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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

CONVERGENCE AND CONFLICT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND

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ABSTRACT. *Recent writing shows that eighteenth-century Irish society was both less and more divided than was supposed by Lecky, whose* History of Ireland in the eighteenth century (*now over a century old*) *dominated so much subsequent historiography. Because Lecky enjoyed access to records that were subsequently destroyed his work will never be entirely redundant, but this article looks at ways in which his views have been and continue to be modified. It surveys the various interpretative models now being used to open up the period, which invite comparisons not merely with England, Scotland, Wales, and colonial America but also with Europe. It also considers how that endlessly fascinating decade, the 1790s, has emerged from the spotlight turned on it by a plethora of bicentenary studies.*

I

'Though Lecky and Froude have already treated eighteenth century Irish history on a generous scale, a series of special studies is necessary if we are to have an adequate understanding of the period.' Thus began the preface to what was the first significant study of political thought in Ireland, R. B. McDowell's *Irish public opinion 1750–1800* (1944). The words convey something of the sense among Irish historians in the mid-twentieth century that the clash of these mighty Victorians had done so much to illuminate the nature of eighteenth-century Irish history that little was required, perhaps, beyond some filling in of blanks, or tweaking at the edges. There were of course some early correctives: but even Daniel Corkery, who set out in the 1920s to redress Lecky's failure to treat of Gaelic culture and society, hastened to reassure his readers that his book would not 'in any way, replace Lecky's study of the … century'.[1] The Lecky/Froude hegemony has been slow to be displaced. In what is widely agreed to be the best survey of eighteenth-century Irish history to have appeared in recent years, the preface noted that the study of Irish history between the end of the Cromwellian regime and the Anglo-Irish union had evolved in the shadow of the great surveys of the period by Froude

[1] D. Corkery, *The hidden Ireland* (Dublin, 1924), p. 6.

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and Lecky; that fresh works of synthesis had been slow to appear, and even so had not fully replaced them.[2]

At first glance it seems surprising that these authors should have exerted such influence over succeeding generations of historians in twentieth-century Ireland. Froude, after all, was English, while Lecky came from a minor Anglo-Irish landed family; both wrote primarily for a British readership. A recent study sheds light on this phenomenon, at least as far as Lecky was concerned. In the first full-length biography of Lecky it is made clear that his interpretation of Irish history, informed as it was by a strong moral sense and concern for justice, was admired by virtually all shades of contemporary Irish opinion. For unionists his opposition to home rule outweighed his criticisms of the union, while nationalists (including Patrick Pearse and Eamon de Valera) were beguiled by Lecky's obvious sympathy for what he called 'Irish nationality'.[3] For historians, the fact that Lecky had enjoyed access to many primary sources, subsequently lost in the destruction of the Public Record Office in 1922, put the seal on his pre-eminent reputation.

A historiographical review by Toby Barnard published in this journal in 1993 welcomed the burgeoning output of research on eighteenth-century Ireland, but warned that the new Ireland being uncovered might turn out to be 'the Old Ireland of Lecky or McDowell' – unduly preoccupied with high politics, and the view from the capital – in borrowed clothes.[4] What of works published since then?

One of the most striking sections of Lecky's treatment of the period concerned the penal laws. Strongly influenced by the views of Edmund Burke, Lecky portrayed the penal laws against Catholics as 'one of the blackest pages in the history of persecution', reducing the population to a condition of 'virtual slavery'.[5] Powerful though this advocacy was, it was among the first props of his superstructure to be undermined, notably by the late Maureen Wall and subsequently by Louis Cullen and others, who have continued to chip away.[6] The intentions behind the penal laws are still of interest,[7] but their operation receives more attention.

A remarkably prolific writer on Catholic Ireland is Patrick Fagan (the jacket blurb for each new work reminding envious readers that since retiring from the civil service he has been able to devote his time 'largely to historical research').

[2] D. Dickson, *New foundations: Ireland, 1660–1800* (1987; 2nd revised and enlarged edn, Dublin, 2000).

[3] D. McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky: historian and politician* (Dublin, 1994) (reviewed in *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp. 253–4), pp. 141–2, 164–5, 193.

[4] T. Barnard, 'Farewell to old Ireland', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), p. 928.

[5] W. E. H. Lecky, *A history of Ireland in the eighteenth century* (5 vols., London, 1898–1913), I, pp. 170, 282.

[6] G. O'Brien, ed., *Catholic Ireland in the eighteenth century: collected essays of Maureen Wall* (Dublin, 1989); L. M. Cullen, 'Catholics under the penal laws'. *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, I (1989), pp. 23–36.

[7] C. I. McGrath, 'Securing the Protestant interest', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1996), pp. 25–46.

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Fagan is not always sufficiently aware of secondary works in his chosen field, and at times is unduly discursive, but his work contributes to what we know about the actual, as opposed to the legal, position of Irish Catholics under the penal laws. A recent study has suggested that during the first half of the century a Catholic lobby consisting of ecclesiastics, gentry, and merchants achieved some success in mitigating the impact of existing laws and scaling back the scope of new ones. This was achieved in part by exploiting the dependence of the Irish parliament on the British privy council through the operation of Poynings' law. Pressure was also brought to bear on government by the ambassadors of Catholic European powers, particularly Austria; it was a feature of the London embassies of these powers that their chaplains were for the most part Irish.[8]

Among those who lobbied against the penal laws were Catholic lawyers. When required to take the various oaths, most of the existing Catholic barristers conformed to the established church, but (as others too have pointed out) many of the converts continued to represent the interests of their Catholic families and friends. In any case, there were loopholes; Catholics continued to be able to qualify as barristers through the Inns in London, and although they could not practise they could act as agents and advisers. Barriers to Catholics practising as solicitors were ineffectual.[9] Alone of the professions, medicine was fully open to Catholics; James Kelly provides a meaningful survey of the history of medicine in this period without reference to religion.[10] There was a significant Catholic element among printers, notably in Dublin (many specialized in supplying the country market with chap books). Although legally outside the officially Protestant guild structures, some of these printers joined St Luke's guild as quarter brothers, alerting us to the dilemma facing the guilds: the need to uphold the Protestant establishment while continuing to regulate the work of all who followed the trade.[11] Outside Dublin, in certain towns there are tantalizing glimpses of Catholic freemen, raising the question of the extent to which occasional conformity may have been practised.[12] And in a valuable study, Kevin Whelan has illuminated the extent to which

[8] P. Fagan, *Catholics in a Protestant country* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998), ch. 2.

[9] Ibid., pp. 110–16. On converts see also Cullen, 'Catholics under the penal laws', pp. 27–8; T. P. Power, 'Converts', in T. P. Power and K. Whelan, eds., *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Blackrock, 1990), pp. 101–27; K. Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 10 (1995), pp. 11–12.

[10] J. Kelly, 'The emergence of scientific and institutional medical practice in Ireland, 1650–1800', in G. Jones and E. Malcolm, eds., *Medicine, disease and the state in Ireland, 1650–1940* (Cork, 1999), pp. 21–39; Fagan, *Catholics in a Protestant country*, ch. 3.

[11] N. ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 53–6. Guild values are discussed in C. D. A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom: a study of the Irish ancien régime* (Dublin, 1994), ch. 4, and J. Hill, *From patriots to unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant patriotism, 1660–1840* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 24–41, 202–11.

[12] B. ó Dalaigh, *Ennis in the eighteenth century* (Blackrock, 1995), p. 34. Such Catholic freemen may have been analagous to quarter-brothers in Dublin, who obtained some purely trading rights on payment of quarterly fees. The pioneering study on quarterage was by Maureen Wall, reprinted in O'Brien, ed., *Catholic Ireland*, ch. 2.

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dispossessed Catholics managed to hold on to land, if not as outright owners, then as middlemen or strong farmers. He confirms that many 'discoveries', officially intended to prevent Catholics from keeping their estates intact, were in fact collusive, and did not necessarily result in the weakening of the Catholic landed interest.[13] A study of the courts fails to find clear-cut evidence of discrimination against Catholics, who resorted to the law fairly frequently. However, local government was an overwhelmingly Protestant preserve, and very few Catholics penetrated that bastion of county government, the grand jury.[14]

One of the novelties of Fagan's work on Catholics has been his use of the Stuart papers in Windsor Castle; indeed, he has done scholars a service by editing a selection of those papers bearing on Ireland.[15] This raises the question of Jacobitism. Lecky, again following Burke, was sceptical about active disloyalty on the part of Irish Catholics in the era after the Williamite revolution. For most of the twentieth century historians were content to follow this line, in the main leaving the field to those who were competent to study eighteenth-century literature in Irish. Their research produced some debate about the extent and significance of Jacobitism, but the subject remained a marginal one[16] until the 1990s, when Irish historians were jolted by the new interest being shown in the English and Scottish manifestations of Jacobitism. At the same time Breandán ó Buachalla completed nearly twenty years research on the subject.

In his study of the *aisling* and other poetry ó Buachalla contends that the Jacobite content is not to be dismissed as rhetoric; rather, the literature reflects a political ideology that was central to the politics of the three Stuart kingdoms until the 1760s. Preoccupation with the Stuarts only evaporated finally in the 1790s when it was transferred to Bonaparte, and later to Daniel O'Connell.[17]

[13] Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', pp. 10–11. This essay is also to be found in idem, *The tree of liberty: radicalism, Catholicism and the construction of Irish identity, 1760–1830* (Cork, 1996). For a Catholic gentry family see K. Harvey, *The Bellews of Mount Bellew* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998).

[14] N. Garnham, *The courts, crime and the criminal law in Ireland, 1692–1760* (Dublin, 1996); idem, 'Local elite creation in early Hanoverian Ireland: the case of the county grand jury', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), pp. 623–42.

[15] P. Fagan, ed., *Ireland in the Stuart papers, 1719–1765* (2 vols., Dublin, 1995). See also B. ó Buachalla, 'Irish Jacobitism in official documents', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 8 (1993), pp. 128–38.

[16] See, e.g., T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, eds., *A new history of Ireland IV* (Oxford, 1986), where Jacobitism is largely a literary or foreign phenomenon.

[17] B. ó Buachalla, *Aisling ghéar na Stíobhartaigh agus an t-aós léinne 1603–1788* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1996) (for a flavour, in English, see idem, 'Irish Jacobitism and Irish nationalism', in M. O'Dea and K. Whelan, eds., *Nations and nationalisms: France, Britain and the eighteenth-century context* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 103–16). *Aisling ghéar* is the subject of a considered review (in English) by M. MacCraith in *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 13 (1998), pp. 166–71. Non-Irish speakers can now consult Éamonn ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685–1766* (Dublin, 2001). For the evolving British historiographical debate on Jacobitism, see D. Szechi, *The Jacobites* (Manchester and New York, 1994), pp. 1–8.

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To the objection that if Jacobitism was so pervasive it might have been expected to produce some sort of rising in 1715 or 1745, others have replied that this was precluded by the strength of the Irish military establishment and the failure of the Pretender to launch an invasion of Ireland. In any case, Irish Jacobites were divided among themselves over strategy.[18]

If this is beginning to look like a consensus about the importance of Jacobitism, with degrees of scepticism declining,[19] contentious issues remain. Questions have been raised about the differences between Scottish and Irish Jacobitism, and whether it is appropriate to try to fit Ireland into an overall picture of 'British' Jacobitism. The extent to which Jacobitism was an ideology merely of an elite of aristocrats, poets, and clergy has also been queried. Niall ó Ciosáin identifies a gap between elite and popular versions of Catholic history, though it has been suggested that schoolmasters could bridge these cultures.[20] This seems worth investigating further, if sources permit; if only to clarify the sense in which the (mainly Catholic) Munster Whiteboys of the 1760s could proclaim, 'Long live King George the 3d and Queen Sive.'[21]

The emergence of a 'Hanoverian' Catholic strategy in the 1750s and 1760s is the subject of a thoughtful contribution by Cadoc Leighton. He found residual Jacobite sentiments even in the leading champion of such a strategy, Charles O'Conor, and suggested that initially it was not so much Protestants as O'Conor's fellow Catholics who had to be won over. Analysis of the argumentation in the pamphlet literature also sheds light on the Catholic contribution to the debate among Irish Protestants about the desirability of economic and social reform: Catholic relief, especially between the 1750s and 1780s, was for the most part advocated on the grounds not of rights or of Catholic numbers but of public utility. However, given the Protestant nature of the Irish state, those contending for Catholic relief – whatever their intentions – could scarcely avoid criticizing confessionalism; thus laying the foundations for the emergence of that otherwise puzzling nineteenth-century phenomenon, the alliance in Ireland of Catholicism and liberalism.[22] Leighton's style is complex, but the reader is richly rewarded.

[18] É. ó Ciardha, 'The Stuarts and deliverance in Irish and Scots-Gaelic poetry, 1690–1760', in S. J. Connolly, ed., *Kingdoms united? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1999), pp. 78–94. For divisions over strategy see P. Fagan, *An Irish bishop in penal times* (Blackrock, 1993); idem, *Divided loyalties: the question of an oath for Catholics in the eighteenth century* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997). Jacobitism (in the person of the 2nd duke) figures largely in T. Barnard and J. Fenlon, eds., *The dukes of Ormonde, 1610–1745* (Woodbridge, 2000).

[19] S. J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 236, 246–8; idem, 'Varieties of Britishness', in A. Grant and K. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (London and New York, 1995), p. 197.

[20] V. Morley, '"Tá an cruatan ar Sheoirse" – folklore or politics?', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 13 (1998), pp. 112–20; ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture*, ch. 6; L. M. Cullen, 'Patrons, teachers and literacy in Irish: 1700–1850', in M. Daly and D. Dickson, eds., *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 15–44.

[21] J. S. Donnelly Jr, 'The Whiteboy movement, 1761–1765', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1978), p. 30.

[22] Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*, chs. 5–7.

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Turning to the Protestant minority, it has to be said that well before the 1990s Lecky's generally damning view of the landed class (especially the lesser gentry and middlemen) as tyrannical, extravagant, idle, and oppressive to tenants had undergone a certain softening.[23] Recent studies have continued to provide a more rounded picture of landlord activity, several of them by Toby Barnard,[24] whose magnum opus on the Protestant interest is keenly awaited. Others have revealed landlords reinvesting in their estates, building a planned town, and interacting with tenants in ways that belie the 'rack-renting' stereotype.[25] Of course, it can be argued that those who kept records were more likely than their unreconstructed brethren to have been active improvers, so this may distort the overall picture. However, it has been estimated that among peers with sizeable estates in Ireland up to one fifth could be classed as 'improving landlords', similar to the proportion in Britain.[26] Interest in 'improvement' could also be found among the Anglican clergy; while grand juries, corporations, and the Irish parliament were all involved in promoting turnpike roads. Here it may be noted that perhaps one half of Irish Protestants were townspeople: their outlook and political role is beginning to be investigated. Private as well as public support was extended to ventures that combined politico-religious and socio-economic goals, such as the charter school movement that began in the 1730s, the subject of an admirably balanced account.[27] And public and private initiatives helped to produce the remarkable architectural achievements that are the subject of a forthcoming study from Yale by Edward McParland.

On the other hand, signs have also been found of more familiar aspects of elite conduct: making the grand tour; extravagant lifestyles (Leslie Clarkson produces the remarkable estimate that some 168,000 people may have been

[23] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, I, pp. 284–94; cf. Dickson, *New foundations*, chs. 3–4.

[24] See, e.g., T. Barnard, 'The worlds of a Galway squire', in G. Moran, ed., *Galway: history and society* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 271–96; idem, 'Hospitality and display in Protestant Ireland, 1660–1800', in L. Brockliss and D. Eastwood, eds., *A union of multiple identities: the British Isles, c. 1750–1850* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 127–46; idem, 'Public and private uses of wealth in Ireland', in J. Hill and C. Lennon, eds., *Luxury and austerity: Historical Studies XXI* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 66–83. See also T. P. Power, *Land, politics and society in eighteenth-century Tipperary* (Oxford, 1993); L. Proudfoot, *Urban patronage and social authority* (Washington, DC, 1995); idem, 'Landownership and improvement', in idem, ed., *Down: history and society* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 203–37.

[25] P. Friel, *Frederick Trench (1746–1836) and Heywood, Queen's County* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000); D. Cronin, *Robert French of Monivea, 1716–1779* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1995); M. Lambe, *A Tipperary estate: Castle Otway, 1750–1853* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998).

[26] F. G. James, *Lords of the Ascendancy: the Irish House of Lords and its members, 1660–1800* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1995), p. 120.

[27] T. Barnard, 'Improving clergymen, 1660–1760', in A. Ford, J. McGuire, and K. Milne, eds., *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 136–51; D. Broderick, *An early toll road: the Dublin–Dunleer turnpike, 1731–1855* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1996); idem, 'The Irish turnpike road system' (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1998); Hill, *From patriots to unionists*; E. O'Flaherty, 'Urban politics and municipal reform in Limerick, 1723–1762', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 6 (1991), pp. 105–20; K. Milne, *The Irish charter schools, 1730–1830* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997).

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employed, in various ways, in feeding the upper classes), and in the first full-length study, duelling. The number of duels apparently peaked during the 1770s and the 1780s, coinciding with a period of economic expansion, though politics was also becoming more confrontational in that period. The study allows some estimates to be made about whether the practice was, or was not, unduly prevalent in Ireland; the answer seems to be that it was, at least in the last quarter of the century, when Ireland bucked the European trend. (On the other hand, Neal Garnham, studying levels of violence through some surviving assize books, concludes that these were high only by English standards, not by those of Europe or the American colonies.)[28]

At the heart of the code of honour lay the idea of what it was to be a gentleman, and in eighteenth-century Ireland, as in England, the boundaries between social classes were often fluid enough to tempt those on the edges to enhance their standing by asserting their entitlement to duel. The practice was not confined to members of the established church, but drew in, to some extent, Presbyterians, and also Catholics, though during the penal era the latter were constrained by not being legally permitted to bear arms. However, both before and notably after the relaxation of this ban in 1793 Catholics did fight duels, and were disproportionately involved – as perpetrators and as victims – in cases of abduction.[29]

The ethical, religious, and political issues raised by private and collective uses of wealth, and the tensions between expenditure on public or philanthropic ventures and what might be called display, are revealingly discussed by Toby Barnard. Among the points he makes is that in the course of the century Protestants began to be vilified as feckless, idle, extravagant: the very failings that had hitherto been associated with Catholics; while the latter, excluded as they were from public life, began to be praised for their hard work, thrift, and restraint. For Barnard, who has been to the fore in attempting to delineate the mental and material world of 'the Protestant interest' (he has even come up with some estimates of income) the significance of such reversal of stereotypes is that they point towards a blurring of the cultural boundaries, perhaps a certain convergence, between the new and the old proprietors.[30] And it was not merely over matters like hospitality and largesse that the new proprietors

[28] E. FitzGerald, *Lord Kildare's grand tour, 1766–1769* (Cork, 2000); J. Ingamells, *A dictionary of British and Irish travellers in Italy, 1701–1800* (New Haven and London, 1997); L. Clarkson, 'Hospitality, housekeeping and high living in eighteenth-century Ireland', in Hill and Lennon, eds., *Luxury and austerity*, p. 102; J. Kelly, '*That damn'd thing called honour': duelling in Ireland, 1570–1860* (Cork, 1995), pp. 127–8, 170; N. Garnham, 'How violent was eighteenth-century Ireland?', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1997), pp. 391–2.

[29] Kelly, '*That damn'd thing called honour*', pp. 47, 51–2, 63, 277; idem, 'The abduction of women of fortune', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 9 (1994), pp. 25, 38. The crucial importance of honour to one opposition MP is revealed in a compelling biography: idem, *Henry Flood* (Dublin and Notre Dame, IN, 1998), pp. 57–61, 352–4.

[30] Barnard, 'Public and private uses of wealth', pp. 66–7, 69. On 'improving' Catholic farmers see Whelan, 'An underground gentry?', pp. 33–7.

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began, in some degree, to resemble the old. One criticism of the new elite, much found in the Gaelic poetry of the period, is that they were upstarts who lacked the kind of pedigrees associated with gentility.[31] Yet there are signs of convergence even here. Like Catholics, Protestants valued kinship networks, and some resorted to genealogists, even Gaelic genealogists, to have their pedigrees made out.[32] Elsewhere Barnard has suggested the 'gentrification' of Ireland as a means of encapsulating such convergence, and has explored the various ways in which the idea of the gentleman was changing in the course of the century.[33]

Popular culture, too, has come in for scrutiny, with several authors concluding that the gulf between the elite and the rest of the population was less absolute than implied by Lecky. But the role of women is still neglected, despite some editions of contemporary women's writing;[34] nor has the work of artisans and craftsmen received much attention.[35] However, the theatre and politics is wonderfully brought to life in a study of R. B. Sheridan; the subject of politics and art has been opened up, and so has the role of charitable societies in the promotion of music in Dublin.[36] Others have investigated whether Ireland exhibited anything resembling E. P. Thompson's 'moral economy'. Eoin Magennis discovers it in protests about tithes, food shortages, and among election crowds; Roger Wells in reactions to dearth; James Kelly finds it in crowd reaction to certain cases of abduction of women of fortune.[37]

[31] ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture*, pp. 174–5.

[32] T. Barnard, *The abduction of a Limerick heiress* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998), p. 42; K. Simms, 'Charles Lynegar, the ó Luinín family and the study of seanchas', in T. Barnard, D. ó Cróinín, and K. Simms, eds., '*A miracle of learning*' (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 266–83; S. P. Flory, *Fragments of family history* (London, 1896), p. 41.

[33] T. Barnard, 'The gentrification of eighteenth-century Ireland', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 12 (1997), pp. 137–55.

[34] J. S. Donnelly and K. Miller, eds., *Irish popular culture, 1650–1850* (Dublin, 1998), p. xiii; A. C. Elias, ed., *Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington* (2 vols., Athens, GA, 1997); J. Agnew, ed., *The Drennan–McTier letters, 1776–1793* (3 vols., Dublin, 1998–9).

[35] But see on book making and selling, J. W. Phillips, *Printing and bookselling in Dublin, 1670–1800* (Dublin, 1998); M. Pollard, *A dictionary of members of the Dublin book trade, 1550–1800* (London, 2000). Ken Severens is completing a study of artisans in the building trades in Ireland and America.

[36] F. O'Toole, *A traitor's kiss: the life of R. B. Sheridan* (London, 1997); F. Cullen, *Visual politics: the representation of Ireland, 1750–1930* (Cork, 1997); B. Boydell, *Rotunda music in eighteenth-century Dublin* (Blackrock, 1992). See also T. Barnard, 'Art, architecture, artefacts and ascendancy', *Bullán*, 2 (1994), pp. 17–34.

[37] An early application of Thompson's concept to Irish conditions was T. Bartlett, 'An end to moral economy: the Irish militia disturbances of 1793', *Past and Present*, 99 (1983), pp. 41–64. See also E. Magennis, 'Reconsidering the Hearts of Oak disturbances', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31 (1998), pp. 165–87; idem, 'In search of the moral economy', in P. Jupp and E. Magennis, eds., *Crowds in Ireland, c. 1720–1920* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 189–211; R. Wells, 'The Irish famine of 1799–1801', in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth, eds., *Markets and popular protest in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland* (Liverpool, 1996), pp. 163–93; Kelly, 'The abduction of women of fortune'.

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II

All this raises the question of how eighteenth-century Ireland should be characterized. For Lecky, the subject comprised 'this portion of the history of the Empire', a conceptual framework that for most of the twentieth century proved sufficiently broad and ambiguous (McCartney draws attention to the varied meanings with which Lecky used the term 'empire')[38] to accommodate not only the predominant nationalist model, but also republican, unionist, and even Marxist interpretations.[39] However, in recent years Lecky's own understanding of Ireland's place in 'the empire' – completely subordinated to British interests and unable to resist conditions imposed in London; excluded from the colonial trade and subject to commercial legislation that ruined any chance of prosperity – has been significantly modified.[40] Lecky himself accepted that the linen industry was something of an exception to his dire picture. A new study confirms that the bulk of the output was exported (duty free) to Britain and the American colonies, and considers the development of the industry in the light of the proto-industrialization model, which is found to be in some need of modification. Charles McGrath takes up where James McGuire left off to show how relations between the executive and the legislature changed after the Williamite reconquest, with government becoming more answerable to the political nation for expenditure, and the Irish parliament (through the committee of public accounts) able to exert some influence over the administration.[41] The role of the army, like so much else, has been found to be ambiguous: not entirely part of the society in which it was stationed, but not quite an army of occupation either; paradoxically, at the end of the century it became both more Irish in composition and a more effective instrument of repression.[42]

[38] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, I, p. 1; McCartney, *Lecky*, pp. 21, 61.

[39] For Lecky and nationalist historians, see McCartney, *Lecky*, ch. 7; and unionist historians, A. Jackson, 'Irish unionism', in D. G. Boyce and A. O'Day, eds., *The making of modern Irish history: revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 120–40. For a Marxist interpretation drawing (among others) on Lecky, see E. Strauss, *Irish nationalism and British democracy* (London, 1951), preface and pt 1.

[40] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, I, pp. 136, 171–89. Many of the foundations for the revised view were laid by Louis Cullen, summarized in 'Economic development, 1691–1800', in Moody and Vaughan, eds., *A new history of Ireland IV*, pp. 123–95. See also N. Canny, 'Irish resistance to empire?', in L. Stone, ed., *An imperial state at war* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 288–321; S. J. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-century Ireland', in Boyce and O'Day, eds., *Making of modern Irish history*, pp. 15–33.

[41] M. Cohen, *Linen, family and community in Tullylish, County Down 1690–1914* (Dublin, 1997), chs. 1–3; J. McGuire, 'The Irish parliament of 1692', in T. Bartlett and D. Hayton, eds., *Penal era and golden age* (Belfast, 1979), pp. 1–31; C. I. McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth Irish constitution, 1692–1714* (Dublin, 2000); P. McNally, 'Woods halfpence, Carteret, and the government of Ireland, 1723–6', *Irish Historical Studies*, 30 (1997), pp. 354–76.

[42] S. J. Connolly, 'The defence of Protestant Ireland', in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery, eds., *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 246; T. Denman, 'Irish recruitment to the British army, 1660–1815', *Irish Sword*, 20 (1996), pp. 148–66.

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The more nuanced picture is summed up by Tom Bartlett. The amount of British legislation binding Ireland in the eighteenth century was small, and mostly uncontroversial; Irish merchants (including Catholics) did participate in colonial trade, especially the provision trade; and from mid-century they achieved, after some earlier setbacks, a modest prosperity.[43] Far from taking an anti-imperialist stand – a position sometimes assigned them by post-colonial studies[44] – they wanted more trading privileges, and in 1790 Wolfe Tone was keen for Ireland to have her own colonies. Both Protestant and Catholic settlers, it appears, entered eagerly into the slave-holding culture of the West Indies.[45] In any case, as historians of empire have recently stressed, the scope for anti-imperialism was limited before the end of the century, when a greatly expanded empire in the east emerged as a largely unplanned by-product of the revolutionary wars. As for the bulk of the rural population, undoubtedly there was poverty; but people were better fed and healthier than is often supposed, and there was no inexorable process driving the country towards the disaster of the great famine.[46]

Such reinterpretations of long-held assumptions can be unsettling. A champion of the 'Englishness' of British history has argued recently that the United Kingdom's identities are in danger of being dehistoricized by the contention that a British identity was essentially an invention of the eighteenth century: in Ireland, a somewhat similar charge is that 'revisionist' historians have deliberately sought to play down the historic importance and continuity of Irish nationalism.[47] Such conspiracy theories are unconvincing to most practising historians. But what light has recent work shed on eighteenth-century Irish identities? Certainly, within the last twenty years the nationalist model has increasingly been questioned, and while no single agreed alternative has emerged, the field has become a crowded one. In addition to the familiar concepts of 'kingdom' and 'colony' (with its attendant 'colonial', 'settler', or

[43] T. Bartlett, '"This famous island set in a Virginian sea": Ireland in the British empire, 1690–1801', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire II* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 253–75; for insights into mercantile wealth see L. M. Cullen, *The Irish brandy houses of eighteenth-century France* (Dublin, 2000). A serious setback at mid-century was the great frost and famine of 1740–1: D. Dickson, *Arctic Ireland* (Belfast, 1997).

[44] Stephen Howe, working from secondary sources, takes a balanced look at the strengths and (mostly) weaknesses of colonial and post-colonial frameworks for analysing Ireland, past and present (*Ireland and empire: colonial legacies in Irish history and culture* (Oxford, 2000)). For a post-colonial interpretation see T. McLoughlin, *Contesting Ireland: Irish voices against England in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1999).

[45] T. Bartlett, ed., *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone compiled by W. T. Wolfe Tone* (Dublin, 1998), pp. xv–xvi; D. H. Akenson, *If the Irish ran the world: Montserrat, 1630–1730* (Liverpool, 1997), pp. 141–51.

[46] M. Duffy, 'World wide war and British expansion, 1793–1815', in Marshall, ed., *Oxford history of the British empire II*, pp. 184–207; C. ó Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history, 1780–1939* (Oxford, 1994), p. 23.

[47] J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 249–76. For 'revisionism' in Ireland see C. Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1994).

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'Protestant' nationalism), eighteenth-century Ireland has recently appeared in the guise of something like a full-blown 'state',[48] as part of 'ancien régime' Europe (or sharing an 'ancien-regime ideology'),[49] and as part of what may be called the 'new British' history.[50]

The impact of these developments is still too recent to permit any very firm predictions about which, if any, of these alternatives may prove to have staying power. Some conclusions can be drawn. In respect of the 'new British' historiography that has appeared (after something of a delay) in response to the pleas from J. G. A. Pocock for a less Anglo-centric approach, the point has been well made that Irish historians have shown no more disposition than their English, Welsh, or Scots counterparts to abandon their own histories in favour of a larger unit, whether 'three kingdoms', 'Atlantic archipelago', or even 'these islands'.[51] Nevertheless, with various caveats[52] they have been prepared to join in the endeavours to explore these still provisional models.

The findings of such studies have been mixed. It seems abundantly clear that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Ireland was very far from being integrated into a multinational British state.[53] There is rather more acceptance of the capacity of Protestantism to act as a cohesive force. Although Ireland was omitted from Linda Colley's influential study *Britons*, which emphasized the importance of Protestantism (among other things) to an emerging 'British' identity, it has been noted that in Ireland too there was a sense that Protestantism guaranteed civil liberties and economic prosperity, and offered a rallying principle in times of stress.[54] Paradoxically, one sign of convergence emphasized by Lecky, a growth of 'toleration' in the later decades of the century, is now regarded much more sceptically, though the implications

[48] T. Bartlett, somewhat provocatively, in 'From Irish state to British empire', *Etudes Irlandaises* (Spring 1995), pp. 23–37.

[49] See, e.g., Connolly, *Religion, law and power*; Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*; Hill, *From patriots to unionists*; W. Doyle, 'The union in a European context', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 10 (2000), pp. 167–80.

[50] See, e.g., T. Barnard, 'Scotland and Ireland in the later Stewart monarchy', and D. Hayton, 'Constitutional experiments and political expediency, 1689–1725', both in S. Ellis and S. Barber, eds., *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state, 1485–1725* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 250–75, 276–305; Connolly, 'Varieties of Britishness', in Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*; D. Dickson, 'Second city syndrome', S. J. Connolly, 'Unnatural death in four nations', and N. Garnham, 'The criminal law, 1692–1760', all in Connolly, ed., *Kingdoms united?*, pp. 95–108, 200–14, 215–24; J. Smyth, 'Anglo-Irish unionism before 1707', in B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts, eds., *British consciousness and identity, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 301–20.

[51] J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), pp. 601–28; J. McCafferty, review of Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*, and Ellis and Barber, eds., *Conquest and union*, in *Irish Historical Studies*, 31 (1998), pp. 297–9.

[52] Morley, '"Tá an cruatan ar Sheoirse"'.

[53] Barnard, 'Scotland and Ireland in the later Stewart monarchy', pp. 274–5; Hayton, 'Constitutional experiments and political expediency', pp. 304–5.

[54] L. Colley, *Britons* (New Haven and London, 1992), ch. 1; D. Hempton, *Religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland from the glorious revolution to the decline of empire* (Cambridge, 1996), chs. 7–8; Hill, *From patriots to unionists*, chs. 3–4.

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of this changed view have yet to be fully worked out.[55] Even a cursory glance at newspaper sources indicates a preoccupation with the fate of foreign Protestants at Catholic hands, and there is room for systematic consideration of the varieties of anti-Catholicism in Ireland, such as Colin Haydon has provided for England.[56] However, the undoubted importance of Protestantism has been qualified in various ways. Attention has been drawn to the enduring divisions among Irish Protestants, and to changes within denominations. Moreover, to the extent that Protestants saw themselves as a chosen people, they were often uneasily aware of their failure to live up to their responsibilities, either in the conduct of their own lives or by rescuing their Catholic neighbours from spiritual darkness: to this extent Protestantism remained aspirational.[57] Above all, it is clear that a common Protestantism did not necessarily produce closer political ties. There was much support among Irish Protestants for legislative union with England in the early eighteenth century and to a lesser extent thereafter; but when government decided to act at the end of the 1790s it was not on account of a shared Protestant identity.[58] Nor did Protestantism automatically induce willingness to embrace or be accorded the label 'British'.[59]

This raises the question of the relationship between ethnicity and identity, an issue that has hitherto enjoyed a higher profile in respect of medieval and early modern Ireland.[60] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there is evidence of an ethnic dimension in what ó Ciosáin refers to as 'status ideology'. Gaelic genealogists were apt to reassure their mostly Gaelic and Old English clients of their 'Milesian' (aristocratic) descent as opposed to that of the Fir Bolg (peasantry). In a work of meticulous scholarship, Bernadette Cunningham notes of Geoffrey Keating, author of the historical work *Foras feasa ar Eirinn* (1634), that he deflected English and Old English criticisms levelled against the

[55] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, II, pp. 181–217. Influential for the revised view was R. K. Donovan, 'The military origins of the Catholic relief programme of 1778', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 79–102. See Dickson, *New foundations*, pp. 147–55; T. Bartlett, *The fall and rise of the Irish nation: the Catholic question, 1690–1830* (Dublin, 1992), ch. 6.

[56] See G. McCoy, '"Patriots, Protestants and papists"', *Bullán*, 1 (1994), pp. 108–9; C. Haydon, 'Anti-Catholicism, xenophobia and national identity', in T. Claydon and I. McBride, eds., *Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 33–52.

[57] Hempton, *Religion and popular culture*, p. 174; Barnard, 'Protestantism, ethnicity and Irish identities', pp. 208–12; T. Claydon and I. McBride, 'The trials of the chosen peoples', in idem and idem, eds., *Protestantism and national identity*, pp. 13–14, 26–9.

[58] J. Kelly, 'The origins of the act of union', *Irish Historical Studies*, 25 (1987), pp. 236–63; J. Smyth, '"Like amphibious animals": Irish Protestants, ancient Britons, 1691–1707', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 785–97; idem, 'Anglo-Irish unionism before 1707'; J. Hill, 'Ireland without union', in J. Robertson, ed., *A union for empire: political thought and the union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 271–96. The unionist dimension is played down in N. L. York, *Neither kingdom nor nation: the Irish quest for constitutional rights, 1698–1800* (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 30–2.

[59] Hayton, 'Constitutional experiments', p. 304; Barnard, 'Protestantism, ethnicity and Irish identities', p. 235.

[60] See, e.g., S. Ellis, 'Nationalist historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds in the late middle ages', in Brady, ed., *Interpreting Irish history*, pp. 161–80.

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Gaelic Irish by directing them away from the nobility towards the 'unfree clans of Ireland' who might display 'evil customs'. Kinship was a key preoccupation for Keating, but ethnicity was secondary to his purpose of integrating Gaelic and Old English peoples into a shared model of an Irish (Catholic) kingdom. Keating's history, with its ease among Old Irish language sources that only a century later posed problems even for Irish-speakers, depicted a realm whose kings agreed, at inauguration, to respect divine and Irish law. The work attracted Protestant attention. Even before it got into print (1723) some manuscript versions had cloaked Keating's ancient Catholic kingdom in neutral Christian garb, and (thus clad) the work continued through the century to dictate 'what the canon of Irish history should be'.[61] For Protestants in general, it has been suggested of the period 1660–1760 that their ideas of ethnicity were mutable and muddled, and the realities even more so. Multiple identities were possible.[62]

The subject is further explored in Colin Kidd's study *British identities before nationalism*, an example of the new British history at its best, going beyond mere contextualization to probe the way in which a common political language could be transformed in different parts of Britain, Ireland, and the American colonies. Kidd's starting point is that in the eighteenth century ethnic identities tended to be subordinated to the prescriptive legitimacy of institutions. For English commentators the key issue concerning the various groups inhabiting the British Isles was their role in respect of the 'free' English constitution. The Anglo-Saxons were accorded primacy, but Kidd suggests that it was common in England to celebrate the shared libertarian values of all non-Roman, northern European 'Gothic' peoples, including Celts. Given the deference still paid to biblical monogenesis, the emphasis was less on innate racial difference than on historical processes of differentiation.[63] Drawing on his own and others' findings, Kidd suggests that the Anglo-Irish identified primarily with the English motherland, but that at different times and for different purposes they also claimed identity with the Old English, who had cultivated their own 'free' institutions. And although apt to denigrate the Gaelic Irish, the Anglo-Irish were not above borrowing (selectively) from the Gaelic past, particularly in church history.[64] We have recently been reminded that the foundations for

[61] ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture*, ch. 10; B. Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), pp. 108–16, 142–3, 152–3, 207, 218, and ch. 4.

[62] T. Barnard, 'Identities, ethnicity and tradition among Irish dissenters, *c.* 1650–1750', in K. Herlihy, ed., *The Irish dissenting tradition* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1995), pp. 29–48; idem, 'Protestantism, ethnicity and Irish identities', pp. 210, 235.

[63] C. Kidd, *British identities before nationalism: ethnicity and nationhood in the Atlantic world, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999). This otherwise excellent work lacks a bibliography.

[64] Ibid., pp. 168–81. Instructive on ethnicity and institutions is S. Mandelbrote, 'The bible and national identity', in Claydon and McBride, eds., *Protestantism and national identity*, pp. 157–81. An early exploration of Irish ethnicity and identity was J. Leerssen, *Mere Irish & Fíor Ghael* (Amsterdam, 1986); recent studies include C. O'Halloran, 'Antiquarian debate and ethnic identity in Scotland and Ireland', in S. J. Connolly, R. Houston and R. Morris, eds., *Conflict, identity and economic development* (Preston, 1995), pp. 135–47; Smyth, '"Like amphibious animals"';

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a 'Protestant' St Patrick and early Irish church were laid in the seventeenth century. The saint's status in the 1700s has been neglected, but a careful study by Bridget McCormack examines the context in which mid-century Protestants could select 'Patrick' as an archetypal Irishman to represent them in dialogue with 'George'.[65] Others, too, were creative in using the past, with 'Hanoverian' Catholics (drawing on Keating) portraying pre-Norman Ireland as 'the Throne of *Liberty*'.[66] However, not the least valuable part of Kidd's study is to suggest ways in which a culture of high expectations associated with the Gothic heritage could turn to disillusion and disappointment, especially when coming into conflict with the practicalities of imperial reform from the 1760s onwards.[67]

The appearance of the 'ancien régime' model in the Irish context has proved rather more contentious. Borrowed, of course, from European history, its value as an explanatory apparatus in respect of urban corporations in England and Ireland had already suggested itself before the appearance of J. C. D. Clark's *English society*, which, however, provided an important stimulus.[68] Clark's claims that eighteenth-century England constituted an *ancien régime* received a very mixed response in England, but the work contributed to a renewed interest in ideology and in the confessional state. Historians who applied the model to Irish history have stressed the vertical ties of patronage and clientship, the importance of confessionalism, and the presence of corporatist structures and values.[69] Although much more remains to be done by way of direct comparison with other European societies, viewing Ireland from a European perspective has served to highlight various structural and ideological parallels, such as those between Irish Patriots and their anti-absolutist counterparts in France or the Netherlands.[70] This has prompted further questioning of the

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E. Magennis, 'Walter Harris and the writing of *Fiction unmasked*', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 13 (1998), pp. 86–111; R. Sullivan, 'John Toland's Druids: a mythopoeia of Celtic identity', *Bullán*, 4 (1998), pp. 19–41.

[65] J. McCafferty, 'St Patrick for the Church of Ireland', *Bullán*, 3 (1997–8), pp. 87–101; B. McCormack, *Perceptions of St Patrick in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), ch. 3.

[66] Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*, pp. 122–3; Kidd, *British identities before nationalism*, pp. 157–8.

[67] Kidd, *British identities before nationalism*, ch. 10; J. P. Greene, 'Empire and identity', in Marshall, ed., *The Oxford history of the British empire II*, pp. 228–9.

[68] J. Redlich and F. W. Hirst, *The history of local government in England* (2nd edn, London, 1970), pp. 3–4; J. Hill, 'The politics of privilege: Dublin corporation and the Catholic question, 1792–1823', *Maynooth Review*, 7 (1982), pp. 19–21; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985).

[69] Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, ch. 4; Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*, ch. 2; Hill, *From patriots to unionists*, ch. 1; idem, 'Corporatist ideology and practice in Ireland, 1660–1800', in S. J. Connolly, ed., *Political ideas in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), pp. 64–82.

[70] See, e.g., J. Leerssen, 'Anglo-Irish patriotism and its European context', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 3 (1988), pp. 7–24; Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*, ch. 2; Doyle, 'The union in a European context'.

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'nationalist' model, and encouraged closer study of the nature and variety of Irish Patriotisms.[71]

Various reservations have been expressed. It has been suggested that *ancien régime* might turn out to be as constricting as some now find 'colony'.[72] But given the almost infinite variety of the old regime in Europe,[73] the danger may lie rather in the all-embracing nature of the phenomenon. In any case, it has been conceded that Ireland as *ancien régime* is not necessarily incompatible with Ireland as 'colony'; perhaps what made Ireland distinctive was the very ambiguity of its status: 'too physically close and too similar to Great Britain to be treated as a colony, and too different to be a region of the metropolitan centre'.[74] Colin Kidd detects elements of 'colonial regnalism' as well as ancient constitutionalism and gentry patriotism in Ireland, and compares the construction of Anglo-Irish identity with the ways in which Hispanic colonists borrowed from native American cultures to manufacture creole identities for themselves.[75] Moreover, if historians are now more likely to pause before 'nationalism' *tout court*, it is still possible to find a well-argued defence of 'national consciousness',[76] as well as 'national feeling', 'national allegiances', and 'proto-nationalism' (in the late eighteenth century).[77] And some have simply reaffirmed the colonial and nationalist models.[78]

In view of the above, the place of Ireland in British imperial policy might have been expected to be a lively field, but it is comparatively neglected. Martyn Powell argues that the idea of governing Ireland through a constantly residing viceroy, beginning with Lord Townshend in 1767, had been the subject of more thought on the part of government than allowed by Bartlett.[79]

[71] J. G. McCoy, 'Court ideology in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland' (MA thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1990); idem, 'Local political culture in the Hanoverian empire: the case of Ireland' (PhD thesis, Oxford, 1993); Hill, *From patriots to unionists*, chs. 3–6; P. McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997), ch. 8. The transition from patriotism to nationalism is explored in J. Leerssen, *Remembrance and imagination* (Cork, 1996), pp. 8–32.

[72] Barnard, 'Farewell to Old Ireland', p. 925.

[73] Doyle, 'The union in a European context', pp. 167–72.

[74] S. J. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-century Ireland', in Boyce and O'Day, eds., *The making of modern Irish history*, p. 26.

[75] Kidd, *British identities before nationalism*, pp. 177–81. See also N. Canny, 'Identity formation in Ireland: the emergence of the Anglo-Irish', in N. Canny and A. Pagden, eds., *Colonial identity in the Atlantic world, 1500–1800* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 195–6.

[76] P. Kelly, 'Nationalism and the contemporary historians of the Jacobite war in Ireland', in O'Dea and Whelan, eds., *Nations and nationalisms*, pp. 89–102.

[77] Claydon and McBride, 'The trials of the chosen peoples', p. 8; Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p. 218; Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant kingdom*, pp. 25–6.

[78] See, e.g., the conclusion of Whelan's 'An underground gentry?', p. 68, which seems little related to the previous argument; S. Murphy, 'Charles Lucas, Catholicism and nationalism', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 8 (1993), pp. 83–102. Accepting the existence of Protestant nationalism, Bartlett finds it 'flawed' ('Protestant nationalism in eighteenth-century Ireland', in O'Dea and Whelan, eds., *Nations and nationalisms*, p. 79).

[79] M. J. Powell, 'The reform of the undertaker system', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31 (1998), pp. 19–36; T. Bartlett, 'The Townshend viceroyalty', in Bartlett and Hayton, eds., *Penal era and golden age*, pp. 88–112.

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Patrick McNally's analysis of the structure of politics from 1714 to the early 1730s is a welcome addition to the still relatively neglected first half of the century: Lecky's precedent in this respect is slowly being addressed. It complements the work of David Hayton, and is particularly useful in identifying the different types of patronage available to English- and Irish-based politicians. The purge of the Tories after the Hanoverian accession is considered, although there is less attention to the phenomenon of party outside parliament, or discussion of what may have constituted the appeal of the Tories in Ireland.[80] The following decades are discussed by Eoin Magennis, who endorses Hayton's finding that for the most part ministerial attitudes towards Ireland were marked by pragmatism.[81] A study of the Irish House of Lords has made a welcome start in opening up the subject, but it is mainly a social study of the resident peerage, where it complements the work of Malcomson; it has little to say about how the house was managed, or the role of the lords in 'virtual representation'.[82] For such matters much is expected of the forthcoming *History of parliament*, edited by E. M. Johnston.[83]

The subjects of James's study inhabited worlds very different from those of the bulk of the Irish people; that much Lecky had prepared readers for. However, what emerges in recent work is the extent to which Irish society was not simply divided into the haves and have-nots, but contained infinite gradations; many, perhaps most, being dictated by local circumstances, and only slowly, in the course of the century, being affected by an expanding public sphere. The remoteness and provincial character of the country is borne out by studies of reading; of towns; even of the Enlightenment.[84]

Such studies illustrate the importance of the painstaking work of uncovering the nature of community, and of being open to a wealth of distinctive local detail.[85] At a different level, such an approach seems to call for comparative

[80] McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, chs. 4–5; D. Hayton, 'Walpole and Ireland', in J. Black, ed., *Britain in the age of Walpole* (London 1984), pp. 95–119.

[81] E. Magennis, *The Irish political system, 1740–1765* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000); D. Hayton, 'The Stanhope/Sunderland ministry and the repudiation of Irish parliamentary independence', *English Historical Review*, 113 (1998), pp. 610–36; idem, 'British whig ministers and the Irish question, 1714–1725', in S. Taylor, J. Connors and C. Jones, eds., *Hanoverian Britain and empire* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 37–64.

[82] James, *The Irish House of Lords*; A. P. W. Malcomson, *The pursuit of the heiress* (Antrim, 1982).

[83] 6 vols., Ulster Historical Foundation: to include biographies of MPs, surveys of constituencies, etc.

[84] G. Long, ed., *Books beyond the pale* (Dublin, 1996); T. Barnard, 'Reading in eighteenth-century Ireland', in B. Cunningham and M. Kennedy, eds., *The experience of reading* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 60–77; Dickson, 'Second city syndrome'; C. Leighton, 'The enlightened religion of Robert Clayton', *Studia Hibernica*, 29 (1995–7), p. 163. Leighton's study concerns the English, rather than the French, Enlightenment; for the latter see G. Gargett and G. Sheridan, eds., *Ireland and the French Enlightenment* (London, 1999). The domestic life of an Anglican bishop at mid-century is wonderfully illuminated by M. L. Legg, ed., *The Synge letters* (Dublin, 1996).

[85] In addition to local history journals, the county history series (in progress) is one vehicle for such works: recent eighteenth-century contributions not already noted include L. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics', and C. Buttimer, 'Gaelic literature and contemporary life in Cork', both

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work that will shed light on the nature and extent of Irish particularism. There are welcome signs that this is taking place. In respect of economic thought, Patrick Kelly perceptively analyses the ways in which Irish (mainly Anglican) thinkers sought to adapt the general principles of British mercantilism to Irish conditions, and (in Berkeley's *The Querist*) produced important theoretical advances.[86]

In church history, although the established Church of Ireland shared theological foundations with the Church of England, and certain elements were capable of displaying a 'three kingdoms' outlook,[87] there were also distinctive features: the church has been described as 'a curious hybrid in which the confidence of Establishment mingled with the insecurities more characteristic of a sect'. Some churchmen, such as Archbishop King, regarded the church in corporatist terms, enjoying effective self-government but working with the state for the common good.[88] In a country where the majority of the population was Catholic, the Church of Ireland – hampered by small numbers and limited endowments – faced an Anglicizing mission that had no parallel in England. Recent writers continue to undermine the stereotype of a torpid, unduly worldly establishment. Early in the century efforts at religious reformation were directed as much at Protestants as at Catholics; this began to change in the 1730s, as it emerged that the penal laws were producing only limited conversions.[89] Scott Mandelbrote provides insights into why Welsh Anglicans were so much more successful than their counterparts in Ireland or

in P. O'Flanagan and C. Buttimer, eds., *Cork: history and society* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 535–84, 585–653; D. Dickson, 'Derry's backyard: the barony of Inishowen, 1650–1800', in W. Nolan, L. Ronayne and M. Dunlevy, eds., *Donegal: history and society* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 405–46; J. Kelly, 'The politics of the "Protestant ascendancy"', in G. Moran, ed., *Galway: history and society* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 271–96, 229–70; T. Barnard, 'The world of goods and County Offaly', and A. P. W. Malcomson, 'Laurence Parsons, 2nd earl of Rosse', both in W. Nolan and T. P. O'Neill, eds., *Offaly: history and society* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 371–92, 439–83; R. Hylton, 'Portarlington and the Huguenots in Laois', in P. G. Lane and W. Nolan, eds., *Laois: history and society* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 415–34. Another vehicle is the pamphlet series 'Maynooth Studies in Local History' (general editor R. Gillespie): see (e.g.) items listed in n. 25 above.

[86] P. Kelly, 'The politics of political economy in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland', in Connolly, ed., *Political ideas in eighteenth-century Ireland*, pp. 105–29. Berkeley is the subject of an important study by D. Berman, *George Berkeley: idealism and the man* (Oxford, 1994).

[87] D. Hayton, 'The high church party in the Irish convocation, 1703–1713', in H. Real and H. Stöver-Leidig, eds., *Reading Swift* (Münster, 1998), pp. 117–40. See also S. Connolly, 'Reformers and high-flyers: the post-revolution church' in Ford, McGuire, and Milne, eds., *As by law established*, pp. 155–60.

[88] R. Eccleshall, 'Anglican political thought after the revolution of 1688', in D. G. Boyce, R. Eccleshall, and V. Geoghegan, eds., *Political thought in Ireland since the seventeenth century* (London and New York, 1993), p. 37; P. O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin and the constitution in church and state* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), pp. 333–4.

[89] D. Hayton, 'Did Protestantism fail in early eighteenth-century Ireland?', in Ford, McGuire, and Milne, eds., *As by law established*, pp. 166–86; Milne, *The Irish charter schools*, ch. 1. Obstacles to missionary success are considered in J. Falvey, 'The Church of Ireland episcopate in the eighteenth century', *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, 8 (1993), pp. 103–14.

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Scotland in making use of vernacular languages to promote Protestantism.[90] Despite its failure to wean the masses from Catholicism, the Church of Ireland became more self-reliant as the century progressed, for instance by producing its own catechisms, rather than relying on English ones.[91]

The dissenting churches too, often neglected, have been the subject of attention, with notable contributions from Richard Greaves, who considers which of the seventeenth-century sects survived into the 1700s, and why; he differs from Phil Kilroy in seeing superior organization, rather than leadership and the loyalty of the original immigrant families, as the key to survival of the Quakers and the Scots Presbyterians. Nevertheless, the latter faced many problems in Ireland, aspiring as they did to some sort of quasi-established status; David Hayton argues that the marked decline in Presbyterian representation in the Irish parliament early in the century had less to do with the new sacramental test than with a fall in the Presbyterian element in the Ulster landed class.[92] The 'fissiparous culture' of Irish Presbyterianism is well brought out in Ian McBride's fine study; and David Hempton highlights the way in which local circumstances affected Wesley's Irish missions: instead of communicating directly with the poor, Wesley worked through the gentry, which reduced the impact of Methodism in Ireland.[93]

For the Catholic Church new diocesan histories are beginning to appear, and the history of Catholic education is receiving more attention. Before the 1790s Irish priests had necessarily to seek their education and sometimes their careers abroad: individuals were caught up in the intellectual challenges of the French Enlightenment and the Revolution. Thus the founding of a national seminary at Maynooth (1795), the subject of a balanced reassessment, was a significant step in the changing, but still anomalous, relations between the Catholic Church and the state.[94]

Ireland shared with England a legal system based mainly on the common

[90] Mandelbrote, 'The bible and national identity'. See also T. Barnard, 'Protestants and the Irish language', *Journal of Ecclesiatical History*, 44 (1993), pp. 243–72. For Anglican patronage of the Irish language see A. Harrison, *The dean's friend: Anthony Raymond, 1675–1726* (Blackrock, 1999).

[91] I. Green, 'The necessary knowledge of the principles of religion', in Ford, McGuire, and Milne, eds., *As by law established*, pp. 74–6.

[92] R. Greaves, *God's other children: Protestant non-conformists, 1660–1700* (Stanford, 1997), p. 6; P. Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy in Ireland, 1660–1714* (Cork, 1994); D. Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation', in K. Herlihy, ed., *The politics of Irish dissent* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997) pp. 69–71. See also K. Herlihy, ed., *Propagating the word of Irish dissent* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998).

[93] I. McBride, *Scripture politics* (Oxford, 1998), pt 1; Hempton, *Religion and political culture*, pp. 153–4.

[94] L. Swords, *The diocese of Achonry, 1689–1815* (Blackrock, 1997); J. Kelly, 'The impact of the penal laws', in J. Kelly and D. Keogh, eds., *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), p. 174; D. Keogh, *Edmund Rice* (Dublin, 1996); V. J. McNally, *Reform, revolution and reaction: Archbishop Troy and the Catholic Church in Ireland, 1787–1817* (Lanham, MD, 1995); T. O'Connor, *An Irish theologian in Enlightenment France* (Dublin, 1995); P. J. Corish, *Maynooth College, 1795–1995* (Dublin, 1995); C. Leighton, 'Gallicanism and the veto controversy', in R. V. Comerford et al., eds., *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 135–58.

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law. In view of the loss of most of the records, the very possibility of Irish legal history has often seemed doubtful. Nial Osborough, who for long appeared to be working on the subject almost alone, has now brought out a selected edition of his writings, most of the essays dating only from the 1990s. The scope is astonishing – from the brehon laws to the 1920s – and much has at least a passing relevance to the eighteenth century. An essay on the Irish law reports suggests that the desirability of committing Irish judicial decisions to print was frustrated by a conviction that this status should only be accorded to the decisions of the courts in England, home of the common law. Hence Irish law reports circulated in manuscript and were only printed in the 1780s, by which time there was greater confidence in the integrity of an indigenous Irish legal tradition. The emergence of a distinct legal culture is also the subject of a new study of the criminal law, although the main emphasis here is on the first half of the century.[95]

III

1790 to 1800 was a crucial decade for Ireland, witnessing as it did the rebellion of 1798, a marked increase in polarization on sectarian lines, and the act of union. To evaluate the changing perspectives on these developments it may help to go back to Lecky. Striving, as usual, for a balanced view (though hampered by parallels he kept seeing between the 1790s and the agrarian agitation of his own day) Lecky was unsympathetic to plans for rebellion. However, he was inclined to blame the government for failing to complete the process, begun in 1792–3, of extending political rights to Catholics: a policy which, he believed, by that time had broad Protestant support. He accepted that the United Irishmen had a non-sectarian political agenda, but considered that their allies, the Defenders, represented the uneducated Catholic masses, who were alienated from their (Protestant) landlords and lacked ideas beyond the traditional agrarian goals of the poor. Defender support gave the rebellion some chance of success, but increased the danger that it would take the form of 'a religious war'. Military repression in 1797–8 ensured that this was what happened. Following the arrest of the United Irish leaders, the rebellion in Leinster was left to 'helpless mobs', prone to commit sectarian atrocities.[96]

Lecky's account avoided the more obvious biases contained in loyalist, Catholic, and nationalist versions of the rebellion,[97] and his influence was still apparent in what became a standard work on the subject, Thomas Pakenham's *Year of liberty* (1969). However, recent work reveals various deficiencies in those accounts. For instance, we now know more about popular culture. ó Ciosáin finds 'substantial literacy' among males by the late eighteenth century; with

[95] W. N. Osborough, 'Puzzles from Irish law reporting history', in idem, *Studies in Irish legal history* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1999), pp. 193–212; N. Garnham, 'The criminal law 1692–1760', in Connolly, ed., *Kingdoms united?*, pp. 215–24.

[96] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, III, pp. 212–24; IV, pp. 38–65, 118–22, 325–95.

[97] See, e.g., A. Kinsella, '1798 claimed for Catholics', in D. Keogh and N. Furlong, eds., *The mighty wave: the 1798 rebellion in Wexford* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1996), pp. 139–55.

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Dublin (Catholic) printers supplying the rural book market the effect was 'culturally anglicising but politically catholicising'. The Jacobitism already noted percolated down to the lower classes through cheap editions of works such as Hugh Reily's *Ireland's case briefly stated* (1695), which displayed little interest in Gaelic culture but contained an anti-Protestant edge. In such ways the idea of dispossession, too, spread down the social scale. By the end of the century reading rooms, aimed at the skilled artisan class, were beginning to appear, and the practice of reading aloud helped bridge the gap between oral and literary culture. It is claimed that as early as 1792–3 the activities of the Catholic committee in support of political rights were having a politicizing effect on Catholics from the lower classes.[98] This calls in question Lecky's description of the Defenders as drawn from a class 'sunk in the deepest ignorance', and provides a context for David Dickson's analysis of the impact of the works of Tom Paine, and other studies that demonstrate the flow of printed material from Dublin and Belfast, and the demand for newspapers. There is general agreement that the United Irishmen were excellent communicators, using a variety of genres including ballads, oaths, and catechisms, and tailoring their message to local circumstances.[99]

Most accounts accept that the content of United Irish thought was not particularly original, though it has recently been claimed that one of the most sophisticated of the radicals, Arthur O'Connor, created a distinctively Irish language of radical democracy from French sources, local political traditions, and English and Scottish political economy. One perhaps surprising element in the thought of O'Connor and certain other Anglican radicals, neglected in most studies, was a regnal one, centred on the potential of an Irish 'imperial crown' for transforming Anglo-Irish relations and regenerating monarchy and aristocracy through universal suffrage. This may suggest that the United Irishmen and the Grattanite Whigs had more in common than is usually thought. There was also a Gaelic cultural element in United Irish thought, but most historians consider that it was fairly marginal.[100]

Although it is usual to refer to 'the rebellion of 1798', the two main centres of action were discrete, one in the south-east, chiefly Wexford and a band of counties around Dublin; the other in the north-east, in Antrim and Down.

[98] ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture*, pp. 38, 56, 102–6; J. Killen, 'The book collections of the Belfast SPK', in Cunningham and Kennedy, eds., *Experience of reading*, pp. 99–108; J. Smyth, 'Defenderism and the Catholic question', and L. M. Cullen, 'The political structures of the Defenders', both in H. Gough and D. Dickson, eds., *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Blackrock, 1990), pp. 109–13, 117–38.

[99] Lecky, *History of Ireland*, III, p. 223; D. Dickson, 'Paine and Ireland', and K. Whelan, 'The United Irishmen and popular culture', both in D. Dickson, D. Keogh, and K. Whelan, eds., *The United Irishmen* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 135–50, 269–96; B. MacDonald, 'Distribution of the *Northern Star*', *Ulster Local Studies*, 18 (1997), pp. 54–68; N. Curtin, *The United Irishmen* (Oxford, 1994), ch. 7.

[100] A. O'Connor, *The state of Ireland*, ed. J. Livesey (Dublin, 1998), pp. 2–3, 107–9; H. Goto, 'The dawn of anti-imperialism: Irish radicals and their liberal project for modernisation of Ireland in the 1780s–90s' (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1998), chs. 5–6; M. Thuente, *The harp re-strung* (New York, 1994).

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Much recent work on the rebellion tends to focus on one or the other, and the treatment is rather different.

For the rebellion in the south, new monographs have appeared for three of the five most affected Leinster counties, Wexford, Wicklow, and Kildare. All make considerable use of accounts by participants as well as loyalist and official sources, and both Ruán O'Donnell and Liam Chambers devote chapters to setting the local scene. All three draw attention to the fact that on the eve of the rebellion their county was relatively prosperous: these were far from being the poorest regions of the country. All note the presence of a liberal element among the local Protestant gentry, which suggests that (even when such Protestants did not support the rebellion) rebels may have felt that the reformist agenda had some sort of support in establishment circles.[101] All three differ from Lecky and Pakenham and follow Cullen and Whelan[102] in emphasizing the political, rather than the agrarian, dynamics of the rebellion. The rising, it is argued, was not reactive: the rebels in these counties were not, in general, goaded into action by government or loyalist repression. Although the failure of the rebels to take Dublin at the start of the rebellion was a serious setback, the Leinster rebels did not lack a military strategy (some of them had military experience): the aim was to hold a ring of counties round the capital until the French arrived. Charges of sectarianism have been much exaggerated: when atrocities occurred they were usually the result of a breakdown in rebel discipline.[103] Overall, the rebellion represented a more serious threat to government than has been acknowledged, and it is argued that the threat of renewed rebellion remained formidable at any rate down to the period of Emmet's rebellion in 1803.[104]

While these correctives have been generally endorsed, some reservations have been expressed. The presence of a land reform component in some United Irish propaganda raises the question as to how far the 'political' dimension of the rebellion can be separated from the 'agrarian', and whether the preoccupations of the lower orders forced the leaders into new directions.[105] The phenomenon of forced baptisms casts doubt on the absence of a sectarian

[101] D. Gahan, *The people's rising: Wexford, 1798* (Dublin, 1995), ch. 1; R. O'Donnell, *The rebellion in Wicklow, 1798* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998), ch. 1; L. Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare, 1790–1803* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998), chs. 1–2.

[102] L. Cullen, 'The 1798 rebellion in Wexford', in K. Whelan, ed., *Wexford: history and society* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 248–95; K. Whelan, 'Politicisation in Co. Wexford', in Gough and Dickson, eds., *Ireland and the French Revolution*, pp. 156–78.

[103] Gahan, *People's rising*, pp. 7, 81–5, 101, 131–3, 169; O'Donnell, *Rebellion in Wicklow*, pp. 164–72; Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare*, pp. 12, 101.

[104] Gahan, *People's rising*, pp. 119–20; Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare*, ch. 7; R. O'Donnell, *Aftermath: post-revolutionary insurgency in Wicklow, 1799–1803* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 2000), pp. 1–2, ch. 5; T. Graham, 'An union of power', in Dickson, Keogh and Whelan, eds., *The United Irishmen*, pp. 244–55. P. Weber, *The United Irishmen and Hamburg* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997), ch. 3, complements M. Elliott, *Partners in revolution* (New Haven and London, 1982), in stressing the crucial significance for the rebels of prospective French intervention.

[105] See I. McBride's penetrating review article, 'Reclaiming the rebellion', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31 (1999), pp. 395–410; O'Donnell, *Rebellion in Wicklow*, p. 49; J. Quinn, 'The United Irishmen and social reform', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31 (1998), pp. 188–201.

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dimension on the rebel side, and the use of 'black propaganda' – exaggerating the local prevalence and nature of Orangeism so as to terrify Catholics into seeking United Irish protection – suggests that United Irishmen were occasionally prepared to compromise their own non-sectarian principles.[106] In certain works a tendency to portray the United Irishmen as visionaries whose ideals remain 'an inspiration for the 1990s'[107] sits uneasily beside evidence of anti-Catholicism in the writings of the best-known United Irishman, Wolfe Tone, and among various Presbyterian elements.[108] There is much to be said, as Nancy Curtin has suggested, for regarding the United Irishmen as more like a political party than a movement representative of an entire nation.[109] As for the severe strictures delivered by some authors on the shortcomings of Pakenham's history ('crude reductionism'; echo of 'loyalist historians'), these may be understandable given the recent advances – a new edition of *The year of liberty* contains only minor changes from that of 1969 – but it remains the only book to attempt a detailed account of the entire rebellion, north and south, in something like equal measure; it does not play down the horror of the rebellion; and it strives to be impartial.[110] For the quality of the writing, too, *The year of liberty* remains in a class apart.

It is difficult, too, not to agree with Chambers that the attention devoted to the radicals in the 1790s has tended to obscure those on the conservative or loyalist side.[111] The counter-revolutionary as well as the reformist tendencies of the Catholic Church have been well brought out by Dáire Keogh, but only one full-length biography of any member of the Irish administration has appeared in recent years.[112] That is unfortunate, particularly in view of a claim that the inclusive United Irish project was derailed by 'a sectarianism deliberately injected by government'.[113] Certainly the government decided, in time, and

[106] L. M. Cullen, 'The politics of clerical radicalism', in L. Swords, ed., *Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter: the clergy and 1798* (Blackrock, 1997), pp. 291–5; O'Donnell, *Rebellion in Wicklow*, pp. 47–8.

[107] K. Whelan, *Fellowship of freedom* (Cork, 1998), pp. ix, 121; idem, 'Reinterpreting the 1798 rebellion in Wexford', in Keogh and Furlong, eds., *The mighty wave*, p. 9.

[108] T. W. Moody, R. B. McDowell, and C. J. Woods, eds., *The writings of T. W. Tone* (Oxford, 1998), I, pp. 213, 313–4; McBride, *Scripture politics*, pp. 153–5.

[109] Curtin, *United Irishmen*, pp. 284–5.

[110] Whelan, 'Reinterpreting the 1798 rebellion', p. 30; D. Gahan, 'The military planning of the 1798 rebellion', in Keogh and Furlong, eds., *The mighty wave*, p. 97; T. Pakenham, *The year of liberty* (rev. edn, London, 1997).

[111] Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare*, p. 12. For some attempts to redress the balance, see the new edition (with large index) of R. Musgrave, *Memoirs of the different rebellions in Ireland* (4th edn, Fort Wayne, IN, 1995); A. Blackstock, *An ascendancy army: the Irish yeomanry, 1796–1834* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998); J. Kelly, 'Conservative political thought', in Connolly, ed., *Political ideas in eighteenth-century Ireland*, pp. 185–220; N. Curtin, 'The magistracy and counter-revolution in Ulster, 1795–1798', in J. Smyth, ed., *Revolution, counter-revolution and union in Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 39–54.

[112] D. Keogh, *The French disease: the Catholic church and radicalism, 1790–1800* (Dublin, 1993); A. Kavanaugh, *John Fitzgibbon, earl of Clare* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1997).

[113] Whelan, 'The origins of the Orange Order', *Bullán*, 2 (1996), p. 19. The author, whose research has illuminated so much of eighteenth-century Ireland, concedes later that the causes were more complex (ibid., p. 22).

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with various misgivings, to augment some yeomanry corps with Orangemen,[114] but until more detailed studies have been made of Irish loyalism such judgements seem unduly reductive.

Accounts of the northern rebellion by contrast, while confirming the seriousness of the threat posed by the rebellion, have been more inclined to emphasize internal factors that militated against the realization of the inclusive ideology of the rebels. Thus Nancy Curtin, whose account of the northern rebellion is the most searching to date, argues that the United Irishmen overestimated their ability to forge a nation from the many different constituents of class and creed mobilized by their propaganda. In his study of the origins of the northern United Irishmen, which examines the influence of seventeenth-century English republicanism, Presbyterianism, and freemasonry, A. T. Q. Stewart concludes that republicans represented a small minority, who never came to look sympathetically on Catholicism. In any case, Ulster freemasons could take the loyalist as well as the radical side.[115] Stressing the inseparability of religion and politics for the different varieties of Presbyterianism, Ian McBride argues that Presbyterian political radicalism peaked in the early 1790s, and was always fragile and contingent, depending on the assumption that the Catholic threat was a spent force. As this assumption was called in question during the 1790s, and as government authorized the dragooning of Ulster, many Presbyterians drew back from the revolutionary brink: and contrary to the received view, some Armagh Presbyterians, mostly from the poorer classes, were among the early adherents of the Orange Order.[116]

The Orange Order, like the Defenders, originated in County Armagh, in parts of which settlement patterns created by plantation, with distinct communities of Catholics, Dissenters, and Anglicans, still retained much of their raw integrity. Orangeism's earliest phase, when it was transformed from a local into a national movement, still requires much elucidation.[117] For Louis Cullen the Order originated essentially as a by-product of electioneering, gentry approved and inspired; others have broadened the examination to relations in general between landlords and the lower orders, Catholic and Protestant.[118] One such study, by the late Frank Wright, analysed Ulster in the

[114] Blackstock, *Ascendancy army*, pp. 59–63, 92–7.

[115] Curtin, *United Irishmen*, pp. 284–5; A. T. Q. Stewart, *A deeper silence* (London, 1993), chs. 18–19. Also on the northern rebellion see idem, *The summer soldiers* (Belfast, 1995); M. Hill, B. Turner, and K. Dawson, eds., *1798 rebellion in Co. Down* (Newtownards, 1998); P. Mirala, 'Freemasonry in Ulster, 1733–1813' (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1999).

[116] McBride, *Scripture politics*, pp. 12–13, 84–5, 110, 190–1.

[117] H. Senior, *Orangeism in Britain and Ireland, 1795–1836* (London, 1966), remains the only modern monograph. The Grand Lodge has published some early accounts of the Order's origins: C. Kilpatrick, ed., *The foundation of the Orange Order* (Belfast, 1994).

[118] Cullen, 'Political structures of the Defenders'; idem, 'The political troubles of Co. Armagh', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 23 (1996), pp. 18–23: the 'top-down' approach is endorsed by Whelan, 'Origins of the Orange Order', p. 21. For a different view, see D. Miller, 'Politicisation in revolutionary Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 23 (1996), pp. 1–17.

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light of frontier societies in other parts of Europe, including Poland and Prussia. Wright attached particular weight to the loosening of ties between the Protestant elite and the mass of Protestant settlers in the aftermath of the Williamite reconquest and imposition of the penal laws. Feeling more secure, landlords permitted Catholics to outbid Protestants for labour and land. Instead of leading to greater solidarity with Catholics among lower-class Protestants, this created resentment against landlords and Catholics, and prompted bouts of emigration, particularly by Presbyterians. As the formal relaxation of the penal laws began in the 1770s and 1780s, some plebeian Protestants challenged the process, forcing the elite either to speed it up or to pull back. Wright argued that the prospects for instability and polarization increased when Catholics began to organize themselves, as they increasingly did from the later 1780s, challenging elite control over the pace of change. In certain parts of Ulster, such as County Antrim, where Catholics were few, Presbyterians enjoyed the necessary space to enable them to avoid the polarizing process; at the other end of the spectrum in County Armagh such space did not exist. Thus for Wright the central issue dividing the United Irishmen and the Orange Order was not Ireland's relationship with Britain, but how Protestants related to Catholics.[119]

These different approaches can give rise to quite different interpretations of particular events. For Whelan, the willingness of Lord Gosford to permit some 1,500 Orangemen to parade through his estate on the Orange Order's first 'twelfth' in 1796 represented a bid to graft himself on to the leadership of the Order; for Blackstock, pointing out that Gosford had recently condemned the persecution of Catholics, the appearance of Orangemen requesting permission to parade on his estate conveyed 'an ominously ambiguous, double-edged message', the purpose of which was to bring home to Gosford that 'the power to preserve the peace no longer automatically or solely rested with the gentry'.[120] Blackstock has also suggested that while the assumed links between the Orangemen and the yeomanry have been exaggerated, those between the Volunteers and the yeomanry have been overlooked.[121]

For all the attention devoted to the 1798 rebellion some basic questions remain, including the number of deaths. Pakenham gave a figure of 30,000 (including women and children), while more recently Whelan has suggested 20,000. If the real figure is somewhere in this region, it shows how exceptional Irish experience was by British standards. Looking at Europe, the picture changes. Of the numbers who perished during the 'pacification' of the Vendée in 1793, for instance, it has been claimed that 'the most authoritative estimate

[119] F. Wright, *Two lands on one soil* (Dublin, 1996), ch. 2.

[120] Whelan, 'Origins of the Orange Order', pp. 19–20; A. Blackstock, 'Loyal crowds in mid-Ulster, 1795–1796', in Jupp and Magennis, eds., *Crowds in Ireland*, pp. 104–5.

[121] Blackstock, *Ascendancy army*, pp. 74–92, 172–3. See also the fine Ulster Museum exhibition catalogue, W. A. Maguire, ed., *Up in arms: the 1798 rebellion in Ireland* (Belfast, 1998), p. 142. The presence of radicals and Catholics in the early phase of the yeomanry is noted by Cullen, 'The United Irishmen', *Ulster Local Studies*, 18 (1997), pp. 7–27.

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suggests a total of around 400,000 for both sides'.[122] Despite studies of Catholic priests among the rebels, the question of motivation is still obscure, though Cullen's judicious overview does much to place the subject in context.[123] The aftermath of the rebellion, too, has received only patchy treatment. There are accounts of rebel activity and emigration after 1798,[124] but we know little of the fall-out from the rebellion at local level, though Beatty's study of Protestant women makes the suggestive observation that the rebellion may have affected relations between loyalist and rebel women more than those between loyalist and rebel men.[125]

As for the act of union, which closed the decade, it is rather too early to say how far our understanding is likely to change as a result of work timed to commemorate the bicentenary. Peter Jupp makes a strong case for the primacy of wartime considerations in bringing Pitt to his momentous decision; and we now know more than Bolton did about the extent of secret funds available to ministers seeking support for union.[126]

In conclusion, the sheer amount of work now appearing, much of it on local history, or – if concerned with politics – looking beyond Dublin Castle and the Irish parliament, is revealing an Ireland that was significantly different from Lecky's. He would have been surprised at the varieties of convergence historians are uncovering: whether in respect of gentility, improvement, popular culture; even in ideas about the past. This may make the turbulence and violence of the 1790s seem all the more puzzling. In fact, in one sphere where Lecky did see convergence – in the growth of toleration towards the end of the century – he underestimated the persistence and adaptability to new circumstances of anti-Catholicism. Besides, the troubles of that decade in Ireland, though anomalous in comparison with Britain, look much less so by comparison with Europe.

[122] Pakenham, *Year of liberty*, p. 13; Whelan, 'Reinterpreting the 1798 rebellion', p. 28; T. Blanning, *The French revolutionary wars* (London and New York, 1996), p. 98.

[123] K. Whelan, 'The role of the Catholic priest in the 1798 rebellion', in idem, *Wexford: history and society*, pp. 296–315; N. Furlong, *Fr John Murphy of Boolavogue* (Dublin, 1991); Cullen, 'The politics of clerical radicalism'.

[124] M. Durey, *Transatlantic radicals* (Lawrence, KS, 1997) is the most reliable guide to the diaspora produced by the rebellion. See also D. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States* (Dublin and Portland, OR, 1998).

[125] J. Beatty, 'Protestant women of Co. Wexford and their narratives of the rebellion', in D. Keogh and N. Furlong, eds., *The women of 1798* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 117–31.

[126] P. Jupp, 'Britain and the union', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 10 (2000), p. 202; G. C. Bolton, *The passing of the Irish Act of Union* (Oxford, 1966); P. Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 201–7. A guide to contemporary literature is W. J. McCormack, *The pamphlet debate on the union between Great Britain and Ireland, 1797–1800* (Dublin, 1996).

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