative kingship) that were extinguished in Gaul and Britain by Roman conquest. Toland does not refute the Irish annals’ account of waves of settler-invaders and described them as respectable sources. Rather he altered the original source of these invasions; ‘the ancient Irish, not one of their Colonies excepted (the Nemedians, the Firbolgs, the Danannans, and the Milesians) were


\(^{581}\) Toland refers to his Irish origins frequently; John Toland, *Apology for Mr Toland* (London, 1697), pp.16-17; Simms, ‘John Toland’, pp.318-319.

all from Gaule and Great Britain’. A host of classical writers and etymologies are mobilized by Toland to insinuate this ‘natural’ status of consanguinity, including Ptolemy, Orpheus, Aristotle, Strabo and Pliny.

Toland’s mythopoetic polity derived from the context of its composition and his political convictions. Toland was enthralled by the same seventeenth-century thought that had informed the earliest incorporationist ethnology in Ireland. This adherence was to the common law fetish and ‘time immemorial’ stances that characterized republican political thought. For instance Milton, whom Toland praised unreservedly in a biography, depicted the druids as ancient insular philosophers in the Areopagitica and in his pro-divorce work. Likewise, John Selden, Michael Drayton and Camden all painted positive pictures of the druids, the latter even endorsing their purported monotheism as the reason for Britain’s unproblematic conversion to Christianity. The fact that all were dedicated to ‘time immemorial’ theories or, in the case of Milton and Selden, active partisans for the parliamentarians should not be surprising. In terms of context and motivations, Toland’s ethnology can be traced from the 1690s. In fact, his ethnography was the culmination of a long-standing ambition; as early as 1694, Edward Lhuyd wrote to John Aubrey that the 24-year-old Ulsterman wished to ‘prove the Irish a colony of Gauls’. Such exercises in ethnological speculation mark the History of the Druids, as does his insistence, like Cox, upon ‘a British for the Irish and an Irish extraction for the Scots’. Immediate political motivations stimulated this ethnography. Toland’s insistence upon common ethnic stock is a marked feature of the literature that accompanied British and Irish arguments for a pan-archipelagic union. Likewise, ‘Toland offered a vision

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584 Toland, Druids, pp.131-135.


588 Lhuyd to Aubrey, 9 January 1694 quoted in Alan Harrison, ‘Notes on the Correspondence of John Toland’, I Castelli di Yale, Vol.4, p.86.

589 Toland, Druids, p.117.
of [the druids] political arrangements that chimed with his own republican commitments.\textsuperscript{590} Furthermore, his patron Robert Molesworth, to whom the work was dedicated, was a proponent of union and encouraged Toland in this particular task.\textsuperscript{591} This work combined a variety of religious motivations, political predilections and sensitivities unique to Toland and his desire to imbue Irish history with prestige and respect was likely the motivation for retaining the annalistic chronology of invasions with an ethnology that supported his momentary political agenda – such invasions were, after all, not doubted, merely reconfigured to fit his ethnographical model.

Toland’s embrace of pan-British ethnicity is comprehensible in these terms – but his privileging of Irish learning in the ancient past beat a path that Charles O’Conor would follow, though within a different ethnological framework that had grown in repute over the generation after Toland’s death. Toland’s work (republished in collections in 1726 and 1747) was very influential; at least, the strain of thought represented by Toland and others that stressed the trappings of primordial patriarchal faith that the druids possessed was influential. Most important was his rehabilitation of Irish history, constructing an ancient civility through which antiquaries could access a glorious past for Ireland. William Stukeley, for one, held Toland’s work in high regard, despite the repugnance in which he held the free-thinker’s religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{592} The similarities between Toland’s work and O’Conor’s Dissertations are startling. Indeed, the degree to which O’Conor was influenced by Toland has gone unrecognized and was not acknowledged by O’Conor in his work – perhaps due to the disrepute in which the deist-pantheist was held. The existence of a literate, rational and civil society in Ireland was portrayed, as was a distinguished intellectual and religious caste whose very privilege creates the conditions of social and political declension. That Ireland was a literate civilization of learned legislators and traders was a core insistence of both texts. Both adhered to a Celtic ethnicity for the Irish and

\textsuperscript{590} Brown, Toland, p.140.
\textsuperscript{591} Harrison, ‘Notes’, pp.89, 93-94.
O’Conor agreed with Toland regarding the British origin of the Tuatha De Danaan and the Fir Bolg – though not the Milesians[593]. The destruction of documentary proof by proselytizing zealots, rendering the magnificent history of pre-Christian Ireland dark and mysterious, was utilized by both. There was also the additional feature of having the once-virtuous druids condemning the polity to decay because of their self-interested actions and their inclination to factionalism. When Richard Digby approached O’Conor for assistance, he recommended Toland’s work for the budding antiquary – to the disapproval of their intermediary, the Church of Ireland clergyman, Reverend Thomas Contarine.[594]

Later still, when ophthalmologist Sylvester O’Halloran first enquired after O’Conor’s assistance in January 1769, requesting information that might help his research, O’Conor stressed that he ‘need not recommend to your perusal Mr. Toland’s History of the Druids.’ In a subsequent letter, O’Conor pressed the importance of Toland’s work and believed that ‘he wrote ingeniously on the subject. I think you would do well to give that work a diligent and critical examination.’[595]

Toland’s was a late example of the previously dominant narratives of ethnogenesis that marked the seventeenth century and the period immediately after the Williamite Wars. Sarah Butler’s romantic depiction notwithstanding, Milesian ethnogenesis tended to be the preserve of Gaelic Catholics and Irish-speakers before the 1730s. Needless to say, given the utility of assertions of English consanguinity to seventeenth-century settlers and their assimilative programmes, Milesian ethnogenesis was anathema to both their theorization of British-derived ethnogenesis and the political demands created by state expansion. Later, after 1690 the desire for union and the need to show Ireland was not a colony demanded a similar denial of Milesian ethnogenesis. Therefore, these theories were the preserve of writers who were religiously Catholic or politically Jacobite and it is among these that the propounding of Milesian ethnogenesis was normal before they became widespread elsewhere. This continued into the early eighteenth century; one of the books referenced by Toland was

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[594] Robert Digby to Charles O’Conor, 21 June 1743, RIA MS B.i.1, f.94.
[595] O’Conor to O’Halloran, 10 February 1769, 28 March 1769.
Hugh MacCurtain’s *Vindication of the Antiquity of Ireland* (1717), which propounded the conventional Gaelic narrative of Milesian migration. MacCurtain stated that arrivals such as the Milesians, Nemedians and Dananns were of Scythian derivation (the Milesians arriving via Spain), stressed their migrations into Ireland and mobilized Spenser and Camden to highlight their capabilities and learning. However, a variety of developments, factors and motivations conspired to make distinct ethnicities for the ‘natives’ increasingly attractive to Irish Protestants. As we saw from previous chapters, these ethno-geneses generally took negative form; that the Irish were ‘Tartarians’ or Scythians whose inherent qualities, derived from their particular descent, were a hindrance to prosperity. The potency of these waned after the self-critical turn taken in improvement literature after the famine of 1740-1. Thereafter, ‘Scythianism’ transmuted into a more respectable ‘Milesianism’.

This did not occur in a vacuum of scholarship. Alongside the mundane or politically-oriented expressions of separate ethnic origins that were useful as explanations for continuing division and lack of economic development, intellectuals, antiquaries and compilers in Britain and Ireland gradually arrived at an espousal of Milesianism’s validity. Most of these seem to have been written and published in the period between 1716 and 1726. The period between these publications saw a brief efflorescence of scholarship devoted to the Irish past. Butler’s *Irish Tales* was published in 1716 and republished in 1727. MacCurtain’s work appeared in 1717 and Toland’s *History of the Druids*, although written and circulated in 1718-19, was posthumously published in 1726. Instrumental in this increased output was a circle of poet-scholars resident in Dublin – Toland was tenuously connected to this group through a Franciscan he

This criticism runs to several pages; Hugh MacCurtain, *A Brief Discourse*, pp.x-xv, 287, 295, 301, 304; Joep Leerssen, ‘Ireland in search of Oriental roots, 1650-1850’, *Comparative Criticism* (1986), p.97; Morley questions whether this was the reason, though it later became widely believed at the time and revived by Lucas in 1749.


See chapter four; Berkeley’s comment regarding the ‘hereditary disposition of our Tartars’ captures this widespread attitude; Berkeley, *The Querist* (Qu.512-514); English accounts also stressed this Scythian element, for example, [Anon.], *The Mock-Marriage: Or, a Lady and no Lady* (London, 1733), p.7; [Anon.], *A General History of the Turks, Mongols and Tartars* (London, 1730), p.iii-iv.
met in Prague, Father Francis Devlin – which included Gaelic-speaking scribes. A poem has survived listing this loose association of the learned, called the ‘O’Neachtain circle’, in the city from c.1727; included we find one of the first mentions of Charles O’Conor (then a teenager) as a capable and promising scholar.

The conversion movement of early eighteenth century, outlined in chapter three, had the effect of fostering ‘enquiries into Gaelic’ and exciting ‘greater curiosity about Ireland’s antiquities and indigenous culture’. One of the earliest products of this interest was the publication of Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn* – translated as *The General History of Ireland*. While Irish Protestant interest in the work was apparent from its earliest appearance in manuscript – indeed, Sarah Butler claimed to have read it – its publication in London allowed access by a much larger audience. The controversy excited by its publication was illustrative of the nature of contemporary intellectual networks in Dublin and increasing comfort that Irish Protestants felt with alternate ethno-geneses. The above-mentioned poem mentioned the translator, Dermot O’Connor, alongside Cathal O’Luinin (Charles Lynegar), Dr John Fergus and Hugh MacCurtain. The author of the poem, Tadgh O’Neachtain, was patronized by the Anglican clergyman Anthony Raymond who had learned Irish in order to ‘perform divine services in the Irish tongue’ and been a proponent of proselytization in Irish. O’Neachtain had also been working on a history of Ireland under Dr Raymond’s sponsorship, a project that had been initiated in 1719 – the latter being stung by the hostile accounts of Irish learning and antiquities written since the medieval period.


members of Trinity College at this time from the remoter areas of Ireland determined to preserve Irish manuscripts or preach in Irish. Raymond was thus the prime mover in a historiographical endeavour that would culminate in the publication of Keating’s history. Raymond’s patronage, however, had a far more acrimonious outcome; Dermot O’Connor, one of his scribes, absconded to London with the translated work and published it in London and Dublin editions in 1723 – apparently assisted by John Toland.

Keating’s work itself is so well known that it can pass without analysis here; what is pertinent, however, is that it was the source ‘through which much knowledge of Irish legend reached the English-speaking Irish of the eighteenth century’ and that Keating was an author ‘most responsible for bringing the origin legends of the Gaelic Irish into common currency’. This work fully endorsed the Milesian thesis as history, as well as presenting immigration and multi-ethnic settlement on the island as a normative in Irish history. The pamphlets provoked by its publication also throw light upon contemporary attitudes to the Irish past – more importantly, they are illustrative of the odium in which both Protestant and Catholic antiquaries held O’Connor. Raymond was justifiably indignant at having his project scuppered by the rogue poet – but he was beaten to print by one Thomas O’Sullevane, who had been alerted in London by ‘Endeavours in foot to impose upon the World… an English version of Doctor Keating’s pretended History.’ O’Sullevane’s objections were grounded in the twin accusations that Keating’s work was not history, but ‘an heap of insipid, ill-

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605 O Cáthain, ‘Dermot O’Connor’, p.68.
digested fables’ and that O’Connor was an inadequate translator. The controversy rumbled on with a reply from O’Connor and a series of pieces in the Post-Boy in January 1723. Raymond further castigated O’Connor from Dublin, accusing him outright of lying and theft – the Tadhgh O’Neachtain was equally scathing, referring to him as a ‘crazed ignoramus’ and a ‘treacherous deceiver’.

In terms of ethnography, most noticeable was that Keating’s articulation of Milesian origins went uncontested – or was eclipsed due to the torrent of abuse directed at Dermot O’Connor. However, O’Sullevane and the other actors in the affair occasionally deal with myths of origins and ethnology. O’Sullevane’s writing had a number of historical revisions, particularly relating to 1641. Similarly, he attacked Cox and Davies was esteemed as a sympathetic and honest observer. However, O’Sullevane unapologetically endorsed Milesian ethnogenesis, arguing that Phoenician settlers ‘planted colonies all over this western part, probably uninhabited before’ – that is to say, without antecedent British or Gaulish settlements. O’Sullevane gently rebuked another proponent of archaic British settlement, the ‘learned writer’ William Camden, for confusing Gauls and Britons with Milesian-Phoenicians. In the translation of Keating that provoked O’Sullevane’s intervention, Dermot O’Connor too propounded the same Milesian origins for Irish people. It was repeated in O’Sullevane’s rejoinder and the preface of the Memoirs of Clanricarde when re-published in Dublin. Raymond’s contributions endorsed these ethnological assertions, stressing Scythia as the seat of the Irish indigenes, and his works were unrestrained in their praise of the Irish past. That said, Raymond used the latest in Celtology (namely, Pezron and Lhuyd) to advance this thesis, rather than relying

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610 O’Cáthain, ‘Dermot O’Connor’, p.73.
611 [O’Sullevane], Memoirs, p.xxiii.
612 Ibid, p.xc-xci.
613 Ibid, pp.xxiv-lxxvi, xcvi-xclx, cxxii.
615 [Thomas O’Sullevane], An Account of Dr. Keting’s History of Ireland (1723), p.5; [Thomas O’Sullevane], Memoirs of the Right Honourable Marquis of Clanricarde (1724).
on Gaelic sources, and neglected to chart a dissemination that would give Irish Gaels a Near-Eastern origin – indeed, he was reluctant to use ‘Milesian’ at all and the term does not appear in his published work.\(^{616}\) This Scythian emphasis was further apparent in the advertisement for Raymond’s proposed (but ultimately unpublished) history, which promised that ‘SCOTIA ANTIQUA’s [the title] Story will recite, The Deeds of the Scythian Race renowned in Fight.\(^{617}\) Raymond’s chariness was indicative of the reliance upon Scythian ethnogenesis monotonously outlined in improvement literature and the use of this ethnic origin to explain Irish economic failure.

The episode raises interesting questions; first, regarding the differences between O’Connor’s London and Dublin editions – the former contained ethnographical information that was omitted in the edition published in Dublin. Dermot O’Connor therefore tailored his ethnographical account in the Dublin edition due to awareness of the ethnographical sensitivities of Irish Protestants.\(^{618}\) Lastly, the publication of the Foras united Irish antiquaries of all confessions in opposition. The most convincing explanation is that Dermot O’Connor jeopardized a tenuous and fragile culture of cooperation between Catholic and Protestant antiquaries and language-enthusiasts in Dublin by his dishonesty, thereby risking the livelihoods of those involved – as well the repute of Irish antiquaries and antiquities. Another issue was O’Sullevane’s condemnation of Keating’s work in terms startlingly reminiscent of Cox’s dismissal of the Irish histories. Sullevane’s objection was that Keating’s unsophisticated account reflected poorly upon a tradition aspiring, as O’Sullevane certainly was, to a degree of prestige in the antiquarian circles that were beginning to flourish during the eighteenth century. He wished to deflect attention from Keating toward ‘the real antiquities of that nation’ as opposed to the ‘idle stories… vented by druids and bards’ and which he stipulated were countenanced among Irish antiquaries for ‘pastime and diversion only.’ Tellingly, O’Sullevane insisted that only the Milesian ethnogenesis could be salvaged from


\(^{618}\) O’Cáthain, ‘Dermot O’Connor’, p.86.
Keating’s work ‘because it may be otherwise sufficiently accounted for.’ O’Sullevane argued against Keating’s work as these ‘fabulous’ accounts gave just grounds to hostile historians (like Cox) and respected antiquarians (like Stillingfleet) to censure Irish sources. From this perspective, Dermot O’Connor’s shoddy scholarship was embarrassing. Charles O’Conor would later condemn this translation, calling it ‘the grossest intrusion that has been ever yet obtruded on a learned age.’

Goths and Milesians in British and Irish Antiquarianism

For several years after this, few new works appeared endorsing Milesian ethnogenesis. Nevertheless, Dermot O’Connor’s intrusion, welcome or otherwise, was indicative of an increased number of publications that either respected the Irish past or accepted Milesian ethnogenesis. Associated works that revised or rehabilitated aspects of both of these appeared from the 1720s onward – quite beside additional editions of O’Connor’s translation in 1726, 1732 and 1738. Furthermore, it was an antiquarian backdrop that had increasingly focused upon a ‘Gothic’ origin for British liberties instead of the ‘time immemorial’ theories that characterized debates in the seventeenth century.

According to Colin Kidd, during ‘this period the ancient British component of the nation’s history was significantly downgraded’ and ‘Gothicism displaced the cult of the immemorial constitution.’ However, despite being ‘rival theories’ the Britons ‘remained important to the whiggish cult of parliament’ and Gothicism ‘commanded a majority (although not total) consensus during the eighteenth century’. This Gothic theory had a long pedigree. Put simply, ‘the

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619 [Sullevane], Memoirs, pp.lxxx-lxxxi, lxxxvii-lxxxviii.
620 Ibid, p.cxxi; Thus, the ‘Bishop Stillingfleet… [had] no other Handle to make Sport with the Irish Antiquities, than the said fables’; Edward Stillingfleet, Origines Sacrae (2 Vols., London, 1662), ii, p.xxii.
621 O’Conor, Dissertations, p.x.
622 Hugh Reilly, Ireland’s Case Briefly Stated (Louvain, 1720); Morgan O’Connor, Poems, Pastorals and Dialogues… Inscr’d to the Provost and Fellows of Trinity College (1726), p.6; Henry Rowlands, Mona Antiqua Restaurata (1723), p.108.
623 Kidd, British Identities, pp.83, 211; Sweet, Antiquaries, p.194.
624 Kidd, British Identities, p.90; Sweet, Antiquaries, p.196.
Gothic theory traced all the limited monarchies of Europe to the Germans’ who had spread over the late Roman Empire during the barbarian invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries. It came into vogue in the eighteenth century for a number of reasons; one was the increased sophistication of historical scholarship that began to doubt the veracity of a simple, linear and continuous legacy from the pre-Roman era. The political context was also pertinent. The legacy of 1688 and the ‘eventual establishment of political stability’ rendered the political need to express such aggressive ‘immemorialism’ moot as parliamentary and judicial independence become normative. Lastly, the passing of the Act of Settlement and the House of Hanover’s accession to the throne gave antiquarians a powerful political motivation to foreground a specifically German predilection for propagating and preserving the rule of law and liberty.

Gothicism had a twofold appeal to Irish Protestants. Domestically, it aligned with the increasing tendency to discriminate between a self-perceived superior ethnic qualification for governance and a willingness to ascribe failures to the ‘natives’ innate characteristics. Secondly, it had potential when appealing or conforming to metropolitan political ethnographies that stressed Gothic or Germanic descent as an ethnic lineage necessary for perpetuating the mixed constitution. Thus, Irish, no less than English political commentators, adhered to this perspective; Molesworth’s *Account of Denmark* and Molynuex’s *Case* are two prominent examples, as are the writings of Jonathan Swift. In the beginning, the fuzzy boundaries between ‘Celts’, ‘Goths’ and ‘Scythians’ meant that this did not challenge received ethnographical wisdom. The differences between all three were indistinct but became more sharply defined over the course of the century. The Celts and Goths instead were held to be near-indistinguishable offshoots of the same Scythian branch, the Anglo-Saxon manifestation being that which had reinforced the liberties of England. The difference was chronological rather than

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626 Ibid, pp.10, 11, 43.

627 Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p.189; the best contemporary example is Samuel Squire, *An Enquiry into the Foundation of the English Constitution; or, a Historical Essay upon the Anglo-Saxon Government* (London, 1745).
ethnographical as ‘English antiquaries committed to a prescriptive ancient constitution tended to minimize the differences between Saxons and ancient Britons.’

However, these groups became increasingly distinguishable over the course of the century and the Gothic element was foregrounded as the primary contributing factor in the construction of the mixed constitution, to the detriment of indigenous and autochthonous ethnic origins for the same. This was formalized in Noachic terms; the Celts were increasingly deemed to be the offspring of Magog, rather than Gomer (the Japhetan father of the Goths). Furthermore, the Irish also began to be comprehended as distinct from the Goths and described as Celts – they were likewise given a Magogian origin in the Noachic schema.

Not only did political contexts alter, but so too did the formal writing and transmission of ancient history. The increasingly reputable and popular discipline of antiquarianism promoted a fascination with archaic aspects of the indigenous past, as well as a fascination with the domestic exotic. Druids, marauding Vikings, Saxon warriors and other vague but tantalising elements invited speculation and instigated debates about their arrival, ethnic origins, clothing, cultures and so on. There was also an inflation of the oriental roots of the English nation in this period. In terms of religious polemic, Joseph of Arimathea’s purported sojourn in Britain with a juvenile Christ and a legendary Pauline mission were potent components of Anglican pretences to a pristine and uncorrupted ecclesiology. The Brutus myth was often tenuously proposed and the idea of Phoenician visitations to Britain, motivated by the tin trade, were common and uncontroversial throughout this period. Furthermore, this

628 Kidd, British Identities, p.188.
630 Ninian Wallis, Britannia Libera (1710), p.22.
orientalism and its enlightenment context meant that if ‘Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks were the favoured ancients, interest in the earlier inhabitants of Britain and Ireland was growing.’ Therefore, developments in intellectual fashions, political ethnographies and the discipline of antiquarianism in Britain facilitated both interest in analyses of archaic populations and increased receptivity to these populations being variegated.

Irish Milesianism could not fail to prosper in such an environment. These scholarly developments, twinned with the absence of a need to justify English sovereignty in ethnic terms, explain Milesianism’s increasing popularity in a wider British context. This was apparent in the work of the respected antiquary William Stukeley, who believed that the Irish were an ‘oriental colony of Phoenicians’ and that the ‘most ancient inhabitants, the remains of the old Phoenician colony… were the Picts, Scots, Highland and Irish, all the same people.’ Even those with reservations tended to be circumspect rather than contemptuous. One account wrote of Milesian ethnogenesis in a tone of respectful scepticism, but included several tables of their lineage from Magog on the basis that ‘I have already [included] the uncertain Kings of other nations.’ Another presented the Milesian thesis as viable, but insisted on British and Scottish ethnogenesis as primary and antecedent in the British Isles. Additionally, the Gentleman’s Magazine – taken as a bellweather for alterations in attitudes – contained several instances of this new regard for Irish history. The edition for October 1751 issued an excerpt ‘From a Daily Paper’ regarding a trip to a remote part of Ireland where the writer observed that the people ‘are an unmixed, original race of people.’ In the May issue of the next year, a description of a cromlech near Dundlak was ‘doubtless the ruins of a temple.’ Similarly, the magazine posited that a stone circle was ‘the remains of a temple or theatre on the planes [sic] of Ballynamtye...’ that ‘seems to have been a very great work, of the same

632 Barnard, Improving Ireland, p.91
633 Stukeley, Stonehenge, p.8-9; Idem, Abury, p.78.
634 Anderson, Royal Genealogies, p.775.
kind with that at Stone-Henge in England." Even hostile accounts could cite that ‘in ancient History ‘tis recorded, they [the Irish] were a most pious, virtuous and learned People; insomuch that Hibernia was then known by the divine Appellation of the Island of Saints.' There were some dissenting voices, the most noticeable of whom was Thomas Hearne, who insisted that there were ‘so any irreconcilable Absurdities’ and internal inconsistencies that Milesianism was invalid as a theory of Irish origins. Furthermore, legal writers tended to propagate a uniform ethnicity between Irish and English people; William Blackstone stressed the ‘inhabitants of Ireland are, for the most part, descended from the English’ – undoubtedly a legacy of the ‘time immemorial’ theory that so actuated jurists like Davies in the previous century. By and large, however, Milesian ethnogenesis gained ground in antiquarianism in this period.

This incipient trend, and the context that facilitated it, was palpable in William Nicolson’s account of Irish origins contained in his Irish Historical Library. Nicolson, who thought Dermot O’Connor ill-treated, was an English clergymen transferred to the bishopric of Derry. His contribution to Irish historiographical and antiquarian debates was significant in terms of context, content and repute. As the work takes the form of a description of archival material and a bibliographical commentary, the scope for speculation was limited. The format of Nicolson’s series (he completed English and Scottish versions of the Historical Library) made it appear a detached and neutral intervention into the debates prevalent and the sources used within each national tradition. Nicolson came from an English antiquarian discipline that could seem ostensibly isolated from the acrimony or controversies generated through indigenous debates about the Irish past. Nicolson was esteemed the Irish past for its antiquity and literacy and for being ‘the fountain of Learning, to which all the Western Countries had recourse’.

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639 Anon., A Candid Enquiry Why the Natives of Ireland which are in London are More Addicted to Vice Than... Any Other Nation, (London, 1754), p. 4.
Davies’ writings were also deemed ‘truly incomparable.’

Equally, the Milesian ethnogenesis was uncontroversially described and his endorsed is best illustrated in the succinct citation of a ‘Book in Irish containing several antient Historical Matters; particularly the coming of Milesius out of Spain.’

Nicolson also referred to Camden’s *Brittania* as the ‘very best Topographical Description that we have of Ireland’ whilst ignoring the British ethnography that Camden propounded for Ireland.

Nicolson further praised Irish contributions to Britain’s ancient history. This influence was particularly relevant for Britain’s ecclesiology – Nicolson stated that certain monks were ‘of the Irish Rule; carried [it] into Scotland… and thence dispers’d into the Northern parts of England.’ Nicolson cautiously posited the same Milesian ethnogenesis for the Scots in his *Scottish Historical Library*.

However, Nicolson’s diffusion went beyond traditional parameters, which insisted upon the ‘schooling’ of the Saxons by Irish churchmen in Ireland and the settlement of Irish nobles and their retainers in the Highlands of Scotland. Nicolson’s theory, given the causal association between migrations of peoples and contemporary ecclesiological and political institutions, was a step toward recognizing the Irish past had contributed to the British present. This theory had been articulated before (particularly in ecclesiological histories such as Archbishop Ussher’s) but was rarely used – English ecclesiastical historians instead insisting upon residual Britannic precedents or Pauline visitations for the lineal integrity of the Anglican Church. The other theory (that of Irish ethnogenesis for Scots) was not uncontested by Scottish antiquaries and was viewed as an insinuation of subordination in the regnal and ethnic hierarchies of the British Isles – from which a Hiberno-Scottish system of mutual insult and appropriation had existed since the sixteenth century.

Instead, Scottish historians such as George Buchanan tended to favour a legendary foundation of 330BC, rather than the sixth century AD, as a means of asserting Scottish claims.

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642 Nicolson, *Irish Historical Library*, pp.xii, xiv, 18.
643 Ibid, p.30; see also pp.xviii, 46126.
to ancient monarchical integrity. This ‘Fergusian’ constitution from 330BC was matched by a Scottish propensity to wilfully misconstrue terminology about early Irish Christian saints and claim these ‘Scottish’ missionaries for the early modern Scottish nation. Naturally, both inclinations were objectionable from the perspective of Irish antiquaries. Charles O’Conor would make both dissemination into England and the Irish origins of the Scots cornerstones of his argument for the partial Irish origin of the mixed constitution, largely in terms of the acculturation of Britain by Irish settlers transmitting political traditions and practises indigenous to Ireland.

Nor was this theory of Milesian settlement intellectually innovative – and Scots utilized it during times of political exigency. James I & VI, in his classic treatise on the powers of the monarchy, could point to the arrival of ‘our King Fergus, with a great number with him, out of Ireland, which was long inhabited before us, and making himselfe master of the Country by his own friendship, and force, as well of the Ireland-men that came with him’. During the debates before the Union of 1707, this derivative Milesianism re-emerged in pamphlet literature. Indeed, the vocal assertions of ethnic qualifications for incorporation that accompanied Irish union pamphlets are equally visible in the Scottish unionist pamphlets, also stressing an ethnic and regnal past that indicated equality with other nations of archipelago. One pamphlet proposed the Milesian thesis for the inhabitants of Scotland (as Scythians arriving via Greece, Egypt, Spain and then Ireland) before concluding that ‘if the Goths, of whom, as it’s said, the English are partly come, be Scythians, and that the Scythians are Scots, then in common consequence the Scots and the English must have the same Original, and been at first one People.’ Many other pamphlets refer to this ethnogenesis –

648 Kidd, British Identities, p.125.
649 Thomas Dempster, Historia ecclesiastica gentis Scotorum lib. XIX (Bologna, 1621); George MacKenzie, A Defence of Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1685); Leerssen, Mere Irish, pp.338-345; Kidd, British Identities, pp.123-145.
some as reasons for incorporation, others in a more derogatory fashion.652 At the same time as Scottish pamphleteers insisted on the movement of Irish Milesians into Britain, Defoe extolled the mongrel nature of the English by citing the contribution of the ‘Irish from the Hibernian shore’ in the ethnic make-up of Englishmen.653

Irish Jacobites were equally forward in expressing cross-channel consanguinity and their common Milesian descent with the Stuart dynasty.654 Matthew Kennedy, designated ‘Judge of the Admiralty of all Ireland’ in the Court of Saint Germain, used the Milesian myth to buttress the claims of ‘his present Majesty K. James the 3rd of England’. Kennedy was an Irish Jacobite keen to derogate Scottish pretensions to a greater or nobler antiquity. Kennedy challenged the Scottish claim to have had an established polity from 330 BC and argued that Scottish antiquities were, in fact, Irish antiquities. Kennedy was, in effect, claiming the Stuarts for the Irish; and the Milesian thesis of antecedent settlement in Ireland and regnal origins were the main cornerstones of his argument.655 James III’s bloodline, from the Irish ‘Mother Country’, could be ‘carry’d up clearly to Milesius’ and was only transmitted to Scotland in the sixth century.656 Both ‘Fergusian’ and Milesian claims of descent had long been used creatively in Scottish (and not just Jacobite) assertions of precedence and worth in the British Isles. For instance, the Scottish Jacobite Thomas Innes created an alternate ethnogenesis for the Scottish monarchy that rested on Pictish – rather than Milesian – foundations.657 This ethnology was used to counter Irish influence in


the exiled Stuart court. Similarly, Innes reinforced the Scythian origins of the Irish.658

However, by unshackling Milesianism from Jacobite associations, Innes might have contributed to the appeal of Milesian ethnogenesis.659 Quite apart from rendering it more palatable to English audiences, it was made less galling to Irish Protestant palates. Of course, the desire among Irish antiquaries to disassociate their ethnological theory from Stuart dynastic loyalty, the passage of time and the functional nature of separate ethnogenesis in the early eighteenth century all contributed to Milesianism’s rehabilitation. This was, as we see, interpreted in Scythian/Tartar terms. However, if Scythian ethnology was prominent, what was most remarkable about this period was the lack of Irish Protestant contributions to historiography.660 Anthony Raymond was unique enough to pass as unrepresentative and antiquaries such as Nicolson and Francis Hutchinson were English churchmen translated to bishoprics in Ireland. Indeed, the latter were resented enough for Nicolson to complain that the next generation of Irish Protestants would be ‘as true born Irishmen as if they had been brought out of Egypt in Scota’s lap’.661 But this hostility to English newcomers did not transfer into any utilization of Milesianism for outright political argument – this stance was precluded by an environment which stressed the liberties of Englishmen as a means of acquiring privilege and with a system of socio-political exclusion grounded in quasi-ethnological interpretations of religious division. Antiquarianism, in these circumstances, retained a political pertinence in Ireland that it had begun to shed in England after 1688.662

However, the Milesian theory began to make uncontroversial appearances, particularly in more prosaic aristocratic genealogies, where descents from Adam still had purchase. The eighteenth century, while it evinced far less reliance upon

659 O’Halloran, Golden Ages, p.31.
661 Nicolson to Wake, 19 March 1721, Dublin Municipal Library, Gilbert MSS 27, 282.
662 Sweet, Antiquaries, p.228.
genealogy in narrative histories, maintained the significance of descent in a newly emerging sub-genre; that of the peerage handbook. It is in these that we find the earliest rehabilitations of Milesian – rather than Scythian – ethnic lineages as reputable. In particular, peerage books articulated respect for Milesian descent before such lineages became accepted in wider Irish antiquarian and ethnological works. This was, undoubtedly, in order to inflate the descent of the families described, thereby flattering them with an ancient attachment to a specific region or country. So Milesianism, and its on-going rehabilitation, did have a certain social cachet; while peasants immune to ‘improvement’ could be characterized as Tartars or Scythians, Irish Protestants of Gaelic descent were increasingly attracted to the idea of Milesian origins. The O’Brien family, as the Earls of Inchiquin, are a case in point. Quite aside from almost every dramatic and historical work regarding the Irish past from before 1750 being dedicated to the Inchiquin family, their Milesian origins began to be expressed in adulatory terms from the earliest tenuous rehabilitations of the Irish past after 1716. Earlier accounts, such as Anthony Raymond and Philips’ dedication in *Hibernia Freed*, elide Milesianism and referred only to the Inchiquins’ rootedness on the island.⁶⁶³ Catholic antiquaries were not so chary⁶⁶⁴ and eventually the peerage manuals plotted their past by wielding Milesianism as a noble and meritorious ethnogenesis.⁶⁶⁵ In particular, they highlighted descent from Brian Boru, supposedly the first actual, rather than nominal, high-king of Ireland.

Boru, and his purported regnal status, was illustrative of this early reluctance to endorse a reputable version of Irish antiquities, in preference for utilizing its Scythian counterpart. Given Irish Protestants’ regnal political identity and insistence upon their status as a distinct kingdom, it is surprising that Boru was not utilized accordingly. As the purported founder of a unified kingdom in the eleventh century, Boru represented a potentially powerful example of Irish

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institutional stability and monarchical lineage with potential for arguments over political privilege. Fergus in Scotland and Alfred in England functioned thus in the historiographies of their respective nations. Such a prospective status may, for example, have warranted Boru’s inclusion in the frontispiece of Dermot O’Connor’s translation of Keating; indeed, later in the century, Boru did obtain this status. Yet Irish Protestants did not exploit him in this manner. Elsewhere, such reluctance to mobilize Milesian ethnogenesis and Irish antiquity was also visible. Particularly in the contentious area of currency and money (which so occupied Irish Protestant obsessions) Milesian precedents were not identified, or utilized, to portray the historical legitimacy of minting and coinage in Ireland. It was not until the late 1740s – when Milesianism was becoming reputable – that work was published outlining such a precedent. Money, according to Simon James, was ‘in use here long before the arrival of the Danes, or Norwegians’ – it was, in fact ‘Tighernmhais Mac Fallamhuin, the tenth monarch of the Milesian race’ who created this early Irish currency. However, the purported proto-Protestantism of the indigenes remained popular and the idea of Ireland as a site of ancient learning was also – both tending to elide ethnological ideas. By and large, however, the Milesian past, despite its potential fecundity, was not mined for polemical weaponry, despite Irish Protestants adhering to a fully-fledged belief in ethnic heterogeneity evinced by the inimical Scythian schema in economic commentary. For instance, in a letter to Lord Egmont, Robert Clayton, Bishop of Clogher, referred to an unusual stone structure he had encountered in Kilbrittain, Co. Cork. It gave Clayton an opportunity to ethnologically speculate; he comprehended Kilbrittain to mean ‘the Church or Cell or rather the Burial place of the Britains’. But – unlike earlier incorporationists and pro-union writers – Clayton did not conceive this in terms of a widespread settlement by older groups from Britain. Instead of using this as

667 Barnard, ‘Protestants and Irish Language’, p.244.
669 [Anon.], The Religion Professed by the Antient Irish (1739), pp.2-3, 52.
an argument for consanguinity, the settlement he depicted was isolated, local and unique and isolated from the ethogenesis of the ‘meir Irish’. 670

‘Reputation and Riches’: The Physico-Historical Society

The 1730s, the high tide of Scythian culpability, nevertheless witnessed a commensurate growth in Milesian repute which accelerated into the 1740s. 671 As seen in the previous chapter, the famine of 1740 and the ‘45 were watersheds in attitudes toward native antiquities. However, some Irish Protestants felt unease with this growing estimation. Thomas Molyneux, for example, criticised those who believed Ireland was peopled ‘from generations near the flood’ and invented ‘antediluvian stories, and a fable of a niece of Noah himself landing on the island.’ 672 Likewise, Cox and Harris were keenly aware of this trend and deemed its arrest desirous. This was due to their awareness of the potential for reputable, rather than derogatory, ethnologies to unsettle conventional explications and socio-political realities. Molyneux, Cox and Harris also had familial reasons to dissent from this growing acceptance; all had ancestors or kin that adhered to a British origin theory. Molyneux’s brother William felt it necessary to preface his famous assertion of Irish parliamentary privilege with a celebration of Gothicism and an articulation of Irish ethnology that validated his claims. Cox’s grandfather and Harris’s great grandfather-in-law, Sir James Ware, had stressed British ethnogenesis, though for different reasons in differing contexts. Indeed, the timing of Cox’s epistle in 1741 to Harris was apposite; the early 1740s had witnessed a flurry of sentimental Milesianism that did not couch it in antipathetic Scythian terms.

It is hard to tell how much this unease, and Cox’s demand for a new historical culture, informed the formation of the Physico-Historical Society (PHS) in April 1744. 673 Like much else in Irish historiography, it is best comprehended as arising from an Irish milieu and wider, in this case English, practise. An account of its

670 Clayton to Egmont, 10 Nov. 1743, BL Add MSS 4438, f.95.
671 Murrough O’Connor, The Petition of Murrough O Connor to the Provost and Senior Fellows of Trinity College (1740), pp.8, 12, 23; Laurence Whyte, Original Poems on Various Subjects (1742), pp.68, 228; Clanricarde’s Memoir was republished in 1744.
'Rise and Progress' enunciated the reasons for its existence and pleaded for public support. The society planned to appoint individuals to write 'several Memoirs relating to the Chorography and Antiquities of these counties [of Ireland]' in order to 'increase the Riches and Reputation of this Country'.

Thus English county-based antiquarian accounts were harnessed to the improving spirit that so characterized Irish discourse during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Beginning as an attempt to reinforce the Anglocentrism of Irish Protestant identities by making Englishness and civility coeval, the society ultimately ended up reinforcing Milesian ethnogenesis. Indeed, given the high clerical participation and the overlap in membership, it is tempting to view the society as the antiquarian wing of the charter school movement – an organization which stressed civility and prosperity could only be achieved by the combined Protestantization and Anglicization of the island. Furthermore, the mission statement of the new society and the queries listed for correspondents to answer were almost wholly concerned with natural phenomenon that might be exploited in order to gain commercial advantage or increase prosperity. Even these stressed the investigation of the tangible landmarks of antiquity, rather than the ancient ethnology or political nature of early Irish society. Respondents were invited to describe, rather than interpret,

Monuments – Memorable or antient Inscriptions – Danish Raths or Mounts – Round Towers – their Heights, and Remarkables – Fortifications – Bridges – Urns – Caves – Tumuli or Sepulchres, &c. – Long-stones, placed singly or circularly – Druidical Altar-stones or the Crom-liag – Kairns, or Heaps of Stones, &c.

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674 Halliday tracts, RIA 200, Tracts 8 & 10.
This emphasis, apparent in the meetings of the society and in its published works, is illustrative; first, by limiting itself to physical remains the society attempted to accrue a scientific outlook that might appear value-free, and hence authoritative. Furthermore, by skipping lightly over the pre-Norman history of Ireland, it wedded this authoritative stance to Cox’s specification that civility in Ireland should be viewed as an English importation. This Anglocentric emphasis was apparent in some of the early plans of the society. One of the first projects of the society, aside from its county choreographies, was the intention to form ‘a Committee to wait on the Provost or Senior Fellows of the College to … [get] … leave to inspect the Depositions relating to the Massacres of the Protestants In the Irish Rebellion of 1641 now in the College Library, with leave to transcribe them.’ Thomas Stearne had deposited the documents in question in the library in 1741 in order to preserve descriptions of the massacres for posterity. The desire of Cox to reorient Irish historical narratives was also visible in Harris’s embarkation upon a hagiography of Sir Richard Cox senior, commenced at some stage in the 1740s. This biography was appended to one of Harris’s works on Ware and his biography of William of Orange contained unrestrained praise of the late Lord Chancellor. There was also a noticeable reliance upon Cox’s *Hibernia Anglicana* in the authorized publications of the society. These county surveys were largely written by Charles Smith but commissioned by Harris. Furthermore, the format of these publications insinuated a connection between Anglicization and civility; as Eoin Magennis points out, there was a persistent suggestion that the legal and administrative changes of ‘the Elizabethan age [were] an important stage in the better governance of Ireland.’ Harris similarly

678 RIA MS 28/E/24, f.17; Charles Smith, *The Antient and Present State of County Down* (1744), pp.xiii, 12, 81-107; Magennis, p.208; this would reach fruition with the publication of Harris’s *Fiction Unmasked* in 1752.


680 NLI MS 19.

insisted that good government arrived with the Anglo-Normans, dating the county division of Ireland to King John’s reign.682

Leerssen is mistaken in identifying Harris as an antiquarian whose patriotic tendencies outweighed his hostility to both Catholics and the merits of Milesianism.683 Indeed, the foundation of the PHS appears to be an institutional manifestation of the historiographical and ethnological anxieties provoked by the growing status of that theory of ethnoogenesis. It should be remembered that the society was long in gestation – county surveys were plotted and parochial and phenomenon-based ephemera were written and published in the 1730s. Smith’s Account of Down, in its first incarnation of 1740, alluded to some gentlemen who ‘have undertaken to collect from the several Parts of the Kingdom such Account of it as may be depended upon.’684

In ethnological terms, the focus of the society and the tone of its publications shifted over the course of its existence. Their reaction to the increased reputation of the Irish past and the Milesian theory was a return to British – rather than Scythian or Milesian – ethnoogenesis for the indigenes. Like the republication and translation of Ware achieved by Harris, the latter’s heavy involvement in the society saw an emphasis upon non-Milesian ethnogenesis in Ireland. However, this is more apparent in the early publications. The Account of Waterford by Smith, the publication in which Harris’s imprint is most visible, explicitly articulated a British origin for the Irish indigenes and stated that settlement, at

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682 Magennis, ‘Milk and Honey’, p.208.
683 Leerssen, Mere Irish, p.301.
684 William Henry, A Description of a Volcano, or Burning Mountain, in the County of Kerry (1733); Idem, An Account of Lough Lheichs, Anglice (1739); Joseph Rogers, An Essay on Epidemic Diseases; and More particularly on the Endemial Epidemics of the City of Cork (1734); George Rye, Considerations on Agriculture: Treating Of the Several Methods practised in Different Parts of the Kingdom of Ireland (1730); Thomas Wilson, An Account of the Foundation of the Royal Hospital of King Charles II. &c. near Dublin (1725); [Anon.], A Strange and Wonderful Account of the Removal of a Turf-bog, in the County of Limerick (1727); [Anon.], An Account of the Charity Schools in Ireland (1730); ‘Hydragogus’, A True Account of the Canal between Lough-Neagh and Newry (1742); Smith, County of Down (1740), p.i; Charles Lucas to Sir Hans Sloane, 11 November 1736, BL Add MSS 4025, f.155; these are explored in Ann de Valera, ‘Antiquarian and Historical Investigations’, (UCD, unpublished MA thesis, 1971), chapter 2.
least in that county, only occurred around 50BC. Indeed, in the *Account of Down*, the history of the county begins in 1177, when John de Courcy, the Anglo-Norman adventurer, claimed it and mounted an incursion in the name of the crown. Hoary myths of older British ethnogenesis were rehearsed in the meetings, as was the belief in the suzerainty of Anglo-Saxon kings over Ireland. By and large, however, ethnological speculation was elided, either to insinuate the lack of civility before 1169 or as a distraction from the society’s main aim. The minute book of the society is scarcely more illuminating. Even after the initial focus on the ‘barbarity’ of 1641, little was done to engage in ethnographical analysis, instead concentrating upon marking the beginning of Irish history with the Vikings or Anglo-Normans and stressing Ireland’s potential as a locus of plenty.

One respondent lamented this physical focus, but also used the queries issued in 1744 as an opportunity to question the society’s ambition and ability. Signing himself ‘a whole Milesian’, Francis O’Reilly concluded their goals were unachievable given their modest membership and that any results would, as a result, be imperfect. Undoubtedly aware of the intentions, composition and inclinations of the society, he also stipulated that it would be marred without the aid of Irish-speakers. But his main complaints were twofold; that ‘the queries mention nothing of the gathering Materials for the Civil History of this Kingdom which is miserably false since Cambrensis’s time’ and that Irish prestige must be restored due to the aspersions cast by the latter, as well as other English writers (barring Nicolson, whom he praised). In this, O’Reilly shared a concern with the members of the society itself – indeed, it was a hobbyhorse of Walter Harris. Harris was preoccupied with what today might be called ‘reputational risk’ – namely, that the derogatory descriptions of the Irish past harmed Ireland’s current reputation and future potential. Yet he was determined to deny validity to Milesian ethnogenesis. This obsession is particularly evident in Harris’s work on Sir James Ware and is particularly visible in the preface to his first work on

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687 PHS Minute-Book, 4 May 1747.
688 Francis O’Reilly to Dr Farrell, 23 July 1744, RIA MS 28/E/24, f.22-24.
This first work was followed by a three-volume set wherein Harris ‘revised and improved’ Ware’s Latin originals, so much so that Harris admitted that he had ‘raised a large Superstructure on the foundations laid by Sir James Ware’. Harris’s motives are easy to discern; to update Ware’s account to encompass the massacres of 1641 and the Williamite War, to republish an account critical of Milesianism and to gain a degree of prestige by re-articulating an Ussherian account of the proto-Protestantism of the early Irish church – the latter being in agreement ‘with that of the Church now happily established.’ Similarly, in the second volume of Ware, he tenuously agreed with a Spanish ethnogenesis for the Irish, but discounted any Milesian contribution or composition in this colony. But the overall intent was compatible with the mission-statement of society; that of restoring repute. Accessing the Insula Sacra was a relatively safe way to do so, via Ware, whilst marginalizing Milesian claims. The desired aim of the PHS was to ‘procure proper Collections for the natural and civil History of the several Counties of this Kingdom, whereby the many gross misrepresentations it lies under may be removed’. In the survey for Down, Harris wished to lift the ‘veil that has long laid upon this Country, and for removing those mistakes and misrepresentations, that have been handed down from remote times.’ In this, the aims of the society overlapped with Catholic antiquaries, but Harris and his associates avoided exploring the myths of ethnogenesis, instead relying upon republication of canonical writers and insinuating lack of merit for the same myths through the specific format and methodology of their enquiries.

Yet this insinuation, as opposed to an out-right articulation, of inferiority or invalidity may have been due to the necessities of convenience and sensitivity. It was also illustrative of the uncertainties now apparent in Irish Protestant identities. What was particularly noticeable is the reluctance of the society to express outright scorn for Milesian ethnogenesis. This may be partly explained by

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689 Sir James Ware, *Historiographorum aliorumque scriptorurn Hiberniae commentarium: or, a history of the Irish writers* (1736), p.iv.
690 Sir James Ware, *The Whole Works of Sir James Ware Concerning Ireland* (2 Vols., 1739), i, p.ii.
692 PHS Minute-book, 7 Nov 1745; Smith, *Down*, p.vi.
the on-going inclusion of Catholics into the ‘People of Ireland’ – indeed they are explicitly described as such in one of the society’s preceding publications and in contemporary improvement literature. Furthermore, Protestant Ireland had absorbed many members of the old surviving Gaelic aristocracy after 1690 – the elite of Catholic Ireland were one of the sections of the population which penal statutes were effective in converting. This absorption is apparent in the surnames (if that can be taken as a crude and rudimentary indicator) that litter the membership lists, subscribers and committee participants of the society itself. The effect of such absorption upon ethnic theories was clear from the praise of Lord Inchiquin’s Milesian origins, and these become more frequent in encomia directed toward Protestants of Gaelic derivation. Such successful conversions and the abandonment of strident ethnic animosity were phenomena noted by contemporaries; one English writer observed that ‘now their families are so blended by Intermarriage and other Occasions together, that these disagreeable distinctions are entirely forgot.’ Similarly, the atmosphere of the 1740s was important. The embarrassment felt by Sheridan’s supporters after Lucas’s clumsy intervention denigrating Milesians in 1747-48 was successfully avoided by the members of PHS, who merely elided, rather than deriding, Milesian ethnological theories. Thus, omission rather than condemnation was the adopted tactic or agreed stance. Yet in the society itself the contradictions inhering in this approach was apparent, as was the development of attitudes to the past over the 1740s.

Despite their initial intention to focus on 1641 and ignore ancient history and ethnology, the society and its members grew increasingly amicable to the idea of Milesian origins as the 1740s progressed. This was reflective of the declining self-assurance of Irish Protestants regarding their historical narratives. But it was also reflective of ongoing antiquarian trends; Thomas Comerford’s History of Ireland, thoroughly advocating Milesianism, was published in uncontroversial circumstances in 1742. Dedicated to the ‘People of Ireland’, Comerford conceived these as comprising ‘the old and new race of Irish’, that is, Milesians and later arrivals. Similarly, John K’eogh’s Vindication of the Antiquities of

693 Smith, Down, p.i.
694 John K’eogh, A Vindication of the Antiquities of Ireland (1748); John Winstanley, Poems Written Occasionally (1751), p.144.
695 W.R. Chetwood, A Tour through Ireland (1746), p.71.
Ireland (1748) was specifically designed to make this Milesian ethnogenesis accessible to Irish Protestants and was dedicated to Robert Callaghan, an Irish Protestant of ‘Milesian’ derivation.\textsuperscript{696} The society was affected by these alterations, abandoning their earlier stress upon Anglocentric ethnicity as an engine of civility. Harris was, understandably enough, resistant to such change. In a series of papers regarding Dublin’s ancient state read to the society between July and October 1749, he stressed that the Irish were of ‘ye Britains, their ancestors’, that ‘some of ye Anglo-Saxon Kings had a dominion over ye city of Dubl. & perhaps over other parts of Ir\textsuperscript{d}, [which] seems to be clearly evinced by a coyn of K. Ethelred’ and that the Eblanii ‘came from yt part of Britain called Wales.’ Yet he conceded that ‘accidental colonies may in divers ages have arrived here from more remote parts, as ye Milesians, for instance, from Spain.’\textsuperscript{697} This qualified acceptance was endorsed when James Simon’s account of Irish coinage came before the society and was approved by Harris despite its acceptance of Milesian theories.\textsuperscript{698} Similarly, after Smith had a rift with Harris over the profits deriving from the Waterford account, Smith began to tenuously endorse Milesian ethnogenesis.\textsuperscript{699} He had previously used works such as Keating uncritically (in the accounts of Waterford and Down) and the use of ‘the more intelligent Irish antiquarians’ increased with the later accounts of Kerry and Cork. In the latter account (1750) he referred to the existence of ‘our Milesian Irish’\textsuperscript{700} and Smith attempted to persuade the reader of the truth of the Milesian myth,

\textsuperscript{696} Thomas Comerford, \textit{The History of Ireland}, (1742), dedication; both offered Comerford and K’eogh offered unqualified praise for Milesian ethnogenesis.

\textsuperscript{697} Walter Harris, ‘A Description of the Historic annals of the city of Dublin’, BL Add MS 4823, f.1, f.3, f.6; this manuscript agrees with the posthumously published account; Idem, \textit{The history and antiquities of the city of Dublin, from the earliest accounts} (1765), p.1-12.

\textsuperscript{698} PHS Minute-book, 9 Nov. 1747; ‘Mr Harris reported that upon the perusal of Mr Simon’s Account of Irish Coins by himself and Revd Dr Corbet, it appeared to them worthy the Approbation and Sanction of this Society’; the same notice of approval was reprinted in \textit{The Reformer}, No.3, \textit{Writings and Speeches}, pp.82-3.

\textsuperscript{699} PHS Minute-book, 2 June 1746.

\textsuperscript{700} Charles Smith, \textit{The Antient and Present State of the City and County of Cork} (1750), pp.402, 407.
using spurious etymologies that posited Gaelic as a dialect of Basque.\textsuperscript{701} By the time he published his *Account of Kerry* in 1756, Smith could matter-of-factly state that ‘Several ancient authors place the landing of some colonies of the Milesians in this river of Kenmare… and with no great improbability’\textsuperscript{702}.

The drift towards Milesianism visible in the minutes and output of the PHS reflected a wider acceptance by the late 1740s.\textsuperscript{703} Certainly, it appears to be indicative of an increasing awareness of Ireland’s composite ethnicity. There was, of course, an older ethnic determinism that distinguished Presbyterians as ‘Scotch’, Church of Ireland members as ‘English’ and Catholics as ‘Irish’ or ‘Old English’, but these become increasingly redundant as a preference for quasi-ethnological terminology was mobilized to describe Ireland’s ethnography. Thus, Irishness began to be conceived as an uncontroversial label applicable to all inhabitants of the island regardless of religion, but this was casually theorized as a composite identity. The ethnogeneses and origins that composed this mix were often denominated by the ‘heroes’ each group arrived with; thus we begin to see ‘Milesian’, ‘Strongbonian’ and ‘Cromwellian’ gaining greater purchase as relevant terms.\textsuperscript{704} Indeed, we often forget quite how widespread notions of ethnic difference in Ireland were in this period, particularly a rhetoric of quasi-antiquarian nomenclature that is not visible during earlier and simpler descriptions of ‘Irish’ and ‘English’ inhabitants and interests before 1740. It is very clear in O’Conor’s correspondence and intercourse, with individuals described according to ethnicity as much as religion. Irish Protestants articulated the same idea of ethnological descent; Thomas Leland once referred to his historical work being written ‘as if I were a Milesian, instead of a

\textsuperscript{701} Smith, *Cork*, pp.29-30; this was a live antiquarian issue in the period 1740-60; see Francis Wise, *Some Enquiries concerning the First Inhabitants, Language, Religion, Learning and Letters of Europe*, (Oxford, 1758), 31; *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, September 1758, p.436; Ibid, August 1759, pp.378-9.


\textsuperscript{703} Chetwood, *Tour*, p.72.

\textsuperscript{704} Whyte, *Occasional Poems*, p.70; Smith, *Cork*, p.30, 325; Reily to O’Conor, 2 November 1756; [Anon.], *An Address from a Noble Lord* (Dublin, 1770), p.21; Sylvester O’Halloran could refer to Ireland’s ethnic mix as divided amongst ‘the Milesians, whom we may account the Aborigines, the Strongbonians, and the later Irish’; *Insula Sacra* (Dublin, 1770), p.iii.
Cromwellian. Later still, Edward Ledwich, who revived the Gothic consanguinity between the Irish and English in order to present a loaded, pro-union ethnography, could rejoice at infuriating ‘all the O’s and Mac’s’.

However, from 1740 Irish Scythianism began a slow mutation into Milesianism under the pressure of new environmental theories of human motivation as well as antiquarian conjectures about ethnological origins. Thus, by the early 1750s, there was a common and widespread awareness of Milesian origins as valid in poetical, polemical and historical works. Poets, understandably enough, mined this rich seam to praise patrons, peers and Ireland as their home country, whether adopted or their place of birth. Indeed, so conventional had it become that it transferred into literary works written in Britain; in this case, the novel *Roderick Random* by Scottish-born Tobias Smollett. Similarly, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams satirized the Irish in London in 1747 as widow-hunting ‘Mileans’. Scholarly works reflected it also; a primer on Ireland’s geography celebrated ‘improvements’ and Irish martial capabilities alongside an endorsement of Milesian ethnicity. Furthermore, Comerford’s unapologetically pro-Milesian history enjoyed two print-runs in 1752 and 1754 respectively. The nascent Masonic movement in Ireland published a handbook for their lodges that included Milesian ethnogenesis as historical fact. Political polemic also evinces a move to Milesian acceptance; though this was often sarcastic, and utilized to satirize specific individuals, the veracity of Milesianism was not trused. However, the polemical potential of Milesianism, as a tool of denigration, was increasingly limited and could often backfire – visible when Sheridan’s

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705 Thomas Leland to O’Conor, 5 January 1769, RIA MS B.i.2.
706 Edward Ledwich to Joseph Cooper Walker, 10 May 1788, TCD MS 1461 (3), f.53.
supporters rounded on Lucas when he attempted to wield it as a derogatory weapon.

This, then, was the political, social and intellectual environment antecedent to O’Conor’s publication of his influential Dissertations in 1753. It was one in which Milesianism had become increasingly conventional in Irish prose and scholarly output during the preceding thirty years. This Milesianism had partially evolved out of the unique ethnology needed to comprehend the failure to convert Irish Catholics and to explain the persisting poverty of Ireland. At first relying on negative depictions of ‘Irishness’ as a savage Scythian ethnicity and an intense identification as ‘English’, this mutated into a more expansive idea of Irish identity. This was not, however, one that was universal and unified. Rather, it stressed Ireland’s composite ethnicities, but there was a creeping respect for all ethnological origins, whether Milesian, Strongbonian or Cromwellian. This new repute did not occur in a socio-political vacuum and coincided with awareness that Irish Catholics comprised part of the economic nation. However, it was also indicative of an increased willingness to view Irish identity as comprising a number of confessions, descents and distant ethnic origins in which invasion and settlement had become historicized. This was one of the main developments that contributed to a nascent idea of an Irish political nation.
Chapter Six
The Content and Afterlife of Charles O’Conor’s Dissertations, 1753-1766

Early in 1743 Richard Digby, a down-at-heel member of Dublin’s Grub Street, sounded out Charles O’Conor. Observing the success of the exotic tales from far-flung civilizations published in London and Dublin, Digby approached the Reverend Thomas Contarine, an acquaintance of O’Conor in Roscommon, to enquire after the assistance of the young farmer in the composition and publication of a volume entitled Ogygian Tales. Contarine, an uncle of Goldsmith and a college friend of Berkeley, brought the collaborative proposal to O’Conor, who was receptive to the idea. Digby praised O’Conor as an ‘Ogygian among Ogygians’ and relations commenced amicably. Proposals for publication and a call for subscribers were published in Dublin, outlining the content of the planned book. The volume, the proposals for which appeared in Pue’s Occurences and Faulkner’s Dublin Journal, was planned as ‘A Curious Collection of Irish Fables, Allegories and Histories’ and differed from the ‘Persian, Arabian and Peruvian tales’ by infusing an element of historical veracity to the stories related. This was O’Conor’s doing; in setting forth ‘the Manners, Customs, Arts and Religion of the ancient Inhabitants of Ireland, with the Characters of the most illustrious in Science and Government’ O’Conor intended to partition this meritorious past from the purely fabulous. O’Conor proposed ‘that the first vol. should be purely historical, and the second fabulous.’ Subscriptions were soon forthcoming. By mid-May 1743, Contarine had placed a manuscript ‘into Mr Digby’s hands’ and O’Conor had promised Digby any revenue arising from the

712 Thomas-Simon Gueullette, Peruvian Tales (1734); Sarah Butler, Irish Tales (1735); John Kelly, The Third Volume of Peruvian Tales (London, 1739); John Tolson, Proposals for Printing Hermathenae: or, One Hundred and Twenty Moral Emblems, and Ethnick Tales (London, 1739); Thomas-Simon Gueullette, Chinese Tales (London, 1740); Idem, Mogul Tales: or, The Dreams of Men Awake (2 Vols., London, 1743).


714 Proposals for printing Ogygian Tales (1743), RIA MS B.i.1, f.100.

715 Rev. Thomas Contarine to O’Conor, 21 June 1743, f.107.

work. Significantly, there seems to have been an appetite for the historical component of the text – if the subscribers and Contarine and Digby’s enthusiasm were anything to go by. Contarine even recommended the historical part should begin with the ‘Partolones [Partholonians]’. Sadly, the project foundered. Digby informed his cousin, Henry Brooke of the text – apparently as an invitation to cooperate. Digby then alerted O’Conor that Brooke planned to misappropriate the manuscript and publish the volume under his own name. Digby – apparently innocent – then sent a letter excusing himself from any machination but the project foundered on Brooke’s theft. Brooke was, for his dishonourable conduct, castigated by Contarine as deserving ‘to be stigmatized with some brand of publick infamy.’

What is remarkable about the affair is not Brooke’s duplicity or O’Conor’s naivety but that an Irish Protestant, albeit one in reduced circumstances and with an eye for the chance, could find Milesianism and a reputable Irish antiquity acceptable enough to anticipate a profitable audience and could contemplate cooperating with a genteel Catholic in the production of such a work. Thus, O’Conor, despite his awareness of an altered historiographical environment and his opportunistic intervention in the Lucas affair, could not be said to have arrived independently at a decision to publish a Milesian account of Ireland’s past. The idea was brought to him by an Irish Protestant and mediated through a Church of Ireland clergyman. The idea installed and the text produced, The Ogygian Tales, would eventually become O’Conor’s The Dissertations on the Antient History of Ireland.

Charles O’Conor and the Revival of Incorporating Thought

As illustrative as Digby’s project was of altered Irish Protestant attitudes to the past, it revealed something else – a contemporary recognition of O’Conor’s antiquarian expertise on the topic of Ireland’s pre-Norman history. That this should be so – and well known in Dublin – is surprising. O’Conor’s studies had been interrupted in 1728 when he returned to Roscommon to become a country

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717 Contarine to O’Conor, 13 May 1743, f.104.
718 Contarine to O’Conor, 9 December 1743, f.121.
719 Digby to O’Conor, 9 February 1744; O’Conor, Memoirs, pp.188-191; Contarine to O’Conor, 12 February 1744, f.129.
squire after the death of his father.\(^{720}\) But it appears that, by 1743, the 33-year-old
gentleman farmer had attained a degree of prestige in the discipline he would do
so much to rehabilitate – though it may be explicable from his early
acquaintanceship and familiarity with the O’Neachtain circle and their Protestant
collaborators (for instance, Raymond) in the 1720s. It is, likewise, something that
has been under-researched in the extant accounts of O’Conor’s life and work.
Given that the period of his life before the 1750s is somewhat obscure, this is
understandable – but historiography dealing with O’Conor still tends to focus on
his repute after the 1760s and his absorption into polite (and Protestant) society
and intellectual circles during the thirty years before his death in 1791.\(^{721}\) Less
attention is lavished upon his early intellectual association in the 1750s and, more
importantly, the immediate impact of his *Dissertations* after 1753.

That said, such a focus is understandable, not least due to the documentary
survivals that give the latter period of his life greater evidential weight. Indeed,
O’Conor is usefully emblematic of the alterations in Irish Protestant mentalities
after 1750; his growing intercourse and easy familiarity with powerful and well-
placed Irish Protestants thereafter make him an ideal person to represent the
changing place of Catholics in the Irish polity and society and the account of his
inclusion as a founding member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1773 is justifiably
de rigeur in any general account of the Irish eighteenth century.\(^{722}\) It is
understandable also in terms of his activism – he was a founder member of
Catholic Association (1757) and the Catholic Committee (1760).\(^{723}\) In intellectual
terms, too, this is a fecund period, not least in his range of correspondents and
associates. His repeated, and consistently frustrated, attempts to engage in a
critical conversation with David Hume on a variety of historiographical issues are
well covered.\(^{724}\) Likewise, his friendship with Edmund Burke, though frequently

\(^{720}\) O’Conor, ‘Charles O’Conor of Belnagare: Part II’, p.466.

\(^{721}\) The articles of Walter D. Love are excellent excavations of O’Conor’s milieu in his later life;

\(^{722}\) McBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, pp.401-403; O’Halloran, *Golden Ages*, p.38; Connolly,
*Divided Kingdom*, p.430.


mentioned, is particularly under-researched. Samuel Johnson’s interest and their correspondence are rightly foregrounded, as sporadic and slight as it was. The influence of Montesquieu and other Enlightenment thinkers has only recently been analysed – indeed, the great and gaping scholarly lacuna relating to O’Conor is the neglect of his pamphleteering career. These pamphlets were sophisticated contributions to the political discourse of eighteenth-century Ireland and, if Michael Reily is to be believed, they were praised by Bishop Berkeley when he read them in the early 1750s. Still, attention tends to gravitate toward his historiography and his friendships and interactions after 1760, particularly with the historians Ferdinando Warner, John Curry and Thomas Leland, as well as the unfairly derided Charles Vallancey.

This chapter will deal with his Dissertations, with a focus on the circumstances and context of its publication, the contents of the work itself and the aftermath of its publication. The functionality of the text was manifold – to revive older incorporationist narratives of equality before the law (albeit in an altered ethnological framework), to critique the dominance of Gothicist ideas of origins for Britain’s legal and political institutions in Germany and to portray ancient Ireland’s religious toleration and constitutional structures as exemplary for eighteenth-century Ireland. The afterlife of the text – and its second edition – illustrated the British scope of O’Conor’s ambitions, particular his eagerness to conquer any historiographic or ethnological challenge from the second peripheral kingdom of the British Isles – Scotland.

*Milesianism and the Irish Nation*

It is not possible to separate O’Conor’s work from its context and view it as an isolated antiquarian intervention divested of any social or political motivations. O’Conor was aware that Milesianism was increasingly accepted, even celebrated, and sought to take advantage of it in the same manner as he recognized the

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727 Reily to O’Conor, 3 January 1751, RIA Ms B.i.1.
fracturing of public Protestant historical commitments that led to his intervention in the Lucas affair. Despite being prompted by Digby, O’Conor intended to use an opportune atmosphere in order to propagate a narrative in which Milesianism could function to imbue repute to the Irish past and, by extension, underscore the capacities of Irish Catholics to responsibly wield political power. But it was also designed as a corrective – particularly to the stress placed upon the growth of civility as coeval with English rule in Ireland by the Physico-Historical Society. O’Conor’s attitude to the PHS was ambivalent. While he recognized the interest it had generated in Irish history, he was undoubtedly conscious of the society’s ambition to equate the arrival of the English with the importation of civilization, letters and commerce. The necessary implication – that nothing of record or worth existed before 1169 – was the antithesis of his deeply held belief in a meritorious and polite Irish antiquity. Whatever mixed feelings he had about the organization itself, his attitude toward many of its principals was more straightforward – and unremittingly hostile. William Henry was an obvious candidate and a target of O’Conor’s ire for his *Appeal to the People of Ireland* which described pre-Norman Ireland in deeply unflattering terms. O’Conor’s *Counter-Appeal* was a direct response to the allegations Henry leveled. About Charles Smith O’Conor was silent, but he actively assisted one Bryan O’Connor in attempting to write and release a history of Kerry before Smith’s edition. In a letter to O’Conor, Michael Reily insisted that the PHS favoured Smith over Bryan O’Connor (despite the latter being Protestant and a native of Kerry) in a naked example of ethnic discrimination – Smith was chosen by the society merely in order to ‘prejudice this Milesian [O’Connor]’.

Walter Harris was another individual he disliked – O’Conor despised Harris as the manifestation in both political and historiographical spheres of the attitudes he wished to abolish and which he felt stood in the way of Irish prosperity and political normality. O’Conor’s letters are replete with hostility. Departing from his usual composure, he satisfactorily noted at one point that Harris’s demise was imminent.

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728 O’Conor to Curry, 18 June 1760; O’Conor to Curry, 15 November 1761.
729 Reily to O’Conor, 6 June 1752, f.181.
731 O’Conor to Curry, 5 October 1757; O’Conor to Curry, 13 January 1757.
same time, O’Conor recognized the potential audience created by the society – and he dedicated his *Dissertations* to Lord Newport, the society’s president, in order to exploit this audience.⁷³² Newport, renowned for his assiduity on the bench and praised for his efforts to relieve the famine of 1740-41, was a suitable choice for these reasons and the dedication could similarly function to appeal to those interested in the activities of the PHS.

O’Conor’s *Dissertations on the Antient History of Ireland* – or the remnants of the historical section of the *Ogygian Tales* – was published in 1753 with a lengthy subscribers’ list. The most obvious tactical imperative discernable in this work was O’Conor’s attempt to highlight Milesian achievement as a way of showing the capability of Irish Catholics for civilized political activity. In the *Dissertations*, two strategies were mobilized to indicate this capability; Milesian political practice and the nature of the early Irish church. Regarding the former, O’Conor foregrounded the tolerance of the Milesian polity and the practice of administering oaths of fidelity to ancient Ireland’s heterogeneous ethno-religious communities. The issue of oath-taking is one instance of the transparent contemporaneity of the *Dissertations* – from the earliest penal legislation, through the Delvin address of 1727 and long afterward, a variety of oaths acceptable to the Irish Catholic conscience were persistently proposed as possible solutions to insinuations of Catholic disloyalty. In ancient Ireland;

They did not confound the *Innocent* with the *Guilty*; they had *legal Tests* to discover one from the other; they punished none who *submitted* to the Laws of the Land, that is, they gave the Benefit of the Constitution to such as loved to live in Peace *with it*, and maintained no Principles diametrically opposed to it.⁷³³

Furthermore, the *Dissertations* negotiated a middle course in his description of the early church in Ireland; one that rejected Ussherian attempts at deracination, but insisted upon the guiding hand and partial influence of Rome in Ireland’s conversion. St. Patrick (‘by birth a Briton and by education a Roman’) found a

⁷³² [O’Conor], *Dissertations*, pp.xxxix-xv.

receptive populace for his proselytization in Ireland – mainly due to the very civility and temperance of the Irish population at the time of the conversion effort. ‘Rome’, O’Conor categorically states, ‘plants it, and with more rapid success than we can learn of any other Country.’

*734* A clear delineation was also insisted upon during and after this mass conversion; one in which the temporal claims of the papacy were politely ignored, while their spiritual jurisdiction was respected. Clare O’Halloran, among others, has expertly outlined the ‘cisalpine hue’ O’Conor attempted to impart to early Irish Christianity.*735*

O’Conor’s preoccupations went beyond revising the history of the early Irish church. Foremost among his intentions was the attempt to revive the incorporationist thought that flourished in the seventeenth century. As we have seen, this strand of thought possessed several characteristics that appealed to O’Conor. These were the ideas of respecting religious distinctions, the emphasis upon equality before the law, religious toleration and the concept of incremental acculturation according to environmental evolution rather than drastic legislative exclusion. The anticipated result, according to this perspective, would be the convergence of interests and identities if the above solutions were applied with equanimity. These were all potential arguments that O’Conor attempted to resurrect for the benefit, not only of Irish Catholics, but also for the Irish polity. All had been anathema in Ireland during the segregationist supremacy, with its belief (ostensible as it may have been) in mass and total conversion, in the strict separation of the Godly and the unconverted, the belief in the inveterate incapability of Catholics and the use of punitive segregation as a means of promoting conversion. O’Conor, conscious as he was of alterations in Irish Protestant attitudes regarding 1641 and Milesianism was also undoubtedly aware of the subterranean survival and underground popularity of Davies’ works (if print-runs are to be taken as a sign). Thus O’Conor attempted through direct citation and oblique invocation to resurrect the incorporating tendencies of Spenser and Davies.

O’Conor’s earlier pamphlets outline an interpretation of Irish history very

*734* [O’Conor], *Dissertations*, xxiii-xxiv; [Charles O’Conor], *The Impartial Examiner* (1746), p.10; O’Conor to Curry, 23 July 1763.

similar to Davies and consistently allude to the similarities between Davies’ deleterious polity and the mistakes of politicos in O’Conor’s present. Amongst these (also criticized in the Dissertations) were the evils of gavelkind – Davies’ bête noir and, in O’Conor’s opinion, one of the primary reasons for Ireland’s wayward development and continuing divergence from British norms. The kernel of this complaint was obvious – that the penal laws demanded the division of lands amongst all sons upon the death of a Catholic owner, thereby making tenure uncertain and discouraging improvement. What had been a deleterious socio-economic practice in Davies’ day was promulgated, approved and enforced by the Irish legislature in the eighteenth century.736 These pamphlets invoked Petty, Spenser and Davies as a means of challenging the connection between the arrival of civility and the Anglo-Norman invasion.737 This desire to underscore the writings of Davies and Spenser carried over into the Dissertations. First, Spenser and Davies were mentioned by name – and are conspicuous by their inclusion in an antiquarian work – and there are frequent allusions to their thought in the work itself.

O’Conor thereby used the Dissertations as a vehicle to advert to their ideas. Spenser, ‘the best Poet, and consequently the best Judge, of his Age’ is referenced as believing the history contained in Irish poetry to be admirable.738 Davies’, too, came in for praise, particularly his interpretation of medieval Ireland and disastrous effects of discriminatory legal systems during the same period. Furthermore, one of the longest extracts quoted was Davies’ complaint that the English government in Ireland did not extend full legal rights, equivalent to those of Anglo-Norman settlers, to the Gaelic population.739 William Camden, an antiquarian and ‘time immemorial’ adherent of Davies’ stamp, was also praised, but gently criticized for lamenting that lack of a Roman ‘yoke’ to civilize the inhabitants.740 When the subject of the recent Irish past was broached, O’Conor was more forthright and couched his critique in language that paraphrased Davies

736 [Charles O’Conor?], Considerations, p.16; [Charles O’Conor], Some Seasonable Thoughts relating to our Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution, (1751), p.26.
737 Idem, Counter-Appeal, pp.10-11; [O’Conor], Impartial Examiner, p.63.
738 Idem, Dissertations, p.55.
740 Ibid, p.123.
– or took it verbatim from the *Discovery*. The Anglo-Norman settlers ‘lived in a constant state of Warfare with the Natives, or with one another’ and they seemed to ‘coalesce into one People’. The root of this conflict was that ‘the Irish themselves were no longer to be treated as Subjects but as Enemies and Aliens, to whom the Benefits of the English Laws was, by no Means, to extend’. This lasted until the ‘Benefit of the English Constitution, so long denied to the Intreaties of this People, was, at length, granted by that heroic Princess [Elizabeth I]’. Furthermore, in his depiction of a privileged caste of poets, jurists and learned men acting detrimentally to the polity, O’Conor’s analysis has much in common with Toland’s *History of the Druids* and Spenser’s *View* – particularly the latter’s castigation of bards and brehons.

This brings us to other aspects of O’Conor’s work closely related to political discourse, antiquarianism and ethnography in early modern Britain and Ireland. O’Conor’s Whiggishness has been acknowledged, but little explored. His *Dissertations* was essentially a Whig text – an emphasis upon constitutional monarchical power limited by legislatures, religious toleration, popular freedoms and hostility to faction are all hallmarks of the book. Ian McBride has stressed this aspect and O’Halloran recognizes it being a formative influence upon the *Dissertations*; this is true, but there are other factors that inform this work, O’Conor’s modification of Irish ethnography and the incorporating thought he attempted to highlight. This was O’Conor’s adherence to the same ‘time immemorial’ beliefs that were so characteristic of the ‘common law mind’. We have seen Cox’s virulent opposition a Davies-derived historical perspective and to Lucas’s assertion that older ‘incorporationist’ programmes had been abandoned – but Cox was additionally opposed to Lucas’s mobilization of the rhetoric of the ‘time immemorial’ constitution. Implicit in the use of the Davies’ writing and this interpretation was the idea that the contemporary dispensation was comparable to Anglo-Norman petty tyranny that had failed to solve the ongoing problem of Irish ethno-cultural division. At first glance, the two issues seem unconnected and Cox’s animosity might be explicable in terms of the

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742 ‘The Form of Government was monarchical, from the Beginning; but at all Times under the Restraint of popular Councils’; Ibid, p.73.
suspect status of ‘time immemorial’ theories after 1688. However, to contemporaries this was not the case. The fact remains that the earliest expressions of incorporationist thought coincided with a widespread belief in the ‘time immemorial’ theory in the early-to-mid seventeenth century. Indeed, the ethnogeneses promulgated by these new settlers relied on a common British ethnicity in order to legitimate the extension of English sovereignty and to articulate an anticipated assimilation. Thus the ‘time immemorial’ beliefs of Davies and other exemplars of the ‘common law mind’ were indissolubly linked to specific policy programmes and outcomes that segregationists like Cox found anathema.

This desire to rehabilitate the ‘time immemorial’ thesis informed the ethnography created in the Dissertations. O’Conor adhered to particular political and antiquarian norms – foremost among which was the idea of the formative role of ethnicity in the creation of national political cultures that evolved slowly over time. Such an idea was prevalent in Britain – but a native, autochthonous, ‘time immemorial’ constitution had been partially replaced by the idea of a Gothic import of the early Middle Ages. O’Conor’s ambition was to supplement, or even supplant, this Gothic theory with one that emphasized the deep roots of these political and legal developments in the British Isles, long predating the Gothic influx, which was accessible to all Britons and which, more importantly, had an Irish and Milesian complexion. For O’Conor conceived, and promulgated in his work, the idea that the Milesians that arrived after the previous British migrants like the Fir Bolg and the Tuatha de Danann were merely one influx that contributed to the composition of the peoples that composed the British Isles. A correlative of this was that they were an earlier, and hence precedent, Irish equivalent of the Goths who had arrived much later in England. These Milesians, by virtue of their settlement in Scotland and Northern England eventually made-up a significant proportion modern Britons and were important in the creation of the same polity.

This hostility to Gothicism was apparent in the Dissertations and the Goths were castigated throughout in derogatory terms; after the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe was overcome with ‘Gothic ignorance’ and subject to ‘Gothic

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744 [O’Conor], Dissertations, p.93.
fury’. Furthermore, O’Conor equated ‘the Goths and the Northern Nations’ with the same level of savage ignorance, lacking the restrained and modest legislative liberty as the Milesians. This was accentuated in the second edition of the Dissertations, when O’Conor claimed the ‘Normans [i.e. Vikings] who issued forth from the same Gothic Hive with the old Saxons and Franks, infested this Kingdom, first by their Incursions, and then by actual settlements.’ Note the emotive language (‘infested’) and the association of the putative ethnological font of European freedoms, the agglutinative ‘Gothic Hive’, with the Normans whose yoke, in ‘time immemorial’ rhetoric, was ineluctably aristocratic and tyrannous. O’Conor wished to re-position the Irish Milesians as the counterparts of the Goths. As a believer in the indigenous origins of the ancient constitution, through the long-settled and domiciled Milesians, O’Conor additionally wished to criticize the Gothic theory in terms of both temporal and constitutional claims. So distant and deep were the Milesians ensconced in the British past, according to O’Conor, their claim to have influenced British political cultures was older, of more repute and, consequently, more valid. This is apparent in O’Conor’s dismissal, in correspondence and print, of the Goths. They were, in short, the epitome of ‘that Darkness which became proverbial of the Northern Nations.’

O’Conor was depicting the Goths, purportedly the prime movers in constructing Britain’s constitutional culture, as too independent and fierce – that their political structures were anarchic and were not tempered by moderation. Nor could they sustain the type of polite, literate and commercial society characteristics of the Milesians.

In strict ethnographical terms, O’Conor was aware of the utility of consanguinity between the Irish and the other groups in the British Isles. O’Conor denied the newly fashionable predilection to ascribe a Magogian ethnogenesis for the Irish, instead maintaining a Gomerian, and hence Scythian source shared by Germanic and other European peoples. This was important if O’Conor wished to validate Milesianism and appeal to a parity of esteem in the Noachic ethnic schema. Additionally, O’Conor insisted that some shared descent was apparent

745 Ibid, pp.x, xxviii, 8, 32, 36.
746 O’Conor, Dissertations, (1766), pp.230-231.
747 Ibid, p.x, xxviii, 8.
748 O’Conor, Dissertations, p.35.
between Britain and Ireland before the Milesians. In the Dissertations, O’Conor built a British superstructure on this Gomerian base. The earliest inhabitants of Ireland – Fir Bolg and the Tuatha de Danaan – were, according to O’Conor, British peoples that arrived in Ireland from both Britain and Gaul. These groups are reminiscent of the groups that Spenser and Camden insisted came from Britain into Ireland. These groups fought varying wars before being conquered by the vigorous newcomers from Spain, the Milesians, who imported letters and civilization. The foil to the Milesians was the intolerant Tuatha de Danaan – the latter’s intolerance and tyrannical inclinations inevitably lead them to lose their status as governors of Ireland. In the Dissertations, the Danaans refuse the inclusion in the other groups in the polity; conversely, the Milesians admit them to every privilege. In short, the Danaans lose Ireland due to their intransigence, while the Milesians retained it due to their tolerance. These, too, undergo a unique but lengthy ethno-genesis with the existing populations becoming, after many centuries of shared political cooperation, the Gaelic Irish.

O’Conor’s account owed much to two Irish historiographical traditions. One was the long tradition in Gaelic historiography that emphasized the normal nature of invasion and settlement in Ireland – a counterpart to the Irish Protestant intellectual tradition of assimilative narratives to which O’Conor was attempting to revive. In a veiled critique and reference to earlier incorporationist sentiment the Milesians did not restrict ‘sacred Freedom’ by making it ‘the Property only of those, who are compelled to come in.’ Rather, they ‘gave the Benefit of the Constitution to such as loved to live in Peace with it, and maintained no Principles diametrically opposed to it.’ Apart from being a being a decent principle, the pragmatism of such a policy was also stressed. O’Conor warned of the inexpedience of segregation – and his warning seemed to deliberately invoke the Jacobite threat. This message was, again, made apparent through allusion to ancient Ireland. Patterns of invasion were due to continuing ethnic distinctions – between Fomorians, Danans and Belgians – that encouraged invitation for foreign intervention from their ethnic or religious kin abroad. Ultimately, O’Conor insinuated, this led to the invasion of the Milesians and caused numerous tumults and revolutions for a long period. Whenever social discord, war, intolerance or discrimination occurred in ancient Ireland, the losing party relied on intervention from exiled chiefs and consanguine groups in France, Spain or Britain to
intervene militarily on their behalf. Additionally, for O’Conor the essential message was that any failure to extend universal legal equality and access to political expression in heterogeneous communities frequently led to civil war.\footnote{Ibid, pp.166-168.}

The parallel with the Jacobites was obvious – this, however, was not a threat. Rather, O’Conor intended to historicize a contemporary reality, thereby placing it in light of the repeated mistakes of the past and anticipating a contemporaneous influence upon attitudes and policy. Ultimately, the Milesians went through a process of ethnogenesis with the varying ethno-religious communities of ancient Ireland to form a new ethnic group – the Irish. This process of ethnogenesis was a slow one, resulting in an eventual ‘End to the Danaan name and Nation’ and the Fir Bolg’s absorption in the ‘third century of Christianity’.\footnote{Ibid, pp.167, 170.} It was, ultimately, the reluctance of the Milesians to persecute on account of religion that caused an evolution toward a uniform ethno-religious identity in Ireland – namely, the creation of ‘one-people’.\footnote{Ibid, p.86.}

This narrative was deliberately instructive, directed at an Irish Protestant audience and was designed to clothe earlier incorporating thought in antiquarian garb. There was another contemporary ethnographical message in O’Conor’s history. The strength of the Milesian civilization derived from its tolerance and a legal system that engendered prosperity and dynamism. By virtue of this vibrancy and their feats in arms these Milesian spread into Scotland and Northern England and due to this dissemination culturally and materially contributed to the formations of British ethnicity. Their ecumenism, their tolerance and their political institutions and practices were all indicators of their contribution to the mixed constitution of O’Conor’s Hanoverian present (a lineage that included the royal family).\footnote{Ibid, pp.xxx, 89-90; O’Conor refers to the Irish conquering ‘from the Orcades to Northumberland; their possessing and governing, so late as the twelfth Century, the far greater Parts of these three Kingdoms; and their giving Kings, in short, to all the British Dominions’.}

This influence was indicated by political acculturation (legislative supremacy, limited monarchy, tolerance, respect for property) but also to tangible artifacts with constitutional functions – in this case the Stone of Scone, transported from Ireland to Scotland, before ending up as the Coronation
This argument for an autochthonous origin for British liberties was an obvious attempt to entrap British public sentiment. However, it was not cynical, as O’Conor believed that Irish Milesians were belonged to a British system of migrations that had a decisive impact on the formation of Britain itself – as O’Conor’s letters evince. This was apparent in the *Dissertations*; the Fir Bolg, Fomorians and Tuatha de Danaan are categorically described as British and O’Conor’s largely conformed to the traditional account of the incorporationists and antiquaries of the seventeenth century – albeit having enhanced the Milesians to centre-stage in the transformation of the ancient Irish polity. O’Conor’s ethnological schema (which is remarkably akin to Spenser’s) therefore comprehended Irishness as both distinct and British. Thus, O’Conor attempted to re-position the Milesians as civilized outsiders that, through a process of dispersal, invasion and settlement, ultimately undergo an ethnogenesis into ‘Britishness’ and significantly contribute to the same polity. As such, and conforming to conventional theorizations of ethnicity, this Milesian infusion involved a literate ethnic group infusing their political and social predilections into their varying areas of settlement, thereby creating the constitution and institutions cherished in the eighteenth century. By focusing on the contributions of the Milesians and delineating a partial British consanguinity for Irish people, O’Conor tried to revive the incorporationist thought of Davies and Spenser as means to further specific political goals in his own time.

That said, the immediate response to this ethnography was strangely muted. One incident illustrative of the welcome O’Conor’s book received was from Dr. Samuel Johnson, who had acquired a copy from George Faulkner shortly after its publication. Precisely what the lexicographer and essayist appreciated about O’Conor’s work is unknown – and speculation is probably fruitless. Johnson was unstinting in his praise of both author and work, lauding the effort to describe a

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753 Ibid, p.103.
754 Daniel O’Conor to Charles O’Conor, March 1759, RIA MS B.i.1 f.290; O’Conor to Curry, 31 March, 1759.
people ‘once so illustrious’ and an island ‘once the seat of piety, and learning.’

The Irish response was somewhat quieter – O’Conor’s Milesian speculations do not appear to have ruffled many feathers. That said, an ostensibly satirical account of Irish antiquity did appear the same year as the Dissertations, though it appears to have used the Viking invasions of Ireland as an allegory for the disputations surrounding the Money Bill of the same year. O’Conor utilized a stratagem in order to ingratiate the work into another tradition of Irish intellectual discourse, modified by contemporaneous fashion, that was to prove successful. However, if Irish Protestant reaction was muted and English audiences receptive, O’Conor was faced with challenges to his new ethnography – and his political ambitions for Irish historiography – from a quarter that had long contested Irish claims to precedence in the British Isles. This was from Scotland and its pre-eminent historian and philosopher, David Hume.

**Activism, Hume and Ossian: O’Conor’s Dissertations of 1766**

Thus far, we have dealt with O’Conor’s historiography, leavened with some very brief biographical details. Additionally, it was indicated that O’Conor’s forays into the public sphere occurred much earlier than previous supposed. His authorship of earlier pamphlets in response to Henry Brooke’s Farmer’s Letters (1745-6) and the series The Impartial Examiner (1746) are of particular note. The recent collection of essays on O’Conor ascribes the authorship of the rebuttal to Brooke but does not substantiate any other attributions prior to the Lucas affair – something, it is hoped, that this work has remedied. Lastly, the presentation of political ethnography in seventeenth-century Ireland and the alterations in Irish Protestant attitudes over the following century was used to contextualize and explain the content of the first edition of O’Conor’s Dissertations.

The decade and a half of O’Conor’s life after the publication of the first edition his Dissertations entwines the threads of these discourses with O’Conor’s

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757 [Anon.], Hibernia Pacata: Or a Narrative of the Affairs of Ireland (1753).

ambition for this work. This included the gradual growth of a rhetoric of Irish nationhood across religious denominations, the growth of a language of Irish patriotism and an increasing willingness to view ‘Irishness’ as a composite identity comprising waves of migration or, if you will, of ‘Mileisians’, ‘Cromwellians’ and ‘Strongbonians’. But these years also saw O’Conor’s careful cultivation of Irish Protestant antiquarianism and historiography, the foundation of the Catholic Committee (1757), O’Conor’s attempt to engage both David Hume in historiographical debate and James Macpherson over the Ossian myth – the latter of which culminated in the second, 1766 edition of the Dissertations.

O’Conor’s association with socially well-placed Protestant gentlemen has been analysed with assiduity by Clare O’Halloran and does not bear repetition here.759 Similarly, his acquaintanceship with George Faulkner – who facilitated communication with Samuel Johnson – is well known, as is his acquaintance with Edward Synge, the Bishop of Elphin.760 Less well known is O’Conor’s initial foray into intellectual debate with the Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher, Robert Clayton.761 The story, briefly told, is simple. Clayton’s unorthodox religious inclinations surfaced in his book The Essay on Spirit (1751). The promised sponsorship of an expedition to the Sinai to prove the veracity of the Book of Exodus and unalloyed praise of Newton proved unsuccessful in dispelling rumours of heterodoxy. However, O’Conor’s use of Newtonian chronology in the Dissertations appears to have brought the two men closer. Clayton and O’Conor appear to have cooperated in an orchestrated pamphlet ‘war’ attempting to initiate confessional toleration in Ireland – certainly, he met with Clayton in 1756 and had ‘a conversation for an hour with him in his closet’.762 Clayton grew less circumspect and in 1757 called for the abolition of the Athanasian Creed in the Irish House of Lords, resulting in persecution. He

759 O’Halloran, Golden Ages, pp.141-170; O’Halloran, ‘‘A Revolution in our Civil and Moral Affairs’: Charles O’Conor and the creation of a community of scholars’ in Gibbons and O’Conor, Charles O’Conor of Ballinagare, pp.81-96.
761 Macdara Dwyer ‘Sir Isaac Newton’s Enlightenment Chronology and Inter-denominational Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Ireland’ in IHS xxxix, No. 154 (November 2014), pp.32-51
762 O’Conor to Daniel O’Conor, 7 February 1756.
died the following year – according to one contemporary source, his death was attributable to ‘the excitement occasioned by the prosecution’.\textsuperscript{763} O’Reily – in his capacity as O’Conor’s agent in the capital – had already hinted to the squire that growing public knowledge of Claytons’ anti-trinitarianism was making his association with the bishop a liability.\textsuperscript{764} Thereafter, O’Conor combined a threefold strategy; in addition to discreet pamphleteering and historiography friendly to multi-confessional and migratory interpretations of Irish history, O’Conor commenced direct activism.\textsuperscript{765}

As O’Halloran has described, one component of this activism remained the cultivation of Protestant sympathizers with whom he engaged in intellectual debate. This intermingling was reflective of a new social dispensation that permitted members of differing sects to associate without rancour – and debate more freely the confessional delineations in Irish social and political life. O’Conor’s association with Clayton, Faulkner and Synge were manifestations of this change – as well as the growth of ‘politeness’ and increasing Catholic economic security and social advancement. But O’Conor also began to agitate more directly. A solid and contemporarily visible manifestation of this strategy was the establishment of the Catholic Committee in 1757.

Needless to say, the committee’s establishment was the culmination of O’Conor’s desire to advance Irish Catholic rights – an engagement which was ‘the dominant driving force of his life.’\textsuperscript{766} The establishment of this entity is at once well covered and under-researched. We know much of the context for its creation, the leaders that initiated lobbying for relief and the history of the committee. Conversely, the relationship with the Catholic hierarchy, the membership of the committee and the political thought of the organization are less well known. Similarly, the political philosophy that O’Conor contributed is rarely explored. The history of the committee is quickly told. Established by O’Conor, the Waterford gentleman Thomas Wyse and the doctor-historian John

\textsuperscript{763} David Berman, \textit{Berkeley and Irish Philosophy} (London, 2009), p.110.
\textsuperscript{764} Michael Reily to O’Conor, 26 June 1756.
\textsuperscript{765} Robert Clayton, \textit{Bishop of C-----r, The Bishop of Clogher’s Speech, made in the House Lords, in Ireland. For Omitting the Nicene and Athanasian out of the Liturgy} (London, 1757).
\textsuperscript{766} Joep Leerssen ‘Charles O’Conor and the nationalization of historical consciousness’ in \textit{Charles O’Conor of Ballinagare} (eds.) by Gibbons and O’Conor, p.247.
Curry, the aim of the Catholic Committee (or Catholic Convention) was to initiate the incremental accession of Roman Catholics in Britain and Ireland to full economic, social and political rights. Key to comprehending this organization’s ethos is that this acquisition of political privilege was presented as a re-admission to political rights. The tone and tenor of O’Conor’s pamphlets in the eight years before its foundation give an indication that this organization intended the return – concomitant with their historic privileges – to full social and civic status of a group of people subject to the King of Great Britain and Ireland. Historical examples such as Magna Charta, the Investiture controversy and the medieval contests between burghers, magnates, kings and the Church were stressed.\footnote{For example; \cite{O'Conor1, O'Conor2, O'Conor3}} This argument warded off potential criticisms of the Roman Catholic faith as antithetical to liberty. There was a concomitant ethnological narrative with the same objective. Obviously, the historical picture created by O’Conor in his \textit{Dissertations} sat well with another of the committee’s arguments – that Ireland had traditionally been the site of large inward migrations and the differences of descent and faith stemming from these settlements were normal. Any insecurities felt, this logic went, by Irish Protestants had been felt by a multitude of Nemedians, Vikings, Strongbonians etc. before these groups were absorbed into the Irish nation.

Another powerful set of arguments (again visible in O’Conor’s pamphlets) was the mobilization of contemporary political thought to indicate Ireland’s confessional diversity was not unique – but that the failure to admit Catholics to political and social life was both politically injudicious and morally unethical. In any discussion of O’Conor’s political activity, his political thought must be appreciated. In this regard, Hilary Larkin’s recent analysis of the influences on his thought encapsulates much that has been articulated elsewhere, albeit in much greater detail. Ian McBride has previously noted the influence on O’Conor – like much of his contemporaries – of Baron de Montesquieu. Larkin goes one step further and indicates that Montesquieu articulated O’Conor’s existing attitudes in his \textit{De l’esprit des lois} (1748) – published in English as \textit{The Spirit of the Laws} in Dublin in 1751. It was this edition that O’Conor read. We know this because
O’Conor – like Berkeley – was especially keen to get his hands on a copy.\textsuperscript{768} O’Conor’s earlier pamphlets \textit{Seasonable Thoughts} and \textit{Counter-Appeal} – as well as the now-ascrivable \textit{Impartial Examiner} and the response to Brooke – contain pronouncements on the lack of wisdom in the ‘penal code’ that are similar to Montesquieu’s sentiments. Precisely how much of this enlightenment thought was imbibed or propagated by the members of the committee is uncertain. But it was a powerful set of arguments – similar to O’Conor’s use of Newton – to argue for serious political reform among the Irish intelligentsia.

The Catholic Committee was short-lived but its existence was testament to the growing assertiveness of Irish Catholics and the willingness of Irish Protestants to tolerate such Catholic activism. The almost total indifference to Jacobitism exhibited by the Irish Catholic gentry and mercantile classes by the 1740s meant these groups were free from the internecine squabbles characteristic of earlier attempts at mitigation such as the 1727 Delvin address. However, one repository of Jacobite feeling – the Catholic hierarchy – remained problematic for the new committee. O’Conor’s complaints about the hierarchy in general – and the Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Lincoln in particular – were persistent and scathing. O’Conor’s criticism, though carefully concealed from public view, proved prescient as it was clerical meddling that would ultimately contribute to the demise of the committee. Despite this, the Catholic Committee was reflective of drastic alterations in mid-eighteenth century political and social life. It was also effective in initiating the process of reform that resulted in the gradual repeal of the most onerous penal legislation between 1774 and 1793.

The establishment of the committee coincided with or – more likely – caused a dearth in O’Conor’s published output. However, that does not mean O’Conor was entirely disengaged from cerebral pursuits. His two abiding obsessions during the 1760s were historiographical – though obviously connected to his political goals. These were to engage the philosopher David Hume in discussion over his representation of the 1641 rebellion and to persuade readers metropolitan and domestic that the Ossian poems were merely derivatives of Irish Gaelic originals. Indeed, so engrossed did O’Conor become in these pursuits that his output of pamphlets dried up – between the years 1758 to 1766 he published no pamphlets.

\textsuperscript{768} Michael Reily to Charles O’Conor, 8 February 1754, RIA MS B.i.1, f.211.
Both obsessions have a very obvious relation to Scotland – and were illustrative of contemporary anxieties shared between members of the two peripheral kingdoms.

Leerssen and O’Halloran have previously indicated this Hiberno-Scottish complexion, and Walter Love published valuable, pioneering research that dealt with O’Conor’s efforts to publish a ‘philosophical history’ of Ireland and his acquaintanceship with Edmund Burke. The ‘philosophical history’ project was connected to an effort to defuse the explosive potential of the Irish past to upset contemporary confessional relations. However (as Leland, Burke, O’Conor and the other individuals involved in this effort lamented) no history proved satisfactorily ‘philosophical’ enough to present a view of the past that did not inflame opinion or reveal biases. However, O’Conor could fight rearguard defences against existing hostile interpretations of Ireland’s antiquity and its recent (especially seventeenth-century) past. As we have seen, O’Conor’s efforts were directly focused on the former. For Ireland’s recent past, a partnership of sorts was established with Dr. John Curry. Curry contended that the 1641 rebellion was the product of local sectarian animosity between confessional groups in the fluid ethno-religious frontiers of mid-seventeenth-century Ulster. More specifically, in Curry’s work the rebellion was presented as an over-reaction by an Irish Catholic ‘rabble’ to fears engendered by English Puritan anti-Popery and local Protestant provocations – provocations that included a massacre at Islandmagee in Co. Antrim. If the historiography was Curry’s responsibility, the polemical side was O’Conor’s. Indeed, O’Conor’s only surviving published output during the period 1757-1765 related to this Hiberno-Scottish contest. One publication was an important contribution to the Ossian controversy – the second edition of the Dissertations in 1766. Another was a letter comparing Irish Catholic loyalty with Scottish perfidy in the London Chronicle. The remaining piece was an open letter in the Gentleman’s Museum addressed to David Hume, challenging the latter’s casual references to Irish Catholic savagery.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Hume’s History of England (1754) on intellectual and public debates about the past after its publication. Such influence made Hume an obsession for O’Conor and Curry in their didactic mission. This was motivated by Hume’s insistence upon Irish Catholic barbarity during 1641 in his History and their mutual fear of its impact upon the political
aspirations of Irish Catholics in the contemporary Hanoverian dispensation. O’Conor sent Hume copies of his *Dissertations*, 769 engaged in open letters criticizing his depiction of 1641 and his influence probably prevailed upon Burke to raise the matter on the occasion that the two men met. 770 This obsession was also a reminder that O’Conor’s audience was not simply a domestic one; those engaging in Irish historical studies during this period attempted to counter the casual assumptions of ignorance and brutality found in enlightenment works – particularly French – against Catholics and the Irish. 771

For O’Conor and Curry the publication of Hume’s *History* in 1754 and its increasing popularity thereafter necessitated a response; the first instalment, dealing with the Stuarts, reiterated all the accumulated sect-libels of Temple, Borlase and Clarendon combined with the graphic survivors’ stories. While contemporary research has calculated that most deaths resulted from passive callousness rather than active cruelty, from the mid-seventeenth century the massacres loomed large in English considerations of the civil war and the Catholics of Ireland. Hume’s reluctance to doubt or criticize the accounts of the rising instigated unease in Irish Catholic quarters; yet Hume had a point to prove. Hume’s intent was not to express anti-Irish sentiment, but instead to articulate hostility to religious zeal, something to which he believed that Catholics were particularly susceptible. 772 In response to Adam Smith’s demurral at his description of 1641 he wrote,


770 David Hume to Hugh Blair, 19 September 1763 in J.Y.T Greig (ed.) *The Letters of David Hume: Volume I, 1727-1765* (Oxford, 2011); the two had been on friendly terms since at least 1759, when Hume gave Burke a copy of Smith’s *Moral Sentiments*. See Edmund Burke to Adam Smith, 10 September 1759 in Thomas Copeland (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, Vol. I, April 1744 - June 1768 (Cambridge, 1968), p.129. All correspondence from Hume hereafter is from this source.


Your Objection to the Irish Massacre is just; but fall not on the Execution, but the Subject. Had I been to describe the Massacre of Paris, I should not have fallen into that Fault: But in the Irish Massacre no single eminent Man fell, or by a remarkable Death. If the Elocution of that whole Chapter be blameable, it is because my Conception labor’d with too great an Idea of my Subject, which is there the most important.773

The ‘idea of the subject’ was sect-based fanaticism causing such an atrocity, not the litany of cruel acts Hume regurgitated uncritically in the narrative. In this matter at least Hume’s was not a pure prejudice but a constructive one to condemn extremism. And yet, Hume cannot be entirely exonerated from national feeling that sought to prove Scottish superiority in contrast to other peripheral kingdoms – or even to England. This would become apparent in the Ossian controversy, but Hume had attempted something similar in the History – instead of consistent anti-planter activities, the ‘English colonies were totally annihilated… The Scots, at first met with more favourable treatment.’ This was not peripheral solidarity, but due to calculated concepts of anti-Britishness; ‘the Irish pretended to distinguish between the British nations; and claiming friendship and consanguinity with the Scots, extended not over them the fury of their massacres.’774

Of course, Irish Catholics regarded this as calumny. O’Conor’s objection – from the perspective of modern demands upon the historian – was principled. While he recognized Hume’s intent to write a partisan history that condemned uncritical adherence to faith systems, he believed Hume had violated historical accuracy. That is, ‘as he may possibly hurt the living by odium cast upon the dead, humanity as well as justice will arrest his hand from offering any more of such injury than historical truth will strictly warrant.’775 It was a sentence repeated almost verbatim in the advertisement to Curry’s response to Hume’s work, the Historical Memoirs of the Irish Rebellion (1758).776

773 Hume to Adam Smith, 9 January, 1755.
774 Hume, History of Britain, v, p. 225.
775 O’Conor to Curry, 7 September 1757
776 John Curry, Historical Memoirs of the Irish Rebellion In the Year, 1641 (London, 1758), p. xxiv
conspiratorial malevolence amongst Irish Catholics. More importantly, Hume depicted the rebellion being caused by ‘their leaders and their priests’ – that is, the political leaders of Irish Catholic society. Thus, the imperative for O’Conor and Curry was to disprove this interpretation and to substitute instead a narrative that depicted the peasantry acting against the wishes of their social superiors. Curry’s earlier revisionism on the rising was published in 1747 and stressed this interpretation – and these themes would again be stressed in his *Historical Memoirs* (1758). Such killings that did occur were ‘all perpetrated by exasperated, and ungovernable Rabble, not only without, but absolutely against the consent and command of their chiefs.’ O’Conor endorsed this class perspective.

More significant was the explicit anti-Scots sentiment contained within Curry’s text. State forces committing atrocities were always ‘English and Scotch’ and Swift’s anti-Scots writings are cited. Specifically, Curry used the Dean’s insistence on a Scottish origin for the war; ‘On the other Side, the Puritans… joining with the Scotch Enthusiasts, in the Time of King Charles the First, were the principle Cause of the Irish Rebellion.’ Likewise, in the advertisement to the *Historical Memoirs*, O’Conor wrote that the civil war and massacres began due to the fact that, ‘The Scots, at length, sought Redress in Insurrection; and the Parliament sitting at Westminster approved of their conduct. The Irish, finding affairs thus embroiled in Britain and dreading the worst from the republican spirit…’ then decided to rebel. This was, along with the refutation of upper-class leadership, a keynote of the remaining text. Similarly, Curry’s stated motivation for his earlier writing the *Brief Account* was the ‘Scottish [sic] Rebellion in 1745’, when the ‘Peace and Property’ of Catholics had been threatened. Furthermore, where massacres did take place, ‘it is highly probable that the Scots were the first Aggressors…’ and the rising was a response to

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779 O’Conor to Curry, 13 January 1757.
780 Curry, *A Brief Account*, p. 50, p. 64.
781 Ibid, p. 65.
perceived Scottish designs to extirpate the Ulster Catholics. The comparisons were constant and stark; Irish strictures against molesting Scottish settlers and other magnanimous resolutions were matched by Scottish perfidy, to both King and fellow subjects.\(^{783}\) Where they did encounter each other, the Irish fight for Charles, the Scottish for the ‘Puritan Rebels’.\(^{784}\) Similarly, there are minor but telling changes between the earlier *Account* and the *Memoirs*; one of the King’s loyal officers in Ireland, Sir John Read – described as ‘a Scotchman’ in the earlier account – is de-nationalized in the *Memoirs*.\(^{785}\) O’Conor contributed to this effort in an article in August 1763 that emphasized the fidelity of Catholics in comparison to Scots. Printed in the *London Chronicle*, this letter alleged a Scottish predilection for disloyalty that was being unfairly rewarded to the detriment of deserving Hibernians. ‘Scotland is’, wrote O’Conor,

…a protestant country…. whose people are generally, if not universally, abhorrent of Popery. And yet from the year 1708 to 1745, three dangerous rebellions, in favour of the Popish pretender, were raised, fomented and headed by some of its most eminent Protestant chiefs; while not a single Papist of either high or low degree was known to stir in Ireland…\(^{786}\)

Hume remained the object of O’Conor and Curry’s attention and they attempted to appeal directly to him. This included bringing the Curry’s book to Hume’s attention – ‘I proposed in my case to find a direct conveyance to Messrs. Hume and Smollett for the *Memoirs.*’ This would, it was hoped, have an influence over their literary output as they ‘may hence give to the world new editions and they will be tempted the more by new lights pouring in on them from parties interested in historical justice.’\(^{787}\) Impatient of inactivity in this regard, O’Conor pressed Curry on another occasion that ‘I would wish you found some means for conveying all that has been printed to Mr. Hume in Scotland, that he may avail himself of the contents in his next edition…’\(^{788}\) O’Conor ultimately

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\(^{783}\) Curry, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 32, 70, 148, 95.

\(^{784}\) Ibid, p. 138.


\(^{786}\) *The London Chronicle*, 27-30 August 1763, p. 203; O’Conor to Curry 15 September 1763.

\(^{787}\) O’Conor to Curry, [undated – 1758].

\(^{788}\) O’Conor to Curry, 27 February 1758.
wrote an open letter to Hume in the *Gentlemen’s Museum* magazine emphasizing the peaceable activity of Irish Catholics and in comparison to the rebellious spirit of Scots. When a response was not forthcoming, a friend of O’Conor’s in London ripped the pages out and sent them to Hume in 1764. All these efforts were fruitless, however, and Hume failed to take the bait – though he did temper his accusations of savagery in subsequent editions of the *History*.

At the time, O’Conor was convinced of the significance of Curry’s work over the antiquarianism he had engaged in; ‘nothing equal your work has ever yet appeared in a point of Irish history much more important to the present time than any that I and any other have formerly dabbled in.’ Another Scottish threat would, however, compel a return to the study of ‘our British antiquities’ in order to prevent the ‘odium so long operating (till of late) against us in the three kingdoms’ from reviving. If Hume was directly responsible for perpetuating the myths about 1641 among the British and European intelligentsia of the eighteenth century, he was indirectly responsible for a challenge to Irish antiquity and ethnology that required a much more vigorous response from O’Conor. This was the fraud of James Macpherson, ‘translator’ of the Ossian poems, which cut to the bone of O’Conor’s Milesian hypothesis and its political corollaries.

Writing to Edward Gibbon in 1775, Hume congratulated the younger Englishman on the publication of the first volume of his tome, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Hume mentioned a specific criticism made by Gibbon in his work, namely, that,

> Something of a doubtful mist still hangs over these Highland traditions; nor can it be entirely dispelled by the most ingenious researches of modern criticism: but if we could, with safety, indulge the pleasing supposition that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung, the striking contrast of the situation and manners of the contending nations [Caledonians and Romans] might amuse a philosophical mind.

Hume’s stance was one of thorough agreement; ‘It is, indeed, strange, that many men of sense could have imagin’d it possible, that above twenty thousand verses,

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789 O’Conor to Curry, 23 September 1758.
790 O’Conor to Curry, 31 March 1759; O’Conor to Curry, 12 December 1759.
along with numerous historical facts, could have been preserved by oral Tradition during fifty Generations, by the rudest, perhaps, of all the European Nations.’ The cause of this, he reasoned, was that ‘Men run with great Avidity to give their Evidence in favour of what flatters their Passions, and their national Prejudices.’ Hume might have had himself in mind; upon the appearance of the poems in 1760, he had heartily embraced ‘these wild flowers’ as the genuine voice of an authentic Scottish tradition orally transmitted from pre-history’s darkness. However, his doubts did set early were subsequently longstanding; these doubts were, more significantly, left unannounced. His famous critique of Ossian, in essay form, was left unpublished in his lifetime and only posthumously printed after its discovery among his papers. Furthermore, his letters to his friends bespoke a nagging reluctance to be fully convinced of the authenticity of the poems – a suspicion that was signally absent from his public attitude to the work when questioned or challenged upon the topic, a support that stretched even to active suppression of literature querying its veracity. The dilemma was obvious. Hume’s private reservations regarding publications that he probably knew to have been composed on a fraudulent premise were unaired as this premise dictated their appeal.

David Raynor has noted that – like any human being – ‘Hume did not always succeed in divesting himself of all prejudices of his country, education, and profession.’ It is a conclusion that many Irish scholars have deemed an understatement. Conventional historiography relating to Hume and Ireland has generally limited itself to the ‘seventeenth-century ghosts’ wrought by the Irish Rebellion of 1641. This, while still of significance, has been to the detriment of Hume’s place in the paramount Hiberno-Scottish antiquarian rivalry of the eighteenth century – the debate surrounding the Ossian poems. It is unfortunate that Hume has been denied this nuance and his attitudes to the Irish have been

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792 Hume to Gibbon, 18 March 1776 from The Letters of David Hume, pp. 309-311.
pigeon-holed into either anti-Catholic atavism derived from the Presbyterianism of his upbringing or anti-Catholic bias derived from his dislike of religious zeal. Hume, as a unionist, was intensely conscious of his Scottishness in the relatively young state of Great Britain. In the acrimony surrounding the poem’s authenticity, he recognized that the greatest threat to its veracity came from the Irish originals, and this consideration directed Hume’s tacit support and calculated silence on the issue of fraud. It was an attitude O’Conor himself – as a Catholic and subject of a peripheral kingdom keen to reap the benefits of membership of the British Atlantic world and its attendant opportunities – shared.

Hume described the origin of Ossian during an encounter of his friend John Home with James Macpherson at the spa resort of Moffat. When their conversation turned to poetry, Home tried to coax some verse out of the coy young man;

Mr. Macpherson replied, that he had never attempted such a thing; and doubted whether it was possible to transfuse such beauties into our language; but, for Mr. Home’s satisfaction, and in order to give him a general notion of the strain of that wild poetry, he would endeavour to turn one of them into English. He accordingly brought him one the next day, which our friend was so much pleased with that he never ceased soliciting Mr. Macpherson, till he insensibly produced that small volume which has been published.

Ossian was born of this flirtation in Moffat. Hume’s support for Macpherson is largely explicable in light of his own literary activism, which entailed a promotion of Scottish authors in England. This had a function akin to that of O’Conor’s antiquarianism, namely, the amelioration negative perceptions of civility. One of Hume’s previous attempts was the promotion of David Wilkie, the ‘Homer of the Lowlands’ whose poem the Epigniad he described as ‘a Production of Great Genius.’ He was to be disappointed in this early

797 David Hume to [Sir David Dalrymple], 16 August, 1760
798 David Hume to Gilbert Elliot of Minto, 2 July 1757; Hume to Andrew Millar, 21 July 1757; Hume to Andrew Millar, 3 September 1757.
ambition. He was still championing the Wilkie cause upon the emergence of Ossian; in an article for the *Critical Review* of April 1759 Hume, devoid of facetiousness, claimed that ‘The whole turn of this new poem would almost lead us to imagine, that the Scottish bard had found the lost manuscript of that father of poetry, and had made a faithful translation of it into English.’ Hume’s championing of Ossian included the provision of a letter of introduction to his publisher in London, William Strahan, to Macpherson. However, the Ossian poems soon turned into a topic of polarized debate when the question of authenticity arose and Irish antiquarians watched with unease as its popularity grew. As Ossian’s underlying premise was to denude the Irish past of its ‘Scotic’ primacy by making Scottish settlement in Britain antecedent to the Irish migration, a riposte became necessary from Irish historians heavily invested in ethnological theories of Milesian primacy in the British Isles.

Macpherson himself was vocal in his condemnation of this Milesian theory – indeed, the whole artifice of the Ossian poems rested upon a rebuttal of Milesian pretensions and the belief that ‘Ireland was colonized from Scotland rather than the other way round.’ He also displayed the sensitivities to ethnological precedence evident in Hume’s private correspondence and O’Conor’s historiography. In short, the Scots – unlike Irish people – were ‘ever a true people’ and this ethnological fact therefore merited social and political prestige in the British Isles. Macpherson was a little more aggressive in later Ossianic productions – in *Fingal* Irish protests are nullified as the ‘inconsistencies between those spurious pieces prove the ignorance of their authors.’ More alarming was the bold claim that ‘Some adventurers passing over from those parts of Britain... were the founders of the Irish nation: which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallican colonies.’ Macpherson’s *Fragments*, too,

800. David Hume in *Critical Review*, April 1759.
801. Hume to William Strahan, 3 February 1761.
802. Quoted from Micheál Mac Craith, ‘Charles O’Conor of Ballinagare and the Macpherson Controversy’ in Gibbons and O’Conor (eds.) *Charles O’Conor of Ballinagare*, p. 168.
insisted on the fallacy of Irish claims and over the course of several pages he argued for Ossian’s authenticity in an argument that boiled down to the sentence ‘That Ireland was first peopled from Britain is certain.’

O’Conor was initially indifferent to the interest generated by the Ossianic ‘translations’. This initial dismissal – which later turned into alarm – is easily explicable. First, O’Conor presumed it was conventional knowledge that northern Britain had been populated from Ireland. The preceding two hundred years had been marked by a historiographic response to the increasing centralization of power toward the south east of England. The impending prospect of this concentration led the antiquaries of both countries to use origin myths as a tool for parity of inclusion in the emerging British polity. The gradual legitimization of Irish claims from 1720 onwards made the purported fact of Irish precedent unassailable. However, recent Scottish membership of an incorporating union and increased anti-Scottish attitude in England necessitated similar strategies by Scots to justify inclusion and portray civility. Ossian was one product of this need but the poems challenged the Irish claims which appeared to have been academically validated through the work of Innes, Stukeley and O’Conor. Second, O’Conor was faintly contemptuous of the Gaelic tales from which Ossian was ultimately derived. He believed the poems ‘Romances, and vulgar stories’ and ‘mere amusements for the vulgar.’

O’Conor’s lethargy dissipated as the popularity of the poems demanded a less lacklustre approach than his previous reliance on scholarly convention. Questions were directed at Macpherson’s patrons. Hume was prevailed upon by Edmund Burke to challenge the authenticity of the poems;

I was told by Burke, a very ingenious Irish gentleman, the author of a tract on the Sublime and Beautiful that on the first publication of Macpherson’s book, all the Irish cried out, we know all these poems, we have always heard them from our infancy. But when he asked more particular questions, he could never learn, that any one had ever heard,

805 An example is the preface to Roderic O’Flaherty’s, Ogygia, or a Chronological Account of Irish Events, Translated by Rev. James Hely (1793), p. xx.
806 Charles O’Conor, Dissertations on the History of Ireland (second edition, 1766), p. 103.
After these attempts to convince Hume to condemn Ossian failed, O’Conor encouraged the English ecclesiastical historian, Dr. Ferdinando Warner, to challenge Ossian’s popularity. Warner ultimately obliged by describing the tales as Irish but claimed they had been ‘mutilated … by the Caledonians’. Under O’Conor’s supervision, Warner also insisted that one must give up ‘the whole Irish History [in order to] subscribe our assent to these Poems of Ossian.’ While contributing to the debate, Warner did not deliver a killing blow. However, O’Conor, on a commission from George Faulkner, was rewriting the Dissertations and used this has an opportunity to comprehensively refute Macpherson’s ethnological assertions.

In the second edition of the Dissertations (1766), O’Conor was concerned with limiting the damage wrought upon the Milesian thesis by the Ossian poems. Most of the criticism – aside from minor alterations to his main text – was contained in an appendix criticizing Macpherson. The second edition again stressed Irish movements to ‘North Britain’ and the political and commercial structures of ancient Ireland re-emerged as suspiciously similar to those of contemporary Britain. However, succinct digs at Macpherson’s reputation are discernable throughout. In these footnotes, O’Conor insinuated rather than accused Macpherson of forgery. Such accusations were directly and rather forcefully levelled only in the appended dissertation. Entitled A dissertation on the first migrations and final settlement of the Scots in north-Britain; with occasional observations on the poems of Fingal and Temora, this appendix ran to 65 pages and were paginated separately from the main work. O’Conor confirmed in the

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807 Hume to Blair, 19 September 1763. Hume and Burke had been acquainted for several years prior to this; Edmund Burke to Adam Smith, 10 September 1759 in The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, Vol. I, April 1744 – June 1768, ed. by Thomas Copeland (Cambridge, 1968), p. 129.
808 Berman, Hume and 1641, p. 104; O’Conor to Curry, 13 March 1761.
810 O’Conor, Dissertations, p. 48, 22-3, 38-9, 58, 81, 163-7, 174-5.
preface that this was a Hiberno-Scottish competition in which Macpherson’s ‘Predecessors in the Lowlands’ had attempted to purloin Irish historical achievements for ‘more than an hundred years.’ The dissertation emphasized that Ossian and Fingal were ultimately derived from Oisin and Fionn mac Cumhaill from the Fianna cycle of Irish mythology. Most of the objections went over previous ground – the Irish derivation of the heroes, the lack of written evidence, the fact that modern orthography was used, the presence of toponymic inconsistencies etc. However, the primary objection of O’Conor’s was the historical evidence that ‘Scot’ was synonymous with ‘Irish’ in the middle ages and that the accreted historical wisdom of centuries was being violated by Macpherson’s schema. Even more objectionable was the danger of contamination from Macpherson’s unlettered antiquity, which had the potential to damage the credibility of the Milesian cultivation of letters in undiscriminating minds. O’Conor insisted that ‘the Readers of South-Britain will hardly take his bare word for it, that any Language can be preserved in its classical Integrity through many Ages among an unlettered people.’

Mutual awareness of this English audience is key to comprehending the different responses to the Ossian poems by Hume and O’Conor. For Hume – in his position as ‘the guardian of Scottish literary integrity’ – the poems represented a chance to increase national prestige by insisting upon a refined and ethnologically pre-eminent position in the British Isles. These stories were a threat from O’Conor’s perspective for the same reasons. It was an indication of the anxieties and preoccupations of both men that they wished to gain respect for their mutual national loyalties through the iteration of particular historiographical narratives and as proponents of noble ancient polities to a wider audience in the British North Atlantic world. More importantly, for O’Conor, Ossian threatened the careful historiographic schema upon which his political ethnography rested – and with his activism, pamphleteering and narratives of the past, he ultimately hoped to help create an Irish identity organized around a political, rather than

812 Ibid, p. 43.
813 Ernest C. Mossner, The Forgotten Hume (London, 1943) p. 82.
confessional identity. History has shown that this was not fulfilled in practise – though the effect on Irish political thought has been immense.
Conclusion

Toby Barnard has asserted that, for Irish Protestants of the eighteenth century, the ‘most significant among the volumes on their shelves were not Spenser’s View, Davies’s True Causes or Molyneux’s Case, but editions of The Tatler, Spectator or popular novels.’ Barnard may well be correct and, if not popular, the very presence of these authors on eighteenth-century bookshelves nevertheless reveals their persisting significance – and their ability to haunt the political conscience of ‘Hibernia Anglicana’. Furthermore, this thesis has attempted to illustrate the ongoing pertinence of Davies and Spenser – but particularly the former – to debates about Ireland’s history, its ethnic and confessional divisions and, lastly, to visions of Ireland’s future or prospective state. Spenser and Davies in particular outlined an ethnography and set of policy proposals that would continually impinge upon intellectual and popular political discourses in the period analysed here. But this study has also been engaged with excavating the ‘central importance of ethnicity in early modern Irish politics.’

This thesis has been primarily concerned with tracing the significance of these ethnological theories and the historical narratives prevalent in Ireland in order to indicate the lineage of this thought and the background to Charles O’Conor’s published work. O’Conor wrote historiography that presented invasion, settlement, religious heterogeneity and, consequently, composite national identities as entirely normal phenomena in Ireland’s history. O’Conor’s significance is often articulated, but his precise intellectual influences are rarely analysed. The purpose of his works in their late eighteenth-century context have been expertly explored by Clare O’Halloran and Joep Leerssen (amongst others), but his influence is much more difficult to quantify. However, it should be clear to anyone familiar with the growth of a sense of Irish identity in the eighteenth century (rather than narrower religious identifications) that his influence was significant. Furthermore, this significance played an important part in the creation of the idea of Irish political identity that later informed Irish republicanism and nationalism. The insistence that Irish people shift their primary identification

from their confessional group to Irishness itself was a fixture in the literature dealing with the establishment of Irish legislative independence in 1782 and the radicalism of the 1790s.\footnote{Although the term 'identity' may be relatively new, there is a sense in which the story of Ireland over the last two centuries has been the quest for a political identity'; Donal McCartney, ‘The Quest for Irish Political Identity: The Image and the Illusion’, Irish University Review, Vol.9, No.1 (Spring 1979), p.13.} Such an ambition is clearly manifest in O’Conor’s output – particularly his desire to replace ethno-religious loyalties with purely national and political ones. This was O’Conor’s oft-quoted ambition that all members of Ireland’s confessional and ethnic communities unite with ‘one creed of political faith’.\footnote{John Curry and Charles O’Conor, Observations on the Popery Laws (1771), p.29.} Furthermore, O’Conor wished to revive the incorporationist sentiments embedded in the ethnologies and commentaries from the period 1570-1640 – but particularly the proposals of Davies and Spenser. Such an ambition was implicit in O’Conor’s historiography and it was explicit in his political pamphlets.

But this work has several secondary ambitions. One concern has been to reinterpret the content and reception of key works in the Irish Protestant canon in light of the early modern relevance of political ethnographies. It will be seen that these works wrestled with the problem of multi-ethnicity and religious heterodoxy in an effort to reconcile untidy Irish realities with their authors’ particular political agendas. This strategy succeeded to varying degrees of success. Molyneux’s insistence on a mutual Anglo-Irish legacy of ‘Gothic’ rights for the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland was immediately challenged by metropolitan audiences. Similarly, Sir Richard Cox’s insistence on the British origins of Irish indigenes lasted until its political utility declined and Protestant Ireland needed alternative, and more exclusive, ethnological theories to explain the failure of their political economy. However, two writers in particular attained a remarkably long hold on the Irish imagination – Edmund Spenser and Sir John Davies.

Therefore, another concern of this thesis has been to reconsider the unsavoury reputation that Spenser and Davies have achieved in the majority of analyses of their lives and work in Irish historiography. There are a few exceptions to this,
but most accounts place the poet and the jurist in a poor light. I have been particularly keen to point out that Spenser was not a proponent of genocide – and, seen in light of the circumstances prevailing when he wrote, his View of the Present State of Ireland outlined a benign and tolerant vision of Ireland’s future state. Similarly, Sir John Davies’ purchase on Irish historical consciousness was marked – and his acceptance by Irish Protestants as a worthy source was creatively exploited by Irish Catholics to argue for the implementation of Davies’ proposals. Lastly, the reputation of the two was such that their output could function as facilitators of inter-denominational discourse that had a constructive, rather than mutually offensive, form.

This is a thesis with a limited word-count, so some interpretative stances of the author must be read or discerned, rather than explicitly articulated. One of these stances is the idea that English involvement in early modern Ireland was, in terms of intent, programmes, policies and means, fundamentally a state-building enterprise. The haphazard, inconsistent, violent and protracted nature of this endeavour, however, meant that the island became a site of experimentation – as well as exploitation – that gave it a certain colonial appearance. This state-building endeavour was completed by 1692. After that date, the growth of the revenue service, the formation of an Irish military establishment, the monetization of the economy and the persistent stability of parliamentary and other governing institutions evinced a consolidated state. This meant the completion of the Irish state-project was followed a long consolidation – even growth – of this state over the course of the century. The existence of this Irish state was necessarily followed by the invention of the Irish nation. However, the persistence of ethno-religious division made the confident expression of an Irish identity problematic and this was the fundamental intellectual and cultural difficulty facing Irish society during the same century. A reversion to the incorporationist appeals found at the beginning of the state-building process was, by the 1790s, thought to be the

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answer – this time, though, it was not Protestantism, or Englishness, or civility that was to be the transforming agent for awkward and persisting communal divisions, but a whole-hearted adherence to the political nation, regardless of language, culture or faith. In all probability, Wolfe Tone owes a greater intellectual debt to Sir John Davies than to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Indeed, he may owe a greater debt to Charles O’Conor – the first individual to present a uniform political identity amidst ethno-religious heterogeneity as both typical within the patterns of Irish history and desirous in his contemporary environment.
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