

THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF
JONATHAN SWIFT

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JONATHAN SWIFT

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17. Index Volume

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978-0-521-83385-1 — Irish Political Writings after 1725
Jonathan Swift, Edited by David Hayton, Adam Rounce
Frontmatter
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JONATHAN SWIFT

Irish Political Writings after 1725

A Modest Proposal and Other Works

Edited by

D. W. HAYTON AND ADAM ROUNCE



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THE CAMBRIDGE EDITION OF THE WORKS OF
JONATHAN SWIFT

GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift is the first fully annotated scholarly edition ever undertaken of Swift's complete works in both verse and prose. The great editions of Swift by Herbert Davis and Harold Williams have remained standard for over half a century. We are all greatly indebted to them, but the time has come to replace or revise their texts and commentary in the light of subsequent historical, biographical and textual knowledge. Davis's fourteen-volume edition of the *Prose Writings* offered valuable introductions but no annotation. The commentary to his separate edition of the *Drapier's Letters*, and Williams's commentaries to the *Poems* and *Journal to Stella*, though excellent in their time, must now be supplemented by a considerable body of more recent scholarship. The Cambridge Edition's detailed introductions, notes and appendices aim to provide an informed understanding of Swift's place in the political and cultural history of England and Ireland, and to establish the historical, literary and bibliographical contexts of his immense achievement as a prose satirist, poet and political writer. The editors of individual volumes include distinguished historians, as well as leading scholars of eighteenth-century literature.

For the Cambridge Edition, Swift's texts will be collated and analysed afresh, with attention to new evidence of drafts, autographs, transcripts and printed editions, including revisions of Swift's own *Works*. All lifetime editions will be investigated for their authority. The choice of the version to be printed will be based on an assessment of the work's nature and of the particularities of its history. As a general rule the last authoritative version of the work will be chosen, but in the case of works that are bound in tightly to an immediate context of controversy (polemical tracts, for example), the first edition will usually be chosen instead. In all cases editors will have regard to Swift's overall conception of his text, including issues of typography and illustration. All substantial authorial variants will be recorded in the apparatus, along with those accidental variants editors deem significant, and full introductions will provide the history of the text and the rationale for editorial decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For permission to consult, and in some cases to quote from, manuscript materials in private possession, we are grateful to the Duke of Devonshire and the Trustees of the Chatsworth settlement, the Viscount Midleton, and his grace the Archbishop of Armagh. In respect of materials held by institutional repositories, we must thank the Board of Trinity College Dublin; the British Library Board; Cambridge University Library; the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies; the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office; the Deputy Keeper of the Records of Northern Ireland; Derbyshire Record Office; Dublin City Council; the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum; the Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway; the John Rylands Library, Manchester; the Keeper, Marsh's Library; the Librarian, Lambeth Palace Library; the National Library of Ireland; the Registry of Deeds, Dublin; the Royal Dublin Society; and the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Librarians and archivists whom we have had occasion to trouble have been universally helpful and accommodating, often beyond the call of duty, but we wish to acknowledge in particular the assistance given by Mary Clarke at Dublin City Archives, Tom Desmond at the National Library of Ireland, Carol Hollier at the Hallward Library, University of Nottingham, and Michael Page at the Surrey History Centre. For scholarly advice on a range of subjects, we are indebted to Toby Barnard, John Bergin, Paddy Bullard, Brenda Collins, Sean Connolly, Louis Cullen, Louise Curran, Suzanne Forbes, Richard Holmes, Stephen Karian, Brian Kelly, James Kelly, Ian McBride, Ciarán McCabe, Gordon Rees, Ian Campbell Ross, Estelle Sheehan, Brendan Twomey, Patrick Walsh, James Ward, Tim Watt, Rachel Wilson and, in particular, James Woolley, for his generosity in sharing his knowledge of the *Intelligencer* papers. The General Editors – Ian Gadd, Ian Higgins, James McLaverty, Claude Rawson, Valerie Rumbold and Abigail Williams – deserve our lasting thanks for their support and advice, in matters of content, text and much else beside, as do the representatives of Cambridge University Press, Linda Bree, Maartje Schelkens, Anna Bond and Victoria Parrin, who have always been helpful and encouraging.

CHRONOLOGY

1664 Marriage in Dublin of Swift's parents, Jonathan Swift the elder and Abigail Erick.

1667 March or April: Swift's father dies; 30 November: birth of Swift in Dublin.

1673–82 Swift at school at Kilkenny.

Birth of John Vanbrugh. Katherine Philips, *Poems* (pirated).

1665 Second Anglo-Dutch War (until 1667). Commencement of *Philosophical Transactions* by Royal Society. Plague in London.

1666 Fire of London. Death of Abraham Cowley. Boileau-Despréaux, *Satires*; Molière, *Le Misanthrope*.

Dismissal of Clarendon; the 'Cabal' administration of the government (until 1673). Birth of John Arbuthnot. Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*; Dryden, *Annus Mirabilis*, *Indian Emperor*, *Of Dramatick Poesy*; Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1st edn); Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*.

1668 Dryden appointed Poet Laureate. Beginning of *Mercurius Librarius* (*Term Catalogues*); Cowley, *Works*, with life by Sprat.

1670 Birth of William Congreve. Milton, *The History of Britain*; Pascal, *Pensées*; Izaak Walton, *Lives*.

1671 Milton, *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes*.

1672 Third Anglo-Dutch War (until 1674); second Declaration of Indulgence. Births of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Buckingham, *Rehearsal*; Marvell, *Rehearsal Transpos'd* (Pt II, 1673).

1673 Second Declaration of Indulgence withdrawn, and Test Act signed. End of Cabal.

1674 Death of Milton. Opening of Theatre Royal. Boileau, *L'Art Poétique*; Milton, *Paradise Lost* (2nd edn, in 12 books); Thomas Shadwell, *Enchanted Island*.

- 1675** William Wycherley, *Country Wife*.
- 1676** George Etherege, *Man of Mode*; Shadwell, *Virtuoso*.
- 1677** Aphra Behn, *The Rover*, Pt I (Pt II, 1681); Wycherley, *Plain Dealer*.
- 1678** Popish Plot. Beginning of Christopher Wren's work on St Paul's. Death of Andrew Marvell; birth of George Farquhar. John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, I (Pt II, 1684); Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, III.
- 1679** Exclusion Crisis (until 1681). Birth of Thomas Parnell. Gilbert Burnet, *History of the Reformation* (vols. II and III, 1681 and 1715).
- 1680** Deaths of Butler, Rochester, La Rochefoucauld. Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*; Rochester, *Poems*; Roscommon, *Horace's Art of Poetry Made English*; Sir William Temple, *Miscellanea*, I.
- 1681** Thomas Burnet, *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, Books I and II; John Oldham, *Satires Upon the Jesuits*; Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*.
- 1682** April: Swift admitted to Trinity College Dublin. He remains there until the outbreak of war between James II and William III.
- Death of Sir Thomas Browne. Dryden, *The Medall*, *Religio Laici*, *Mac Flecknoe*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, II; Lucretius, *De rerum natura* (tr. Thomas Creech); Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserv'd*; Sir William Petty, *Essay Concerning the Multiplication of Mankind*.
- 1683** Rye House Plot. Death of Oldham.
- 1684** Behn, *Love-Letters Between a Noble-Man and his Sister* (1684–7).
- 1685** February: Death of Charles II and accession of James II. June to July: Monmouth Rebellion; October: Edict of Nantes revoked. Birth of John Gay; birth of George Berkeley. *Sylva* (including contributions by Dryden); Dryden, 'To the Pious Memory of Mrs Anne Killigrew', and *Tbrenodia Augustalis*.
- 1686** Swift takes his bachelor's degree *speciali gratia* from TCD.
- Behn, *The Lucky Chance*.
- 1687** April: James II's Declaration of Indulgence. Isaac Newton, *Principia*. Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*; 'Song for St. Cecilia's Day'.

1688 Civil war breaks out in Ireland.

Glorious Revolution: November: William of Orange invades England; December: James II flees to France (transfer of the crown to William and Mary in 1689). Birth of Alexander Pope; death of Bunyan; Shadwell named Poet Laureate in succession to Dryden; Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (completed 1697).

1689 January: Swift leaves for England; employed in Sir William Temple's household at Moor Park, near Farnham, Surrey; meets Esther Johnson (Stella), then eight years old.

Accession of William and Mary. Birth of Samuel Richardson; death of Behn. John Locke, *First Letter on Toleration*.

1690 May: Swift returns to Ireland, on doctors' advice, after first appearance of Ménière's disease.

James II defeated by William III in Ireland (Battle of the Boyne) and flees to France. Dryden, *Don Sebastian*; Locke, *Two Treatises of Government, Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (enlarged 1694–1700), *Second Letter on Toleration*; Petty, *Political Arithmetick* (see 1682); Temple, *Miscellanea*, II, includes 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', which triggers Phalaris controversy (rev. 1692).

1691 Swift, *Ode. To the King*. Returns to Moor Park by end of year.

Treaty of Limerick ends war in Ireland.

1692 Swift, *Ode to the Athenian Society* (in supplement to *Athenian Gazette*, vol. V). Swift takes degree of MA at Oxford, for future purpose of ordination.

Death of Shadwell. Locke, *Third Letter on Toleration*; Thomas Rymer, *Short View of Tragedy*.

1694 Swift returns to Ireland, takes deacon's orders.

1693 Beginning of National Debt. Congreve, *Old Batchelor*; Dryden, 'Discourse Concerning Satire', prefixed to trs. of Juvenal and Persius; Locke, *Thoughts Concerning Education*.

Death of Mary II; founding of Bank of England. Congreve, *Double Dealer*; *Dictionary of French Academy*; William Wotton, *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*.

1695 January: Swift ordained priest, and becomes prebendary of Kilroot, near Belfast.

Death of Henry Purcell. Richard Blackmore, *Prince Arthur*; Charles Boyle, ed., *Epistles of Phalaris*; Congreve, *Love for Love*; Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity and Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (second *Vindication*, 1697); Southerne, *Oroonoko*.

1696–9 Swift at Moor Park, at work on *A Tale of a Tub* and related writings.

1699 January: death of Temple. August: Swift returns to Ireland as chaplain to Earl of Berkeley, Lord Justice of Ireland. Writes 'When I come to be Old'. November: Swift's edition of Temple's *Letters* (dated 1700) is published.

1700 February: Swift appointed Vicar of Laracor, Co. Meath. October: appointed prebendary of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

1701 April: Swift goes to England with Lord Berkeley; August: Esther Johnson's move to Dublin; September: Swift moves back to Dublin with Rochester, new lord lieutenant. October: Swift, *Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*; Swift's edition of Temple, *Miscellanea*, III.

1702 February: Swift takes the degree of DD, Trinity College Dublin. April: travels to England. August: writes 'Meditation on a Broomstick' (published in *Miscellanies*, 1711). October: returns to Ireland.

1697 Birth of William Hogarth. Richard Bentley, 'Dissertation upon the *Epistles of Phalaris*' (in 2nd edn of Wotton's *Reflections*, see 1694); Blackmore, *King Arthur*; Dryden, *Works of Virgil*; Vanbrugh, *Provok'd Wife*.

1698 Charles Boyle, Dr. Bentley's *Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris and the Fables of Aesop Examined*; Jeremy Collier, *Short View of the English Stage*; William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland Stated*.

Bentley, *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris, with an Answer to the Honourable Charles Boyle*; Garth, *The Dispensary*.

Death of Charles II of Spain; final statute against Catholics; dispute over Irish forfeitures; Act of Resumption; death of Duke of Gloucester; Partition Treaty. Death of Dryden; birth of James Thomson. Blackmore, *Satire against Wit*; Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Motteux; Congreve, *Way of the World*; Dryden, *Fables and Secular Masque*; Fénelon, *Dialogues des Morts*; James Harrington, *Works*, with life by Toland; Matthew Prior, *Carmen Seculare*.

Death of James II; his son, James Francis Edward (b. 1688), 'Pretender' to the throne, recognised by Louis XIV; Act of Settlement; general election (Tory landslide); Impeachment of Somers; general election (Whig recovery); Joseph Addison, 'Letter to Halifax' (written); Charles Davenant, *Essay on the Balance of Power*; John Dennis, *Advancement of Modern Poetry*; Richard Steele, *Christian Hero*.

Death of William III, accession of Anne; Tory ministry; Godolphin–Marlborough influence; Harley Speaker of the House of Commons; War of Spanish Succession. Clarendon, *History of the Great Rebellion* (1702–4); Defoe, *Shortest-Way with the Dissenters*; William King, *De Origine Mali; Observator* (1702–12); *Poems on Affairs of State* (1702–7); Shaftesbury, *Paradoxes of State*.

1703 November: travels to England, and stays until May 1704. Swift's edition of Temple, *Letters to the King*.

1704 May: publication of *Tale of a Tub*, containing also 'Battle of the Books', and 'Mechanical Operation of the Spirit'. Second and third edns follow this year. 1 June: arrives back in Dublin; there or in Laracor until November 1707.

1705 *Tale of a Tub*, fourth edn.

1707 April: Swift writes 'Story of the Injured Lady'. August: writes 'Critical Essay'. November: Swift in London on Church of Ireland business; meets Addison, Steele and other authors; writes tracts on political and ecclesiastical issues; begins friendship with Esther Vanhomrigh (Vanessa).

First Occasional Conformity Bill defeated in Lords; campaign in Flanders; Great Storm (27 November); Defoe imprisoned, pilloried and released. Abel Boyer, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*; Steele, *The Lying Lover*; Ned Ward, *London Spy* (collected edn, eighteen monthly parts, November 1698–1703).

Battle of Blenheim; Queen Anne's bounty; Nottingham ministry resigns; Harley Secretary of State; Bolingbroke Secretary at War; death of Locke. Defoe, *Review* (1704–12); Dennis, *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry and Liberty Asserted*; Wycherley, *Miscellany Poems*.

General election, Whig victory, 'Junto' administration; Marlborough breaks through lines of Brabant; 'Church in Danger'; Haymarket Opera House opened by Vanbrugh; Addison Commissioner of Appeals. Addison, *The Campaign and Remarks on Italy*; Samuel Clarke, *Being and Attributes of God*; Bernard Mandeville, *The Grumbling Hive*; Steele, *The Tender Husband*; John Toland, *Socinianism Truly Stated*; Vanbrugh, *The Confederacy*; Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, 3rd edn, with a *Defense of the Reflections*, including 'Observations upon *The Tale of a Tub*'.

1706 Act of Succession; Battle of Ramillies; Sunderland Secretary of State; Steele made Gazetteer; death of John Evelyn; birth of Benjamin Franklin. Addison, *Rosamond*; Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer*; Locke, *Conduct of Understanding, On Miracles and Fourth Letter on Toleration*; White Kennett, *Complete History of England* (1706–19).

Union of England and Scotland; births of Henry Fielding and Charles Wesley. Colley Cibber, *Comical Lovers, The Double Gallant and The Lady's Last Stake*; Defoe, *Modest Vindication of Present Ministry*; Farquhar, *The Beaux' Stratagem*; Delarivier Manley, *Almyna*; John Philips, *Ode to Bolingbroke*; Prior, *Poems on Several Occasions* (pirated); Thomas Tickell, *Oxford*.

1708 January: Swift, *Predictions for 1708*; March: *Elegy on Partridge, Account of Partridge's Death*; December: *Letter concerning the Sacramental Test*; writes *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* (published 1711); writes *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*.

1709 April: Swift, *Famous Prediction of Merlin, A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff, Project for the Advancement of Religion*. 'Baucis and Philemon' published in various locations. Steele starts *The Tatler* (12 April); Swift's 'A Description of the Morning' appears in No. 9 (30 April). Swift's edition of Temple, *Memoirs*, III. June: returns to Dublin.

1710 *Tale of a Tub*, fifth edn, with 'Apology' and notes. Swift arrives in London on 1 September, travelling on behalf of the Church of Ireland soliciting for a remission of some financial imposts on the clergy of the Church of Ireland; begins epistolary diary known as *Journal to Stella*, 1710–13; Swift's letter on corruptions of style published as *Tatler* 230. October: meets Harley, leader of the new Tory government; still dining regularly with Addison and Steele; 'A Description of a City Shower' appears in *Tatler* 238; November: takes over pro-government paper, *The Examiner*.

1711 February: Swift attends Harley's 'Saturday Club' dinners; publishes *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*. September: death of Swift's friend Anne Long. November: Swift, *Conduct of the Allies*.

Battle of Oudenarde; Harley and St John resign; Catalonia Campaign; Somers returns to office; Naturalization Act; Addison Keeper of Records, Dublin Castle. Joseph Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticae*; Jeremy Collier, *Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* (1708–14); Fontenelle, *Dialogues of the Dead*, tr. Hughes; Locke, *Letters*; John Philips, *Cyder*; Shaftesbury, *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm*; Lewis Theobald, *Persian Princess*.

Charles XII defeated at Pultawa; Sacheverell's sermon, *The Perils of False Brethren*; births of Samuel Johnson and George Lyttelton; Copyright Act (first, fourteen-year term, renewable for another fourteen if author is alive); Steele dismissed from the *Gazette*. Berkeley, *New Theory of Vision*; Manley, *The New Atlantis*; Ambrose Philips, 'Pastorals' and Pope, 'Pastorals', published in the Tonson *Poetical Miscellanies* VI; Prior, *Poems on Several Occasions*; Nicholas Rowe's Shakespeare (1709–10); Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*.

January: Marlborough threatens to resign commission over Tory influence of Abigail Masham at court. March: trial of Sacheverell ends disappointingly for Whig managers. August: Godolphin dismissed as Lord Treasurer, replaced by Tory treasury under Robert Harley. October: landslide victory brings Tories to power. Samuel Clements, *Faults on Both Sides*; Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*; September: Addison begins *The Whig Examiner*. Bayle, *Dictionary*, first English edn; Congreve, *Collected Works*; Manley, *Memoirs of Europe*.

January: peace conference at Utrecht begins. February: Tory 'October Club' attacks Harley for perceived moderation. March: assassination attempt by Guiscard on Harley. May: Harley created Lord Treasurer and Earl of Oxford; Pope, *Essay on Criticism*. November: Nottingham (Swift's 'Dismal') breaks with Harley. December: Marlborough dismissed. Pope,

1712 May: Swift, *Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue*. August: Swift, *Some Remarks on the Barrier Treaty*. Formation of the ‘Scriblerus Club’ with Pope, Gay, Parnell and Arbuthnot.

1713 January: Swift, *Mr. C[olli]ns’s Discourse of Free-Thinking, put into Plain English*. May: public acrimony between Swift and Steele. June: Swift installed as Dean of St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin. October: Swift, *Importance of the Guardian Considered*; composes ‘Cadenus and Vanessa’.

1714 February: Swift, *Public Spirit of the Whigs* declared ‘seditious and scandalous libel’ by Lords; Swift Governor of Bethlehem Hospital (‘Bedlam’). March: Swift helps draft Queen’s speech. June: Swift leaves London for Letcombe Bassett, Berkshire; Swift writes *Some Free Thoughts*. August: sails for Dublin, beginning of six-year break from publication.

1719 March 13: Swift writes birthday verses for Stella.

1720 Swift, *Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture*; at subsequent trial of its printer, Edward Waters, Chief Justice Whitshed refuses to accept ‘not guilty’ verdict from jury.

1721 April: earliest references to writing of *Gulliver’s Travels*, in a letter to Charles Ford. Swift travels over 400 miles on his ‘Summer Rambles’ in Ireland.

Essay on Criticism; Steele, *Tatler* final number, January; Addison and Steele, *Spectator* (1 March 1711 – 6 December 1712); Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*.

July: St John created Viscount Bolingbroke. October: Oxford and Bolingbroke clash in Cabinet. Pope, *Rape of the Lock* (2-canto version); Arbuthnot, *Proposal for an Art of Political Lying*.

March: peace and commerce treaties signed by Britain and France at Utrecht. August: Bolingbroke’s bid to control ministry defeated by Harley; general election, another Tory victory. December: Queen Anne seriously ill. Pope, *Windsor-Forest*; Gay, *Rural Sports*; Parnell, *Essay on the Different Styles of Poetry*; Addison, *Cato*; Steele, *Guardian*, *Englishman*.

January: Steele, *Crisis*. July: Oxford dismissed by Queen Anne. August: death of Queen Anne; accession of George I. Beginning of Whig supremacy.

1715 June: Pope, *Iliad*, books I–IV.

1717 January: Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot, *Three Hours After Marriage*. Pope, *Works*.

1718 Death of Parnell.

June: death of Addison.

March: Declaratory Act (that the British Parliament may make laws binding on Ireland). August: collapse of the ‘South Sea Bubble’. November: Trenchard and Gordon begin publishing *Cato’s Letters*.

Emergence of Robert Walpole as *de facto* Prime Minister. September: death of Prior. December: Parnell, *Poems on Several Occasions*, with Pope’s ‘Epistle to Oxford’ as preface.

1722 July: patent to strike copper coins for Ireland granted to William Wood. August: Atterbury implicated in Jacobite ‘Layer’s Plot’.

1723 June: Death of Vanessa; Swift begins four-month tour of southern Ireland.

1724 January: Swift finishes book four of *Gulliver's Travels*, and begins book three. March: *Letter to the Shopkeepers of Ireland* (first *Drapier's Letter*). August: *Letter to Harding* (second *DL*). September: *Some Observations* (third *DL*). October: *Letter to Whole People of Ireland* (fourth *DL*). December: *Letter to Molesworth* (fifth *DL*).

1725 April: Swift created freeman of City of Dublin. April–October: Swift and Stella at Quilca with Sheridan family; completion of *Gulliver's Travels*.

1726 March: Swift travels to London. April: audience with Princess of Wales. Meetings with patriot members of opposition, and with Walpole. May: at Pope's Twickenham villa with Gay and Martha Blount; visits Cobham at Stowe; Stella seriously ill. August: returns to Dublin amid public acclamation. 28 October: first edn of *Gulliver's Travels*.

1727 January: Swift attempts to correct early editions of *Gulliver*. April: travels to London for his last English visit. June: Pope/Swift *Miscellanies*, vols. I and II. August: returns to Ireland, writing 'Holyhead Journal' during a week of delays before crossing.

1728 January: death of Stella. Swift, 'On the Death of Mrs Johnson'. March: 'last' volume of Pope/Swift *Miscellanies*; Swift, *A Short View of the State of Ireland*. May: Swift and Sheridan begin *The Intelligencer*, runs until May 1729.

1729 October: Swift, *A Modest Proposal*. December: Swift meets Laetitia Pilkington, author of *Memoirs* (1748–54) concerning Swift, and her husband Matthew.

1730 February: Swift tells Pope of his friendship with a 'triumfeminate' of Dublin literary Bluestockings (Mary Barber, Constantia Grierson, Mrs Sican).

May: death of Oxford; Carteret appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland. October: £300 reward offered for naming of the author of fourth *Drapier's Letter*. Gilbert Burnet, *History of his Own Time*.

April: Bolingbroke returns from exile in France. September: Cancellation of Wood's patent. Pope's edition of Shakespeare and translation of Homer's *Odyssey* (to 1726).

March: Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored*. December: Pulteney and Bolingbroke launch opposition periodical *The Craftsman*.

June: death of George I, accession of George II. Autumn: floods, crop failures and rural poverty in Ireland. Gay, *Fables*. Death of Newton.

January: Gay's *Beggar's Opera* begins triumphant run at Lincoln's Inn Fields. May: Pope, *Dunciad*; numerous printed attacks on Pope.

April: Pope, *Dunciad Variorum*.

Townshend resigns as Secretary of State. Trial of Francis Charteris. Colley Cibber made Poet Laureate.

- 1731** Swift works on *Verses on the Death of Dr Swift* (published 1739) and the scatological poems published in 1734.
- 1732** April: Swift, *Life and Character of Dr Swift*. June: Swift, *The Lady's Dressing Room*. October: Pope/Swift *Miscellanies*, 'third' vol.; Swift has met his future biographer, the Earl of Orrery.
- 1734** A letter of commendation from Swift appears as preface to Mary Barber's *Poems on Several Occasions*. November: George Faulkner begins to publish Swift's *Works* in Dublin. December: Swift, 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed' published with 'Strephon and Chloe' and 'Cassinus and Peter'.
- 1735** Death of Swift's faithful housekeeper, Mrs Brent.
- 1736** December: Swift tells Pope that 'I now neither read, nor write; nor remember, nor converse. All I have left is to walk, and ride'. June: *A Character of the Legion Club*.
- 1737** August: Swift created freeman of the City of Cork.
- 1738** Spring: Swift, *Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*; fifth and sixth volumes of the Faulkner *Works*.
- 1739** January: Swift, *Verses on the Death of Dr Swift*, edited by Pope and William King, followed by Dublin edn in February.
- 1740** May: Swift makes his last will, on the brink of his final decline; bequests to Rebecca Dingley (Stella's companion), Martha Whiteway (guardian during his final years) and others; land purchased for St Patrick's Hospital.
- 1742** November: Swift's understanding 'quite gone'.
- 1745** 19 October: death of Swift.
- December: Pope, *Epistle to Burlington*. First issue of *Gentleman's Magazine*. Death of Defoe.
- December: Death of John Gay. Hogarth, *Harlot's Progress*.
- 1733** January: Pope, *Epistle to Bathurst*. February: Pope, first *Imitation of Horace*, *An Essay on Man*. Excise Crisis.
- January: Pope, *Epistle to Cobham*. Hogarth, *Rake's Progress* (engravings published 1735).
- January: Pope, *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. February: death of Arbuthnot. Bolingbroke returns to France.
- Porteous Riots; repeal of Test and Corporation Acts defeated. Butler, *Analogy of Religion*.
- May: Pope's edn of his letters. Prince of Wales expelled from court; death of Queen Caroline.
- October: death of Thomas Sheridan. Pope visited by Bolingbroke. Last report of Society for Reformation of Manners.
- October: War of Jenkins' Ear.
- War of Austrian Succession.
- March: Pope, *The New Dunciad* (i.e. book IV).
- 1744** May: death of Pope.
- Death of Walpole. Jacobite rebellion.

ABBREVIATIONS

Add.MS(S)	Additional Manuscript(s)
BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library
<i>Boulter Letters</i>	<i>Letters Written by his Excellency Hugh Boulter . . .</i> , 2 vols., Dublin, 1770
<i>C.J.Ire.</i>	<i>The Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland</i> , 2nd edn
<i>Cal. Anc. Recs Dublin</i>	<i>Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin</i> , ed. J. T. Gilbert and R. M. Gilbert, 17 vols., Dublin: Joseph Dollard, 1889–1921
<i>Coghill Letters</i>	<i>Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722–1738</i> , ed. D. W. Hayton, Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2005
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>CWJS</i>	<i>The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift</i> , ed. Claude Rawson, Ian Higgins, James McLaverty, <i>et al.</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008–
Davis	<i>The Prose Writings of Jonathan Swift</i> , ed. Herbert Davis <i>et al.</i> , 16 vols., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939–74
del.	deleted
<i>DIB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Irish Biography</i> , ed. James McGuire and James Quinn, 9 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009
Dobbs, <i>Essay</i>	Arthur Dobbs, <i>An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland</i> , Dublin, 1729
Dobbs, <i>Essay</i> , pt 2	Arthur Dobbs, <i>An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland. Part II</i> , Dublin, 1731
<i>ECI</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Ireland</i>
<i>ECS</i>	<i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i>
<i>Econ. Hist. Ire.</i>	George O'Brien, <i>The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century</i> , Dublin, 1918
Ehrenpreis	Irvin Ehrenpreis, <i>Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age</i> , 3 vols., London: Methuen, 1962–83
Ferguson	Oliver W. Ferguson, <i>Jonathan Swift and Ireland</i> , Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962

- Hist. Ir. Parl.* Edith Mary Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692–1800*, 6 vols., Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2002
- HLQ* *Huntington Library Quarterly*
- HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission (printed reports)
- HP 1690–1715* *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons 1690–1715*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley and D. W. Hayton, 5 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002
- HP 1715–54* *The History of Parliament. The House of Commons 1715–1754*, ed. Romney Sedgwick, 2 vols., London: HMSO, 1970
- ins. inserted
- Landa Louis A. Landa, *Swift and the Church of Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954
- Library and Reading, I* Dirk F. Passmann and H. J. Vienken, *The Library and Reading of Jonathan Swift: A Bio-bibliographical Handbook. Part I, Swift's Library in Four Volumes*, 4 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004
- MLQ* *Modern Language Quarterly*
- Münster* (date) *Proceedings of the First Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, ed. Hermann J. Real and Heinz J. Vienken, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985. *Reading Swift: Papers from the [Second, Third, Fourth] Münster Symposium*, ed. Hermann J. Real *et al.*, 1993, 1998, 2003
- NLI National Library of Ireland
- ODEP* *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, ed. F. P. Wilson, 3rd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970
- ODNB* *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols., Oxford, 2004
- OED* *Oxford English Dictionary Online*
- Orrery John Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift*, ed. João Frées, London, 1752; repr. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000
- PBA* *Proceedings of the British Academy*
- Poems* *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 2nd edn, 3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958
- Prior, *Absentees* Thomas Prior, *A List of the Absentees of Ireland, and the Yearly Value of their Estates and Incomes Spent Abroad*, Dublin, 1729
- PRONI Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
- RIA Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
- Spectator* *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965
- SStud* *Swift Studies*

xxii LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Steele, *Tracts* *The Tracts and Pamphlets of Richard Steele*, ed. Rae Blanchard, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944
- SwJ Alexander Lindsay, 'Jonathan Swift 1667–1745', in *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, Vol. III, Part 4*, London: Mansell, 1997
- Tatler* *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987
- TCC Trinity College, Cambridge
- TCD Trinity College Dublin
- TNA The National Archives [of the UK], Public Record Office
- TS H. Teerink, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Jonathan Swift*, 2nd edn, revised and corrected by Arthur H. Scouten, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963
- V & A Victoria and Albert Museum
- Woolley, *Corr.* *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.*, ed. David Woolley, 5 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999–2014
- Woolley, *Intelligencer* Jonathan Swift and Thomas Sheridan, *The Intelligencer*, ed. James Woolley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992

INTRODUCTION

The appearance of the *Drapier's Letters* in 1724 had transformed Swift's standing as a public figure in Ireland, and restored his reputation as a political commentator to the vertiginous heights previously reached by *The Conduct of the Allies*, written for Robert Harley's Tory administration in England in November 1711. Nothing he published after the *Drapier's Letters* had the same political impact. This judgement applies even to the *Modest Proposal*, which in retrospect was recognised as by some distance the most important of his writings on public affairs after 1725, but which received a relatively muted reception in Ireland when it first appeared. Indeed, in many of the works included in this volume (which excludes publications on purely ecclesiastical subjects), Swift was in effect re-treading old ground. His observations on the state of the Irish economy reiterated the pessimistic assessment which he had consistently articulated in the years following his exile to the deanery of St Patrick's in 1713, and which had been given a particularly sharp edge in the arguments of the Drapier. He saw Ireland's problems – the backwardness of agriculture, the decline in manufacture and trade, the scarcity of money, even the moral inadequacies of the people – as deriving ultimately from the kingdom's constitutional inferiority, and the way in which this had been, and was still being, exploited by ministers and Parliaments at Westminster to protect English interests and disadvantage the inhabitants of Ireland. But after the withdrawal of 'Wood's Halfpence' in 1725 the debate in Ireland over political economy moved on, and took a more constructive turn. A succession of poor harvests from 1727 to 1728 triggered subsistence crises, resulting in the impoverishment and near starvation of small farmers and labourers in the countryside, hosts of beggars on the streets of Dublin, and renewed (and overwhelmingly Protestant) emigration from Ulster to north America. In response, other commentators revisited the fundamental causes of Ireland's woes, and offered variations on Swift's themes. Pamphleteers and parliamentarians discussed ways in which Ireland might be 'improved', and in 1731 these would-be 'improvers' founded the Dublin Society, a forum for the exchange of ideas and information, with the intention that it should become an engine of economic development.

The discourse of ‘improvement’, or so it has been argued, represented a new departure in Irish political thinking, superseding the emphasis in Swift’s writings on constitutional inequality. The progenitors of the Dublin Society hoped that former differences over religious and political principle might be set aside, to create a new form of civil society on the basis of a shared commitment to natural philosophy and economic development. It was an approach more likely to emphasise pragmatism than confrontation in Anglo-Irish politics: the benefits of working within existing constitutional frameworks, and co-operating with, rather than confronting, English government. Indeed, one of the most prominent ideologues of ‘improvement’, Arthur Dobbs (1689–1765), a County Antrim landowner and a future governor of North Carolina, was a friend, and to some extent a protégé, of the Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole.¹ Soon this became the prevailing mentality in the Dublin administration, whose officials sought to exploit existing constitutional arrangements to improve Ireland’s trading opportunities.² The Dublin Society included in its ranks a number of such men, advocates of a more realistic and constructive brand of Irish patriotism, who were impatient with the kind of language and arguments to be found in the writings of Swift and some other unreconstructed Anglophobes, which risked provoking resentment at Westminster and sabotaging possible concessions to Irish interests.³

This shift in the ideological consensus did not render all Swift’s economic arguments passé. The emerging generation shared his concern at the detrimental impact on local industry of the fashion for imported luxury goods, and the haemorrhage of bullion from Ireland to absentee landlords and placemen. Nevertheless, the broad current of economic thought was now running in a new direction, and in consequence Swift came into conflict with writers who in his view exaggerated the potential of Irish agriculture and industry, overestimated the volume of Irish trade, or persisted in the delusion that Ireland’s surplus population was a valuable national resource rather than a drain on the wealth of the nation.

The crisis that gripped Ireland in the late 1720s, and to which Swift responded in different ways in the works gathered in this volume, was not just a matter of food shortages and perceived economic stagnation. The very existence of the Protestant establishment seemed to be endangered. Besides

- 1 Dobbs to Alexander MacAulay, 2 June 1732 (PRONI, Dobbs papers, D/162/26).
- 2 D. W. Hayton, *The Anglo-Irish Experience, 1680–1730: Religion, Identity and Patriotism*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012, pp. 132–44.
- 3 See, for example, Marmaduke Coghill to Lord Perceval, 14 Apr. 1731 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 112).

mass emigration from Ulster, which reduced the size of the Protestant population (albeit in the main the Presbyterian element), other evidence pointed towards a revival of the Catholic interest. The broader European context was ominous: the Walpole ministry had failed to deal firmly with the diplomatic and commercial threats posed by the Catholic powers of France and Spain, while stories continued to appear in the newspaper press of the persecution of Protestants in the Habsburg lands. In Ireland itself the general election of 1727 was followed by complaints of the intrigues of Catholic or crypto-Catholic factions in constituencies across the country. The subsequent appearance of French army officers in County Cork, recruiting for the Irish brigades, created further alarm, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that these agents had been licensed by government. Prompted by a rising apprehension that the popery laws of the 1690s and 1700s had failed to dent the Catholic allegiance of the majority of the population, the Irish House of Lords commissioned an enquiry in 1731 into 'the state of popery' in the kingdom, which revealed large numbers of unlicensed priests and a network of illegal schools. The response was a further batch of 'popery' bills, some of which reached the statute book, and in 1734 a renewed campaign to convert Catholics by educating their children, through the charter given to the Incorporated Society in Dublin for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland.

Anti-Catholic alarmism did not, however, necessarily result in a reaction in favour of the Church of Ireland. Instead, to Swift's consternation, the rapid decline after 1714 of the Irish Tory party, the self-styled guardians of the 'Church interest', was followed by the adoption among many in the propertied classes of an openly critical attitude towards the ecclesiastical establishment. Although this did not extend to acquiescing in measures to relieve Protestant Dissenters from legal disabilities, the financial interests of the church came under sustained attack, including the cherished privilege of collecting tithes, a vital source of income for parish clergy. Many country squires, especially advocates of economic 'improvement', began to see tithes as a national rather than a sectional grievance: a significant obstacle to Ireland's progress. The issue came to a head in 1736 with a public debate over the right of the clergy to claim a tithe on pasturage, the so-called 'tithe of agistment', which was eventually condemned in a resolution of the Irish House of Commons, provoking Swift to one of his harshest satires, the verses directed against MPs as the 'Legion Club'.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, given the drift of public events and public discourse in Ireland in the late 1720s and 1730s, and given his own increasing age, ill health and deafness, many of Swift's writings in this period exhibit a nostalgic quality. The focus of economic debate was moving away from the

kind of trenchant rhetoric he had deployed in the *Drapier's Letters*, while the appearance of what he interpreted as a vicious strain of anticlericalism among Protestant landlords in Ireland, and their parliamentary representatives, emphasised a new configuration of politics in an era of Whig consensus. At the same time, his Tory friends in England – men like Pope and Bolingbroke – remained politically impotent and could do no more than rail at the corruption of Walpole's rule, the so-called 'Robinocracy'. Little wonder, then, that in the tracts, essays and fragments presented here, Swift harked back to former glories, basking in the popularity he enjoyed with ordinary Dubliners in the character of 'the Drapier', and sometimes looking even further back into his past, to recall the four last years of Queen Anne's reign, when the 'Church party' controlled government in both Westminster and Dublin.

1 *The World of the Drapier*

Following the British government's withdrawal of the patent for Wood's Halfpence, which marked the final success of the long-drawn-out campaign of the 'Drapier', Swift took himself to England in March 1726, bringing with him the completed manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*. He rented lodgings in London, staying five months, during which time he visited Pope in Twickenham, Bolingbroke in Uxbridge, and other acquaintances farther afield. Surprisingly, he was also afforded an audience with Walpole. In consequence, rumours circulated in Ireland that he might at last receive some additional preferment, but these were soon dispelled. The disappointment in fact added to his public reputation in Ireland, being interpreted there as further proof of his honesty, and of his deep attachment to principle. When he returned to Dublin in August he was greeted as a conqueror. His friend Knightley Chetwode observed that 'Illuminations, bonfires and ringing of bells to welcome him, will perhaps make him a mark of envy, with the great ones, whom he has not gratified and complied with in England.'⁴ According to one witness, 'several heads of different corporations' (presumably the guilds) in Dublin hired boats to go out into the bay to meet the packet before it docked, and Swift was 'brought to his landing place in a kind of triumph... amid repeated acclamations of "Long live the Drapier"'.⁵ The

4 Knightley Chetwode to —, 27 Aug. 1726 (NLI, Mahon papers, MS 47,891/1).

5 Quoted in Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 495–6. See also *An Account of the Journey-men Weavers Grateful Congratulation of the Rev. Dr. Swift Dean of St. Patrick's Safe Arrival, with His Kind Answer, and Bounty to Their Corporation, Sep. the 5th 1726*, [Dublin,] 1726.

English Tory news-writer, Nathaniel Mist, proclaimed that ‘so grateful a sense do the people preserve of the merits of the Drapier’s books against Wood’s brass coin, that there’s scarce a street in town without a representation of him for a sign’.⁶

By his writings against Wood’s Halfpence Swift had created an image for himself as a popular hero that was not only iconic but seemingly imperishable.⁷ Invocation of the Drapier’s name was common practice among all political groupings in Dublin, and while his endorsement would be trumpeted as a guarantee of popularity, the disclosure in 1729 that a candidate in the parliamentary by-election for the city, Alderman James Somerville, had five years earlier argued for the prosecution of Swift and his printer proved sufficiently alarming for Somerville’s supporters to publish a printed denial under the Drapier’s name.⁸ In 1731 a ‘weekly writer’ proposed the erection of a statue in Dublin to ‘the Drapier’; in April 1733, when news of the defeat of Walpole’s excise bill reached Ireland, a group of ‘young men’ set up bonfires near the deanery, and dispensed ale to passers-by, to drink to ‘that worthy patriot the Drapier, who saved our nation from ruin’; and when Swift’s birthday was publicly celebrated in 1736, with ‘bonfires and illuminations’, the healths drunk included ‘long life to the Drapier’.⁹ Swift’s publishers kept the character alive, through reprinting the *Drapier’s Letters* – an edition of 1729 being entitled *The Hibernian Patriot*¹⁰ – or in appending the *nom de plume* to other works: a collection published in 1733 by James Hoey, which included several pieces by Swift alongside effusions of other authors, was given the title *The Drapier’s Miscellany*, presumably in the hope of boosting sales.¹¹ Swift’s rivals also cashed in: three pamphlets appearing in Dublin in 1729 appropriated the Drapier’s name to enhance their appeal, including a disquisition on ‘the inconveniences which the people of Ireland

6 *Mist’s Weekly Journal*, 3 Sept. 1726, quoted in Ehrenpreis, vol. III, p. 496.

7 Clive Probyn, ‘Jonathan Swift at the Sign of the Drapier’, in *Münster* (1998), pp. 225–37.

8 *Dublin Intelligence*, 30 Sept., 11, 14 Oct. 1729.

9 *A Letter to the Right Honourable Sir Ralph Gore, Bart. Speaker of the Honourable House of Commons* . . . , [Dublin, 1732], p. 11; *St James’s Evening Post*, 28 Apr. – 1 May 1733; *London Daily Post*, 11 Dec. 1736; Orrery, pp. 74–5. See also the crudely satirical *Letter from Dermott Mac-Poverty to the Author of the Intelligencer*, Dublin, 1728, p. 7: ‘I shall spake no more or [*sic. recte* of] de stori but shomting pon de statures of the Draper, dat shall be shet up, and I tink if I wash to advise upon dem, dere shall be wans in evry markets-town in Irlands, de shall be made of de shilver or golds, caush he keeps the braush from us.’

10 *The Hibernian Patriot: Being a Collection of the Drapier’s Letters to the People of Ireland* . . . , Dublin, 1729, repr. London, 1730. George Faulkner had previously used this title when reprinting the *Drapier’s Letters* as *Fraud Detected, or The Hibernian Patriot* . . . , Dublin, 1725.

11 *The Drapier’s Miscellany, in Verse and Prose* . . . , Dublin, 1733.

labour under for the want of small change', prepared by a writer who had himself crossed swords with Swift, John Browne (*d.* 1761).¹²

The city in which Swift now enjoyed such an elevated reputation possessed a vibrant political and print culture. Dublin itself was growing rapidly, and the 'constitutional revolution' that had established the Irish Parliament as the principal theatre of Irish political life had created a ravenous appetite for news, opinion and gossip, which the burgeoning book trade both serviced and encouraged. It has been estimated that the number of printers in the city quadrupled in the first three decades of the eighteenth century.¹³ No longer did Dublin presses merely reprint the work of London publishers. Their output was as much a product of the local scene: newspapers originated their own stories, pamphleteers debated specifically Irish issues, squibs and ballads satirised local institutions and personalities, with a strong focus on the life of the capital itself. Dublin also had its own literary periodicals, in emulation of English publications of which the *Spectator* had been the prototype: the *Dublin Weekly Intelligence* established by the printer James Carson in 1725, whose contributors were Whiggish writers such as James Arbuckle; and *The Intelligencer*, which Swift and his friend Thomas Sheridan produced in 1728–9. The greater physical durability of the pamphlet, sermon and tract has induced historians to emphasise these more substantial literary products, but such ephemeral single-sheet or half-sheet publications as have survived hint at a treasure of now vanished riches: for example, a 'vindication' in 1733 of the conduct of the popular Dublin Lord Mayor Humphrey French noted that several 'papers', now lost, had been circulating in the city concerning a report that French had behaved badly towards a chandler called Williams, an incident which in political terms seems trivial, or at best parochial, but which evidently provoked a significant skirmish in the press.¹⁴

12 John Browne, *The Drapier Reviv'd: or, Considerations on the Inconveniences Which the People of Ireland Labour Under for the Want of Small Change*, [Dublin, 1729]; 2nd edn, Dublin, 1731; *A Letter, to M. B. Drapier, Occasionally Writ, on the Late Oppressive Villainy of the Br[ewer]s, in Raising the Price of their Malt-liquors*, Dublin, 1729; *A Letter to the People of Ireland. By M. B. Draper*, Dublin, 1729. For Browne, see *DIB*, and below, pp. xlii–xliii.

13 Robert Munter, *The History of the Irish Newspaper 1685–1760*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; Mary Pollard, *Dublin's Trade in Books 1550–1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, chs. 3–5; James Kelly, 'Political Publishing, 1700–1800', in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. III: *The Irish Book in English 1550–1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 215–21. See also, in general, T. C. Barnard, "'Grand Metropolis' or 'the Anus of the World'? The Cultural Life of Eighteenth-Century Dublin', in Peter Clark and Raymond Gillespie (eds.), *Two Capitals: London and Dublin 1500–1840* (PBA 107 (2001)), pp. 185–210.

14 *A Full Vindication of Humphrey French, Late Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin*, Dublin, 1733.

As a capital city, Dublin was expanding and maturing rapidly.¹⁵ ‘The metropolis is exceeding large’, wrote the contemporary author of *A Humourous Description of the Manners and Fashions of the Inhabitants of the City of Dublin*; ‘the people, pleasures and customs, almost infinite’.¹⁶ Swift’s Dublin occupied the same position in relation to the rest of Ireland as London occupied in England, that is to say it was by a very long way the largest conurbation in the country, the centre of government, commerce, the law, education and the church. It was also a ‘leisure town’, the centre of fashionable society, where members of the propertied elite would lodge for the winter season, or purchase town houses, in order to avail themselves of the delights on offer – balls at the castle, evenings of music or theatre, promenades in pleasure-gardens, or the daily round of coffee-house conversation. In a comparative context, Dublin thus combined the facilities and functions of the cities of London and Westminster, and in so doing brought together men of trade and men of fashion, government officials, members of Parliament, clergymen, scholars and writers.

The rapidly developing city exhibited two very different faces. On the one hand, the social life of the elite was buoyant. The coffee-houses and the numerous taverns that Swift enumerated in *An Examination of Certain Abuses, Corruptions, and Enormities in the City of Dublin*, formed the backdrop to what modern historians would recognise as a genuine ‘public sphere’.¹⁷ The theatre and music rooms enabled performances of plays and entertainments that had recently graced the London stage, such as *The Beggar’s Opera*, the occasion of one of Swift’s essays in *The Intelligencer*, while ‘assemblies’, card-schools and other fashionable gatherings provided ample opportunities for pleasant sociability (or what Swift deplored as occasions of wasteful feminine self-indulgence). Extensive construction work in the city suggested confidence, and not only the speculative developments of town residences for gentlemen, of which Swift was suspicious (remembering English speculators a generation before), but great public buildings. In 1729 the foundation stone was laid for an impressive new parliament house in College Green, to an innovative design by the young architect Edward Lovett

15 For the condition and development of Dublin in this period, see David Dickson, *Dublin: The Making of a Capital City*, London: Profile Books, 2014, ch. 3.

16 *A Humourous Description of the Manners and Fashions of the Inhabitants of the City of Dublin, in a Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend in . . . Drogheda*, Dublin, 1734, p. [3].

17 For a discussion of this phenomenon in early eighteenth-century England, see Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005.

Pearce.¹⁸ Yet, at the same time, economic depression increased the numbers of the destitute. An influx of ‘strollers’ (as Swift called them) from the countryside served as a highly visible daily reminder of the distress of the lower orders. Beggars filled the streets, and crime spiralled. Prostitution seems to have been a particular problem, to judge by the emphasis placed by the city authorities on closing brothels and arresting street-walkers.¹⁹ It also seems to have been a particular concern of Swift’s, whose references to female vagrants, and even the female hawkers whose street cries are described in the *Examination of Certain Abuses* . . . , repeatedly suggest that these women were of low morals, and in reality no more than whores.

The topography of Dublin, and especially Swift’s corner of it, meant that the worlds of rich and poor came into direct contact. The cathedral and deanery of St Patrick’s, though within walking distance of the castle, the new parliament house, Trinity College, and the haunts of the *beau monde*, were also surrounded by the slums of the Archbishop’s and Earl of Meath’s Liberties. Here were the weavers and street gangs for whom ‘the Drapier’ was a patriotic hero, and here also were crowds of beggars, alarming creatures whose presence on the streets made travelling short distances seem hazardous. The visible contrast of wealth and poverty, and a sense of physical insecurity, gave Dublin its essential character. A former lord mayor argued in 1733 that it was a far livelier, and more disorderly, city even than London:

The Court is in the heart of our City, our Nobility and Gentry are intermixed Inhabitants . . . besides we have a College with about four Hundred Students. It is for the Accommodation of these that Coaches and Chairs ply almost all Nights, Taverns, Publick-houses and Coffee-houses are kept open most part of the Nights, and a continual Noise, and Quarrels often ensue; Numbers passing and repassing the whole Nights long, lewd Women tempted to strole about to meet with those disorder’d by Drinking, etc.²⁰

For much of the year, the tumult of Dublin (and especially the area around St Patrick’s cathedral) constituted Swift’s personal landscape. But for all the adulation he claimed to receive from the populace, and the pleasure he derived from the company of friends, it was not a landscape in which he was content. ‘Going to England is a very good thing’, he wrote in a letter in 1726, ‘if it were not with an ugly circumstance of returning to

18 Edward McParland, ‘Building the Parliament House in Dublin’, *Parliamentary History* 21 (2002), 131–40.

19 See below, p. xcvi.

20 Sir William Fownes, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Humphrey French, Esq., Present Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin*, Dublin, 1733, pp. 4–5.

Ireland'.²¹ He journeyed across the water for the last time in 1727, before being called back by news of what turned out to be the fatal illness of Esther Johnson ('Stella'). His peregrinations within Ireland were also more tightly circumscribed than they had once been. In the first decade of his return to Ireland he had established a wide-ranging itinerary: there were visits to the Rochforts in County Westmeath, to Bishop Stearne in Clogher in County Tyrone, to Bishop Bolton in County Galway, and in 1723 a journey to the wilds of west Cork.²² This extensive travelling, as well as the time he had spent attending to his parish duties at Kilroot in County Antrim (at the outset of his clerical career) and then at Laracor, near Trim in County Meath, has encouraged scholars to emphasise Swift's familiarity with the country, its resources and its problems.²³ But this was not the case after 1725, when not only had life become much harder for tenants and labourers because of persistent bad weather and poor harvests, but significant underlying changes were happening to the Irish economy. In the period covered by this volume, Swift travelled much less. Aside from a lengthy visit in 1728 to his friends the Achesons at Markethill in County Armagh (where he again confessed 'I hate Dublin and love the retirement here'²⁴) and another, briefer stay in the autumn of 1735 with Thomas Sheridan at Quilca in County Cavan, his country visits were now confined to the hinterland of the city: to Belcamp, Grange and Howth, just north of Dublin, to Powerscourt in County Wicklow, and to his first cousin once removed, Deane Swift, at Castlerickard near Trim.

Increasingly, Swift's vision of Ireland was seen through the lens of the capital city. Brief sojourns in comfortable villas in County Dublin, amid the prosperous pastureland of the Pale, afforded only a limited insight into conditions in the countryside; and while travel in south Ulster, to Markethill and Quilca, offered a different perspective, this was in its way equally unrepresentative. Avoiding Munster meant that Swift did not see for himself how Ireland's principal wool-producing region was responding to the challenges of restrictive English legislation, and how graziers and merchants in Cork were exploiting opportunities to trade with Britain's transatlantic plantations. At the same time, the fact that he went no farther north than Counties Armagh or Cavan left him reliant on second-hand information

21 Swift to Pope and Gay, 17 Nov. 1726 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. III, p. 35).

22 Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 426–30.

23 Joseph McMinn, *Jonathan's Travels: Swift and Ireland*, Belfast: Appletree Press, 1994, provides a full picture.

24 Swift to Sheridan, 2 Aug. 1728 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. III, p. 192).

about the state of Presbyterian communities in Ulster, the reality behind emigration to America, and the transformative potential of the new linen manufacture.

Moreover, even on these visits to northern friends, he seems to have been insulated from the realities of life in the Irish countryside. Markethill, for example, was situated in an area notorious for rural banditry, and for the brutalities of the local ‘rapparee-hunter’, John Johnston, on whose largely unofficial policing activities depended the maintenance of public order.²⁵ Swift, ensconced behind the walls of the Achesons’ Gosford Park estate, would appear not to have fully appreciated the violent reputation of the neighbourhood. Indeed, he was either ignorant of the details of recent local history, or perhaps sufficiently confident in Johnston’s abilities to contemplate purchasing a property there for himself.²⁶

The world Swift inhabited was circumscribed not just by his own travelling habits, but also by the scope of his social contacts. The death of Esther Johnson in 1728 put an end to his most intimate relationship, but he retained a coterie of friends in Ireland: representatives of the next generation, like the Achesons, Patrick Delany or Thomas Sheridan (his collaborator on *The Intelligencer*); slightly older men like Charles Ford or Knightley Chetwode; and apprentice poets like Mary Barber and Laetitia Pilkington. In essence, this was a community of inferiors: cronies, admirers and protégé(e)s. Beyond the shores of Ireland, of course, older and grander friendships continued, with Lords Bolingbroke and Orrery, Alexander Pope and John Gay, and with the family of his former patron Robert Harley, but after 1727 these relationships were maintained on an epistolary rather than a personal basis.

One obvious feature of Swift’s social circle was its strongly literary character; another was an enduring strain of Tory sympathies, allegiances and prejudices, which informed not just the poetry of Pope and the political journalism of Bolingbroke, but, on a lesser scale, the High Churchmanship of Dr Delany and the rustic Tory ‘patriotism’ of Sir Arthur Acheson.²⁷ A

25 T. G. F. Paterson, ‘The Black Bank and Fews Barracks’, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 1 (1938), 108–12; L. M. Cullen, *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600–1900*, London: Batsford, 1981, p. 207; Neal Garnham, *The Courts, Crime and the Criminal Law in Ireland 1692–1760*, Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996, pp. 44–5.

26 J. G. Simms, ‘Dean Swift and County Armagh’, *Seanchas Ardmbacha* 6 (1971), 131–40. It is worth noting, however, that in a poem in which he explained his reasons ‘for not Building at Drapier’s Hill’, he made reference to the situation of the place: ‘How could I form so wild a vision, / To seek, in deserts, Fields Elysian? / To live in fear, suspicion, variance, / With Thieves, Fanatics, and Barbarians’ (*Poems*, vol. III, p. 899).

27 For Delany, see *DIB*; *ODNB*; for Acheson, John Bayly to George Dodington, 31 July 1736 (NLI, MS 16,139, p. 29); *Hist. Ir. Parl.*, vol. III, pp. 52–3.

less obvious feature, perhaps, in the list of Swift's closest acquaintances is the absence of figures of influence at the centre of politics. Swift remained at some distance from the key men in Dublin Castle or in the Irish Parliament; and after the death of Archbishop King of Dublin in May 1729, he had few contacts within the higher reaches of the established church. Among Irish politicians, he had little to do with the pro-government party headed first by Speaker William Conolly (*d.* 1729) and then by Sir Ralph Gore (*d.* 1733), aside from an amiable acquaintance with the Prime Serjeant Henry Singleton, himself a former Tory. And his only connection with the rival Whig faction, headed first by the Brodricks and then after 1728 by Henry Boyle, was the maverick patriot Eaton Stannard, whose candidacy for municipal office in Dublin in 1729 Swift advocated in *Some Considerations Humbly Offered to the . . . Lord-Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, and Common Council . . . in the Choice of a Recorder*.²⁸ Otherwise, Swift's Irish friends were minor players on the public stage. As for his English correspondents – with the exception of William Pulteney, Walpole's principal parliamentary antagonist, with whom in any case he was not close – they were, in political terms, internal exiles. Bolingbroke, whom Swift first encountered at the heart of English political life in Queen Anne's reign, was now an archetypal outsider, his influence resting entirely on his writings.

With one exception, Swift's relationships with successive viceroys were also distant. The exception was John, Lord Carteret, lord lieutenant from 1724 to 1730. Carteret was another ex-Tory, and an old London acquaintance, who welcomed Swift into Dublin Castle and into his private apartments, did what he could to protect him from prosecution over the *Drapier's Letters*, and at first accepted his recommendations for the advancement of clerical friends. But Carteret regarded Swift as a source of entertaining company rather than serious counsel. He took his political advice from other sources (notably Conolly and Gore). There was no bishopric for Swift himself, despite the wholly unrealistic expectations of his supporters,²⁹ and the preferments provided for those whom the dean recommended were very small beer. The dukes of Dorset and Devonshire, the lords lieutenant who followed Carteret, showed Swift no more than the formal courtesy due to a man of his position and reputation.

The relatively narrow compass of Swift's social life from the late 1720s onwards had two main consequences for his writings. In the first place,

28 For more on Swift's relationships during the period, see A. C. Elias, 'Senatus Consultum: Revising Verse in Swift's Dublin Circle, 1729–1735', in *Münster* (1998), pp. 249–67.

29 Knightley Chetwode to —, 5 July 1726 (NLI, MS 47,891/1).

his contributions to political debate in Ireland possessed a strongly self-referential quality. He wrote about his own experiences, cited and justified his own previously published work, and endlessly pursued quarrels with other writers. Even his *Vindication* of Carteret in 1730 from the charge of favouring Tories was constructed around a narrative of the patronage the viceroy had doled out to Swift's friends. Moreover, the individual Irish politicians whom Swift attacked most vehemently and most often, Viscount Allen, Richard Tighe and Richard Bettesworth, were singled out by personal vendetta. Admittedly, each was a prominent parliamentarian, but, with the possible exception of Allen, they were not figures of the front rank. They were notorious because Swift's satires made them so. His practice of coining abusive nicknames for personal enemies based on physical infirmities or doubtful ancestry – 'Traulus' (the stammerer) for Allen, 'Dick Fitzbaker' for Tighe (referring to Tighe's supposed descent from a supplier of bread to the Cromwellian army) – and re-using these without explanation suggests that his satire was operating in an artificial political environment of his own creation: a kind of micro-system with himself at the centre, rather than the greater world of Irish parliamentary politics as contemporaries understood it.

It was also a political environment with the strong flavour of a bygone era. Swift's emphasis on party identity and party hostility, in a Whig and Tory sense, was inappropriate to the Ireland of the late 1720s and 1730s, when such distinctions, though they had left traces in men's thoughts and writings, seem to have been largely absent from the political scene.³⁰ His presentation of pro-government interests (for example, in *An Examination of Certain Abuses, Corruptions, and Enormities in the City of Dublin*) as obsessed with a fear of the Jacobite Pretender, and determined at all costs to smear their critics as Jacobites, may have had some resonances at a local level, especially on the streets of Dublin, where Catholic mobs adopted Jacobite emblems and catch-cries.³¹ But it does not reflect the tenor of Irish parliamentary debates, as reported in the surviving sources. As Swift himself acknowledged, many of those who had been active in the Tory party in Ireland in the period before 1715 had now reconciled themselves to the Whig ascendancy, to the extent of holding high office themselves in the Dublin government.

Swift's depiction of Whig paranoia was in fact more appropriate to the political situation in Walpole's England, where party distinctions were still important, both in terms of practical politics and in the rhetoric of

30 See below, pp. xlvi–liii.

31 Patrick Fagan, 'The Dublin Catholic Mob (1700–1750)', *ECI* 4 (1989), 139.

parliamentary and extra-parliamentary debate.³² He was interpreting Irish politics in English terms, rather than reflecting the very different circumstances that now obtained in the Dublin Parliament. He was also viewing contemporary events through the prism of his own past. In several of the works included in this volume we can see Swift harking back to what were for him the great days of Queen Anne's reign. His *Letter on the Fishery* in 1734, for example, included attacks on the Dutch (never too far beneath the surface of his thought) and gratuitous references to the 'great ministry' of Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, which had dished the Whigs, protected the established churches in England and Ireland, and made peace with France in spite of the machinations of selfish allies abroad and warmongering financiers at home. Even the literary expression of his continuing attachment to his friend Francis Atterbury, the High Church bishop of Rochester deprived and banished in 1723 after accusations of Jacobite conspiracy, was rooted in the past. In one of his *Intelligencers*, Swift appears to contrast Atterbury's sufferings with the worldly success and material comforts of unworthy Whig clergymen (though disguising the identification of Atterbury by depicting his fate as rustic obscurity rather than continental exile). The story he tells, however, focuses on the education and early career of the protagonists before the Hanoverian succession. The recollection of such distant days, which were not only a golden age for the 'Church interest' but also a time of great success for Swift personally, was of a piece with his continued emphasis on the triumphs of the Drapier long after Wood's Halfpence had been abandoned and new issues had arisen. The nature of public debate in Ireland was changing, but Swift was not changing with it.

2 *Irish Economic Writings 1727–1731: Problems and Solutions*

The condition of the Irish economy in the early eighteenth century attracted an inordinate amount of interest from contemporary commentators. By English standards Ireland was poor and underdeveloped, lagging behind its more prosperous neighbour not only in manufactures, trade and commerce, but in agriculture, the principal economic activity of the majority

32 Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714–60*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, chs. 7–8; Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, ch. 1. Cf. William Speck, 'Whigs and Tories Dim Their Glories', in John Cannon (ed.), *The Whig Ascendancy: Colloquies on Hanoverian England*, London: Edward Arnold, 1981, pp. 51–70.

of the population. The Irish countryside did not appear to have recovered from the damaging effects of the ‘war of the two kings’ and the widespread reorganisation of tenurial agreements arising from the post-war land settlement. Harvest failures produced periodic crises, which were exacerbated by the scarcity of coin. It was easy to recognise major structural weaknesses in the Irish economy. Irish agriculture was perceived to concentrate on pastoral rather than arable farming, and thus to be dependent on imports of basic foodstuffs. The only significant manufacture, woollens, had received a serious blow from the English Woollen Act of 1699, which prevented the export of yarn and cloth to England or its plantations. From the mid-1720s, the balance of trade ran against Ireland, a situation that seemed to be exacerbated by excessive imports of luxury goods that could not be offset by exports. Worse still, from the perspective of the mercantilist beliefs that still underpinned much contemporary economic theory, the country’s stock of bullion seemed to be draining away: remitted to absentee landowners and officials, and exported by opportunistic bankers who took advantage of the differences in the relative values of gold and silver in Ireland and England. With no facility to mint coin in Ireland and a chaotic variety of foreign moneys in circulation, the currency was chronically weak. And, indeed, the financial sector in general was relatively primitive. There were no public banks, and the small Irish finance houses were in constant danger of collapse (as indeed happened in 1733, when Benjamin Burton’s bank closed, owing over £90,000 to between 8,000 and 9,000 creditors), thus preventing the level of capital formation necessary for investment in commercial or industrial enterprises. Public finance was equally fragile: persistent shortfalls in tax revenue after 1714 had created a ‘national debt’, which stood at £300,000 in *c.* 1730. Although, of course, minuscule by English standards (where the national debt was at least 100 times as large), this represented a substantial sum for the Irish treasury, whose annual expenditure in this period ranged from £400,000 to £600,000, and was therefore a source of considerable public concern.³³

Such was the perception. The reality, as modern scholars have shown, was much less gloomy, at least in relation to the potential for development.

33 Charles Ivar McGrath, ‘Money, Politics and Power: The Financial Legislation of the Irish Parliament’, in D. W. Hayton, James Kelly and John Bergin (eds.), *The Eighteenth-century Composite State: Representative Institutions in Ireland and Europe, 1689–1800*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 27–32; McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692–1770*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012, pp. 171, 183–9. The national debt and its management are central themes of Sean D. Moore, *Swift, the Book, and the Irish Financial Revolution: Satire and Sovereignty in Colonial Ireland*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Economic historians have identified the 1740s as the decade in which the Irish economy finally ‘took off’.³⁴ What remained of the legal trade between Ireland and the north American plantations, in particular the provisions trade in beef and butter from Munster, was promoting a healthy expansion in cattle-grazing, and enhancing the prosperity of Cork and its subsidiary ports.³⁵ At the same time, large-scale clandestine exports of contraband goods to France and Spain, especially woollen yarn and cloth, was compensating in no small measure for the legislative restrictions imposed on trade to Britain and her dominions: indeed, in some parts of the south-west of Ireland smuggling was so well organised, and maintained on such a large scale, as to occupy a central place in the structure of the local economy.³⁶ Elsewhere, especially in north-east Ulster, patient nurturing of the infant linen manufacture was beginning to show beneficial results.³⁷ With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that Ireland’s economy was by no means as stagnant, nor its future as hopeless, as contemporaries believed. But, of course, this was less apparent to contemporaries. With some notable exceptions – economic writers like John Browne and David Bindon (*c.* 1690–1761), with whose opinions Swift profoundly and bitterly disagreed – they could see little further than the depressing commercial statistics available to Parliament, the newspaper reports of bankruptcies, and the evidence of their own eyes in relation to poverty and starvation in town and countryside.³⁸

Swift’s analysis of Ireland’s economic problems was set forth clearly in his *Short View of the State of Ireland*, published in 1728.³⁹ Here he established a

34 David Dickson, *New Foundations: Ireland 1660–1800*, 2nd edn, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000, ch. 4, esp. p. 116.

35 David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster 1630–1830*, Cork: Cork University Press, 2005, chs. 4, 7.

36 L. M. Cullen, ‘Five Letters Relating to Galway Smuggling in 1737’, *Journal of the Galway Historical and Archaeological Society* 27 (1959), 10–25; Cullen, *Anglo-Irish Trade 1660–1800*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968, pp. 5, 26; Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660*, London: Batsford, 1972, pp. 39–42; Dickson, *Old World Colony*, pp. 124–35.

37 See Conrad Gill, *The Rise of the Irish Linen Industry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, chs. 2–4.

38 See, for example, *Dublin Intelligence*, 28 Dec. 1728, 8 Feb. 1729; Lord Middleton to Thomas Brodrick, 9 July 1727, 30 Apr., 2, 18 May 1728 (Surrey History Centre, Brodrick papers, 1248/7/77–8, 231–4, 235–6, 243–4); Henry Crofton to William Smyth, 18 Aug., 19 Sept. 1729 (NLI, Smyth of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,586/3); Bishop Robert Howard to Hugh Howard, 2, 27 Nov. 1728, 9 Apr. 1729 (NLI, Wicklow papers, MS 38,598/4, 38,598/5); Hugh Howard to Bishop Robert Howard, 20 Mar. 1728[9] (NLI, Wicklow papers, MS 38,598/4); and, in general, James Kelly, ‘Harvests and Hardship: Famine and Scarcity in Ireland in the Late 1720s’, *Studia Hibernica* 26 (1991–2), 65–85.

39 See below, pp. 13–26.

series of requirements for prosperity, and showed how the condition of Ireland failed to meet them. His later writings recapitulated the same points. In essence, however, this was a political explanation. In Swift's view, the nature of Anglo-Irish governance, in which Ireland's administration and legislature were subordinated to England's, inevitably resulted in the sacrificing of Irish economic interests. The government at Westminster ruled Ireland in England's interests: they would not permit the Irish to mint their own coins, gave jobs and pensions in Ireland to Englishmen, and interfered with the legislation prepared by the Irish Parliament, which under Poynings' Law required the approval of the English (after 1707, British) privy council. And the Westminster Parliament went further, passing laws that undermined the capacity of Irish agriculturalists and manufacturers by refusing them the right to export their products: not only the hated Woollen Act but the various Navigation Acts that controlled transatlantic commerce. At the same time, the proclaimed constitutional inferiority of Ireland, and the experience of living under laws which they themselves had no part in making, infused into the minds of Irish men and women the mentality of slavery, reducing the 'vulgar' to a brutish state in which they were unable to help themselves, and creating among the wealthy a vain aspiration to live in the manner of their counterparts across the water. In consequence, absentee landlords extorted unreasonably high rents from their tenants in order to draw away the wealth of the country to support conspicuous consumption in London or Bath, while the gentlemen, and especially the ladies, who did remain in Dublin were keen to ape English fashions and import luxury goods at the expense of native manufactures.

Constitutional patriotism of this kind had a well-established pedigree. In particular, there had been a sustained chorus of protest from Protestants in Ireland at the turn of the century over repeated English parliamentary interference in Irish affairs: the Woollen Act in 1699, the enforced resumption of Irish forfeited estates in 1699–1700, and attempts by the English House of Lords in 1697–1703 to assert their appellate jurisdiction over Irish litigation. Some had returned to the historical claim of the Irish Parliament to parity with Westminster, and thus in effect a legislative autonomy, most notably William Molyneux, in *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (1698), a work which acquired a brief notoriety in England and a lasting fame in Ireland.⁴⁰ Similar sentiments had also

40 J. G. Simms, *William Molyneux of Dublin: 1656–1698*, ed. P. H. Kelly, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982; D. W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685–1742: Politics, Politicians and Parties*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004, pp. 66–84; Patrick Kelly, 'Conquest versus

been aroused two decades later by the passage at Westminster in 1720 of the Declaratory Act, which confirmed unilaterally and finally the right of the British House of Lords to act as a last court of appeal for lawsuits begun in Ireland, and also the right of the British Parliament to legislate directly for Ireland.⁴¹ Swift's calculation of the deleterious effects of the denial of Irish constitutional rights stood directly in this tradition: indeed, the controversy over the Declaratory Act had formed the background to his incendiary pamphlet *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture . . . Utterly Rejecting and Renouncing Everything Wearable that Comes from England* (1720). His point of departure was indignation at English discriminatory legislation over wool, and the iniquity of binding a people with laws to which they had not given their consent, arguments to which he would return. Moreover, in developing his case he made several other points which were to be found in the *Short View* – for example, lamenting the export of bullion to England and condemning landlords who 'racked' their tenants with exorbitant rents, instead of discharging their proper social responsibilities (a point he returned to in *Maxims Controlled in Ireland* in lamenting the decline of the traditional dispensation of hospitality in aristocratic houses).⁴²

Those who thought and wrote in the same vein as Swift were not necessarily in the majority. Even at the height of the outrage against the English Forfeitures Resumption Act of 1700, which generated a national campaign of addresses to the king, any suggestion that the protesters were aiming at independence was quickly denied.⁴³ Later, during the prolonged jurisdictional dispute over the case of *Annesley v. Sherlock*, which was the immediate occasion for the introduction of the Declaratory Bill, there were inflammatory speeches in the Irish House of Lords about 'certain men's being slaves who are to be bound by laws where they have no representatives', but once the bill passed, the public response in Ireland was strangely muted.⁴⁴ This

Consent as the Basis of the English Title to Ireland in William Molyneux's *Case of Ireland . . . Stated* (1698), in Ciaran Brady and J. H. Ohlmeyer (eds.), *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 334–56.

- 41 Isolde Victory, 'The Making of the Declaratory Act of 1720', in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Parliament, Politics and People: Essays in Eighteenth-century Irish History*, Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989, pp. 9–29; D. W. Hayton, 'The Stanhope/Sunderland Ministry and the Repudiation of Irish Parliamentary Independence', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), 610–36.
- 42 See below, pp. 171–80.
- 43 Patrick Walsh, *The Making of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy: The Life of William Conolly, 1662–1729*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010, pp. 56–9; Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp. 79–80.
- 44 Hayton, 'Stanhope/Sunderland Ministry and Repudiation of Irish Parliamentary Independence', pp. 618, 635–6.

was not simply a matter of political timidity among people whose memories of their ‘deliverance’ from the Catholic government of James II in 1690 were still vivid. There was always another style of political discourse in Ireland, less strident and more pragmatic, whose proponents sought to persuade the English government and Parliament that it was in their own interest to accommodate Irish manufacturers and merchants in their extensive commercial networks. Examples include Sir Francis Brewster (*d.* 1705), whose published writings recommended the adoption of a generous imperial policy based on the colonial practices of the ancient Romans, and Henry Maxwell (1669–1730), who in 1704 presented the argument for an Anglo-Irish union, instead of, or in addition to, the proposed English treaty with Scotland.⁴⁵ And there were writers – including Maxwell again – who continued the tradition of urging Irish Protestants to help themselves through a process of social and economic reform, to be achieved either by educating the ‘native Irish’ and converting them to Protestantism and English civility, or by a renewed policy of inviting over Protestant settlers.

These less confrontational approaches gained significant ground after 1715. The proposal for a national bank in 1721 stimulated a pamphlet debate which explored the ways in which the Irish economy could be kick-started without any revisions of the system of governance;⁴⁶ and in 1723 Robert, Viscount Molesworth, published his *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture*, which offered a range of practical schemes that could be adopted within Ireland, without reference to the English, including the granting of longer leases to tenants, the foundation of local agricultural schools, ‘praemiums’ awarded for excellence in husbandry, and (something Swift would not have welcomed) a rational reform of the system of ecclesiastical taxation through tithes.⁴⁷ By the late 1720s, a new generation of

45 Sir Francis Brewster, *Essays on Trade and Navigation . . .*, London, 1695; Brewster, *A Discourse Concerning Ireland and the Different Interests Thereof . . .*, London, 1698; Brewster, *New Essay's on Trade . . .*, London, 1702; Henry Maxwell, *An Essay upon an Union of Ireland with England . . .*, Dublin, 1704; Maxwell, *Reasons Offer'd for Erecting a Bank in Ireland; in a Letter to Hercules Rowley, Esq.*, Dublin, 1721; Maxwell, *Mr Maxwell's Second Letter to Mr Rowley; Wherein the Objections Against the Bank are Answer'd*, Dublin, 1721; D. W. Hayton, ‘Henry Maxwell, Author of *An Essay Towards an Union of Ireland with England* (1703)’, *ECI* 22 (2007), 28–63.

46 Michael Ryder, ‘The Bank of Ireland, 1721: Land, Credit and Dependency’, *Historical Journal* 25 (1982), 557–82. See also Patrick Kelly, ‘Industry and Virtue versus Luxury and Corruption: Berkeley, Walpole and the South Sea Bubble Crisis’, *ECI* 7 (1992), 57–74.

47 Molesworth, *Some Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor*, Dublin, 1723.

economic writers had emerged, most notably David Bindon, John Browne, Arthur Dobbs, William Maple (*d.* 1762) and Thomas Prior (1681–1751), who based their work on detailed analyses of trading patterns and prospects.⁴⁸ Together, they developed a new and persuasive ideology of the ‘improvement’ of Ireland through the modernisation of agriculture and the promotion of new industrial enterprises.⁴⁹ This was a significant departure from demands for constitutional equality.⁵⁰ Swift was not entirely isolated in his continuing rage against English legislative discrimination,⁵¹ but his arguments were being superseded by a different line of thought, one that by contrast emphasised the advantages offered by the connection with Britain. The new literature of political economy in Ireland took its cue from the work of established English authorities on trade, like Charles Davenant (1656–1714), and more recent authors such as the London-based transatlantic merchant Joshua Gee (1667–1730), himself the son of an Irishman, whose most important publication, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain Consider’d*, appeared in 1729, and dealt with a range of very specific problems in a highly practical way. This style of writing also adopted the statistical emphasis

- 48 For Bindon, see *DIB*. For Dobbs, see Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs, Esquire, 1689–1765*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957; Helen Rankin and Charles Nelson (eds.), *Curious in Everything: The Career of Arthur Dobbs of Carrickfergus, 1689–1765*, Carrickfergus: Carrickfergus and District Historical Society in association with Society for the History of Natural History, 1990; *ODNB*; *DIB*. For Maple, see *DIB*. For Prior, see Desmond Clarke, *Thomas Prior, 1681–1751, Founder of the Royal Dublin Society*, Dublin: Royal Dublin Society, 1951; Teddy Fennelly, *Thomas Prior: His Life, Times, and Legacy*, Port Laoise: Arderin Publishing, 2001; *ODNB*; *DIB*.
- 49 Patrick Kelly, ‘The Politics of Political Economy in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Ireland’, in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Political Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000, pp. 106–9; James Livesey, ‘The Dublin Society in Eighteenth-Century Irish Political Thought’, *Historical Journal* 47 (2004), 615–40. See also Livesey, *Civil Society and Empire: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009, ch. 2, esp. pp. 57–62.
- 50 Even if, as James Kelly has argued, this ideology could not have been developed without the foundations laid by Swift’s critique of Irish economic conditions in *A Short View* and other writings: ‘Jonathan Swift and the Irish Economy in the 1720s’, *ECI* 6 (1991), 7–36; see also Patrick Kelly, ‘“Conclusions by No Means Calculated for the Circumstances and Condition of Ireland”: Swift, Berkeley, and the Solution to Ireland’s Economic Problems’, in Aileen Douglas et al. (eds.), *Locating Swift: Essays from Dublin on the 250th Anniversary of the Death of Jonathan Swift, 1667–1745*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998, p. 55.
- 51 See, for example, [?Sir Richard Cox,] *Some Observations on the Present State of Ireland, Particularly with Relation to the Woollen Manufacture*, Dublin, 1731, and the reaction to this pamphlet in Lord Perceval to Marmaduke Coghill, 8 Apr. 1731 (BL, Egmont papers, Add. MS 47033, fo. 70).

of the nascent science of ‘political arithmetic’, which dated back to the work of Sir William Petty in the Restoration period.⁵²

Swift’s *Short View* offered superficial concessions to political arithmetic. It began in a theoretical style, with an enumeration of ‘the true causes of any country’s flourishing and growing rich’, which included ‘the conveniency of safe ports and havens’ and ‘the privilege of free trade’. But it was not long before Swift was rehearsing familiar grievances, through recording the many inadequacies of the Irish case: denied the opportunity to export their manufactures; denied the basic freedom to coin their own money; denied a resident monarch to provide a focus around which the social elite might cluster instead of always looking to England; even denied access to places in the Irish administration which their own taxes paid for. The conclusion turned the tables neatly on the arithmeticians: ‘if Ireland be a rich and flourishing kingdom, its wealth and prosperity must be owing to certain causes, that are yet concealed from the whole race of mankind’.

In composing the *Short View*, Swift was taking as his principal antagonist John Browne, a scion of a Catholic landed family in County Mayo now suffering under reduced circumstances, who had conformed to the established church in 1722 and was attempting to make his way in the world as a writer and ‘projector’. Having previously given evidence before the privy council in Whitehall in support of the patent for Wood’s Halfpence, Browne had made Swift his enemy, a state of affairs he was anxious to put right. Unfortunately for him, the pamphlet with which he hoped to recover Swift’s good opinion, *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*, published in 1728, only antagonised the dean further, since it presented a highly optimistic view of the prospects for the development of Irish commerce, which in Swift’s view was entirely counter-intuitive, given the food shortages in the summer of 1727, the destitution of the Dublin population, and the ongoing emigration from Ulster.⁵³ Of particular concern to Swift was Browne’s endorsement of a popular saying which he himself regarded as a dangerous fallacy and which he denounced in, among other works, *Maxims Controlled in Ireland*, namely that ‘people are the riches of a nation’. In Swift’s view, Ireland’s overpopulation, far from being a potential source

52 George Wittkowsky, ‘Swift’s *Modest Proposal*: The Biography of an Early Georgian Pamphlet’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943), esp. pp. 81–3; G. A. Rees, ‘Pamphlets, Pamphleteers and the Problems of Irish Society, c. 1727–1749’, Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 2011, pp. 65–8.

53 Kelly, ‘Swift and the Irish Economy’, pp. 20–31.

of prosperity, was in fact a dead weight on the country's economy, since one consequence of the flood of paupers that was inundating Dublin and other urban centres was that money would be spent on poor relief rather than invested in agriculture or manufacturing. It was a theme to which he would return in the *A Modest Proposal*, which at last found a practical use for the children of beggars by treating them as livestock: in that pamphlet, his readers were asked to accept the horrifying prospect of cannibalism as the only way in which, in Ireland, human beings could conceivably constitute a source of wealth.

Browne's simple remedy for Ireland's ills was founded on the therapeutic power of trade, and the primary purpose of this work and another pamphlet, *An Essay on Trade*, which he published shortly afterwards, was relatively innocent: to persuade the English government to open up imperial commerce.⁵⁴ But for Swift this was tantamount to addressing the symptom rather than the disease. Worse still, Swift feared that such fallacious nostrums might convince politicians and members of Parliament in Westminster and Dublin, and divert their minds from attending to the real, deep-rooted, problem of Anglo-Irish governance. He therefore maintained a particular antipathy to Browne, responding acidly to his *Memorial of the Poor Inhabitants, Tradesmen and Labourers of the Kingdom of Ireland*, and casting further sneers in Browne's direction in his own *Answer to Several Letters from Unknown Persons*, and even, by implication, in *A Modest Proposal*, in a sidelong reference to one of Browne's recognised pen-names.⁵⁵

More formidable writers than Browne, however, soon appeared on the scene. In 1729 Arthur Dobbs, who had been elected to a seat in the Irish House of Commons two years earlier, published the first part of his *Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland* (the second appeared in 1731). At over 250 pages, bolstered by detailed statistical tables, the *Essay* was an even more solid contribution than Browne's *Seasonable Remarks* (against which Dobbs also launched significant criticisms). It was founded on a formidable grasp of the data available from governmental and parliamentary sources relating to trade and population, which compared favourably with Swift's sometimes cavalier way with figures. In his later writings, Swift occasionally disagreed with Dobbs's statistics, providing alternative numbers of his own without any acknowledged basis, but, unlike in his treatment of Browne, he

54 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*, Dublin, 1728; Browne, *An Essay on Trade in General; and, on that of Ireland in Particular*, Dublin, 1728.

55 See below, pp. 22–39, 116, 152–3.

did not engage directly in dispute with the younger man.⁵⁶ Then Thomas Prior, a well-connected and unusually intellectual Irish estate agent, who had worked for the Rawdon family in Ulster and was now managing George Berkeley's properties during Berkeley's absence in America, published a *List of the Absentees of Ireland*, which brought statistical rigour to the issue of absenteeism. Prior quickly followed this success with a second pamphlet, the *Observations on Coin* in 1730, which took another issue of concern to Swift and subjected it to a similar exercise in political arithmetic. Again, Swift steered clear of direct conflict with Prior. Browne had been a relatively weak opponent, but Dobbs and Prior were made of different stuff, bringing to the debate on the Irish economy a statistical precision that Swift could only parody. Moreover, each had an entrée into official circles, which afforded them privileged access to information derived from revenue returns, while another contemporary, the Dublin merchant David Bindon, author of *A Scheme for . . . the Better Providing for the Poor of Ireland* (1729) and *Some Thoughts on the Woollen Manufactures* (1731), had a personal experience of the realities of commerce that was on a higher level altogether than the knowledge Swift derived from his conversations with the weavers of the Liberties.⁵⁷

The rash of publications on the Irish economy in 1727–9, to which Swift contributed, was clearly owing to the sense of doom enveloping Ireland, as one failed harvest followed another. But the fact that pamphlets clustered at particular times, in 1727–8 and again in 1729–30, was owing to the nature of their intended audience. We know relatively little of the economics of publishing in this period, the size of print-runs, the profits to be made, and where the money went. But it has been suggested that, even by the middle of the century, the readership of pamphlets did not extend much below freehold voters in counties.⁵⁸ None of the major productions of the period, including Swift's, was provided with a price on its title page, which may indicate that they were not intended primarily to make money for the authors or printers. Instead, they were intended to be read by government ministers, and especially the parliamentarians in Dublin – the men who could make decisions. The Irish Parliament was in session from November 1727 to May 1728, and

⁵⁶ See below, pp. 103, 135, 169, 235.

⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that John Perceval, the son of the first Lord Egmont, found on a visit to Dublin in May 1731 that Bindon 'has a very bad character here, and is very little esteemed' (John Perceval to his father, 5 May 1731 (BL, Add. MS 47033, fo. 98)).

⁵⁸ James Kelly, 'Political Publishing, 1700–1800', in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, vol. III: *The Irish Book in English 1550–1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 227.

again from September 1729 to April 1730, and in both sessions discussed a raft of measures designed to tackle both short-term and long-term economic problems. Pamphlets like Prior's exposure of the extent of absenteeism, or his discussion of the problem of the coinage, were clearly intended to recommend specific forms of legislative action. Swift's contributions were not focused in quite the same way. The *Modest Proposal*, the most famous of these works (which will be discussed at length later in this introduction), did of course advocate a particular scheme, to wit, the breeding of Irish children for the butchery trade but only on the assumption that the other remedies being proposed would never be implemented, and in any case Swift could hardly expect the Parliament to take this recommendation seriously.

Dobbs, Prior and Bindon also played an important part in the promotion of schemes for the improvement of Ireland's economic base through their involvement in the establishment of the Dublin Society in 1731. That the country required 'improvement' was an incontestable assumption among politicians and pamphleteers, and a variety of initiatives were undertaken during the 1720s for this purpose: tracts, like Molesworth's, recommending particular schemes for the employment of the poor, or the modernisation of agriculture, or the systematic exploitation of resources like the fisheries; parliamentary legislation to promote new industrial enterprises, or to enhance infrastructure by building roads and repairing bridges and harbours; and the establishment of charity schools to educate the children of the poor in basic literacy and numeracy and in useful skills such as spinning and weaving. These various strategies had come together in the widespread effort to encourage the production of linen as an alternative to the hamstrung woollen manufacture, a national enterprise which was backed by parliamentary funds, administered by the Linen Board, and was a central feature of the curriculum of many charity schools. In response to the agricultural crisis of the 1720s, the Irish Parliament adopted a similarly co-ordinated strategy over the issue of promoting tillage when it erected a Navigation Board, on the same lines as the Linen Board, to fund schemes for the reclamation of bog land and the construction of canals.

It was in this atmosphere, in which enthusiasm for 'improvement' dominated Irish public life, that Prior and his friends came together in June 1731 to form the Dublin Society, as a forum for the sharing of ideas and practical experience of industrial and agricultural enterprises. Among the members attending the inaugural meeting were Prior, Dobbs, Maple, and the clergyman and *littérateur* Samuel Madden, who had already submitted to Trinity College a plan for the encouragement of useful learning through the awarding of financial 'premiums', and who in 1738 was to publish his

own attack on economic absenteeism, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland, as to their Conduct for the Service of their Country*.⁵⁹ The society grew rapidly, admitting a range of men who were active in Irish public life, including a number of practising politicians, judges and, eventually, in 1732, the then viceroy, the Duke of Dorset, who was elected president. The clergy were particularly well represented, with archbishops, bishops, deans and archdeacons, some of them firmly establishment figures like Primate Boulter, but others of a High Church kidney.⁶⁰ The name of the dean of St Patrick's, however, was absent.

By the time the Dublin Society was inaugurated, the tenor of public debate in Ireland had shifted away from the abrasive 'patriotism' that had characterised Swift's successful resistance to Wood's Halfpence. Within the Irish administration, politicians whom Swift decried as 'paltry underlings of state' – self-interested and mealy-mouthed apologists for English misrule – were negotiating to modify the harsh legislative regime under which Irish commerce laboured, through a constructive engagement with Walpole's ministry, and with the support of the 'Irish lobby' at Westminster headed by John, Viscount Perceval (later first Earl of Egmont).⁶¹ It was a strategy endorsed even by opposition Whigs.⁶² Sharp assertions of Ireland's 'rights', in the style in which Swift specialised, could only undermine negotiations. Occasionally, other pamphleteers overstepped the mark – Prior in particular⁶³ – and in the Irish House of Commons back-benchers might become over-excited, but in general the public discussion in Ireland on economic questions tended to stay safely within accepted limits.

3 *The Political Context: Lord Carteret's Administration* 1724–1730

Lord Carteret's appointment as lord lieutenant of Ireland in 1724 had been contrived by Sir Robert Walpole with malice aforethought. Carteret was not

59 For Madden, see Mairead Dunlevy, 'Samuel Madden and the Scheme for the Encouragement of Useful Manufactures', in Agnes Bernelle (ed.), *Decantations: A Tribute to Maurice Craig*, Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1992, pp. 21–8; *ODNB*; *DIB*.

60 Dublin Society Register, 1731 (Royal Dublin Society, minute book 1).

61 F. G. James, 'The Irish Lobby in the Early Eighteenth Century', *English Historical Review* 81 (1966), 543–57; James, *Ireland in the Empire, 1688–1770: A History of Ireland from the Williamite Wars to the Eve of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 154–7.

62 Andrew Crotty to [Henry Boyle], 31 Dec. 1730 (NLI, Shannon papers, MS 13,297/31).

63 Coghill to Lord Perceval, 14 Apr. 1731 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 112); Lord Perceval's diary, 24 Feb. 1731 (HMC, *Egmont Diary*, vol. I, p. 148).

only a rival, but was suspected of intriguing with one of the major players on the Dublin political scene, the Irish lord chancellor, Alan Brodrick, Viscount Midleton, whose family's behaviour over Wood's Halfpence had been equivocal. While Midleton had been ostensibly loyal to government during the viceroyalty of Carteret's predecessor, the Duke of Grafton, his eldest son, St John Brodrick, had in effect acted as the leader of the opposition in the Irish House of Commons. Whichever strategy Carteret adopted in his new office, he stood to lose: either he would seek a compromise over the halfpence and be seen to fail in his viceregal responsibility, so forfeiting the confidence of the king, or he would decide to enforce the wishes of the English Cabinet at all costs and thus sacrifice the trust of his Irish friends, which would inevitably make his management of the Irish Parliament more difficult.

No viceroy had enjoyed an easy passage in Ireland since the Hanoverian succession. The fact that the Irish general election of 1715 had returned a huge Whig majority, far from smoothing out parliamentary opposition, had created a new set of problems. It proved impossible to satisfy all the powerful individuals or family connections among the Irish Whigs, and, from the first, those left out of government had made common cause with Tories in a 'country' or 'patriot' alliance. Most serious was the competition for power between the two most important and successful Whig politicians in Ireland, Lord Midleton and the Speaker of the Commons, William Conolly. The conflict between Conolly's followers and the faction headed in the Commons by St John Brodrick had caused difficulties for the Duke of Bolton in 1717–19 – among other things, wrecking his plans for a repeal of the sacramental test – and had rendered Grafton's position as lord lieutenant untenable. In 1720, the Stanhope–Sunderland ministry had determined to dismiss Midleton but had lost its nerve. To continue for any length of time with both factions in government was not sustainable. At some point, an English viceroy would have to take decisive action and restore clarity to management. As Walpole put it, the choice facing Carteret in Ireland was obvious: he would have to 'take his party, between the two great men there'.

Carteret arrived in Dublin in October 1724, well in advance of the time at which he would have to call a parliament, and set about trying to cool the rage against Wood's Halfpence. Outwardly, he acted to maintain the royal prerogative, persuading the Irish privy council to prosecute the printer of the fourth *Drapier's Letter*, but privately was more conciliatory, warning Swift against admitting authorship of the pamphlet, and urging the Cabinet in Whitehall to withdraw Wood's patent. He was equally cautious in tackling the question of political management. Unwilling to risk the wrong

choice between Speaker and lord chancellor, he made no decisive move at all, attempting instead to keep himself and his administration above the squabbles of local politicians, and behaving towards the two rivals with equal friendliness, and with equal distance. The consequence was that, for a time, matters seemed so uncertain that he dare not recall the Irish Parliament, given the likelihood of continued factional infighting, spiced by popular outrage against the halfpence. Although this was a perilous course, it eventually paid off, and in retrospect might well be described as masterly inactivity. In the summer of 1725, both his problems were solved for him. One Gordian knot was severed when Midleton resigned the seals, taking his faction into open opposition; then, even more important, Walpole finally bowed to the inevitable, and agreed to recall Wood's patent.⁶⁴

Carteret was thus able to summon an Irish Parliament in the winter of 1725–6, with some hope of success. The removal of the halfpence had secured his personal popularity, while Midleton's resignation, followed by the summary rejection by the viceroy of an offer from St John Brodrick to take over responsibility for parliamentary management, removed any ambiguity over which Irish political grouping enjoyed viceregal favour.⁶⁵ Conolly was now firmly established as the leader of the Castle interest in the Commons, the 'undertaker' for government business, with a key role in the Irish administration as one of the triumvirate of lords justices which substituted for the viceroy in the intervals between parliamentary sessions. Like some of his predecessors, Carteret took an active part himself in the business of parliamentary management, even to the extent of lobbying individual MPs, but he did this in support of the Speaker rather than in an attempt to create a separate 'Castle interest'. His famously gregarious and charming personality attracted a personal devotion that more than once proved crucial in important divisions.⁶⁶

Although William Conolly's personal political history had been staunchly Whiggish, he had been able since 1715 to recruit former Tories, men like the Prime Serjeant Henry Singleton, revenue commissioner Marmaduke Coghill, and the future accountant-general Agmondisham Vesey (son of the archbishop of Tuam who had served as a lord justice in the controversial

64 Patrick McNally, 'Wood's Halfpence, Carteret, and the Government of Ireland, 1723–56', *Irish Historical Studies* 30 (1996–7), 354–76.

65 R. E. Burns, *Irish Parliamentary Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols., Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989–90, vol. I, p. 203.

66 McNally, 'Wood's Halfpence'. According to Bishop Robert Howard, Carteret had a 'rattle wit and humour to a great degree' (Robert to Hugh Howard, 25 Apr. 1730 (NLI, MS 38,598/6)).

Tory ministry of 1711–13).⁶⁷ The relatively broad-based nature of his ‘Castle party’ reflected a more general political process in Ireland after the Hanoverian succession, as ‘party’ divisions became blurred. The establishment of a Whig ascendancy in government, and the tarring of Tories with the Jacobite brush following the abortive rebellion of 1715–16, had resulted in a collapse of support for the Tory interest, as the more ‘moderate’ and more ambitious Irish Tories enlisted in government and became indistinguishable from Whig placemen. The remaining Tories were obliged to make common cause with discontented Whigs, which they could only do by focusing attention on issues of common concern: economic and constitutional grievances and alleged corruption in government, the staples of any ‘country’ or ‘patriot’ opposition.

The old Tory interest was not yet defunct, however, and seems still to have been identifiable in Parliament and the constituencies until 1727. Although operating in collaboration with discontented Whigs, these diehards constituted a separate group in George I’s Parliament, with their own leaders. For a time, even the more accommodating Tories on the government side seem to have retained a residual sense of their historic identity.⁶⁸ In the localities, Tory loyalties and connections survived into the 1720s, even if they now adopted different factional labels.⁶⁹ In some borough corporations, there was even a revival: in Clonmel in County Tipperary, for example, where an intruding Whig faction was successfully resisted in 1722;⁷⁰ in the city of Limerick, whose governor, Major-General Thomas Pearce, himself a former Tory MP in England, made a bid for power in 1723–6, supported by Tory ‘minions and favourites’;⁷¹ and in Youghal in County Cork, where the ‘town party’ – that is to say, the Tories – succeeded in overturning Whig hegemony.⁷² Even in Galway Corporation, whose Tories had once been identified as crypto-Jacobite, even crypto-Catholic, and had been forcibly

67 *Hist. Ir. Parl.*, vol. III, pp. 442–5; vol. VI, pp. 276–7, 468–9.

68 Arthur Hill to Henry Boyle, 15 Apr. 1729 (PRONI, Shannon papers, D/2707/A/1/2/39).

69 D. W. Hayton, ‘Voters, Patrons and Parties: Parliamentary Elections in Ireland, c. 1692–1727’, in Clyve Jones, Philip Salmon and R. W. Davis (eds.), *Partisan Politics, Principle and Reform in Parliament and the Constituencies, 1689–1880: Essays in Memory of John A. Phillips*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005, pp. 66–7.

70 W. P. Burke, *History of Clonmel*, Clonmel: Neil Harvey, 1907, pp. 116–17; *The Munster Combat, or The Invasion of the Moors . . .*, [Dublin, 1722].

71 D. A. Fleming, *Politics and Provincial People: Sligo and Limerick, 1691–1761*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 72–7.

72 T. C. Barnard, ‘Considering the Inconsiderable: Electors, Patrons and Irish Elections 1659–1761’, in D. W. Hayton (ed.), *The Irish Parliament in the Eighteenth Century: The Long Apprenticeship*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001, pp. 118–19.

excluded from power by a specific Act of Parliament (4 Geo. I c. 15 [Ire.]), the leading families from the previous era, the Blakeney, Eyres and Stauntons, gradually re-established themselves and by 1725 recovered control of the corporation.⁷³

What is interesting about this rehabilitation is the extent to which Carteret's Irish administration was involved in promoting erstwhile Tory interests. In Limerick, Youghal and Galway, the Irish privy council intervened in 1725–6 to support local Tory factions, in the same way that the Tory ministry of 1711 had used its powers under the 'new rules' of 1672 to approve or disapprove the election of chief magistrates in borough corporations according to party complexion. At least some of the responsibility for this shift in the 1720s must lie with Speaker Conolly.⁷⁴ In Galway, he was himself admitted a freeman in 1722, alongside one of the Stauntons.⁷⁵ But a significant contribution was also made by Carteret, under whose aegis these decisions were taken, and who was, for example, responsible for appointing General Pearce to the governorship of Limerick.

Carteret's family background, on both sides, was staunchly Cavalier and High Church, and when he had made his appearance on the political stage, in the 'four last years' of Queen Anne's reign, his party allegiance had been unequivocally Tory, although he had been situated on the 'Hanoverian' wing of the party. After 1714, he moved across to support successive Whig administrations, but did not shake off the effects of his upbringing, and those in Ireland who still possessed Tory sympathies, or at least retained a visceral aversion to politicians parading their Whiggish credentials, welcomed his appointment as likely to bring better times. As we have seen, Swift himself was on warm personal terms with Carteret, frequented Dublin Castle, and sought to use whatever influence he possessed with the lord lieutenant to assist his own clerical friends. Two did receive preferment soon after Carteret's arrival: Thomas Sheridan was made a viceregal chaplain, and given a benefice at Rincurran in County Cork;⁷⁶ and the young James

73 Galway Corporation Archives, minute book E (National University of Ireland, Galway, Hardiman Lib.), pp. 75–155.

74 Barnard, 'Considering the Inconsiderable', p. 118.

75 Galway Corporation Archives, minute book E (National University of Ireland, Galway, Hardiman Lib.), p. 88; John Staunton to Anne Donnellan, 15 Feb. 1731[2] (BL, Wentworth papers, Add. MS 22228, fo. 349).

76 Rincurran was scarcely a plum. The parish church had been demolished in 1690 and the stones used to repair the Charles Fort at Kinsale. Not long before Sheridan's appointment, an appeal had been made to government for financial assistance with restoration, on the grounds that the congregation consisted only of 'poor fishermen' (William Bolton to Archbishop King, [c. 1723] (TCD, Lyons collection, MS 1995–2008/2045)).

Stopford, Knightley Chetwode's brother-in-law and himself the nephew of a former Tory MP, became vicar of Finglas, north of Dublin.⁷⁷ This was part of what had seemed at first to be a broader change in the direction of ecclesiastical patronage, manifested most strikingly in the promotion of a pair of once-notorious High Churchmen: William Perceval, prolocutor of the lower house of the Irish convocation in 1713, who received the lucrative Dublin rectory of St Michan's to hold alongside his much less valuable deanery of Emly; and the firebrand preacher Francis Higgins, sometime associate of Dr Sacheverell, who in the twilight of his career was made archdeacon of Cashel.⁷⁸

This was, however, a false dawn for the High Church party. Wild rumours that high-flying Tory lawyers like Richard Nutley would be given places on the Irish bench and privy council came to nothing,⁷⁹ while episcopal promotions were still confined to Whiggish clergy, often sent over from England. Such lingering Tory sympathies as Carteret may have entertained were insufficient to counter the recommendations of the primate (archbishop of Armagh), Hugh Boulter – himself an English import – or Speaker Conolly, not to mention the powerful influence exerted in England by 'Walpole's pope', Bishop Edmund Gibson of London. Furthermore, Sheridan's appointment demonstrated the danger of indulging men with strong Tory prejudices and limited self-restraint. When Sheridan tactlessly preached a High Church sermon in Cork in August 1725, on the anniversary of George I's accession, Carteret faced a chorus of complaint, and was obliged to remove him from the list of chaplains and banish him from the viceregal court.⁸⁰ It is therefore unlikely that Carteret had a hand in the election of another of Swift's friends, Patrick Delany, as chancellor of Christ Church, Dublin, by the cathedral chapter in 1728. In any case, this was not a straightforward matter, since there were advantages to government in getting such a 'rank Tory' away from the undergraduates at Trinity, where Delany was considered by Primate Boulter to be a bad influence.⁸¹

77 Technically, the vicarage at Finglas was in the nomination of the Archbishop of Dublin. One of Stopford's predecessors in the incumbency was the poet Thomas Parnell (1679–1718), preferred by Archbishop King in 1716, also on Swift's recommendation (*DIB*).

78 Archbishop Boulter to Duke of Newcastle, 12 Oct. 1725 (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, pp. 39–40).

79 Knightley Chetwode to —, 17 May 1726 (NLI, MS 47,891/1); Boulter to Carteret, 14 May, 16 June 1726 (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, pp. 57–8, 67).

80 Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 362–3.

81 Boulter to Archbishop Wake, 8 Dec. 1725 (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, pp. 47–8).

Swift's personal relationship with Carteret does not seem to have been seriously damaged by the way in which the viceroy rowed back on his early patronage of High Churchmen, although trust may have been compromised to some extent. When Delany appealed for advancement to the lord lieutenant in a published poem in December 1729, Swift responded quickly with his own verse *Epistle upon an Epistle*, which chided Delany for vainly presuming as an Irishman to apply for favour to an English governor. The satire was ambiguous, to say the least: Lord Chancellor Wyndham, for one, found it impossible to decide whether the piece was intended as a 'compliment' or a 'libel' on the lord lieutenant.⁸² A few months afterwards appeared Swift's prose *Vindication of Carteret*, 'from the charge of favouring none but Tories, High-Churchmen and Jacobites'.⁸³ The tone was ironical, since by this time the accusation could not have been taken seriously. Swift's primary objective, however, was neither to defend the lord lieutenant against the supposed outrage of Whig critics, nor to criticise him for failing in the duties of friendship, but to illustrate the fatuity of outdated sloganising by self-proclaimed Whigs, whose accusations of Tory conspiracies were shown to be not only baseless but absurd.⁸⁴

The 1727 general election was the last flourish of Irish Toryism. After George I's death, Lord Anglesey was reported to have addressed a gathering of Tories in Dublin as to their future political strategy, and in the ensuing election Tory interests were active in several counties, but the Tories did not put up a candidate for the Speakership in November, when Conolly was returned unopposed.⁸⁵ The issues that divided the members of the new Parliament arose from 'patriotic' rather than party concerns: government interference with the process of legislation; the management of the Irish public revenue and national debt; and, increasingly, the state of the Irish economy. The political 'structure' of the Irish House of Commons also became more fluid, especially with the dissolution of the Brodrick faction in 1728 following the deaths, in quick succession, of St John Brodrick and his father Lord Midleton.⁸⁶ There was a 'Castle party', presided over by

82 Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 646–50; Wyndham to Philip Yorke, 7 Feb. 1729[30] (BL, Hardwicke papers, Add. MS 35585, fos. 110–11).

83 Below, pp. 191–217.

84 Davis, vol. XII, p. xxvii; J. S. Malek, 'Swift's "Vindication of Lord Carteret": Authorial Intention and Historical Context', *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 29 (1975), 10–23.

85 Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 122; Edward Maurice to Bishop Sir Thomas Vesey of Ossory, 20 Sept. 1727 (NLI, De Vesci papers, MS 38,869/2).

86 Burns, *Irish Parliamentary Politics*, vol. I, p. 258.

Conolly and his lieutenants, which was said to be composed of various ‘clans’, and on the other side shifting groups of ‘patriots’ which included family-based ‘connections’ as well as professional lawyer-politicians out of office and country gentlemen of substantial means and independent opinions. It was even possible for the new members in 1727, young men with high ideals, or at least high self-esteem, to band together in a group nicknamed ‘toopees’ after the new style of hairpiece that was the height of fashion.⁸⁷ The wig had replaced Whiggism as a distinguishing mark of political allegiance.

This political environment proved surprisingly comfortable for Carteret and his parliamentary undertakers, despite the sudden loss of William Conolly, the government’s principal parliamentary ‘undertaker’, who died shortly after the beginning of the 1729–30 parliamentary session. Conolly’s successor in the Speakership, and in the leadership of the government forces in the Commons, was his former principal lieutenant, Sir Ralph Gore, who, with the assistance of close allies like Coghill, and the backing of the lord lieutenant, was able to mobilise the old Castle party with remarkable success. Gore was even able to secure a substantial majority to pass a money bill that the British privy council had altered, normally the reddest of red rags to Irish MPs. Carteret had been furious at this conciliar intervention and had told the British secretary of state, the Duke of Newcastle, that he could not guarantee ‘to bring [the Commons] to temper again’. But in fact the bill was passed by a two-to-one majority.⁸⁸ Carteret and Gore were also able to take advantage of some hints of optimism in the popular mood concerning the Irish economy, following a much improved harvest. They succeeded in defusing the ‘patriotic’ enthusiasm that characterised the early stages of the session⁸⁹ by accepting a back-bench initiative to tax the remuneration paid to absentee office-holders and pensioners, and by giving strong government support to a portmanteau bill for the improvement of river navigation, the expansion of tillage and the draining of bogs.⁹⁰

This was not simply a matter of making concessions in order to pacify vociferous back-benchers. Gore himself, and a number of other leading figures in the Castle party, could boast a long-standing interest in the

87 Edward Cooke to [Sir Richard Cox], 22 Feb. 1727[/8] (NLI, Fownes papers, MS 8,802/11).

88 Burns, *Irish Parliamentary Politics*, vol. I, pp. 256–7.

89 Boulter to Newcastle, 23 Oct. 1729 (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, pp. 264–5); Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 23 Oct. 1729 (*Coghill Letters*, pp. 74–5).

90 Burns, *Irish Parliamentary Politics*, vol. I, pp. 253–6; Coghill to Southwell, 3 Jan. 1729[/30] (*Coghill Letters*, pp. 83–4); Carteret to same, 8, 28 Jan. 1729/30 (BL, Southwell papers, Add. MS 38016, fos. 19, 21).

‘improvement’ of Ireland, and a record of having drafted and advocated legislative initiatives to this end.⁹¹ When Speaker Conolly had fallen ill in 1728 and his retirement from active politics seemed inevitable, there had been concern among his colleagues that whoever should replace him – as ‘undertaker’ and lord justice – would have to be just as fervently committed as he had been to advancing Irish national interests.⁹² At Conolly’s funeral in 1729, his widow ordered that 700 Irish linen scarves should be distributed among the mourners, in order to demonstrate publicly the deceased Speaker’s support for Irish manufacture.⁹³ Gore proved equally conscientious in defending his country’s interests, thwarting plans by fellow lords justices for a reform of the coinage that he felt was inappropriate and would rightly be unpopular. This brought him into difficulties with English colleagues on the commission who, as his friend Marmaduke Coghill observed, neither knew nor cared for Ireland as much as he did.⁹⁴ A few years earlier, Swift had satirised this particular variety of patriotism in the Drapier’s *Letter to the Whole People of Ireland*, when he parodied the arguments that Castle politicians would use to convince Irish MPs to accept Wood’s Halfpence. Among other suggestions, ‘It might, perhaps, have been hinted . . . that Gentlemen ought to consider, whether it were prudent or safe to disgust England: They would be desired to think of some good Bills for encouraging of Trade, and setting the Poor to work.’⁹⁵ By 1730, the observation was still accurate, but the satire had lost some of its edge.

4 *The Survival and Revival of ‘Popery’*

Historians have long debated whether the ‘penal laws’ enacted between 1695 and 1709 (or to give them their contemporary title, the ‘popery laws’) were seriously intended to extirpate Roman Catholicism from Ireland, or were directed merely towards the reinforcement of the Protestant monopoly of

91 D. W. Hayton, “Paltry Underlings of State”? The Character and Aspirations of the “Castle” Party, 1715–32’, in Claude Rawson (ed.), *Politics and Literature in England and Ireland in the Age of Swift*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 234–8.

92 Coghill to Edward Southwell, 13 June 1728 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 53); same to Edward Southwell, jr, 22 Feb. 1732[3] (*ibid.*, p. 120).

93 Francis Burton to Jane Bonnell, 19 Nov. 1729 (NLI, Smythe of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,579/9); Walsh, *Making of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy*, pp. 194–5.

94 Coghill to Edward Southwell, jr, 31 Mar. 1733 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 124).

95 Davis, vol. X, p. 60. See also the *Humble Address to Both Houses of Parliament*, with its reference to ‘certain bold UNDERTAKERS of weak Judgment, and strong Ambition; who think to find their Accounts in the Ruin of the Nation, by securing or advancing themselves’ (*ibid.*, p. 120) and its further condemnation of corrupt office-holders (*ibid.*, p. 120–1).

property and office. Whatever the intention, there can be little doubt that, had these laws been put fully into operation, the surviving Catholic landowning, professional and commercial classes would have been drastically attenuated and the numbers of Catholic priests and religious in Ireland would have declined almost to the point of extinction. Neither eventuality had come to pass. True, the incentives to apostasy for the propertied were considerable: if they conformed to the established church, Catholics could maintain through primogeniture the integrity of landed estates which otherwise would have to be divided among all the father's children; they could purchase freehold land; could qualify for crown and municipal office; and could practise the profession of the law.⁹⁶ Such potential advantages produced a substantial and increasing flow of converts: by 1710, 117 names were entered on the so-called 'convert rolls'; by 1720, a further 150; and between 1721 and 1730, another 365.⁹⁷ But there were other ways to protect estates – principally by the collusion of friendly Protestants – and in any case the simple evidence of the convert rolls was not particularly comforting to those anxious members of the Ascendancy class who doubted the sincerity of convenient conversions, seeing this as yet another ruse by Catholic landed families to preserve their estates. In 1731, an Irish bill 'for the more effectual obliging converts and guardians to educate children in the Protestant religion' only failed because of scruples in the British privy council, and two years later another, 'to prevent persons converted from the popish to the Protestant religion and married to popish wives, from acting as justices of the peace', did reach the statute book (as 7 Geo. II c. 6).

By lumping together these 'new converts' with the surviving Catholic landed proprietors and merchants, Protestant commentators alarmed themselves with the nightmare of a resurgent Catholic interest. This anxiety was particularly obvious at general elections. By the Popery Act of 1704 (2 Anne c. 6 [Ire.]), voters at parliamentary elections in Ireland could be required to take an oath abjuring the Jacobite Pretender, which of course no self-respecting Catholic would do. But whether or not the oath was applied depended on the returning officer, and there were many instances of Catholics being reported as voting, especially in counties where Protestant freeholders were thin on the ground and candidates were desperate

- 96 Charles Ivar McGrath, 'The Provisions for Conversion in the Penal Laws, 1695–1750', in Michael Brown *et al.* (eds.), *Converts and Conversion in Ireland, 1650–1850*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005, pp. 35–59.
- 97 T. P. Power, 'Converts', in Power and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990, p. 102.

to muster support wherever they could. In 1715, the Irish Parliament had tried to tighten up the law by requiring the abjuration to be taken at least six months beforehand. But this does not seem to have worked. Election petitions commonly complained that ‘papist’ votes had been allowed, contrary to law, or that a crypto-Catholic interest, consisting predominantly of ‘new converts’, had played a sinister part in the defeat of staunch Protestant candidates. The chorus of protest reached a climax after the 1727 general election when a further bill was passed specifically disfranchising Catholics.⁹⁸

The persistence of a Catholic or crypto-Catholic electoral interest was, however, only one among many causes of Protestant anxiety. According to Archbishop Boulter of Armagh, the legal profession in Ireland was dominated by new converts, and in many cases, he reported, there would be a Catholic wife at home ‘who has mass said in the family and the children are brought up papists’.⁹⁹ This was undoubtedly an exaggeration, but recent research has uncovered a network of Irish Catholic lawyers active in England who seem to have had strong connections in Ireland;¹⁰⁰ and, in any case, popular belief was as important as, if not more important than, the reality. There were also enough surviving Catholic landowners to band together in 1727, under the leadership of Lord Delvin, to make an address of loyalty to King George II, in the hope of establishing the grounds for being relieved of some of their legal disabilities.¹⁰¹ The prospect of any such weakening of the penal laws naturally frightened Protestant landowners: witness the panicky reaction in 1735 to reports that the Catholic heir to the earldom of Clancarty intended to petition the Westminster Parliament for the restitution of family property forfeited after the Jacobite war, on the grounds that the forfeiting earl had only been tenant for life.¹⁰²

Equally important was the growing perception among Protestants that the penal laws had failed to weaken, let alone destroy, the organisation of the Catholic church in Ireland. Theoretically, the combined effects of the legislation passed between 1697 and 1709 should have been sufficient

98 J. G. Simms, ‘Historical Revision: X. Irish Catholics and the Parliamentary Franchise, 1692–1728’, *Irish Historical Studies* 12 (1960–1), 35–6.

99 Boulter to Newcastle, 7 Mar. 1727[8] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, p. 182).

100 John Bergin, ‘The Irish Catholic Interest at the London Inns of Court, 1674–1800’, *ECI* 24 (2009), 36–61.

101 Ian McBride, ‘Catholic Politics in the Penal Era: Father Sylvester Lloyd and the Delvin Address of 1727’, in John Bergin *et al.* (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Penal Laws*, *ECI* special issue, 1 (2011), pp. 115–48.

102 Coghill to Edward Southwell, jr, 2, 18 Dec. 1735 (*Coghill Letters*, pp. 178, 179).

to limit the numbers of Catholic clergy to the 1,100 secular (or parochial) priests who had been prepared to register under the terms of the 1704 Popery Act and had given securities for their 'good behaviour', and should also have prevented further recruitment of resident priests. With bishops banished and Catholics who had been educated abroad prevented by law from returning to Ireland, there should have been no newly ordained priests in the country. Yet, twenty years later, Catholic priests were still highly visible, especially in towns, and not just those who were registered, such as the Dubliner Cornelius Nary, who gave himself a public profile through published works that brought him into direct conflict with Church of Ireland bishops.¹⁰³ The heyday of 'priest-hunting' was long past, when bishops and regulars had been exposed by informers and brought before magistrates, and the general pattern was one of a peaceful, if generally clandestine, existence. Swift's friend, Archbishop King of Dublin, was deeply alarmed at what he described as 'the swarm of vermin of popish priests that overspread the kingdom'.¹⁰⁴ He was convinced that there were more Catholic than Protestant bishops in Ireland 'and twice (at least) as many priests', and ascribed this state of affairs to the unwillingness of magistrates to put the laws into effect, either because as individuals they were intimidated by fear of violent reprisals, or because they were in general discouraged by a government unwilling to offend its Catholic allies in Europe.¹⁰⁵ His fellow bishops were sufficiently concerned to prompt the Irish House of Lords in 1731 to order an inquiry into the state of 'popery' that revealed the presence of 1,445 secular priests and 254 friars (the latter figure almost certainly a substantial understatement).¹⁰⁶

Churchmen had also to admit that their own attempts at proselytising had largely failed. Certainly, there were instances of Catholics being persuaded to convert, as distinct from those who were induced to conform, and these were usually given considerable publicity, but they were relatively few. The principal initiatives designed to encourage conversions through education had not been successful. A scheme to print translations into the Irish language of the New Testament, the Book of Common Prayer and an Anglican

103 Patrick Fagan, *Dublin's Turbulent Priest: Cornelius Nary, 1658–1738*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1991.

104 King to Mr Radcliff, 30 Sept. 1725 (TCD, King letterbooks, MS 750/8, p. 29).

105 King to Carteret, 22 June 1727 (*ibid.*, p. 213); to Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, 12 July 1727 (*ibid.*, pp. 231–3).

106 Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Catholic Ireland in the Eighteenth Century: Collected Essays of Maureen Wall*, Dublin: Geography Publications, 1989, pp. 35–50; S. J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, pp. 150–1.

catechism, as an aid to proselytising in schools or parishes, had foundered on the general unavailability of Irish-speaking clergy, and what was in essence factional opposition within the Irish convocation.¹⁰⁷ Archbishop King evidently supported the proposal, which was enough to determine those whose ecclesiastical politics were the reverse of King's Low Churchmanship to damn the project along with its patron.¹⁰⁸ The High Churchmen favoured an alternative, the establishment of schools, usually with private financial endowments, to teach Catholic children the Protestant faith through the medium of English. Swift's own position in this debate is unclear. He may have followed Archbishop King in arguing for attempts to proselytise the natives in their own tongue, for he had friends, like the clergyman and fellow of Trinity, Anthony Raymond, who were interested in the Irish language (though Swift's own attitude to the language was at best ambivalent).¹⁰⁹ He may also have shared some of King's scepticism of lay enthusiasts though he subsequently gave charity schools his 'qualified support', provided that they had 'good Foundation and rents to support them'.¹¹⁰ In any case, despite a substantial degree of philanthropic investment from pious churchmen and women, the charity schools established between c. 1695 and c. 1725 were ultimately unsuccessful. One problem lay in the fact that they were not directed at the conversion of Catholics so much as the recovery of backsliding Protestants; another weakness was the lack of firm direction. Even though these schools were gathered under the umbrella of a 'Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in Ireland by the Method of Charity Schools', connected with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

107 T. C. Barnard, 'Protestants and the Irish Language, c. 1675–1725', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993), 261–5.

108 Sir Charles S. King, *A Great Archbishop of Dublin William King D.D. . . .*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906, pp. 291–8; S. J. Connolly, 'Reformers and Highflyers: The Post-Revolution Church', in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds.), *As by Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation*, Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995, pp. 163–4; D. W. Hayton, 'The High Church Party in the Irish Convocation, 1703–13', *Münster* (1998), p. 132.

109 Andrew Carpenter and Alan Harrison, 'Swift's "O'Rourke's Feast" and Sheridan's "Letter": Early Transcripts by Anthony Raymond', *Münster* (1985), pp. 27–46; Alan Harrison, *The Dean's Friend: Anthony Raymond (1675–1726)*, *Jonathan Swift and the Irish Language*, Dublin: Éamonn de Burca, 1999; D. W. Hayton, 'Did Protestantism Fail in Early Eighteenth-Century Ireland? Charity Schools and the Enterprise of Religious and Social Reformation, c. 1690–1730', in Ford *et al.* (eds.), *As by Law Established*, pp. 171, 182. See also below, p. 125.

110 *Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland* (Davis, vol. IX, pp. 202–5); Claude Rawson, *Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985, pp. 122–3.

(SPCK) in England, they were still very much local and personal initiatives. And by the late 1720s not only were individual foundations withering, but the central organisation, such as it was, had ceased to function.¹¹¹

It is no surprise, therefore, to find that by *c.* 1730 Irish Protestants were displaying an uneasy interest in relative demography (a point picked up in *A Modest Proposal*).¹¹² In 1732, a pamphlet was published in Dublin under the title *Scheme of the Proportions which the Protestants of Ireland may probably bear to the Papists; Humbly Offer'd to the Public*. Tellingly, the preamble began with the words, 'As popery is of late become the subject of most conversations'. The author sought to bring up to date Sir William Petty's calculations from 1672, using evidence from a variety of sources, and concluded that Catholics still comprised roughly 70 per cent of the inhabitants of Ireland. Elsewhere, unsystematic estimates put the proportion at between 80 and 90 per cent.¹¹³ But there was also more positive news. In 1732, the collectors of the hearth tax were required to state the number of Catholic and Protestant families in their districts. The results were printed and analysed in a pamphlet published four years later by David Bindon, who used them (together with the bills of mortality) to argue that Ireland was now a much more Protestant country than it had been in Petty's time, the proportion of Catholics to Protestants having sunk below three to one. Indeed, in Ulster, and in some towns, especially Dublin, Protestants were now, he stated, in a solid majority. Ostensibly, Bindon wrote 'for the satisfaction of those who are curious in political arithmetic', but he also intended to reassure pessimists about Ireland's capacity for economic development.¹¹⁴

Obsessive concern over the size of the Catholic population was symptomatic of a more visceral emotion than the anxiety of Protestant proprietors over the retention of their lands. Reactions to reports of popular violence, whether the actions of the Dublin mob (represented in the newspaper press, rightly or wrongly, as predominantly Catholic),¹¹⁵ or the rural brigandage of 'rapparees', called to mind images of the ancient savagery of the native Irish, which, encouraged by the 'atrocities' literature surrounding the 1641

111 Hayton, 'Did Protestantism Fail?', pp. 166–86.

112 See below, p. 154.

113 Boulter to Archbishop Wake, 13 Feb. 1727/[8] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, p. 169); to Newcastle, *c.* 4 Dec. 1731 (vol. II, p. 57); Archbishop King to Wake, 12 July 1727 (TCD, King letterbooks, MS 750/8).

114 David Bindon, *An Abstract of the Number of Protestant and Popish Families in the Several Counties and Provinces of Ireland, Taken from the Returns made by the Hearthmoney Collectors . . .*, Dublin, 1736.

115 Fagan, 'Dublin Catholic Mob', 133–42.

rebellion, formed a persistent feature of the mental landscape of the Irish Protestant ascendancy.

Atavistic fears of the violent hostility of the 'native Irish' helped preserve a belief in the potential danger from Jacobitism despite all evidence to the contrary. The Pretender and his advisers did not exhibit any interest in Ireland after 1714, and there were no stirrings of rebellion in 1715 or 1719 when Jacobites in Scotland rose. But Irish Protestants were easily aroused by reports of Jacobite activity or interest in Ireland. The decision by the Walpole administration to permit the French to recruit soldiers in Ireland in 1730 touched a raw nerve, especially in the Blackwater valley in Counties Cork and Waterford, where the agents went to work. Swift himself intervened in the public debate on this issue, in the *Answer to the Craftsman*, though with characteristic irony, arguing that this was one more example of the draining away of Ireland's natural resources, and taking the episode as a point of departure for yet another discussion of the fundamental issue of Anglo-Irish trading relations. The response of his fellow Irish Protestants was, however, more straightforward and predictable. There was much speculation about the real intentions of the recruiters and the connections that were being established between the local Catholic population and the exiled Stuart court. The fact that the French officers involved were all of Irish extraction did not help, and after considerable local agitation the licence was revoked.¹¹⁶ But the furore did not die down. There were further reports in 1732 and 1734 of Catholics being enlisted in the south-west, in Counties Kerry and Clare, and of the arrest of recruiting officers. As Under-Secretary Thomas Tickell wrote, this offence was perceived to be 'so very dangerous to the liberty of the subject, and fills the Protestants with so reasonable a terror of being forced out of their country'.¹¹⁷

The resurgence of anti-popery can be seen in the way in which the attention of the Irish Parliament became once again focused on the Catholic issue, producing a flurry of new bills.¹¹⁸ In the session of 1727–8, besides

116 L. M. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics and County Cork Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century', in Patrick Flanagan and C. G. Buttimer (eds.), *Cork: History and Society*, Dublin: Geography Publications, 1993, pp. 560–1; Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766: A Fatal Attachment*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002, pp. 255–60; Dickson, *Old World Colony*, pp. 266–7.

117 Thomas Tickell to Walter Cary, 25 Nov. 1732 (PRONI, Wilmot papers, T/3019/107); lords justices to Duke of Dorset, 20 Dec. 1732 (ibid., T/3019/110), Duke of Newcastle to same, 17 May 1734 (ibid., T/3019/143).

118 James Kelly, 'Sustaining a Confessional State: The Irish Parliament and Catholicism', in Hayton *et al.* (eds.), *Eighteenth-Century Composite State*, pp. 59–61. For an attempt to explain the phenomenon, see Lord Chancellor Wyndham to Philip Yorke, 5 Jan. 1731[2] (BL, Add. MS 35585, fos.147–8).

the Elections Act, a bill was passed to prevent Catholics acting as solicitors (1 Geo. II c. 20); another, ‘to prevent Protestants intermarrying with papists’, was rejected by the Irish privy council; and leave was given for heads of a bill ‘to more effectually provide for the guardianship of Popish minors, and to prevent their being bred papists’, which in the event was not introduced. In 1729, amidst a plethora of legislative initiatives concerned to deal with the effects of the economic crisis, Bishop Lambert of Meath failed in an attempt to secure a bill ‘for better securing the Protestant religion and interest of this kingdom, against the further attempts of the papists’, and in 1731/2 there were unsuccessful proposals to tighten up the statutes for the registration of priests, the banishment of regulars, the disarming of Catholics, and the exclusion of Catholics from the legal profession, and to enforce the obligation on converts to bring up their children as Protestants. The solicitors’ bill was successfully reintroduced in the following session (7 Geo. II c. 5), and a further act was passed to prevent any convert who kept a popish wife, or educated his children as Catholics, from acting as a justice of the peace (7 Geo. II c. 6).

The same anxieties lay behind a revival of interest in schemes for the conversion of the native Irish by means of education, with the grant in 1733 of a royal charter for an ‘incorporated society in Dublin for promoting English Protestant schools in Ireland’. These ‘charter schools’ grew out of the charity school movement, but their primary purpose was to proselytise; indeed, it was agreed that the new society should begin by establishing a school in each province in a ‘very popish and extended parish’.¹¹⁹ In order to attract investment, the charter schools, like their predecessors, emphasised training in useful skills such as spinning and weaving, and in this way they have been linked to the contemporary campaign for economic improvement, and in particular to the Dublin Society, several of whose members were involved in the early work of the ‘incorporated society’. But the original impulse had come from the clergy, from Archbishop Boulter of Armagh and Bishop Maule of Cloyne, and the original stimulus had been the church’s insecurity in the face of a resilient Catholicism.

5 *The Enemy Inside the Gates: Protestant Dissent*

For men of Swift’s cast of mind, Protestant Dissent offered an equal – if not a greater – threat to the maintenance of the established church in the decades following the Williamite settlement. Although there were substantial

119 Kenneth Milne, *The Irish Charter Schools 1730–1830*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997, p. 24.

Dissenting communities (Independents, Baptists and Quakers) in Dublin and other major port towns in the south, attention focused on Ulster, where the Presbyterian community was reinforced by extensive immigration from Scotland during the 1690s. However unrealistic it may seem to modern eyes, Churchmen in Ireland genuinely imagined the possibility of a Presbyterian coup similar to the Scottish ecclesiastical revolution of 1689, which had abolished episcopacy and purged the parochial ministry. ‘High Church’ controversialists inveighed against the religious and social practices of Presbyterians, who were accused of entrenching on the corporate privileges of the church, and conspiring to expand their influence beyond Ulster. In the absence of a legal toleration, church authorities exerted their legal powers to curb Dissent, summoning Presbyterians to ecclesiastical courts on various charges, including fornication if they had been married by their own minister and not in the parish church. Then, in 1704, an Irish statute imposed a sacramental test on holders of crown and municipal office, designed to exclude Dissenters by obliging them to take communion in the established church. Ulster Presbyterians, unlike their English counterparts, refused to compromise by conforming ‘occasionally’, and in consequence Presbyterian strongholds like the corporations of Belfast and Derry fell to Anglican domination. The test then became a focus of political debate, as Presbyterians concentrated their energies on arguing for repeal, going over the heads of Irish MPs to sympathetic Whig politicians in London.

By the mid-1720s, the anxiety that had once seized Irish churchmen over the expanding ambitions of the Presbyterians in the north was diminishing. To all intents and purposes, the General Synod of Ulster had dropped its campaign for repeal of the test after the failure of an attempt in 1719, engineered by the then lord lieutenant, the Duke of Bolton, at the behest of the Whig ministry in England. Bolton had consulted his parliamentary advisers and been convinced of the likelihood of overwhelming opposition in the Irish House of Commons.¹²⁰ The broader context was also more encouraging. Not only had the inrush of Presbyterian immigrants from the west of Scotland in the 1690s proved a temporary phenomenon, but in the late 1710s the demographic balance had tilted in the opposite direction, as distress propelled the first wave of emigration from Ulster to north America, a process that would be repeated in 1728–9. More insidiously, the class of Presbyterian landlords which had once provided political leadership was thinning out, through a gradual and apparently inexorable process of

120 Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp. 224–6.

induced conformity to the established church. The doctrinal divisions which increasingly plagued Presbyterianism also made Protestant Dissent as a whole seem less coherent and formidable. In particular, the controversy over the question of ministerial subscription to the Westminster Confession gave rise to prolonged debates in the General Synod and in the press, and eventually resulted in some congregations of non-subscribers splintering off to form the semi-independent Presbytery of Antrim.

There were, however, still reasons why churchmen should have remained on the watch. Although the subject of the test was not even raised for over a decade after 1719, pressure was maintained for statutory relief in relation to other supposed injustices. In 1719, the Irish Parliament passed a Toleration Act to enable Dissenters to qualify themselves for exemption from the penalties prescribed by the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity for non-attendance at a parish church, and to enable their ministers to avoid prosecution for celebrating the Lord's Supper.¹²¹ Then, in the Irish parliamentary session of 1723–4, an unsuccessful attempt was made to settle the vexed question of the validity of marriages contracted outside the established church.¹²² The resumption of Presbyterian emigration to north America prompted a government inquiry into this and other similar grievances, which were cited by spokesmen for the Dissenters themselves as reasons for the general exodus of their brethren from Egyptian captivity at home.¹²³ It was not obvious to Swift and his contemporaries that Presbyterian political influence had waned sharply: there was a tendency to exaggerate the influence of Dissenting electoral interests, among freeholders in counties like Antrim and Monaghan, and in some corporations outside Ulster (notably in Dublin). With more justification, those who were anxious about the security of the test continued to suspect the worst of English Whig ministers. There was thus no expression of surprise in Ireland when Walpole relaunched the forlorn hope of the repeal of the test in 1731. The prime minister's intention was probably to convince English Dissenting deputies of his sincerity in their cause, but he may have had the subsidiary objective of embarrassing a political enemy, the Duke of Dorset, whom he had sent over to Dublin as viceroy.¹²⁴ As in 1719, Dorset was advised by parliamentary managers that the Irish Parliament would not accept repeal and abandoned the idea. Two years later, he was asked to try

121 J. C. Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland 1687–1780*, London: Faber & Faber, 1948, ch. 7; Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power*, pp. 165–6.

122 Beckett, *Protestant Dissent*, p. 121.

123 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

124 Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp. 189–90, 223–4, 258–63.

again, and again drew back in the face of opposition.¹²⁵ In the meantime, another ‘paper war’ had broken out in Dublin over the issue, with Swift taking a prominent part. The urgency of this public debate demonstrates the extent of continuing fear for the maintenance of Anglican privilege, despite the evident decline in the political strength of the Dissenting community, and the repeated reassurance of parliamentary backing for the status quo.

6 *An Uncertain Marriage: Church and State; Parson and Squire*

The nature of the ‘confessional state’ in eighteenth-century Ireland presumed an identity of interest between the Protestant landlord class and the established church. However, the involvement of the clergy in the economy and governance of the kingdom always created the potential for friction. As a major proprietor, the church could influence the pattern of land use and the working of the land market through the detail of sales and leases. Financial exactions – not only tithes on agricultural produce but the rates collected by the parish vestry and the ‘small dues’ or ‘book money’ required by the parish incumbent for the performance of baptisms, marriages and burials – also bore heavily on tenants and reduced their capacity to pay rent. In terms of government and politics, the clergy were active as justices of the peace and as voters in parliamentary elections, while the bishops were a significant force in the House of Lords and in government, the primate (archbishop of Armagh) customarily serving on the commission of lords justices. When the exertion of clerical influence, either locally or nationally, proved controversial, this could easily result in resentment at the pretensions of the clergy and suspicion of their motives.

Swift (and he was not alone) tended to regard criticism of ecclesiastical privilege or jurisdiction as a manifestation of anticlerical prejudice. But this was an over-reaction. Only a few Irish writers condemned ‘priestcraft’ in the manner of contemporary English radicals. Certainly, the overfed parson was an easy target for humour in popular literature, and in some Irish political salons mockery of the clergy may have been commonplace: at Speaker Conolly’s house parties, for example, one aspiring politician sought to ingratiate himself by telling ‘ill stories of bishops and clergymen’.¹²⁶ But the notion of a conflict of interests between secular and clerical estates should not be

125 Ibid., pp. 190–1, 258–62.

126 Mary Jones to Jane Bonnell, 13 Jan. [?1727] (NLI, Smythe of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,577/1).

over-emphasised. These were not discrete social groups. Most clergymen – at least those of Irish parentage and education – shared the social background and attitudes of the gentry. The parson was on a social level with the squire, and in remote parts of the country his presence was considered essential to agreeable social intercourse (a point Swift himself made at various times in his own work).¹²⁷ Nor, despite the existence of a few clerical dynasties (such as the Synges or Vesseys) did the clergy form a separate caste.¹²⁸ As Swift informed Carteret in 1725: ‘There is hardly a gentleman in the nation, who hath not a near alliance with some of that body [the clergy]; and most of them [that] have sons, usually breed one to the church.’¹²⁹ The alienation of ecclesiastical property into lay hands – ‘impropriation’ – which affected advowsons (the right of appointment to a cure of souls), glebe land and tithes, also created a class of proprietors who stood to lose income and patronage if the position of the established church were to be altered.

During the ‘age of party’ in Ireland – roughly speaking, the reign of Queen Anne – the clergy derived obvious political benefits from the public attachment of the Tories to the interests of the Church of Ireland. After 1714, however, not only did the Tory party decline, but the church itself became attached to unpopular causes. The intrusion of bishops from England, like Hugh Boulter of Armagh, with the express purpose of defending the interests of imperial government in council and Parliament, identified the hierarchy with ministerial rather than national interests. Nor was the survival of a vocal ‘Irish’ party in the episcopate of much help, since gossip focused on the injustices done to these ‘patriots’ in every round of episcopal promotions. Even more worrying was the emergence in the late 1720s and early 1730s of a strain of opinion critical of the influence of the church in Irish society. Boulter reported in 1736 that ‘there was a rage stirred up against the clergy, that . . . equalled anything . . . seen against the popish priests, in the most dangerous times’.¹³⁰ There is a temptation to connect this negativity with the simultaneous growth of anticlericalism at Westminster, as expressed

127 *Considerations upon Two Bills Sent Down from the R[ight] H[onourable] the H[ouse] of L[ords] to the H[onourable] H[ouse] of C[ommons] Relating to the Clergy of I[re]lan[d]*, London, 1732, pp. 14–17. See also *An Apology for the Clergy of Ireland in Respect of their Civil Rights, Especially as to Agistment for Dry and Barren Cattle*, Dublin, 1737/8, p. 7; *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity* (Davis, vol. II, p. 30); and the dedication to Lord Somers in *A Tale of a Tub* (CWJS, vol. I, p. 16).

128 T. C. Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: The Irish Protestants, 1649–1770*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003, ch. 4.

129 Swift to Carteret, 3 July 1725 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. II, pp. 566–8).

130 Boulter to Earl of Anglesey, 8 Jan. 1736[/7] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. II, pp. 150–2).

in a clutch of bills in the mid-1730s to reform ecclesiastical courts (1733, 1734), exempt Quakers from tithes (1736) and curtail charitable bequests of property (mortmain) (1736).¹³¹ The same issues were raised in Ireland: in 1737, a measure was brought into the Irish House of Commons to regulate church courts, while the Lords debated a version of the English mortmain bill. Criticism of tithes was even more virulent. English influence cannot thus be entirely discounted, but in Ireland the mainsprings were different. The anticlericalism of radical Whigs in England was a reflection of their ideological inheritance, bound up with an ambition to dismantle the confessional state, whereas their Irish counterparts had little sympathy for Dissenters, and derived their principles from another source.

Impatience with ecclesiastical pretensions in Ireland was stimulated by a growing perception that the established church was hindering economic development. The two principal complaints were the restrictive terms on which bishops could make leases, and the effects of tithes. An Irish statute of 1635 limited to 21 years the length of time for which ecclesiastical land could be set, in order to prevent bishops from raising money through high fines while binding their successors to long leases at fixed rent.¹³² But short leases denied the stability which would encourage tenants to invest. Although for some clergy the 1635 act was ‘the great Magna Carta of our church revenues’,¹³³ economic ‘improvers’ thought otherwise, and made several attempts to repeal it. The first, in 1723, produced a heated debate in the press and Parliament, in which the clergy were condemned for their aggrandisement of wealth and power.¹³⁴ Twelve years later, the cause was revived, again unsuccessfully, by one of Swift’s *bêtes noires*, Richard Bettesworth.¹³⁵ At the

131 T. F. J. Kendrick, ‘Sir Robert Walpole, the Old Whigs and the Bishops, 1733–1736: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Parliamentary Politics’, *Historical Journal* 11 (1968), 421–35; Stephen Taylor, ‘Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England, and the Quakers’ Tithe Bill of 1736’, *Historical Journal* 28 (1985), 51–77; Taylor, ‘Whigs, Tories and Anticlericalism: Ecclesiastical Courts Legislation in 1733’, *Parliamentary History* 19 (2000), 329–56. The connection was made explicitly in ‘Late Proceedings in Ireland, in Opposition to the Clergy’s Demand of Tithes Herbage . . .’ [1736] (BL, Egmont papers, Add. MS 47089, fo. 5; further copies in BL, Add. MS 21132, fos. 49–53, 54–9, 60–4).

132 Landa, pp. 96–111; A. P. W. Malcomson, *Archbishop Charles Agar: Churchmanship and Politics in Ireland, 1760–1810*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002, pp. 399–401.

133 Bishop John Evans to Archbishop Wake, 5 Dec. 1723 (Christ Church, Oxford, Wake papers, Arch Epist. W. xiv).

134 Philip Perceval to Viscount Perceval, 30 Jan. 1723/4 (BL, Egmont papers, Add. MS 47030, fos. 57–8); Landa, pp. 97–111. The bill was described by one angry clergyman as ‘downright plunder by law’: James Smyth to William Smyth, 11 Nov. 1723 (NLI, Smyth of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,582/4).

135 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. VI, 570.

same time, a second front was opened on the vexed question of tithe. Bitterly resented, and frequently unpaid, tithes were a major popular grievance, adduced by Presbyterian ministers as a principal reason for emigration.¹³⁶ By the 1730s, a connection with economic stagnation had been established in the press. Dobbs, in his first *Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland*, denounced tithes as responsible for the impoverishment of the country, and recommended various reforms, including a proposal that part of the yield be devoted to the setting up and maintenance of poorhouses.¹³⁷ Often stress was laid on the protection of the linen industry, as a key to Ireland's prosperity. In 1738 Samuel Madden recommended that anyone sowing 10 acres of flax be excused payment of tithe.¹³⁸ Dobbs himself introduced a parliamentary bill in 1735 'to ascertain the tithes of hemp and flax'. The fact that his bill was followed in the same session by another, sponsored by Hercules Rowley, the author of the leases bill of 1723, indicates how intimately those two issues were connected.¹³⁹ Neither Madden nor Dobbs could be described as anticlerical; indeed, Madden was himself a clergyman. Their opinions were symptomatic of a general movement among parliamentarians and political economists, as discontented Anglicans who had once seen the church as an instrument for economic transformation now took quite the opposite view.

The first major conflagration over tithe began in the Irish House of Commons in 1735, sparked by clerical insistence on the need for a levy on pasturage – the so-called tithe of herbage or 'agistment'.¹⁴⁰ A number of clergymen, led by Bishop Synge of Ferns, began cases in the law courts to secure their dues, provoking protests from tithe-payers across Ireland and a resolution of the Commons declaring the exaction illegal.¹⁴¹ Synge then

136 Boulter to Carteret, 8 Mar. 1728[/9] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. I, p. 229); to Newcastle, 13 Mar. 1728[/9] (vol. I, pp. 229–35); Coghill to Edward Southwell, 23 Oct. 1729 (*Coghill Letters*, pp. 74–5).

137 Dobbs, *Essay*, pp. 54, 87–8, 92–5.

138 Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland, as to their Conduct for the Service of their Country*, Dublin, 1738, p. 134.

139 A previous Commons bill in 1733 to encourage the hempen and flaxen manufactures had included a clause to limit the tithe on 'flax and hemp' and had been opposed in the House of Lords by all the bishops (Coghill to Edward Southwell, 29 Dec. 1733 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 151)).

140 Landa, pp. 135–50; T. C. Barnard, "Almoners of Providence": The Clergy, 1647 to c. 1780', in T. C. Barnard and W. G. Neely (eds.), *The Clergy of the Church of Ireland, 1000–2000: Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2006, p. 85.

141 Boulter to Anglesey, 8 Jan. 1736[/7] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. II, pp. 150–2); to Sir Robert Walpole, 9 Aug. 1737 (vol. II, pp. 181–4); 'Some Considerations upon the Late Proceedings in Ireland . . .' [1736] (BL, Add. MS 47089, fos. 1, 3–4); *An Apology for the Clergy . . .*, p. 7.

published a vindication of his actions, complete with documentary evidence, setting in motion what became a lengthy and acrimonious controversy.¹⁴² The Commons' vote was memorialised in Swift's satire 'The Legion Club', which dismissed the opponents of the tithe as enemies of the church, and thus as knaves or fools.¹⁴³ It also opened up a frank public debate on the issue of tithe in general. A pamphlet entitled *Prescription Sacred* (1736), responding directly to Syngé's self-justification, contained a prolonged attack on 'the new demand of herbage', and in turn gave rise to blasts and counter-blasts.¹⁴⁴ Critics argued that the clergy were amply provided for despite the poverty of the country and condemned the extortions of tithe-farmers, and 'tithe-jobbers'. It was no wonder that clergymen in general took a dim view of the legislature: Archdeacon Crofton of Cork, discussing the business prospects of one of the MPs for Cork city in 1737, described him as 'a very honest man, *though a Member of Parliament*',¹⁴⁵ while the author of *An Apology for the Clergy of Ireland* (1737/8) complained that the Commons vote had initiated 'an inquisition into their [the clergy's] lives and manners . . . as if they were a body of men, who had distressed the nation to the last degree', and warned that 'to break any gap into the lawful enclosure for one sort of tithes, is to open a way to invade the clergy's rights in every other'.¹⁴⁶

7 *Poverty and Vagrancy*

Ireland, as one historian has observed, was unique among European countries in having no systematic nationwide provision for the relief of poverty until the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁷ This does not mean there was no provision at all; but what was available was an assortment of parochial, municipal and private philanthropy. In general terms, the Church of Ireland seems to have accepted an institutional responsibility for the provision of charity to the poor. Parish vestries levied money and appointed overseers to organise the distribution. But this had no statutory basis. It was merely a

142 Edward Syngé, *Two Affidavits in Relation to the Demands of Tythe-agistment in the Diocese of Leighlin; with an Introduction*, Dublin, 1736.

143 *Poems*, vol. III, pp. 827–39.

144 *Prescription Sacred: or, Reasons for Opposing the New Demand of Herbage in Ireland*, [Dublin?], 1736; Alexander MacAulay, *Property Inviolable: or, Some Remarks upon a Pamphlet Entituled, Prescription Sacred*, Dublin, 1736.

145 Crofton to William Smyth, 30 Jan. 1737 (NLI, Smyth of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,586/23). Emphasis added.

146 *An Apology for the Clergy* . . . , pp. 3–4.

147 Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law 1531–1782*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, p. 159.

custom, albeit based on the precedent set in an Act of Parliament of 1666 relating to the Dublin parish of St Andrew's, which specifically required the collection of money for the poor.¹⁴⁸ Distribution was also restricted to members of the established church, and although other religious denominations (notably the Presbyterians) collected and dispensed money to the distressed among their own congregations,¹⁴⁹ such relief could not touch the majority of the population, especially in the towns, and most particularly the rapidly increasing numbers of destitute in the capital. Efforts were made in 1695 and 1697 to pass legislation that would enable every parish in the kingdom to assess inhabitants for this purpose, but neither bill made any headway.

In his principal contribution to the public debate on the question of provision for the poor, the *Proposal for Giving Badges to the Beggars* (1737), Swift assumed that in Ireland, as in England, 'every Parish is bound to maintain its own Poor', but this was not the case.¹⁵⁰ What had been taken over from England was only the settlement legislation which formed an important prop of the Tudor and Stuart poor law. The Henrician vagrancy acts, which the Irish Parliament re-enacted, empowered justices of the peace to register the 'impotent poor', who were entitled to beg within the particular town or rural parish where they were 'settled', and were provided with identification seals (later with badges) for the purpose, but liable to penalties if they wandered. At the same time, the able-bodied poor – 'sturdy beggars' – were liable to confinement in the stocks. The distinction between the impotent and the able-bodied lay at the heart of attitudes to the poor throughout the early modern period. While the former were to be assisted, the latter were subjected to punishment, and in the 1630s the Irish Parliament strengthened the statutes against vagrancy by adopting a further English innovation, the house of correction, or bridewell.¹⁵¹ This approach was further refined in England through the development of the workhouse, which combined punishment with education, in obliging the poor to work and thus (it was hoped)

148 Rowena Dudley, 'The Dublin Parishes and the Poor, 1660–1740', *Archivium Hibernicum* 53 (1999), 81–8; *The Vestry Records of the Parishes of St Catherine and St James, Dublin, 1657–1692*, ed. Raymond Gillespie, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002, p. 13.

149 Robert Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster, 1680–1730*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013, pp. 171–7.

150 Below, pp. 305–19.

151 David Dickson, 'In Search of the Old Irish Poor Law', in Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (eds.), *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland 1500–1939*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988, p. 149. For the problem of poverty in Dublin, and the means taken to deal with it, see in general Dickson, *Dublin*, pp. 117–20.

inculcating in them the ‘habits of industry’. By 1700, the educational element had become more pronounced, with the foundation of ‘corporations of the poor’ in London, Bristol and other major cities, the purpose of which was to find useful work for ‘sturdy beggars’. Accustoming the children of the poor to work and training them in basic industrial skills was central to the ethos of charity schools and the SPCK. There was also a powerful moral imperative: indeed, the benefactors who founded schools or workhouses were also likely to be involved in the coercive campaign of social reform spearheaded by ‘societies for the reformation of manners’.¹⁵²

The idea of managing poverty and vagrancy by setting the poor to work – if necessary with an element of constraint – was soon adopted in Ireland. It was seen most obviously in the charity schools, and their successors the charter schools, but in general, from the 1690s onwards, pamphleteers were emphasising the necessity of finding suitable work for the poor, and bills were brought into the Dublin Parliament designed to assist in ‘the better employment of the poor’.¹⁵³ Early legislation for the promotion of the linen industry in 1695 and 1697 envisaged setting up what would have been in effect corporations for the poor in various counties to employ children in manufacture, and eventually, in 1704, the first workhouse was established in Dublin, under an Act of Parliament.¹⁵⁴ Although this was to some degree a municipal enterprise, funded through a local tax administered by the city corporation, the governing body included leading office-holders in central government, the Church of Ireland archbishops of Dublin and Armagh, and the deans of the two Dublin cathedrals. The workhouse was also patronised by philanthropists of an evangelical disposition, including clergymen – precisely the kind of individuals who were also involved in the work of charity schools. Among the most prominent were Lord Lanesborough and his pious wife, the niece of Bishop Compton of London, and the evidence of

152 See, for example, the proposal sent in 1728 by an unnamed Member of Parliament (possibly from Ulster) to the bishop of Cloyne, Henry Maule (who had been heavily involved in the charity school movement and was connected with the SPCK in London), advocating the establishment of a national system of workhouses: Marsh’s Lib., MS Z. 3.1.1 (142).

153 A charity sermon preached in Dublin in March 1730 (after the publication of *A Modest Proposal*) by the bishop of Elphin, declared that it was ‘no part of charity to provide for those who can be usefully employed for themselves or the public’. Indeed, those who ‘withdraw their labour from the common stock’ were to be regarded as ‘traitors to society’; ‘they must submit to the common lot of labour, and ought not, as indeed they cannot, eat unless they work’: Robert Clayton, *A Sermon Preach’d in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Dublin: March the 22d. 1729/[30]. At the General Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity-Schools in Dublin*, Dublin, 1730, p. 19.

154 Dickson, ‘In Search of the Old Irish Poor Law’, p. 150.

Lanesborough's papers shows that they were looking for inspiration to an English example, the corporation of the poor in Bristol.¹⁵⁵

Although in due course the Dublin workhouse came to specialise in catering for the 'deserving poor' (and especially orphans), its first impact was on the beggars, or, as Swift and others put it, the 'strollers', who were flooding into the expanding city from the depressed countryside. Over 120 vagrants were forced into the new building when it was opened in 1706, before local churchwardens could bring in their own parish dependants.¹⁵⁶ The harsher side of the 'moral reform' movement was also visible in unsuccessful parliamentary attempts to reinforce the vagrancy laws. In 1711, Sir William Fownes, a Tory alderman of Dublin, brought in a bill (which got no further than its committee stage) to bring up to date the Henrician act. Fownes was a friend of Swift's and subsequently the author of a work published in 1725 under the title of *Methods Proposed for Regulating the Poor, Supporting of Some and Employing Others*.¹⁵⁷ Six years later, Abel Ram, another Tory and a Dublin banker who was an enthusiast for charity schools, sponsored a bill 'for better regulating the poor in this kingdom, and for punishing idle persons, vagrants and vagabonds', which suffered the same fate.¹⁵⁸

By 1725 it was clear that the accommodation provided in the Dublin workhouse was entirely inadequate to cope with the number of beggars being referred to it. The population of the workhouse in 1726 numbered 222 in all, of which nearly half (110) were children, 30 were 'superannuated', and almost none appear to have been able-bodied.¹⁵⁹

The situation was plain enough for the Irish House of Commons to establish a committee of inquiry, after which draft legislation was prepared, only to be amended in the British privy council and dropped on its return to Dublin. In the following parliamentary session, in 1727–8, another committee of inquiry reported at length on inefficiency and corruption in the workhouse, and this time the resultant bill passed into law (1 Geo. II c. 27), reorganising the governing board, broadening the membership and putting the institution's finances on a sounder footing (based on a local tax on those involved in transport services). Although 'sturdy beggars' were still to be committed by the board of governors, emphasis was placed on the

155 'Abstract of the Account from the Corporation of the Poor at Bristol for the Use of the Irish Corporation for the Poor in Dublin . . .' (NLI, Lane papers, MS 8,645/1).

156 Dickson, 'In Search of the Old Irish Poor Law', pp. 150–1.

157 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. II, pp. 831, 869. For Fownes, see *Hist. Ir. Parl.*, vol. IV, pp. 232–3; and for his friendship with Swift, Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 346, 435, 818.

158 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. IV, pp. 324, 392; *DIB*.

159 See Marsh's Lib., MS Z. 3.1.1 (146).

provision that was also to be made for foundling children, who were to be accommodated and given a basic education. A further act of 1732 (5 Geo. II c. 14 [Ire.]) did no more than tighten up financial arrangements, but the description of the workhouse given in this act had significantly changed. Its purpose now was not just to provide work for the poor and punishment for ‘vagabonds’, but to look after foundlings and lunatics, an indication of the direction which would increasingly be taken, as the workhouse metamorphosed into a hospital. But at this stage the problem of vagrancy in the capital was still a sufficiently important issue for the bill to permit the governors to transfer inmates to the bridewell, since ‘by the great number of idle vagabonds and strolling beggars that are from time to time committed to the workhouse . . . great disorders are committed therein’.¹⁶⁰ Although we have no direct evidence of the nature of the regime operating in the workhouse at this time, it is worth noting that in 1729 a Dublin newspaper reported that one woman who had just been committed tried to recover her freedom by jumping out of a window so high that she broke both legs in the attempt.¹⁶¹

Advocacy of harsh treatment of the able-bodied poor, especially those who resorted to begging (whether aggressively or not), was common among the propertied elite. Those working for the economic and moral regeneration of Irish society were particularly susceptible. One noted ‘improver’, Bishop Francis Hutchinson of Down, in the course of a pamphlet in which he proposed a constructive solution to the problem of poverty, found time to recommend condign punishment for ‘idle beggars’, while one of Swift’s local political heroes, the almost unbearably upright lord mayor of Dublin Humphrey French, took a personal interest in the commitment of ‘vagabonds’, ‘beggars’ and ‘shoe-boys’ to the workhouse and houses of correction.¹⁶² It therefore became essential to distinguish between the licensed, impotent poor and idle and sturdy vagrants. And in Dublin in particular, the problem of vagrancy was widely assumed to be an importation from outside – as indeed, given the nature of the Irish economy, and the extent of internal migration, it almost certainly was. Elsewhere in Ireland – and the evidence is especially strong in Ulster – we can see local initiatives to import the English practice

160 Cf. *Cal. Anc. Recs. Dublin*, vol. VII, pp. 440–1, for the building of a new bridewell in 1728 near the gate of the Dublin workhouse.

161 *Dublin Weekly Journal*, 12 July 1729.

162 Francis Hutchinson, *A Letter to a Member of Parliament, Concerning the Employing and Providing for the Poor*, Dublin, 1723, p. 18; *Pue’s Occurrences*, 5–9, 25–28 Nov. 1732.

of providing badges for licensed beggars, so that the unlicensed might be more easily identified, then committed, or sent away.¹⁶³

The issuing of badges to licensed beggars by parish vestries was far from unknown in Ireland in the late seventeenth century. Examples can be found in Dublin parishes (St Mark's and St Ann's), in Waterford, and especially in the north-east of the country, where badges survive from five parishes in Counties Antrim, Down and Armagh between 1695 and 1709.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, it is possible that Swift's time at Kilroot accustomed him to badging as common practice. Such fragmentary evidence as survives also suggests a revival in the 1720s: in Cork in 1721 and 1728;¹⁶⁵ and in Dublin, where in 1724 St Catherine's parish required eighty-six badges for its poor; and two years later badges were provided for the indigenous poor in St Werburgh's.¹⁶⁶

Sir William Fownes's *Methods Proposed for Regulating the Poor*, in 1725, had recommended the introduction of badging into Dublin city on a systematic basis, and in 1726 Swift had tried unsuccessfully to do the same throughout the diocese of Dublin by means of his own influence with Archbishop King (towards which end, presumably, he began to draft the commentary *Upon Giving Badges to the Poor*).¹⁶⁷ It is not surprising, then, that the dean should have returned to this theme in 1737, and that his preferred solution to the problems caused by the beggars who infested the capital, and especially the streets surrounding his own deanery, was to imprison them or drive them back to their home parishes and thus restore the proper social order to the city and to the countryside. In his view, these wandering 'strollers' constituted a social problem which outside interests – the irresponsible gentry of rural Ireland, and even the calculating English – had dumped on Dublin. Such people should be disqualified from benefiting from the produce of local

163 Dickson, 'In Search of the Old Irish Poor Law', p. 151; Dudley, 'Dublin Parishes and the Poor', p. 89. On the English practice, see Steve Hindle, 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c. 1550–1750', *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004), 6–35.

164 W. A. Seaby and T. G. F. Paterson, 'Ulster Beggars' Badges', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser., 3 (1970), 96, 99, 102–4.

165 *Ibid.*, p. 99; Rowena Dudley, 'The Dublin Parish, 1660–1730', in Elizabeth FitzPatrick and Raymond Gillespie (eds.), *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland: Community, Territory and Building*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006, p. 293.

166 Barnard, *New Anatomy of Ireland*, p. 287; S. C. Hughes, *The Church of S. Werburgh, Dublin*, Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1889, p. 44.

167 See below, p. 2. Fownes noted in his pamphlet that 'It is reported, other Cities and Towns, as also many Country Parishes, have begun to Badge their Poor' (Preface, A3f).

taxation, which took money from the pockets of honest workmen. Instead, the poor rate should be used to provide relief for the resident poor of the city's parishes, and the limited number of unfortunates – increasingly orphans and lunatics – whom the workhouse was able to help.

8 *A Modest Proposal*

Since the mid nineteenth century, Swift's *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burden to their Parents or Country; and for Making Them Beneficial to the Publick* has been regarded as one of his most important works, its irony touching depths not to be found in other contemporary satire.¹⁶⁸ Throughout its long literary afterlife, *A Modest Proposal* has inspired the production of masterpieces of macabre humour and satiric aesthetics, and its presence can be detected in work by writers as diverse as Thomas De Quincey, H. G. Wells, Bram Stoker and Evelyn Waugh.¹⁶⁹ The notion that over-population might be rectified by treating the children of the Irish poor as livestock for the butchery trade is in itself gruesome enough, even to modern sensibilities, but in following through with brutal clarity the practical details of his scheme Swift presented a vision that still has the power to shock. Modern sensibilities are uneasy with the black humour of the piece, and few readers are likely to appreciate it as a sardonic joke; rather, it comes across as Swift's most powerful meditation on the inhumanity of mankind and the particular hopelessness of the Irish condition, the most savage example of his savage indignation. Yet there is no agreement as to its primary intention. Critics and biographers have cited it as proof of Swift's essential pessimism about the human condition, and also of his loathing for English misgovernment of Ireland, his sympathy for the poor in general and for the native Irish in particular. For a relatively short pamphlet (only fourteen pages of text in the original Dublin edition), it has spawned a variety of differing interpretations: was Swift's principal aim to satirise 'projectors' and 'proposers' of practical schemes for improving the Irish economy and occupying the poor; to condemn English government for reducing all of Irish society to the level of primitive savagery which was the heritage of the natives; to shock his audience into revising their facile preconceptions of the 'wild Irish'; even to suggest a comparison between cannibalism and

168 Wittkowsky, 'Swift's *Modest Proposal*', p. 75.

169 Ian Higgins, 'The Afterlife of *A Modest Proposal*', in *Dean Swift's Modest Proposal at 280: A Symposium on Swift and Ireland*, Dublin: Deanery of St Patrick's Cathedral, 2009, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/50380>.

the consumption of Ireland's resources, and to imply that absentee landlords and unscrupulous financial interests were already 'devouring' the country? The complexity of the arguments in *A Modest Proposal*, the elusiveness of the authorial voice, and the multiplicity of allusions, both to contemporary Irish society and politics, and to literary precedents, allows for a range of interpretations, yet for all its timeless fascination this is a work which needs to be tied closely to its context.

The form which Swift adopted in the pamphlet – a 'proposal' – was indeed typical of many publications designed to suggest solutions to Ireland's economic and social ills that were laid before the Irish reading public, and the political classes in particular, in the early decades of the eighteenth century. He was himself to use it again soon afterwards in the *Proposal that all the Ladies and Women of Ireland Should Appear Constantly in Irish Manufactures*. That he chose this mode of address has naturally prompted the idea that he was aiming his satire at his fellow authors – earnest 'virtuosi' and political arithmeticians – making *A Modest Proposal* echo his ridicule of the professors whose pointless experiments were described in *Gulliver's Travels*. But this may well be to confuse form with purpose. As Oliver Ferguson observed, the fact that Swift showed contempt for useless learning did not mean that he despised those who offered serious and practical schemes for advancing the common good. He was on amicable terms with Arthur Dobbs, for example, and in private spoke well of Thomas Prior.¹⁷⁰ Nor should we place too much weight on the occasions when he crossed swords with individual 'projectors'. As we have seen, the main reason for his dismissal of John Browne's 'scheme[s] for improving the trade of this kingdom' was that they ignored the basic fact of Ireland's constitutional subordination, which vitiated any simple importation of ideas and practices from other states. In a rather different way, his rejection of James Maculla's idea for the circulation of promissory notes printed on copper as an alternative to the coinage Ireland so desperately needed (in *A Letter on Maculla's Project about Halfpence*), was partly based on the view that it was impractical, and partly on a visceral suspicion of any project that could turn out to be a money-making enterprise for the projector. Such enterprises reeked of the financial quackery of an earlier generation whom he had encountered in England: individuals like the speculative builder Nicholas Barbon, whose activities Swift recalled in *Maxims Controlled in Ireland*, gloating that Barbon, in common with others of his ilk, had 'died bankrupt'.¹⁷¹

170 Ferguson, pp. 165–6.

171 Below, p. 178.

Furthermore, there is little reason to suppose that Swift was hostile towards those who put forward constructive ideas for the relief and re-education of the poor, who at first glance might appear to have been his prime target. Charitable initiatives intended to assist the poor, such as schools or workhouses, were generally associated with those of an evangelical cast of mind, devoted members of the established church who were not easily made objects of derision. Indeed, the most recent offering along these lines, which some have suggested was in Swift's mind when he wrote *A Modest Proposal*, was in fact written by his old friend, the Tory MP and former lord mayor of Dublin, Sir William Fownes, whose attitudes towards poverty and vagrancy were not much different from Swift's own.¹⁷² Moreover, the dean was not himself so well disposed to the poor as to disdain coercive measures, whether the establishment of workhouses or the expulsion of unlicensed beggars from the urban parishes to which, in desperation, they had resorted.

This is not to say that Swift was incapable of satirising views which were akin to his own, or at least of presenting them in a distorted and wildly exaggerated form. It may be, as David Womersley has suggested, that he was intent on showing the world the depths of the moral degeneration that would inevitably follow the slavish condition in which he and other Irishmen found themselves, so that during the course of the work the proposer grew into 'a terrible imaginative projection of what Swift could be driven to become'.¹⁷³ Alternatively, it may simply be counted as an additional complexity, in an already complex work, that he presented in an extreme and satirical form a calculating and authoritarian attitude to the poor which was commonplace among contemporaries, and to an extent even understandable in the context of the prevailing instability, real and perceived, in Irish social relations and public order. Published analyses of the problem of poverty in Ireland viewed the children of the poor as a potential national resource (even if, in their current state, they were a drain on the economy) and a fit subject for social engineering.¹⁷⁴ This was the ethos of the charity-school movement, which took in children in order to make them 'useful' and docile. If schooled in this

172 Sir William Fownes, *Methods Proposed for Regulating the Poor. Supporting of Some, and Employing Others: According to Their Several Capacities*, Dublin, 1723–4; repr. 1725; Fownes to Swift, 9 Sept. 1732 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. III, pp. 535–9); Ehrenpreis, vol. III, p. 818. Fownes, like Swift, was a keen supporter of the mayoral government of Humphrey French (Fownes, *Letter to . . . Humphrey French*).

173 *CWJS*, vol. XVI, p. c.

174 For example, Hutchinson, *Letter to a Member of Parliament, Concerning the . . . Poor*, p. 8, asserted that the beggar 'eats your Meat, and drinks your Milk, and pays you nothing for it', while the vagrant 'both eats and steals, and spoils your inclosures, and fills you with Children'.

way, they would be a benefit to the country; if not, they offered a real threat to social order. It is of course conceivable that Swift had reservations about the severity of the regimes under which the destitute laboured in workhouses and the children of the poor were put to manual labour in schools, or that he took private exception to the contemptuous and inhumane tone in which other writers discussed the poor (though he was fully capable of expressing similar sentiments in his own writings). But his principal objection to pamphlets of this kind was that the answers they proposed to the great question of poverty would ultimately prove futile. Putting the unemployed poor to work served no purpose while the Irish economy languished, which was an inevitable consequence of Ireland's crippled constitution.

This point is underlined by the precise wording of the title of *A Modest Proposal*. While the literary device of a 'proposal' was commonplace in 1729, to add the adjective 'modest' in front of it was not. According to the *English Short Title Catalogue*, the words 'modest proposal' had been used in this way only once before, in the title of an obscure English pamphlet from the early years of William III's reign, which it would have been pointless for Swift to have referred to.¹⁷⁵ Nor was the phrase popular in printed works, though it had appeared the previous year in the Whig journalist James Ralph's priggish denunciation of fashionable theatrical taste, *The Touch-Stone*, and, since Ralph had recently criticised Pope, Swift would at least have been aware of him.¹⁷⁶ As Claude Rawson has pointed out, it also harks back to Bernard Mandeville's *A Modest Defence of Public Stews* (1724), which, in advocating state-controlled prostitution, performed a similar satirical exercise to Swift, advocating a scheme that outraged public decency by challenging accepted moral values in order to achieve a material good, or set of goods.¹⁷⁷

Leaving aside echoes of other writers, Swift's use of the phrase may simply have been intended to enhance the ferocity of the irony: 'modest' in the sense of morally decent or respectable.¹⁷⁸ But it may also have held a political meaning: 'modest' in the sense of limited and (in this fantastic scenario) practicable. His was not a scheme which required parliamentary legislation,

175 *An Essay, or, Modest Proposal, of a Way to Encrease the Number of People, and Consequently the Strength of this Kingdom . . .*, [?London, 1693].

176 James Ralph, *The Touch-Stone: or, Historical, Critical, Political, Philosophical, and Theological Essays on the Reigning Diversions of the Town*, London, 1728, p. 193. For Ralph, see *ODNB*.

177 Rawson, 'Mandeville and Swift', in *Swift and Others*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 51–69. One of the benefits envisaged by Mandeville was a reduction in instances of infanticide, which constitutes a further link with the *Modest Proposal*.

178 As, for example, in Richard Allestree, *The Government of the Tongue*, Oxford, 1702, p. 203.

interventionist government regulation or the establishment of new institutions (whether poor-houses or Molesworth's agricultural colleges). Above all, it was something the Irish could do for themselves. Since this particular commodity by its very nature could not be exported, the English government and Parliament would have no cause to intervene.

In disparaging 'the several schemes of other projectors', Swift was making two points: first, contrary to accepted wisdom, the 'prodigious number' of the children of the poor constituted a dead weight on the economy and not, in normal circumstances, a potential source of economic growth; second, and more important, that Ireland's problems were so intractable that nothing but the most brutally radical solution could put them right. In a lengthy passage towards the end of the pamphlet he listed other options, including not only a tax on absentees, but also a boycott of foreign goods, sumptuary laws, even the development of a spirit of patriotism, only to conclude: 'let no Man talk to me of these and the like Expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere Attempt to put them in Practice.'¹⁷⁹ In other words, Swift's intention was not to ridicule practitioners of political economy as such, but, as Ferguson observed, to show 'their foolishness in trying to help an indifferent Ireland',¹⁸⁰ or, indeed, the unreality of proposing remedies that either required the consent of the British ministers or could be undone by legislative action at Westminster. The fundamental problem remained a political one: Ireland's status as a 'dependent kingdom', which Irish parliamentary patriots seemingly had neither the will nor the capacity to challenge. Ultimately, the exploitation by British government and Parliament of its power over the Irish economy was what would keep the country poor. In one of the several sidelong comments with which *A Modest Proposal* was peppered, Swift made a characteristic allusion to English rapacity. Referring to the possibility of curing the flesh of Irish children, he conceded that it was too tender to 'admit a long continuance in Salt' but added sharply, '*I could name a Country, which would be glad to Eat up our whole Nation without it.*'¹⁸¹

At the same time, the conceit that lies at the heart of *A Modest Proposal*, the scheme to breed and sell the children of the natives for meat, enabled Swift to weave a web of ironic meanings which, taken together, exposed the complex nature of Ireland's predicament: not only its powerlessness against malign English government, but the decadence of the Protestant elite, reduced by slavery to a moral condition no better than the indigenous

179 Below, p. 157.

180 Ferguson, p. 175.

181 Below, p. 158.

inhabitants of the country whom it was their religious and moral duty to bring to civility.

The association of cannibalism with the native Irish, through their supposed Scythian ancestry, was well established in literary tradition, dating back to Herodotus, who recorded how the Scythians drank blood to seal and sanctify an agreement, and the geographer Strabo, who described both the Scythians and the ancient inhabitants of Ireland as anthropophagous. It had been taken up by Edmund Spenser, who devoted a lengthy passage of his *A View of the Present State of Ireland* to a detailed comparison of the ‘evil’ customs of the native Irish with those of their Scythian and Gaulish forebears, and included a reference to drinking the blood of defeated enemies.¹⁸² Both Spenser and his fellow Elizabethan Fynes Moryson described how, in the famine conditions of the 1590s, the starving Irish had been reduced to eating the bodies of the recently deceased. One particularly horrible story of Moryson’s, of the orphan children of a widow consuming in desperation the carcass of their dead mother, had been related by Sheridan in *The Intelligencer* a year earlier.¹⁸³ In *A Modest Proposal*, Swift also refers to well-known examples of cannibalism among the native peoples of the Americas, especially the Tupi or Tupinamba of coastal Brazil, in order to underscore the supposedly innate barbarism of the Irish. Cannibalism, either in the way the Scythians and the Tupi disposed of the bodies of defeated enemies, or in the supposed practice of the Incas, in raising children as gastronomic delicacies¹⁸⁴ – a precedent that was closer to the proposer’s intention – was made to seem a characteristic of ‘savage’ peoples wherever they might be found.

182 Herodotus, *History*, IV, 70. Strabo, *Geography*, VII, iii, 7; IV, v, 4. *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw *et al.*, 11 vols., Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1943–57, vol. IX, p. 112. That the idea was current in Swift’s generation can be illustrated by a passage in a typically condescending work of English travel-writing, *A Brief Character of Ireland, with Some Observations on the Customs &c. of the Meaner Inhabitants of That Kingdom*, London, 1692, whose author writes, of the ‘native Irish’ (pp. 46–7): ‘Were it not for the industrious English and strangers among them, I am persuaded in process of time they would let it [the country] all run into its original wilderness, and live either like cannibals upon one another, or like the native wolves . . . upon the next prey they light on, tho’ of the nearest blood, rather than take the least honest pains to provide better for themselves, or their wretched progeny’. It is, of course, possible that such views also formed an object of Swift’s satire.

183 Woolley, *Intelligencer*, p. 198. Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary . . . Concerning His Ten Yeeres Travel through the Twelve Dominions of Germany . . . Scotland and Ireland*, London, 1617, p. 271. For a summation of these influences on the pamphlet, see Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 70–91.

184 Ian Campbell Ross, ‘“A Very Knowing American”: The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*’, *MLQ* 68 (2007), 493–516.

The assumption that lay behind *A Modest Proposal* was presumably that Irish ‘savages’, long accustomed to the idea of eating human flesh, would take no exception to such an outlandish idea; indeed, they would embrace it with alacrity. Yet *A Modest Proposal* was not simply a further statement of the barbarism of the Irish Yahoos. For while the indigent natives were to raise this new source of food, it was the propertied classes, people like Swift and his readers, the English in Ireland, who would consume the product. Moreover, as Swift was quick to point out, the English in England would happily consume everything, and everyone, in Ireland if they could. The nature of the Irish condition had therefore reduced the settlers, and their English exploiters, to the same level of barbarism as the natives.

Although the thrust of Swift’s satire is against the consumers of this ghastly trade, the enslaving English and enslaved Irish Protestants who are responsible for the degradation of the country to such a pitch that organised cannibalism offers the only solution to its difficulties, the attitude towards the native Irish embodied in *A Modest Proposal* remains problematic. For some commentators the author’s intentions are clear: Swift is identifying with the oppressed. In 1882, Leslie Stephen (at that time an influential representative of popular literary culture) described the pamphlet as ‘the most complete expression of burning indignation against intolerable wrongs’, reflecting a belief in the uncomplicated nature of the authorial voice, and Swift’s ironic distance from the subject; eating people is wrong, and Swift is obviously repudiating the mad theory of the proposer.¹⁸⁵ This view survives in modern scholarship, and has been extended to claim for Swift an honoured place in the gallery of writers against colonial exploitation. According to Carole Fabricant,

A Modest Proposal is governed by a central metaphor that for Swift automatically conveyed a definite political and economic – specifically anticolonialist – statement: one that assumed the existence of close ties between Ireland’s self-destructive tendencies and England’s brutal oppressions. As Swift saw it, England’s lawless seizure of Ireland’s earthly produce, like Eve’s wilful plunder of the forbidden fruit, generated a fundamentally anarchic and predatory world founded upon a grotesque Chain of Devouring.¹⁸⁶

This straightforward interpretation has been challenged, however, by readings which point up the contrast with the derisive and dismissive attitude

185 Leslie Stephen, *Swift*, London: Macmillan, 1882, p. 163.

186 Carole Fabricant, *Swift’s Landscape*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, p. 79.

towards the native Irish expressed in Swift's other writings. The idea that *A Modest Proposal* was written in defence of the native Irish peasantry flies in the face of this other evidence. In the words of Claude Rawson, 'to suggest that . . . [Swift's] attitude on certain central questions (poverty, beggars, the care of children) was "humane" or "liberal" in a sense which a modern reader would understand or assent to, is misleading'.¹⁸⁷ Swift's satire targeted Anglo-Irish settlers, but did not defend the poor, who were almost beneath consideration.

Swift's attitude to the native Irish was complex. To understand it, we have first to consider his perception of his own national identity. Here, residence and ethnicity were in conflict. In common with other Irish Protestants in this period, he was able to consider himself as English and as Irish at different times and in different circumstances.¹⁸⁸ Put simply, when their interests were threatened by the actions of the English/British government, members of the Protestant elite in Ireland defined themselves as 'Irish'; when they faced the danger of rebellion, and the expropriation of their property by Catholics, they were 'the English interest' in Ireland and their enemies were 'the native Irish' or 'the Irish' *tout court*. This at least was the situation at the Glorious Revolution; in the succeeding generations, a sense of 'Irishness' gradually took over, but suspicion and the historical sense of alienation from the native Irish Catholics did not disappear entirely, and in consequence neither did the Protestant's residual ethnic, religious and political identification with England. As has often been observed, Swift's outrage at the English Parliament's interference in Irish affairs was grounded on the belief that Protestants in Ireland were being deprived of their liberties as Englishmen.

The idea that the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy was a self-consciously 'colonial' caste currently finds little favour with historians, however attractive it has proved to be to literary and cultural critics wishing to draw modern Ireland into the maw of 'subaltern studies'. For a time it was fashionable to equate eighteenth-century Protestant Irish 'patriotism' with the 'colonial nationalism' that emerged in the white dominions of the British empire in

187 'A Reading of *A Modest Proposal*', in *Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1985, p. 121.

188 D. W. Hayton, 'Anglo-Irish Attitudes: Changing Perceptions of National Identity among the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland, ca. 1690–1750', *Studies in Eighteenth-century Culture* 17 (1987), 145–57 (repr. and expanded in Hayton, *Anglo-Irish Experience*, pp. 25–48); Jim Smyth, "Like Amphibious Animals": Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons, 1691–1707', *Historical Journal* 36 (1993), 785–97.

the late 1800s.¹⁸⁹ The idea that Protestant Ireland was in essence a ‘colony’ – or even a ‘garrison’ – has of course been central to the nationalist narrative of Ireland’s past, and has given rise to debates among historians as to whether the Ascendancy is still best described objectively as a colony, or whether its colonial features – the equation of political rights with landownership and the sectarian exclusiveness of the ruling class – were in fact typical of the states of ‘ancien régime’ Europe.¹⁹⁰ It is clear, however, that Irish Protestants did not see their position as equivalent to that of the colonial planters of north America or the Caribbean. They did not use the term ‘colony’ of Ireland, nor did they concede that Ireland’s Parliament was a mere colonial assembly.¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, the history of English settlement in Ireland and the nature of the relationship between landed Protestants and landless Catholics could not but impart some element of the colonial into Irish Protestants’ self-image. After all, for Swift, Catholics were ‘the native Irish’, whom it had been the mission of the English in Ireland to civilise.¹⁹²

The statements of sympathy for the Irish Catholic population that are to be found in Swift’s writings are few and far between. As Rawson has put it, his ‘bitterness about the oppression of the Irish natives . . . is sparsely expressed, and usually mixed with gruff contempt for their laziness and ignorance, and the squalor of their mode of life’.¹⁹³ Where Swift shows concern for the plight of the poor in general, as in his sermon on the *Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland*, the principal subjects of his pity are ‘the lower Sort of Tradesmen, Labourers and Artificers’ of Dublin, ‘not able to find Cloaths and Food for their Families’ – in other words, the industrious Protestant artisans and tradesmen who have been brought low by the English discriminatory legislation which has destroyed their

189 J. G. Simms, *Colonial Nationalism, 1698–1776: Molyneux’s ‘The Case of Ireland . . . Stated’*, Cork: Mercier Press, 1976; T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds.), *A New History of Ireland*, vol. IV: *Eighteenth-century Ireland 1691–1800*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, pp. 104–22, 196–235; Patrick Kelly, ‘Archbishop William King (1650–1729) and Colonial Nationalism’, in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Worsted in the Game: Losers in Irish History*, Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1989, pp. 85–94.

190 S. J. Connolly, ‘Eighteenth-century Ireland: Colony or Ancien Régime’, in D. G. Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 15–33; Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009, pp. 100–3.

191 D. G. Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982, pp. 106–8; Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power*, pp. 105–6.

192 See also *A Proposal for Giving Badges to the Beggars* (below, pp. 312, 314), where Swift uses the term ‘colonies’ to refer to the impoverished tenantry and labourers on country estates in Ireland, whom the landlords have ‘sent up’ to beg on the streets of Dublin.

193 Rawson, *God, Gulliver and Genocide*, p. 81.

livelihoods.¹⁹⁴ Where we can detect glimmers of sympathy for the ‘poor Popish natives’, these are an instrumental part of his critique of the selfish behaviour of landlords, and though Swift does at one point refer to the expropriation of Catholic lands in moralistic terms, the phrasing is still not entirely straightforward: the rural poor have been oppressed and degraded by landlords ‘who stripped them of all of their substance’, but the more serious charge against land-grabbers is not that they took estates away (which would be justified by their civilising mission), but that they have since failed to discharge the social responsibility that the acquisition of property entailed.¹⁹⁵

Where Swift was quite uncompromising was in his observations on the mendicant poor, and in particular the children of beggars, in both town and country, whom he presented as pathologically vicious. In this respect he was at one with other contemporary commentators, who wrote about the children of the poor in a highly pejorative manner. Even Sir William Fownes, whose intentions were essentially benevolent, could lose his self-control on this subject:

there are numbers of these straggling about, running into evil Courses, sculking about Gentlemens Stables and Houses; and are privately supported by Servants, and some by Servants to whom they are related, and this by stealing from their Masters and Mistresses; others pretend to live by selling News-Papers, blacking of Shoes, and running often on pimping Errands from Taverns; tho’ these kinds make a sorry Shift to get Bread; yet they are notoriously wicked, and ought to be confined to Work-houses.¹⁹⁶

Even more violent language was to be found in Viscount Molesworth’s *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture, and Employing the Poor* (1723), where fear gave way to loathing. He described the poor Irish in the countryside who

live under Hedges, in Ditches and Hutts, worse than Hog-sties; from whence you shall often see creeping out like Vermin, whole swarms of Bastards; the Produce of Adultery and Incest, and whereof, there are more in the Neighbourhood of *Dublin*, than any other part of the World; a Race of People like Gypsies, which no Priest takes any care of; yet are the Seminaries of all rebellions, dangerous in Plague Times, revengeful at all times, in burning Barns and Houses of such as are not kind to them, and Harbourers of Robbers.¹⁹⁷

194 Davis, vol. IX, p. 199.

195 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

196 Fownes, *Methods for Regulating the Poor* (1725), p. 9.

197 Molesworth, *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture . . .*, pp. 40–1.

Swift wrote in the same vein, of ‘the Tribe of wicked Boys, wherewith most Corners of the Town are pestered’, many of them immigrants from the city’s rural hinterland, where they had been ‘bred up from the Dunghill in Idleness, Ignorance, Lying and Thievery’, ‘from their Infancy so given up to Idleness and Sloth, that they often chuse to beg or steal, rather than Support themselves with their own Labour’.¹⁹⁸

This belief in pathological criminality, combined with what appears to have been an obsessive concern with the prevalence of prostitution in Dublin, produced in Swift a revulsion against female vagrants in particular, whom he described in one telling passage as ‘profligate abandoned Women, who croud our Streets with their borrowed or spurious issue’. In this mindset, the children themselves appeared, at best, as the badge of a squalid and habitual immorality; and, at worst, as the product of a base calculation, as these ‘strolling women’ deliberately surrounded themselves with bands of ‘naked children’, as much the appurtenances of their trade of begging as the rags in which all were clothed.¹⁹⁹ In consequence, there would be a bitter logic in the proposal that such women should be enabled to contribute positively to the Irish economy by selling their offspring for butcher’s meat, their reproductive capacity for once harnessed to a profitable end.

Thus, *A Modest Proposal* is far from being a simple repudiation of the inequities and inhumanity of dominant social systems and economic relations. Rawson has pointed out that this popular misconception of the pamphlet obscured both the workings of ‘an irony a good deal less simple than is normally thought’, and Swift’s ‘complicated interplay of compassion and contempt’, where ‘feelings oscillate starkly among extreme positions’. These positions do not include sympathy in any simple way. The Modest Proposer ‘is not mainly parodying other pamphleteers, so much as giving vent to a certain side of Swift himself’.²⁰⁰ This side is not easily sympathetic to the modern reader, is implicated in Swift’s own satire (on weakness, and the intractable ways in which human clay cannot be remoulded, which is the larger vista beyond the local ironies of the *A Modest Proposal*), and reflects Swift’s sense of being (and not being) English and Irish, amongst other contradictions.

Despite its status as a classic exemplar of Swift’s fierce irony, and the treatment it often receives as a timeless satire on the inhumanity of man,

198 *Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland* (Davis, vol. IX, pp. 201–2).

199 *Ibid.* In the *Proposal for Giving Badges to Beggars*, Swift noted that rags were ‘Part of their Tools with which they work’ (below, p. 319).

200 Rawson, ‘A Reading of *A Modest Proposal*’, in *Order from Confusion Sprung*, pp. 121, 128.

A Modest Proposal is also a piece of writing that reflects its chronological context. Although the issue that the pamphlet addressed directly was the acute economic hardship visible on the streets of the capital, it was also an indirect response to what was perceived as a general crisis threatening Irish Protestant society. Demographically, the principal cause for concern was the renewed emigration from Ulster to north America, at a time when fear of ‘popery’ was resurgent. A scheme to engineer a comparable reduction in the Catholic population would have obvious resonances. But Swift himself was ambivalent about the events in Ulster. The migrant ships departing from Derry and other northern ports undoubtedly represented a weakening of the Protestant interest, but he was contemptuous of the way in which Presbyterian ministers and controversialists opportunistically cited emigration to make a case for the redress of grievances. In common with other clergymen, he could not accept the argument that these emigrants had been driven away by any form of religious discrimination, observing that they had ‘chosen rather to leave their Country, than stay at home, and pay Tythes against their Conscience, to an *Episcopal Curate*’.²⁰¹ The embattled position of the established church, having to defend its privileges against increasing criticism, also weighed on Swift’s mind. We can also see it expressed, more obliquely, in his repeated denunciations of Irish landlords, which reflects resentment at what he saw as the gathering anticlericalism of the propertied elite.

A Modest Proposal needs also to be understood as Swift’s particular contribution to the chorus of printed advice being prepared for the members of the Irish Parliament who were to meet in session over the winter of 1729–30. In this respect, it enjoyed only a limited success in Ireland. The appearance of the pamphlet created ripples in the political waters there, but no great splash. It attracted considerably more attention in London, where the reading public were more likely to be intrigued and amused by fantasies of Irish depravity. The rather nondescript Dublin edition was soon reprinted by two different London booksellers, both of whom advertised it in November 1729; one of these, Weaver Bickerton, had offered three editions by the end of 1730 (albeit possibly the same edition with new title pages), and combined it with two other Irish pamphlets, in a portmanteau publication entitled *A View of the Present State of Affairs in Ireland* (perhaps a nod towards Swift’s *Short View*). It was referenced in November 1730 in the issue of *The Craftsman* to which Swift penned a

201 Below, p. 154. The introduction, before ‘Episcopal’, of the adjective ‘idolatrour’ into the 1735 edition (whether by Swift or someone else) effectively parodied the rhetoric of a bigoted Ulster Presbyterian minister.

response,²⁰² and was translated into French by the Piedmontese Count Adalberti Radicati di Passerana in 1736.²⁰³ But of the immediate impact in Ireland we know very little. James Arbuckle's collection of essays, *The Tribune*, published a month or so later, offered proposals for curing Ireland's ills, and in particular for social engineering among the debased peasantry, in reasonable and relatively humane terms, which might have been read as an implicit response to *A Modest Proposal*.²⁰⁴ But for direct contemporary comment, all that survives is a short comment from the Irish revenue commissioner, Marmaduke Coghill, who in November 1729 sent a publication to his friend Edward Southwell in London with the laconic explanation, 'the enclosed is a book of Swift's'.²⁰⁵ This was presumably *A Modest Proposal*. By comparison, Coghill's comments on the publication of Thomas Prior's *A List of the Absentees of Ireland*, published a few weeks in advance of Swift's masterpiece, were almost animated: 'We have a bitter book published against absentees, [which] though it has some truths in it, has many faults and [is] liable to many objections.'²⁰⁶

Prior's book (which at over eighty pages was more than four times as long as *A Modest Proposal*) did indeed create a minor sensation in Dublin, so much so that 'patriot' MPs were encouraged to prepare a bill for the forthcoming session of the Irish Parliament that would have imposed a tax on the incomes of absentee landlords, placemen and pensioners.²⁰⁷ The *List* also went through three editions in its first year: two in Dublin and the third printed in London, again by Weaver Bickerton, who bundled it, together with a rejoinder on behalf of the absentees, and *A Modest Proposal*, in his *View of the Present State of Affairs in Ireland*. Interestingly, he placed Prior's tract, and the reply, ahead of Swift in the running order. It looks very much as though Prior had scooped the dean. Bishop Robert Howard of Killala thought that the *List of Absentees* 'had some strokes of Jonathan', and there are hints that Swift himself may have been piqued by its success. He had, after all, already played this card himself. He wrote to

202 *The Answer to the Craftsman* (below, pp. 218–27).

203 Flavio Gregori, 'The Italian Reception of Swift', in Hermann J. Real (ed.), *The Reception of Jonathan Swift in Europe*, London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005, p. 26.

204 [James Arbuckle,] *The Tribune*, London, 1729, pp. 125, 129–30; Richard Holmes, 'James Arbuckle and Dean Swift: Cultural Politics in the Irish Confessional State', *Irish Studies Review* 16 (2008), 437–8.

205 Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 13 Nov. 1729 (*Coghill Letters*, p. 78).

206 Same to same, 14 Oct. 1729 (*ibid.*, p. 74).

207 Carteret to Edward Southwell, 30 Nov. 1729 (BL, Add. MS 38016, fos. 9–10); James Smyth to William Smyth, 23 Dec. 1729 (NLI, Smyth of Barbavilla papers, MS 42,582/7).

Pope on 31 October 1729, 'we return thrice as much to our absentees as we get by trade, and so are all inevitably undone; which I have been telling them in print these ten years, to as little purpose as if it came from the pulpit'.²⁰⁸ In *A Modest Proposal*, he included the proposed tax on absentees as one of the various 'other expedients' to which his own scheme was an alternative.

We know nothing of the genesis of *A Modest Proposal*, nor of the circumstances of its composition, so it would be rank speculation to suggest that Swift may have been seeking to overbid Prior by the 'shock value' of his own work. But although he fully endorsed the case against absenteeism, he would not have been happy at an analysis which ascribed all the blame for Ireland's economic woes to the irresponsibility of Irish landowners, while to all intents and purposes ignoring the essentially iniquitous nature of Ireland's constitutional dependency. Prior's pamphlet also shared the assumption of other writers of whom Swift very much disapproved, like John Browne, that the Irish economy might be improved without the necessity for fundamental constitutional change. *A Modest Proposal* maintains Swift's frequently expressed disdain for Browne's optimistic view of Irish prospects, based as it was on an ingenuous belief in the potential of the country's economic resources; indeed, the foundation of his argument is to satirise the idea that population density was a resource to be exploited. But it might also be seen as a riposte to Prior, and it would therefore have been doubly galling for Swift to find that (if only in the short term) Prior's pamphlet had made an even greater impact than his own.

9 *Dublin Politics*

In June 1725, at the height of the excitement about Wood's Halfpence, some fervent 'patriots' tried in vain to secure for Swift the freedom of Dublin. On that occasion, the ruling oligarchy in the city – primarily the aldermen – resisted what would undoubtedly have been a serious affront to government.²⁰⁹ When the aldermen reversed their position in January 1730, and a general assembly of the corporation (comprising aldermen and 'commons' or common council) voted to offer the dean his freedom in a gold box,²¹⁰ Swift's political enemies were disgusted. The Whig politician Lord Allen, formerly a friend of Swift's but now seeking to curry favour with

208 Swift to Pope, 31 Oct. 1729 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. III, pp. 262–3).

209 Ehrenpreis, vol. III, p. 298.

210 *Cal. Anc. Recs. Dublin*, vol. VII, p. 476; Ehrenpreis, vol. III, p. 650.

the administration, vented his spleen at a meeting of the Irish privy council, to which the lord mayor and sheriffs had been summoned to account for their failure to suppress rioting in the city. At their pleas of poverty, he 'took them up very roundly, and wondered how they should complain of poverty, when they were so lavish as to give a gold box to a man who neither feared God nor honoured the king, who had wrote a libel on the king, queen and government'.²¹¹ These words were reported to the deanery, and Swift naturally took deep offence. When they were repeated in the Irish House of Lords Allen found himself the subject of a series of stinging satires, in verse and prose.

Allen was not the only Castle politician to be nauseated by the assembly's vote. The revenue commissioner Marmaduke Coghill, remembering how the civic authorities had resisted 'patriotic' pressure in 1725, wrote to an Irish correspondent in London: 'You very justly observe how our angels of aldermen are turned from those of light to those of darkness, for once nothing was too good for them, so now nothing is bad enough for them, and they are the most despicable set of men in the kingdom.'²¹² From a government point of view, worse was to come. In February 1733, Swift's friend, the 'patriot' MP Eaton Stannard, was elected to the vacant position of recorder of the corporation, after Swift had listed his virtues in an appeal to the public spirit of the aldermen and common council.²¹³ And, later that year, a hard-fought parliamentary by-election for the city ended with the return of another 'patriot' candidate, the outgoing lord mayor Humphrey French, who had also been strongly endorsed by Swift in his *Advice to the Free-men of the City of Dublin in The Choice of a Member to Represent Them In Parliament*.²¹⁴

The background to the changing political climate in the corporation is obscure. Histories of eighteenth-century Dublin have tended to slide over this period, and to pick up the narrative with the rise of a 'patriot' element among the citizenry in the 1740s, and the radical challenge of the apothecary Charles Lucas to the oligarchic rule of the aldermen. As yet, we have insufficient evidence of the ideological sympathies and factional allegiances of aldermen and common councilmen to enable events to be

211 Coghill to Edward Southwell, 21 Feb. 1729[/30] (*Coghill Letters*, pp. 91–2).

212 Same to same, 3 Jan. 1729[/30] (*ibid.*, p. 83).

213 Below, pp. 240–3. For Stannard, see *Hist. Ir. Parl.*, vol. VI, pp. 319–21; and for his friendship with Swift, *Ehrenpreis*, vol. II, pp. 819, 842.

214 Below, pp. 247–54. On French's 'patriot' credentials, see also *Astræa's Congratulation: an Ode upon Alderman Humphrey French being Elected Representative for the City of Dublin*, [Dublin], 1733.

explained with confidence: little or no correspondence survives between the principals, and the existing printed sources – pamphlets, broadsheets and newspaper reports – are fragmentary. Nevertheless, the bare record of the city corporation's 'Monday books' and assembly rolls, stating decisions made by the aldermen and common council, suggests that there had been significant tremors since at least 1728. Elections at all levels proved unusually difficult. In July 1728, the choice of a new alderman – at which the lord mayor customarily proposed a panel of three candidates from which the rest of the aldermen selected one – required six attempts before a successful nomination was made; another aldermanic election the following year saw seven mayoral nominations rejected; and in February and April 1730, and again in January 1731, there were contested votes in elections for aldermen and for the city coroner.²¹⁵ Although Humphrey French was recorded as having been chosen lord mayor in 1732 unanimously at the first attempt, only half the aldermen were present on that occasion, which might well indicate a division of opinion. The following year it took two attempts to secure the appointment of Stannard as recorder.²¹⁶ This level of seismic activity in municipal elections was unusual, and was accompanied by hard-fought contests over parliamentary seats, in a constituency whose combined freeman and freeholder franchise made it the largest urban electorate in the country, with between 2,000 and 3,000 voters.²¹⁷ The 1727 general election cost one successful candidate over £1,000, which in Ireland was an unheard-of, and potentially ruinous, expense.²¹⁸ An unusually high level of mortality among the city's representatives then produced by-elections in 1728, 1729, and again in 1733, when French was returned. Each gave rise to frenetic activity, including elaborate entertainments for voters, and the frequent resort to printed broadsheets or ballads to assert a candidate's virtue or to denounce opponents.

The nature of corporate governance in Dublin suggests that an explanation should first be sought in the personalities and rivalries of the twenty-four aldermen, in whose hands power was concentrated, and who usually provided the rival candidates in parliamentary as well as municipal elections. A

215 Dublin Corporation 'Monday book', 22 July 1728, 16 May 1729, 7 Feb. 1729[/30], 9 Apr. 1730, 19 Jan. 1730[/1] (Dublin City Archives, G/102/05, pp. 90–1, 95–6, 107, 108, 116).

216 'Monday book', 21 Apr. 1732 (*ibid.*, p. 128); *Pue's Occurrences*, 13–17 Feb. 1733; *Daily Courant*, 1 Mar. 1733; *Daily Journal*, 1 Mar. 1733.

217 *Hist. Ir. Parl.*, vol. II, p. 229; Sean Murphy, 'Charles Lucas and the Dublin Election of 1748–1749', *Parliamentary History* 2 (1983), 95.

218 Hugh Howard to Bishop Robert Howard, 27 Feb. 1727/8 (NLI, MS 38,598/3).

classic self-perpetuating oligarchy, they served for life, and themselves chose new members to fill vacant places. They were also responsible for electing the lord mayor, and other officers, and the members of the common council, the body from which recruits to the aldermanic dignity were drawn. The easiest explanation for divisions within this narrowly circumscribed community would be conflicts of personality, tending by a natural process to produce factional conflicts. But the political history of early eighteenth-century Ireland suggests that issues could also figure. Twenty years earlier, in Queen Anne's reign, the city had been riven by the conflict of Whigs and Tories. True, the long-running dispute which brought corporate government to a standstill in 1711–14 had been in essence a quarrel between aldermen, a handful of Tories exploiting the powers of the Irish privy council in order to frustrate the wish of the Whig majority for a lord mayor of their own persuasion.²¹⁹ On the other hand, Whig and Tory loyalties clearly extended far below the level of the aldermanic court, and the parliamentary election for the city in 1713 had given rise to mob violence, with fatalities when troops were called out to protect municipal officials.²²⁰

Underlying the antagonism between these parties, at every level, was tension between Churchmen and Dissenters, arising from the existence of a substantial minority of Protestant Nonconformists, mainly Presbyterians, in the city's population. By the late 1720s, 'party', in the Whig and Tory sense, was no longer acknowledged as a significant factor in Dublin politics, despite the survival of some Tory aldermen like Sir William Fownes who were veterans of the battles of Queen Anne's reign. There was, however, still a Nonconformist presence in the corporation, for southern Presbyterians, unlike their Ulster brethren, were happy to conform 'occasionally' (that is to say, to serve a turn), and thus circumvent the requirements of the sacramental test. This may well have exacerbated other differences between aldermen. The belated election of the Nonconformist clothier Alderman Joseph Kane as lord mayor in 1725–6 seems to have marked a recovery in the Dissenting interest in city politics.²²¹ Dissenters were particularly active in parliamentary elections, where ordinary freemen could be mobilised by

219 C. M. Flanagan, "A Merely Local Dispute?" Partisan Politics and the Dublin Mayoral Dispute of 1709–1715' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1983); Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660–1840*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, ch. 2.

220 J. G. Simms, 'The Irish Parliament of 1713', in G. A. Hayes-McCoy (ed.), *Historical Studies, IV*, London: Bowes & Bowes, 1963, pp. 85–6.

221 J. R. Hill, 'Dublin Corporation, Protestant Dissent, and Politics, 1660–1800', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Politics of Irish Dissent 1650–1800*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997, pp. 32–3.

their ministers.²²² In the 1727 general election, one of the three candidates, William Howard (who was in fact a younger brother of the bishop of Killala), was said to have relied on Nonconformist voters in his successful campaign against Swift's friend, Alderman John Stoyte; and the following year, at a by-election to replace Howard, who had barely lived long enough to take his seat in the Commons, Stoyte was again opposed, this time unsuccessfully, by a Dissenting lobby, on this occasion supporting John Forbes, a young lawyer and the son of an alderman.²²³ When Stoyte died, within a year of his election, the contest for the vacancy was between two aldermen, James Somerville and Peter Verdoen, and although there are no contemporary reports of the involvement of Dissenters on Somerville's side, Verdoen, like Stoyte before him, was presented as a stalwart of the established church, and was said to have enjoyed the backing of staunch churchmen within the city.²²⁴ It may also be significant that Swift was accused by Howard's friends of supporting Stoyte in 1727 – reasonably enough, given their friendship, but also to be expected in the sectarian atmosphere in which the election was fought – and that in 1729 the dean's name was also made use of to discredit Somerville.²²⁵ When Forbes appeared in 1733 as an aspirant for the recordership, in a contest with Eaton Stannard, Swift once more weighed in against him, though on this occasion religious allegiance does not seem to have been a factor. Instead, Forbes was the candidate of the aldermen against the popular vote.²²⁶

It was not just in parliamentary elections that 'ordinary' Dubliners could exercise their prejudices. Politics in the corporation was not entirely a closed shop, even in relation to municipal government, and the aldermen were not insulated from the concerns and opinions of the population at large. Within the corporation itself, there was a role – albeit a restricted one – for the 'commons'. While routine business was undertaken by the lord mayor and aldermen at weekly meetings, it was at the quarterly 'assemblies' of aldermen and 'commons' together that by-laws were made, funds awarded, and municipal elections ratified. What is more, motions in the assembly

222 *A Letter to the Freemen and Freeholders of the City of Dublin, who are Protestants of the Church of England as by Law Established*, [Dublin, 1727].

223 T. C. Barnard, 'The Government and Irish Dissent, 1704–1780', in Herlihy (ed.), *Politics of Irish Dissent*, pp. 24–5; Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 12 Jan. 1727[/8] (*Coghill Letters*, p. 46).

224 *An Elegy on the Much Lamented Death of Alderman John Stoyte . . .*, Dublin, 1728; *Dublin Intelligence*, 11 Oct. 1729.

225 *The Last Speech and Dying Words of the Election of the City of Dublin, Ended November the 1st, 1727*, [Dublin, 1727]; see above, p. xxvii.

226 *Daily Courant*, 20 Feb. 1733; *Daily Journal*, 1 Mar. 1733; Swift to Stannard, 12 Dec. 1733, 12 Mar. 1734 (*Woolley, Corr.*, vol. III, pp. 713, 726–7).

frequently originated in petitions from the ‘commons’, agreed beforehand at separate meetings. In normal circumstances, the aldermen need not have feared displays of independence, for the size of the common council made it an unwieldy instrument of resistance – it comprised 48 ‘sheriffs’ peers’ and 92 ‘numbers’ (representatives of the various trade guilds) – and the members were hand-picked, the ‘sheriffs’ peers’ chosen by a committee of aldermen, the ‘numbers’ selected by the aldermen from a slate put forward by each guild master.²²⁷ (The role of the guilds was a further complicating factor, with some aldermen serving as guild brothers.) Nevertheless, even this carefully selected group was capable of flashes of independence. The offer of the freedom of the city to Swift in January 1730 may have been one such episode. As mentioned above, the election of Stannard in February 1733 was another act of defiance, the aldermen having first favoured one of their own number, John Forbes, whom the ‘commons’ rejected by a vote of 70 to 37 before Stannard was nominated and accepted.²²⁸

If, as seems likely, the ‘commons’ were becoming more restive from the late 1720s, and more sceptical of their civic leaders, it is likely that the aldermen’s own failings were at least a contributory factor. Among the wider urban public, the Dublin corporation was a byword for incompetence and dishonesty. Even the financial distress of individual aldermen became fodder for satirists, one ‘scandalous paper’ being circulated in July 1729 at the expense of the hapless Alderman Henry Burrows, a bankrupt who had been obliged to appeal to his colleagues for money to provide for himself and his family.²²⁹ But the most serious revelations came as a consequence of parliamentary inquiries in the autumn of 1729 into law and order in the capital, which exposed systematic corruption in the administration of justice in the city, centring on the dubious figure of John Hawkins, the keeper of Newgate gaol. The first reaction of the aldermen was to ignore the evidence against Hawkins, which only had the effect of tarring themselves with the same brush, before they were embarrassed into backtracking and removing him from office.²³⁰ Worse still, the Irish House of Commons

227 Sean Murphy, ‘The Corporation of Dublin, 1660–1760’, *Dublin Historical Record* 38 (1984), 22–35; Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists*, pp. 43–4.

228 *Daily Courant*, 1 Mar. 1733; *Pue’s Occurrences*, 13–17 Feb. 1733; *Cal. Anc. Recs. Dublin*, vol. VIII, p. 92.

229 *Dublin Intelligence*, 12 July 1729, 14 Apr. 1730; *Dublin Weekly Journal*, 30 Aug. 1729; *Cal. Anc. Recs. Dublin*, vol. VII, pp. 461, 465, 488–9; vol. VIII, pp. 61–3.

230 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. V, pp. 668, 708; *Cal. Anc. Recs. Dublin*, vol. VII, pp. 467, 472, 477; T. D. Watt, ‘The Corruption of the Law and Popular Violence: The Crisis of Order in Dublin, 1729’, *Irish Historical Studies* 39 (2014–15), 8–19.

discovered that two aldermen and the city coroner, Sir Nathaniel Whitwell, had solicited bribes to drop prosecutions, and took them into custody.²³¹

The collapse of public trust in the civic elite was exacerbated by the economic crisis which gripped Ireland in the late 1720s, and which affected Dublin perhaps even more seriously than the countryside. Shortages in the supply of basic foodstuffs coincided with a slump in trade, which for the ordinary inhabitants of the city – and especially the journeymen weavers and their families in the neighbourhood of St Patrick's – meant that incomes fell while the cost of living rose: a deadly combination.²³² The consequences were dire. Not only did working families drop into poverty: as we have seen, there was also a very visible increase in the numbers of beggars and 'disorderly persons' on the streets. The city became an even more violent place: riots were commonplace, with groups of weavers frequently involved, and marauding gangs – notably the 'Kevan Bail', whose home ground was the area around St Kevan (or Kevin) Street – fighting running battles with each other and with the watchmen and constables. All of this took place close enough to the seat of government, and to the town houses of the wealthy, to make Irish politicians fearful for their own safety. On one occasion, an affray took place in St Stephen's Green, where the well-to-do would promenade; there were confrontations between the populace and students from Trinity College; and the Kevan Bail also transgressed barriers of social status by attacking 'gentlemen'.²³³ In June 1729, the lords justices and privy council issued a proclamation against the 'riots and tumults' that were a daily occurrence in the city,²³⁴ but were unable to restore calm, and in the following autumn the Irish Parliament began its inquiries into the activities of Dublin magistrates and their officials. Little wonder that Lord Allen should have been so furious at a corporation which not only seemed incapable of preserving public order but was – in his view – guilty of offering encouragement to political and social insubordination by lionising the Drapier.

Whether or not a specific connection could be made between the excitements of the populace and Swift's particular brand of 'patriot' rhetoric, it is clear that the street violence of Dublin was far from being devoid of political content. The more obsessive Whigs were inclined to suspect Jacobite

231 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. V, pp. 733–5.

232 For the sufferings of the weavers, see *Dublin Intelligence*, 14 Jan. 1729. A thousand of them signed a petition to the Commons (Carteret to Edward Southwell, 9 Dec. 1729 (BL, Add. MS 38016, fos. 11–16)).

233 *Dublin Intelligence*, 12, 16 Apr. 1729, 16 Mar. 1730/1.

234 *Ibid.*, 10 June 1729.

ambitions in the mob, though there is little to bear this out. A proclamation by the lord mayor in 1729 banning the wearing of white roses and other ‘distinguishing marks of disloyalty’ on the Pretender’s birthday, 10 June, could be dismissed as hysterical, and seems to have been ridiculed by Swift on just this basis, in his *Vindication of . . . Carteret* (1730), and possibly again in the *Examination of Certain Abuses, Corruptions, and Enormities in the City of Dublin* (1732).²³⁵ If genuine, the practice was as likely to have been sectarian as Jacobite, or (to adapt the argument of one scholar on the character of protest in early eighteenth-century England) simply a ready means of expressing a generalised opposition to authority.²³⁶ Other instances of crowd behaviour show a clearer motivation, with grievances and objectives that were local in nature and economic in motivation. Protests against high food prices were often directed against the engrossers, the supposed ‘monsters in retailing’, who were exploiting bread shortages to raise their prices, a complaint taken up in the Irish House of Commons in November 1729 by the Dublin city recorder, Sir John Rogerson, when he was given leave to introduce heads of a bill ‘against forestallers, regratters, and engrossers, [and] for . . . regulating the price and assize of bread’.²³⁷ There were also tensions between journeymen and their masters, in various trades, including hosiery, when the journeymen found themselves obliged to pay so much for the materials supplied to them that they could not make enough on their work. In 1731, a Dublin newspaper reported instances of ritualised violence – ‘colting’ – against rivals prepared to work at a cheaper rate, and a proclamation was issued against ‘assemblies of journeymen’.²³⁸ This must have been an ongoing concern, for in 1730 the Irish Parliament had passed an act (3 Geo. II. c. 14 [Ire.]) ‘to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen, artificers, and labourers, employed in the several trades and manufactures of this kingdom’.²³⁹

235 *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal*, 7–10 June 1729; below, pp. 217, 240–63.

236 Nicholas Rogers, ‘Riot and Popular Jacobitism in Early Hanoverian England’, in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689–1759*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982, pp. 70–88. For a different view, see P. K. Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688–1788*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; and for Jacobitism in Ireland, Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause*.

237 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. V, p. 709; see also *A Poem Occasion’d by the Lord Mayor’s Reducing the Price of Coals &c.*, Dublin, 1729.

238 *Dublin Intelligence*, 14, 28 July 1731; *The Poor Man’s Case Consider’d; or a Pill for Colts and Cure for the Publick: Being the Address of All and Singular the Journeymen of the City of Dublin*, Dublin, 1732.

239 See Mel Doyle, ‘The Dublin Guilds and Journeymen’s Clubs’, *Saothar: Journal of the Irish Labour History Society* 3 (1977), 6–14.

How did Swift negotiate his way through this strained and often conflicted environment? At the most basic level he could rely on his iconic status as ‘the Drapier’ to protect him from the daily perils of his violent neighbourhood, as well as his reputation for acts of personal charity to the poor of the Liberties. When he returned to Dublin after a prolonged rustication in 1729, the Kevan Bail lit bonfires to celebrate his safe arrival back in his deanery.²⁴⁰ ‘I walk the streets in peace’, he boasted to Alexander Pope in 1733, ‘without being jostled, nor ever without a thousand blessings from my friends the Vulgar’.²⁴¹ There is some evidence that he associated himself with the artisan class, groups like the ‘poor inhabitants, tradesmen and labourers’ whose memorial he answered in 1728.²⁴² When he spoke of meeting and talking with representatives of the ‘several societies of handicrafts-men . . . in this city’, it is likely that these were associations of journeymen rather than the trade guilds, which represented the masters and were headed by wealthy businessmen, and even city aldermen.²⁴³ These journeymen societies were evidently ‘friendly societies’, which had been established ‘for the improvement of trade and the relief of indigent and decayed workmen’: in Dublin they numbered over 1,500 members, and they included ‘the Loyal and Charitable Society of Broadcloth Weavers’, ‘the Society of Journeymen, Shearers and Dyers’, the ‘Society of Journeymen Tailors’ and ‘the Loyal and Charitable Society of Stocking-Frame Knitters’.²⁴⁴ Thus, ‘the corporation of weavers in woollen and silk’, with whom Swift claimed to have had personal dealings, is more likely to have been some such organisation as the ‘loyal and charitable society of woollen broad-cloth weavers’ who published their welcoming address on his return from England in 1727, or the ‘Society of Journeymen Tailors’ whose annual meeting was recorded in a Dublin newspaper in 1731,²⁴⁵ rather than the principal weavers’ guild, the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, represented in the city ‘commons’, in whose minutes for this period

240 *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal*, 7–11 Oct. 1729.

241 Swift to Pope, 8 July 1733 (Woolley, *Corr.*, vol. III, p. 663).

242 Below, pp. 27–41.

243 For these journeymen societies, see Patrick Walsh, ‘Club Life in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Ireland: in Search of an Associational World, c. 1680–c. 1730’, in James Kelly and Martyn Powell (eds.), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010, pp. 44–8.

244 Marsh’s Lib., MS Z.3.1.1. (136–7, 164); William O’Brien, *An Epick Poem on . . . William Leigh*, Dublin, 1727; *A Congratulatory Speech of the Loyal and Charitable Society of Woollen Broad-Cloath-Weavers, in Honour to the Reverend Doctor Jonathan Swift*, [Dublin, 1727]; *Dublin Intelligence*, 28 July 1731.

245 *A Congratulatory Speech of the Loyal and Charitable Society of Woollen Broad-Cloath Weavers*, *Dublin Intelligence*, 28 July 1731.

Swift's name does not appear, although a number of other public figures were admitted as members, headed by the lord lieutenant and including MPs and the economic writer David Bindon.²⁴⁶ Swift's constituency was emphatically not the civic elite, even if he did have friends among some leading men in the corporation, including Sir William Fownes, not only an alderman but a prominent member of the weavers' guild.²⁴⁷ Instead, he appealed to the ordinary citizen – specifically to the freemen in his published advice on the 1733 parliamentary election²⁴⁸ – and it was the 'commons' rather than the aldermen who responded to him, who voted to offer him the freedom of Dublin in 1730, and who elected Eaton Stannard into the recordership and Humphrey French into Parliament in 1733.

There was, however, a limit to Swift's advocacy of the interests of the common man. He did not choose to comment in print on the scandals breaking in Dublin in 1729–30 over the administration of justice, and only once did he allude to the frequent communal violence in the city, despite the geographical proximity of the deanery to the epicentre of the disturbances. In the poem 'The Yahoo's Overthrow' (1734), directed at his old enemy Richard Bettesworth, he made reference both to the 'Kevan Bayl' and to the practice of 'colting' in a surprisingly jocular fashion, contemplating how Bettesworth might be punished for the crime of insulting the dean, by the 'jolly boys of St Kevans'.²⁴⁹ Swift's contributions to the debate over the depressed condition of trade and manufacture ignored the grievances of journeymen against masters, and of consumers against profiteers, in favour of a rehearsal of the main themes of his economic and social discourse, the iniquity of English policy, which by discriminating against Irish trade and restricting economic opportunities had reduced the population of Ireland to the status of slaves, and the blind refusal of the fashionable – especially the female of the species – to support their country by purchasing garments of Irish manufacture.

These omissions suggest that, whatever the public response to his work, Swift himself identified not with the interests of the 'vulgar' urban population as a whole, but with those who had – or in a properly governed society ought

246 Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dublin, 'book of brothers', 1693–1722, 1722–43 (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, SAI/BV/WRVS, 005, 009). Bindon was admitted in 1733, alongside the 'patriot' MPs Warden Flood and Anthony Malone.

247 Fownes had been admitted into the Weavers' Guild by 1715 (Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 'book of brothers', 1693–1722 (Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, SAI/BV/WRVS, 005, unfol.).

248 Below, pp. 279–87.

249 *Poems*, vol. III, pp. 814–17.

to have had – the means for self-sufficiency: small manufacturers and traders like the Drapier who were bearing the brunt of English economic oppression. In the corporation these were the freemen, and ordinary guild members – at a pinch, the city ‘commons’. Their interests were distinct not only from those of the wealthier merchants above them in the civic hierarchy, but also from the desperate anxieties preoccupying the mass of poor Dubliners below them, and especially the begging and criminal classes.

In promoting the popular parliamentary candidature of Humphrey French, Swift was throwing his weight behind a municipal figure whose ‘patriotic’ virtue, proven by a record of public service and a deserved reputation for philanthropy, was combined with a tough approach on issues of law and order. French almost perfectly represented the concerns of small manufacturers and traders, who responded by offering him tributes that were not given to other lord mayors, the corporation of shoemakers making him a present of plate, and the city’s common council paying for his portrait to be painted.²⁵⁰ In Parliament, French sponsored a bill to rescue Dublin’s woollen manufacture by prohibiting the importation of silks and other luxury fabrics.²⁵¹ As lord mayor he intervened directly to alleviate bread shortages by confiscating ‘unmerchantable provisions’ from bakers and distributing them among the poor, spent his own money in releasing unfortunates from imprisonment for debt in the Marshalsea, sought to correct abuses in the city government, and organised a rescue package agreed by leading merchants and members of the corporation to guarantee the capital of investors when the banks threatened to fail.²⁵² At the same time, he personally led the reformed city constabulary in putting down disturbances, in raiding brothels, and in campaigns dedicated to the arrest and committal of large numbers of destitute vagrants, with whom he filled the workhouse and the new bridewell.²⁵³ These two sides of his mayoralty were complementary, and indeed there is no reason to suppose that his most prominent clerical supporter felt the slightest qualm about a policy which in asserting public morality and securing public safety, to the benefit of honest tradesmen,

250 *Daily Journal*, 3 July 1733; *St James’s Evening Post*, 27 Oct. 1733; *Address of the Society of Yellowes, to Alderman Humphry French, Late Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin*, [Dublin], 1733.

251 *C.J.Ire.*, vol. VI, pp. 562, 565.

252 *Pue’s Occurrences*, 31 Oct. – 4 Nov. 1732, 23–27 Jan., 14–18 Aug., 22–25, 25–29 Sept. 1733. See also *The Lamentation of the Poor of the City of Dublin; After the Late Lord Mayor . . .*, [Dublin], 1733; *A Full Vindication of Humphrey French, Late Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin . . .*, [Dublin,] 1733.

253 *Pue’s Occurrences*, 14–18 Nov. 1732.

also produced brutal outcomes for those at the very bottom of the social scale.

Swift's contributions to the political debates fermenting within the city in 1728–33 were not, however, related to any of these issues, but instead reproduced in a local context more general 'patriotic' concerns. He did not, unlike some contemporaries, ridicule aldermen who were financially embarrassed, or condemn the corporate oligarchy as a whole for corruption and misgovernment. There was no radical civic agenda, but an entirely orthodox 'patriotic' political opposition, and in this sense he seems detached from much of the contemporary discourse in the Dublin press on the challenges facing the capital. Thus, his advocacy of Eaton Stannard as Dublin's recorder was based on an appreciation of Stannard's already well-established reputation as a parliamentarian, not on what he might achieve for the corporation. Similarly, preference for Humphrey French in the parliamentary election of 1733 was founded on French's credentials as a 'patriot' rather than his exemplary record as a reforming lord mayor. French's personal qualities, his integrity and philanthropy, were translated from a municipal to a national context. He was distinguished from his original opponent John Macarell by a presumed independence from government and by his principled appeal to the electorate, disdaining to acquire votes by bribery or treating.²⁵⁴ Macarell had been the first to declare, and although he subsequently withdrew, leaving French to contest the poll against the current lord mayor, Thomas Howe, he was still a candidate when Swift intervened. Macarell had only recently been elected an alderman, but what Swift emphasised was the fact that he also held a government office, as register of the barracks, and therefore as a placeman could not be trusted to serve the country's interests.²⁵⁵

10 *The Changing Character of Irish Politics, 1730–1737*

The replacement of Lord Carteret as lord lieutenant by the Duke of Dorset in 1730 had little immediate effect on the political scene in Dublin. Dorset made no changes to the commission of lords justices – Lord Chancellor Wyndham, Archbishop Boulter and the Speaker, Sir Ralph Gore – and when he came to Dublin in 1731 to preside over his first session of Parliament, he retained in their offices the parliamentary 'undertakers' he

254 *Astræa's Congratulation. . . ; A Full Vindication of Humphrey French. . . ; Advice to the Freemen and Freeholders of the City of Dublin; in Their Choice of a Representative in the Ensuing Election*, Dublin, 1733.

255 Below, pp. 279–87.

had inherited, Gore and the other remnants of Speaker Conolly's party. But, unlike Carteret, he sought to keep himself above the parliamentary fray, leaving the routine work of management to others, with the intention that, by remaining aloof from the factional struggles of Irish politicians, he might attract support from a broader spectrum of opinion, including the independent, back-bench country gentlemen who were vociferous in defending Ireland's interests and promoting measures to improve the kingdom's economic prospects. This, at least, was the theory. In practice, he had his favourites and particular advisers, although they were not men of the first flight. Colonel William Flower, a wealthy Kilkenny squire, was one; and, unfortunately for Swift, Lord Allen – 'Traulus' – was another, which seems to have set the seal on Swift's exclusion from the new viceregal court.²⁵⁶

Dorset's first parliamentary session, in the winter of 1731–2, was neither an outstanding success nor a dismal failure. More by luck than judgement, and probably owing a great deal more than he was willing to admit to the skill and loyalty of Gore and his friends, Dorset avoided humiliation and secured a short-term grant of supply. He was, however, obliged by Sir Robert Walpole to attempt a repeal of the sacramental test, and in that respect succeeded only in provoking a storm of outrage from members of the established church, both clerical and lay. The idea was for a repeal clause to be tacked by the British privy council to a further popery bill sent from Ireland, but when Dorset grasped the extent of the likely opposition in the Irish House of Commons he persuaded Cabinet colleagues that the scheme should be dropped, at least for the time being. But the issue did not go away. The implications for English politics were too important for Walpole simply to forget about it, and in any case the prime minister's difficult relationship with Dorset, which only worsened during the Excise Crisis of 1733, made the prospect of causing embarrassment for the viceroy a very tempting one. And in the Irish context the damage had already been done: the proposed repeal had reanimated an issue that had previously seemed settled, and had focused political debate once more on the relationship of church and state. Parliament's response had been discouraging for the Presbyterians, but as far as Swift and his fellow clergymen were concerned prospects were still clouded. Besides the evident determination of the English ministry to see something done, there were worrying doubts

256 Henry Boyle to Earl of Burlington, 17 Aug. 1731 (PRONI, Chatsworth papers, T/3158/13); Henry Rose to Sir Maurice Crosbie, 21 Sept. 1731 (NLI, Talbot-Crosbie papers, P.C. 188).

about the reliability of Irish MPs, and when this was combined with what Swift regarded as the intrinsic corruption of the political system on both sides of the Irish Sea, nothing could be taken for granted.

Further complications arose before the next parliamentary session in Dublin, which was to take place in the winter of 1733–4. The death of Sir Ralph Gore in February 1733 not only created a vacancy in the Speakership of the Commons, but promised a major alteration in the Irish administration. There was no obvious successor from within the old ‘Castle’ party, and the individuals in whom Dorset had confided on his first visit to Dublin had proved that they lacked sufficient personal influence in the Commons. The answer, which Dorset eventually realised, was to turn to the leader of the quondam Brodrick faction, the County Cork squire Henry Boyle, whose personal following, based around the Brodricks’ supporters and his own extended family, gave him enough votes to be able to ‘undertake’ for a supply. Boyle was elected as Speaker in October 1733, and after initial difficulties, caused by Dorset’s unwillingness to give the new ‘undertaker’ his full support, settled into the position that Conolly and Gore had occupied before him, managing the passage of government business through the Commons, and joining the primate and lord chancellor on the commission of lords justices during the long recess.

In some respects, Swift could rest easy with this changeover, in so far as Boyle’s appointment did not carry with it any particular threat to the church. Indeed, on the issue of the sacramental test, Boyle’s elevation actually constituted an encouragement to opponents of repeal. Throughout the period 1716–19, when successive British administrations had sought to force the issue, the Brodricks had appeared strongly in defence of the test, and in opposition in the 1720s they had cultivated an alliance with the Tories. That Boyle was Lord Middleton’s political heir in this respect, as in much else, was shown by the way in which he successfully argued Dorset out of a second attempt at removing the test in the 1733–4 session. But there were other aspects of the ministerial reconstruction in Dublin that were less welcome: Swift’s particular enemies in the old regime, Lord Allen and Richard Tighe, retained their places, and were joined on the government side by others against whom he had developed a particular animus, notably Richard Bettesworth, the ‘booby’ who had long been a stalwart of the Brodrick faction and had slipped smoothly into Henry Boyle’s slipstream after Middleton’s death.²⁵⁷

257 See Andrew Crotty to Henry Boyle, 13 July 1727 (PRONI, D/2707/A/1/2/17A); [Thomas Carter] to Henry Boyle, 8 Aug. 1727 (ibid., D/2707/A/1/2/21).

In fact, apart from the Speaker and his immediate cronies, the new Castle party looked very much like the old. Although Boyle had come in on his own terms, he had not insisted on a purge of his previous political opponents. Key figures in the Conolly faction, such as Marmaduke Coghill, Henry Singleton and Agmondisham Vesey, held on to their offices, and Boyle's system of management, like his predecessors', involved knitting together a coalition of placemen and the major 'connections': the Wynnes and their followers in Counties Sligo, Roscommon and Galway, the Ponsonbys in County Kilkenny, and the much-ramified family of the Gores. As before, the advocacy of the 'patriot' cause in Parliament was left to independent country gentlemen and vociferous individuals like Eaton Stannard and his protégé, the young lawyer Anthony Malone.

Realisation that the change of Speaker had merely been a change in personnel did not produce a massive effect on Irish public opinion comparable to the disillusionment manifest in England after the fall of Walpole in 1742 and the coming to power of the Earl of Bath and other erstwhile 'patriots'. By contrast, relatively little had been expected of Boyle and his friends. Even though Boyle had appealed to back-bench squires for their votes on the basis that he was a country gentleman like them and also a patriot,²⁵⁸ his opposition to Conolly and Gore was recognised, and accepted, by many as having been opportunist and factional. He himself was no orator, and had created few hostages to fortune through flights of parliamentary rhetoric while in opposition. He does seem to have suffered some difficulties with former allies in County Cork, who were anxious to press their concerns over the government's management of economic issues, but these difficulties derived from the regional nature of his power-base, and not from any perception that he had reneged on promises.

For Swift, on the other hand, hostility to the governing forces in Irish politics now overflowed. His most famous expression of bile against the denizens of the new and very grand Irish parliament house (opened in 1731), 'A Character, Panegyric and Description of the Legion Club', was written in March–April 1736, and swung the sword of satire in several directions, though with some particular thrusts reserved for old enemies. The immediate context was the opposition in the House of Commons to the assertion by representatives of the Church of Ireland clergy of their right to the 'tithes of agistment'. This attack on clerical privilege was not, however, associated with a particular faction, nor indeed exclusively with the

258 Boyle to John King, 18 Mar. 1732/3 (NLI, MS 8,645/3).

pro-government side in the house.²⁵⁹ Swift's universal condemnation of MPs – which extended to all major groupings, whether supporters of the new Speaker or adherents of other major factions – reflected the confused and fluid structure of 'parties' within the House of Commons. Contemporary commentators divided Parliament into the 'court' and 'country' parties – as Sir Richard Cox put it, 'the courtiers' on the one hand and 'the gentlemen of the country' on the other.²⁶⁰ But the government's 'patriot' critics lacked the coherence of the Brodrick faction in the 1720s. Indeed, apart from a few loquacious lawyers, like Stannard or Malone, who might be assumed to have ambitions for office, these 'patriots' seemed to resemble closely the 'independent country gentlemen' who were such a feature of the English political scene in the 1740s and 1750s.

The real conflict in the Commons, sometimes hidden and sometimes out in the open, was actually within the Court party: between, on the one hand, Speaker Boyle and his followers, and, on the other, the faction headed by one of Conolly's former lieutenants, Brabazon Ponsonby, now Earl of Bessborough. Dorset's replacement as lord lieutenant in 1737 by the Duke of Devonshire was followed by the aggrandisement of the Ponsonby family. Brabazon Ponsonby cultivated a close friendship with the new viceroy and eventually married his eldest son to one of Devonshire's daughters. He was now prepared to challenge Boyle's predominance within the government party. The Ponsonby grouping was partly based on family and friends, partly on the remnants of the old Conolly connection, and partly on those who saw Bessborough as the rising star of Irish politics. However, this crucial subtext of Irish parliamentary history in the years after 1735 was unrepresented in Swift's own writings. Old, ill and deaf, he seems now to have become entirely alienated from Irish political life, very much the outside observer of a drama to whose essential plot-line he was indifferent.

11 *An Improving Economy?*

In May 1731, the young John Perceval, who was eventually to succeed his father as second Earl of Egmont, paid a visit to Dublin. A young man possessed by a zealous Irish patriotism, he immediately sought an audience with the dean of St Patrick's. There, he reported proudly to his father, he was 'received . . . as I am told with unusual complaisance'. During their

259 D. W. Hayton and Stephen Karian, 'Select Document: The Division in the Irish House of Commons on the "Tithe of Agistment", 18 Mar. 1736, and Swift's "Character . . . of the Legion Club"', *Irish Historical Studies* 38 (2012–13), 304–21.

260 Sir Richard Cox, 'Irish Politics Displayed' (1737) (PRONI, Armagh diocesan registry papers, DIO/4/5/8).

interview, Swift ‘lamented the miserable condition of Ireland, and said that he had pretty much left off writing in a political way, because he found there was no stemming the torrent, and that the evil in time would remedy itself’. He added that ‘the two great misfortunes of the country were poverty and oppression’. And, although he expressed some hope for the future, envisaging a sudden end to absenteeism, this was wishful thinking and based on no rational analysis: ‘the gentlemen of Ireland will soon be obliged to return, which will enrich the kingdom and make it so powerful that it will be dangerous to oppress it’.²⁶¹

By this time, Swift’s diagnosis of Ireland’s condition was as unusual as his identification of the likely source of her recovery. Among writers like Prior, Dobbs and Bindon, and Castle politicians like Sir Ralph Gore and Marmaduke Coghill, political economy had replaced constitutional reform as the key to national progress. In public debates on the condition of the Irish economy, Swift’s rhetoric seemed increasingly out of place.²⁶² However, despite what he had said to Perceval, he did make further short contributions on three specific issues: the continued difficulties of the woollen trade; public interest in encouraging the development of the inland and maritime fishing industries; and the implications of any attempt to regulate the coinage. In each case, he seems to have been working outside the parameters of the current public discourse, reiterating arguments he had made before.

Just as in England and Scotland, enthusiasts for the improvement of Ireland had fastened on the potential of the fishing industry there, both inland and maritime. Molesworth’s *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture* (1723) had noted ‘how many natural advantages’ Ireland enjoyed ‘beyond any part of Europe, proper for this great and most beneficial trade’. Bishop Francis Hutchinson had devoted a pamphlet to the subject in 1729, and another writer, John Knightley, had petitioned the Irish Parliament in 1733 to support his own scheme for the development of these valuable natural resources.²⁶³ Then an apparent drop in the yields of the existing fisheries

261 John Perceval to Lord Perceval, 4 May 1731 (BL, Add. MS 47033, fo. 93).

262 A point made by Patrick Kelly in ‘Swift on Money and Economics’, in Christopher Fox (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 140.

263 Molesworth, *Considerations for the Promoting of Agriculture* . . . , p. 42; [Francis Hutchinson], *A Second Letter to a Member of Parliament, Recommending the Improvement of the Irish-Fishery*, Dublin, 1729; John Knightley, *To the Honourable the Lords Spiritual, Temporal and Commons in Parliament Assembled. . . this Essay toward Proving the Advantages which may Arise from Improvements on Salt Works, and in the Fishing Trade of Ireland*, Dublin, 1733. See, in general, Andrew Sneddon, ‘Legislating for Economic Development: Irish Fisheries as a Case Study in the Limitations of “Improvement”’, in Hayton *et al.* (eds.), *Eighteenth-century Composite State*, pp. 136–59.

focused minds, and produced, first, a parliamentary inquiry, and second a bill, introduced into the Irish House of Commons in December 1737 and managed by Richard Bettesworth, ‘for the further improvement and encouragement of the fishery of this kingdom’. Despite opposition from fishing interests in England, this eventually passed into law in 1738 as 11 Geo. II c. 14 [Ire.].²⁶⁴ Swift’s single contribution to the public debate on fishing was a short response to Francis Grant, a Scottish businessman based in London, who had written to him in 1734, soliciting Swift’s support for a pamphlet of his own, *The British Fishery Recommended to Parliament*. Swift welcomed the potential of any project to expand Irish fisheries but considered ‘the vulgar folks of Ireland’ to be ‘too lazy and knavish’ to carry it out successfully: ‘oppressed beggars are always knaves, and, I believe, there are hardly any other among us; they had rather gain a shilling by knavery, than five pounds by honest dealing’. Cured fish from Ireland would be the same as Irish cloth: ‘abominable’ in quality and thus unable to find a market even if allowed.²⁶⁵

The one issue on which Swift could still strike a chord with his audience was the availability and value of money. The lack of hard currency remained a problem in Ireland throughout Swift’s life, and was generally identified as one of the fundamental causes of the country’s failure to progress. In particular, the amount of silver in circulation was perceived to be declining steadily. Some commentators emphasised as underlying causes the imbalance of Irish trade, and the remittances to absentees, but the Irish privy council focused on a more immediate and specific issue, the relative value of gold and silver coins in Ireland, and in the spring of 1736, before Dorset left Ireland as viceroy, decided on a radical solution.²⁶⁶ Dorset brought with him to England an application for a proclamation to reduce the value of gold coins in Ireland to the same level as in England. A guinea in Ireland was worth 21s 3d in English silver coins, whereas what was being proposed was a modest reduction to 21s. The higher relative value of gold in Ireland (including foreign coins like the Portuguese moidore, which circulated in Ireland because of the unavailability of Irish coins) meant that Irish merchants were paying their debts in England in silver, and that gold was being brought into the country from England instead of silver in order to pay for goods. It seemed a sensible proposal, but immediately ran into difficulties.

Swift was not the only opponent of the reduction in the value of gold. The issue was fully debated in the press, though much of the discussion was

264 Edward Walpole to Devonshire, 26 Jan. 1737/8; Wilmington to Devonshire, 6 Mar. 1737/8 (PRONI, Chatsworth papers, T/3158/44, 49).

265 Below, pp. 293–300.

266 For what follows, see Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 840ff.

on points of practical detail rather than principle, in all probability because, as Eoin Magennis has suggested, it was widely accepted that something had to be done to alleviate the chronic shortage of coin.²⁶⁷ Other, more progressive economic thinkers were experimenting with notions of paper credit, but Swift still adhered to the older, Lockean, definition of money in terms of gold and silver bullion.²⁶⁸ But there was also a powerful vein of concern among the merchants and financiers in Dublin, who had found ways to profit from the differing exchange rates, and feared the loss of gold bullion as well as silver across the water. Swift's own objections were based on his atavistic suspicion of office-holders, absentees and other profiteers, who would ruin Ireland for their own advantage.

He was given an early opportunity to express these views, even before Dorset had embarked for England, when his friend Richard Grattan, then lord mayor of Dublin, invited him to address a meeting of the aldermen and common council on 19 April 1736, called to discuss the proposal to revalue gold, news of which had got abroad. Swift attended a meeting of merchants called to discuss the same problem at the Guildhall that Saturday, 24 April, and spoke. The speech was printed as *The Rev. Dean Swift's Reasons against Lowering the Gold and Silver Coin*.²⁶⁹ In it he denounced government officials, bishops and absentee landlords, and declared that those who favoured lowering the value of gold were 'no friends to this poor kingdom'. Indeed, the absentees were its 'greatest enemies'. He concluded, 'Can there be a greater folly than to pave a bridge of gold at your own expense, to support them in their luxury and vanity abroad, while hundreds of thousands are starving at home, for want of employment?' The upshot was a formal protest, which Swift signed alongside the aldermen and common councilmen, and the presentation of a petition to the lord lieutenant and privy council, with Swift accompanying the lord mayor, the sheriffs of Dublin, and the city's two MPs to deliver it.

Despite these representations, Dorset's application was granted, and the following year Devonshire, his successor, transmitted a proclamation to that effect.²⁷⁰ In the meantime, there had been a further provocation, in the form of a new coinage of halfpence, which arrived in Dublin in March 1737 and

267 Eoin Magennis, 'Whither the Irish Financial Revolution? Money, Banks, and Politics in Ireland in the 1730s', in Charles Ivar McGrath and C. J. Fauske (eds.), *Money, Power and Print: Interdisciplinary Studies on the Financial Revolution in the British Isles*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008, pp. 200–2.

268 Kelly, "Conclusions by No Means Calculated", p. 57.

269 Below, pp. 301–4.

270 Order in council, 21 July 1737 (BL, Hardwicke papers, Add. MS 35586, fos. 125–6); proclamation of lords justices [Ire.], 29 Aug. 1737 (ibid., fos. 33–5).

was declared legal tender in a proclamation in May. Swift called a meeting of the inhabitants of the Archbishop's Liberty in which he publicly denounced the new copper coin as likely to meet the same fate as Wood's, a speech which was reported in the press and, Swift thought, might have led to his arrest. But this was nothing in comparison to his reaction in September, when the proclamation about the value of gold was finally issued. On that occasion, Swift published nothing, but instead 'had a great black flag on the top of St Patrick's steeple and wrote in gold letters "O poor Ireland", and the bells and clappers done round with black and tolled a most melancholy sound'.²⁷¹ In terms of exciting the populace, this stunt was at least as effective as anything he had ever written.²⁷² The capital – and, some said, the whole country – was 'in a ferment'. One minor official reported that 'all our merchants and trading people are exasperated to a great degree and a certain eminent writer is inflaming the people as if Hannibal was at our gates'.²⁷³ There were riots in Dublin, and Archbishop Boulter, who had been one of the chief architects of the new policy, feared for his life.²⁷⁴ The worst that happened to the archbishop, however, was to find himself seated near Swift at the lord mayor's feast on 29 September. Boulter allegedly 'taxed the doctor before the company for endeavouring to raise the mob, and to begin a rebellion on account of the lessening the value of gold'. Needless to say, he received a bitter reply.²⁷⁵

This affair was the last kick of the Drapier *redivivus*, and briefly recalled the great days of Wood's Halfpence in the way that Swift became once more the hero of the populace, single-handedly defending Ireland's interests against a corrupt government. But, in fact, it was very different from the great events of the previous decade. His attacks on the new copper halfpence in the spring of 1737 proved a damp squib,²⁷⁶ and even the ferment against the lowering of the value of gold, in which he had more support from Dublin's commercial oligarchy, did not last long. Moreover, this time the Irish Parliament declined to follow his lead. Despite the general strength of the 'patriot'

271 Mrs Jones to Mrs Bonnell, 16 Sept. [1737] (NLI, Smythe of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,577/3); Devonshire to Duke of Newcastle, 10 Sept. 1737 (BL, Newcastle papers, Add. MS 32690, fo. 354). See also *Ireland's Mourning Flagg*, Dublin, 1737 (a single-sheet ballad).

272 Boulter referred to it as an insult against government: Boulter to Bishop Gibson, 10 Feb. 1737/[8] (*Boulter Letters*, vol. II, pp. 191–2).

273 John Bayly to George Dodington, 6 Sept. 1737 (NLI, MS 16,139, p. 59).

274 It was reported that the Dublin mob had burned the primate in effigy (Mrs Jones to Mrs Bonnell, 16 Sept. [1737] (NLI, Smythe of Barbavilla papers, MS 41,577/3)).

275 Ehrenpreis, vol. III, pp. 861–2. See also *Poems*, vol. III, pp. 842–3.

276 Boulter to Cary, 26 Mar. 1737 (*Boulter Letters*, vol. II, p. 162).

party in this session, the ministers secured a massive majority in a vote on the proclamation.²⁷⁷ The nature of the discussion in the public prints about the issue of the coinage also showed the extent to which things had moved on from 1724–5, since no one took up Swift's intemperate denunciations of ministers and absentees, the focus instead being on practicalities. A comment by the painter Hugh Howard, writing from London to his brother, the bishop of Elphin, encapsulates this sense of Swift being left behind. Howard had been told 'odd stories' of Swift's opposition to the alterations in the coinage, and was sorry to hear them: 'I believe he means well', he observed of the Drapier, but quite simply, in the matter of the coinage, 'he does not understand it'.²⁷⁸

277 Devonshire to Newcastle, 13 Sept., 5, 26 Oct. 1737 (BL, Add. MS 32690, fos. 356–7, 388, 398); Bayly to Dodington, 25 Oct. 1737 (NLI, MS 16,139, p. 60).

278 Hugh Howard to Bishop Robert Howard, 29 Sept. 1737 (NLI, MS 38,958/14).

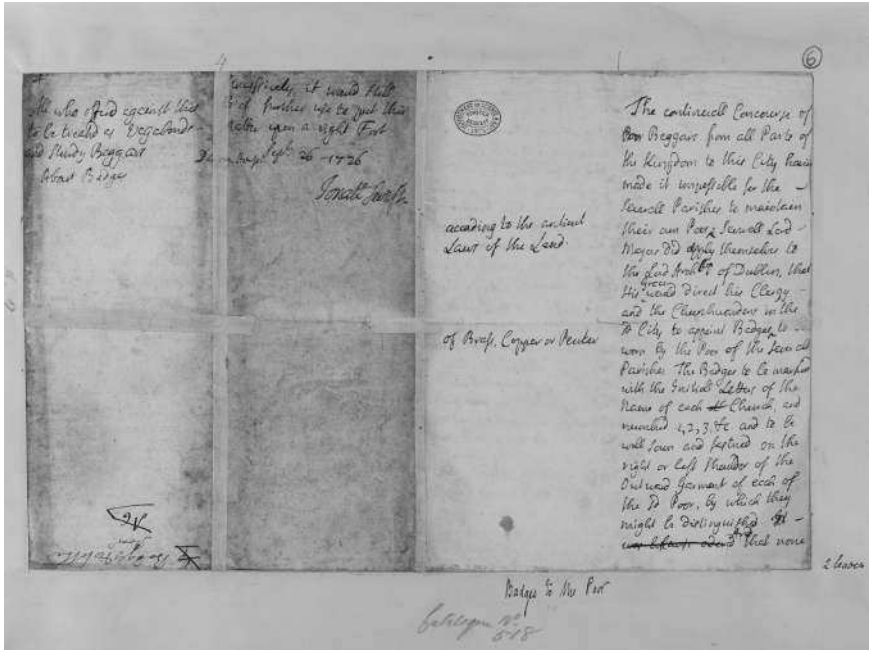


Figure 1. Jonathan Swift, *Upon Giving Badges to the Poor*, first page of Forster manuscript.