

## Introduction: Interpreting Late Early Modern Ireland

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The history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Ireland poses a variety of hermeneutical challenges. While this period was traditionally depicted by those of the Catholic and nationalist tradition as an era when a foreign minority Protestant elite oppressed the native (Catholic) majority, the historical and historiographical perspectives of those in the Protestant tradition were disposed to be more positive. Though these readings are now anachronistic, they continue to register in popular discourse and, to a degree, among those who take their historical understanding from an engagement with material culture (art and architecture particularly). As a result, any attempt to interpret the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries must come to terms with the fact that the collective memory is anchored in atavistic attitudes as well as in a formative historiography that long mirrored the ethno-religious division that shaped the era. Guided by these considerations, this introduction seeks, using the narratives generated by a variety of English and German visitors, in the first instance to highlight the depth and nature of the divisions that existed and with which historians of the period must engage. Second, it seeks by briefly surveying the major trends over a century and a half to locate the volume and its content in its historiographical context.

### ‘Improvement’ versus ‘Contentment’

Writing in 1780, in his little-read ‘tour through Ireland’, Philip Luckombe (1730–1803) commented approvingly that over the course of ‘ninety years’ the ‘island’ which, for many centuries, was ‘a continual field of blood . . . has made . . . a vast progress . . . in almost every thing’.<sup>1</sup> Though there is nothing

<sup>1</sup> P. Luckombe, *A Tour through Ireland: in several entertaining Letters wherein the Present State of that Kingdom is considered and the most noted Cities, Towns, Seats, Rivers, Buildings etc are described, interspersed with observations on manners, customs, antiquities, curiosities, and Natural History of that Country* (London: Lowndes, 1780), p. x; for Luckombe see ODNB, *sub nomine*.

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in Luckombe's travelogue to suggest that he was as deferential as his better-known contemporary, Arthur Young, to the Anglo-Irish elite his admiration of 'elegant seats', 'well planted' villages, 'handsome' Protestant churches and 'a fine fertile and populous country' echoed their preoccupation with 'improvement' and 'industry'. This climaxed, in Luckombe's wordy narrative, with his lyrical description of the 'genteel, sensible and friendly' inhabitants of Lurgan, County Armagh – 'one of the prettiest little market-towns in the north of this kingdom' – and his endorsement of their lifestyle: 'from the similarity of ... the language, manners, and dispositions of its inhabitants to those of the English, [it] ha[s] for many years acquired the name of Little England, and an Englishman at Lurgan ... will think himself in his own country'.<sup>2</sup>

If there are few more explicit illustrations of the benefits of an anglicised vision of 'improvement' for Ireland, its more general merits were indicated by another travel writer. James Hall (of Walthamstow, Essex) observed *en passant* in his account of his tour of Ireland in 1812 that 'the man' who makes 'some new and useful improvement' like 'a happy adventurer at sea, discovers, as it were an unknown land, and imports an additional trade to his own country'.<sup>3</sup> And, commenting upon what might advantageously be done in Ireland, Hall recommended that the landed proprietors who sought 'to rouse tenants to industry, and better their condition' should follow the example of their enlightened peers (he elsewhere instanced John Foster of Collon, County Louth, as a model) and 'give tolerably long leases, on condition that, year after year, the tenants improve certain portions of their farm, describing such improvements minutely, and making these *a sine qua non* to the continuance of the lease'.<sup>4</sup> He did not add that this was the practice in England. But the 'pleasure' he too took from the 'neat, cleanly habitations' he observed in Ulster was in such stark contrast to the 'wretched' mud cabins and swarms of ragged beggars he (and others) observed elsewhere that they epitomised the benefits that must flow if the population forswore indolence, and directed their energies to the maintenance of 'decent and comfortable' cottages, with 'neat and useful' gardens populated 'with ... good vegetables', and adorned with 'a few humble flowers and shrubs' – in other words, embraced the

2 Luckombe, *A Tour through Ireland*, pp. 314–15.

3 J. Hall, *Tour through Ireland: particularly the Interior and least known parts*, 2 vols. (London: R.P. Moore, 1813), vol. II, p. 209.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–20, 293–4; for Foster see A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster (1740–1828): the politics of improvement and prosperity* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011).

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culture of improvement as it was practised in England.<sup>5</sup> It also supported the conclusion, advanced by John Bernard Trotter, who toured the island in the 1810s, that it was in Ireland's interest to accede to a dependent relationship with Great Britain. 'I consider their [the Irish nation's] happiness and prosperity to be inseparably linked with England's friendship! It is that rational independence at home, under the British government, which Flanders long enjoyed under Austria, and Norway under Denmark . . . The wild and detestable phantom of mistaken liberty ought not to delude them [the Irish people] . . . They are a nation more suited to set and execute, than to govern and plan.'<sup>6</sup> Though Trotter did not offer this observation in support of the Anglo-Irish Union, about which he possessed well-conceived reservations, his conviction that it was in Ireland's interest to accept a dependent relationship with Great Britain sat easily with his view of 'the vast advantages of English improvement'.<sup>7</sup>

Support for a legislative union was the most striking political manifestation of the shared sense of belonging binding Protestants in Britain and Ireland of which the common commitment to improvement was a still longer standing economic and cultural expression.<sup>8</sup> The most notable organisational expressions of improvement in operation in Ireland were the Dublin Society, established in 1731, and the Linen Board, established twenty years earlier.<sup>9</sup> Indicatively, both were funded by parliament, and while it is the case that the commercial success of the linen industry was not dependent on the Board, the fact that the Dublin Society offered 'instruction in physics, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, zoology, architecture, sculpture, drawing, etching all free of charge' in 1820 when Heinrich Meidlinger, a German merchant, visited the country attests to its cultural range and improving zeal.<sup>10</sup> A no less striking attestation, chronicled *in extenso* in Arthur Young's *Tour of Ireland, 1776–79*, is

5 Hall, *Tour through Ireland*, vol. II, p. 212; J.B. Trotter, *Walks through Ireland in the years 1812, 1814 and 1817* (London: Richard Phillips, 1819), pp. 16, 17.

6 Trotter, *Walks through Ireland*, p. 597. Trotter was the Irish-born private secretary to the British foreign secretary, Charles James Fox: see ODNB, *sub nomine*.

7 Trotter, *Walks through Ireland*, pp. 295, 404–5.

8 D. Kanter, *The making of British Unionism, 1740–1848: politics, government, and the Anglo-Irish constitutional relationship* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009); T.C. Barnard, *Improving Ireland? Projectors, prophets and profiteers, 1641–1786* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008).

9 H.D. Gribbon, 'The Irish Linen Board, 1711–1828' in L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout (eds.), *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), pp. 77–87; K. Bright, *The Royal Dublin Society, 1815–1845* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

10 'Travel account of Heinrich Meidlinger, 1820–27' in E. Bourke (ed.), *'Poor green Erin': German travel writers' narratives on Ireland from before the 1798 Rising to after the Great Famine*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 96–7.

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provided by the sheer number of landowners who pursued improved methods of husbandry, but the enclosure of the countryside, the development of industrial villages, the construction of elegant new residences and the laying out of bespoke demesnes were equally indicative.<sup>11</sup> This is not to suggest, as the instances in which travellers sat at a ‘dining table laden down to the point of superabundance’ in ‘dilapidated’, ‘large country residence[s]’ bear witness, that improvement was pursued by all of the landed elite.<sup>12</sup> But there are still stronger signs to suggest that resistance was keener among the populace, not only because they were disinclined to be told what to do by a landed elite towards whom they were at best ambivalent, but also because they did not buy into a world-view that prioritised ‘industry’.<sup>13</sup>

Divining the attitude of the ‘peasant’ from the travel literature is challenging given the identification of a majority of authors with the then dominant improving culture, but a search can pay dividends. The accounts provided by travellers of ‘well-watered and cultivated’ landscapes ‘abound[ing] in bleaching-greens’, and houses and cottages ‘with an orchard and snug garden’ in east Ulster certainly suggest that the vision of ‘opulence and comfort’ that epitomised improvement was embraced by those who worked the land there.<sup>14</sup> The ‘excellent cultivation of land, good farmhouses, woods, orchards, fine and well-inclosed fields and meadows, respectable cottages [and] well-conditioned cattle’ that John Trotter observed in the vicinity of Doneraile, County Cork illustrate also that ‘English improvement’ was not confined to Ulster moreover.<sup>15</sup> ‘The great farmers’ of Leinster and Munster who prospered from the ‘great prices for the produce of land’ during the 1790s and the early nineteenth century presumably pursued a comparable course, though they accorded less effort to its visible expression than they did to expanding their holdings, husbanding wealth and staking their children.<sup>16</sup> The cottagers, small farmers and cottiers, whose number were on the rise, were certainly less than enthusiastic. Though its regional concentration cautions against

11 B.J. Graham and L.J. Proudfoot (eds.), *Urban improvement in provincial Ireland, 1700–1840* (Dublin: Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement, 1994); J.G. Lockhart, ‘Planned villages in Scotland and Ireland 1700–1850’ in T.M. Devine and D. Dickson (eds.), *Ireland and Scotland: parallels and contrasts* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), pp. 132–43; V. Costello, *Irish demesne landscapes, 1660–1740* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016).

12 ‘Travel account of Friedrich Hering, 1806–07’ in Bourke (ed.), *German travel writers’ narratives on Ireland*, p. 80.

13 See the observations in ‘Travel account of Karl Gottlob Küttner, 1783–4’ in Bourke (ed.), *German travel writers’ narratives on Ireland*, pp. 23–5.

14 Hall, *Tour through Ireland*, vol. II, p. 212.

15 Trotter, *Walks through Ireland*, p. 295.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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assuming that they were representative, the fact that the Whiteboys targeted the enclosure of the countryside in the 1760s suggests that there were many in the expanding ranks of smallholders who were actively hostile to improvement because it collided with traditional ways.<sup>17</sup> There is no Irish equivalent to John Clare, the rural poet, who articulated the concerns of those at the sharp end of the improving initiatives pursued in the English east midlands. For this reason the perspectives the more curious travellers provide into the lives and economies of the Irish peasants, suggesting not only that they were not 'lazy'<sup>18</sup> but that they pursued a model of existence that was rational, and happier than that enjoyed by their English equivalents, provide a valuable counter-perspective to the normative focus on poverty and the potato.

James Hall is particularly intriguing in this respect. While no less disposed than others of his ilk to conclude from the 'unimproved or neglected state of agriculture' and the 'irregular ... cabins or cottages scattered over the country' that they provided few of 'the elegancies of life or hardly allow us to think that their inhabitants enjoy the common accommodations of it', Hall perceived that the people lived a life of contentment:

When we see how the cabins are peopled, the swarms of children at their play; the rows of young people of both sexes in the fields with their shovels, turning up the soil, and depositing their favourite food, the potatoes, or casting up the turf from the bogs for fuel; when we see them returning from their chapels, and loitering away the afternoon of the day of rest in companies, or enduring a greater portion of fatigue at their sports than that of their ordinary labour through the week; we see that the people are sociable ... they are equal, and most of them are happy.<sup>19</sup>

And concluding that the relaxed lifestyle pursued by Ireland's rural dwellers was preferable to the 'tyranny' to which those who resided 'in commercial cities' in England were subjected, Hall observed that 'the multiplied cares and toils which attach themselves to our complicated way of life' meant not only that family life there was less emotionally fulfilling (especially for children) but also that 'the people' sacrificed 'the duties and gratifications of social life' to 'the mammon of unrighteousness'.<sup>20</sup> It is an arresting, and rarely articulated,

17 J.S. Donnelly, 'The Whiteboys, 1761–65', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1978–9), 20–55.

18 Writing in 1806–7, Johan Friedrich Hering, an army surgeon stationed at Dunmore, noticed 'how laboriously the people here work the land', though he acknowledged this was a consequence of the primitiveness of their tools: Bourke (ed.), *German travel writers' narratives on Ireland*, pp. 79–80.

19 Hall, *Tour through Ireland*, vol. II, pp. 290–1.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 291.

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perspective, but it received conditional contemporary endorsement from John Trotter, who maintained that the ‘fortitude and humility’ with which ‘the poor Irishman’ bore his lot was indicative of contentment,<sup>21</sup> and from Karl Küttner’s avowal a generation earlier that the average Irish peasant was not just ‘much happier than any of us’ but habitually disposed to be so because he was not motivated ‘to go to the slightest trouble to improve his situation’ for the simple reason that because ‘his neighbours live like him’ he was not disposed to envy, or, it can be added, emulation.<sup>22</sup>

These are contestable opinions to be sure. Yet the acknowledgement that the peasantry were content because they had access to a foodstuff that not only permitted households to meet their own immediate calorific needs but also provided them with a surplus sufficient (as various travellers could personally attest) to share with visitors, with beggars and, should the need arise, with less fortunate neighbours is noteworthy. It constituted a quite different vision of society than the competitive economy that reified industry and improvement.<sup>23</sup>

The monotony of ‘an eternally unchangeable meal of potatoes’ did not pass travellers by un-noted,<sup>24</sup> but as Hall’s brief reference to sporting activity and others to music and dance attest, there was a recognition too that the peasantry possessed a rich social and cultural life, and that the absence of burdensome financial hurdles allowed young couples to set up home and to generate their own (large) families without too much calculation.<sup>25</sup>

It was not a lifestyle that many visitors, even those who identified its merits, wished to assume, as its disadvantages patently outweighed its advantages. This reality was largely hidden from view when the country experienced the so-called ‘gap in famines’ that spanned the second half of the eighteenth century and the first fifteen years of the nineteenth.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, it was not to endure, as the famine fever observed by John Trotter in 1817 and the acute distress encountered by Thomas Reid in 1822 attest; and the intensifying economic crisis in the ensuing quarter century, culminating in the Great

21 Trotter, *Walks through Ireland*, p. 17

22 ‘Travel account of Karl Gottlob Küttner, 1783’, p. 24.

23 Hall, *Tour through Ireland*, vol. II, p. 283; N. Ó Ciosáin, *Ireland in official print culture 1800–1850: a new reading of the Poor Inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), chapter 5.

24 ‘Travel account of Anton Schutte, 1845’ in Bourke (ed.), *German travel writers’ narratives on Ireland*, p. 505.

25 Hall, *Tour through Ireland*, vol. II, p. 290; Kelly, below pp. 502–8.

26 D. Dickson, ‘The gap in famines: a useful myth’ in E.M. Crawford (ed.), *Famine: the Irish experience: subsistence crises and famines in Ireland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), pp. 96–111. It can be noted that the MP for Carlisle, J.C. Curwen, who visited in 1813, apprehended a calamity if the potato failed: *Observations on the state of Ireland*, 2 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1818), vol. II, p. 121.

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Famine, demonstrated with devastating effect.<sup>27</sup> By the same token the benign image of ‘industry’ and ‘improvement’ cultivated by generations of advocates ignored its negative consequences – its disruptive impact on the economies of the poor, and the ensuing instances of agrarian and food protest.<sup>28</sup>

### William of Orange or James II

The antipathetic positions identifiable in the attitudes of the ruling elite in Ireland and (their differences on political points notwithstanding) their equivalents in Great Britain on the one part and the populace of Ireland on the other to economic growth were compounded by comparable differences in attitude to the prevailing political system and constitutional arrangements. Karl Küttner, for example, was profoundly struck by the depth of the cleavage when he was informed of the divided reaction to reports that a French expeditionary force was spotted on the Munster coast in June 1779:

The people who have estates around here gave a blood curdling description of the anxieties they suffered. The fear of an islander who is not used to seeing enemies in his country, and who knows that all invasions are combined with disorder and excesses, is understandable as such. But that was not the main concern, but rather the greatest fear they had was of the Catholics who outnumbered the Protestants in the district by far. An impoverished, uncouth and forlorn populace had got it into their heads that, as soon as their co-religionists the French had seized hold of the coastal region, the Irish would have their ancient rights restored and would receive back the lands lost by their ancestors. Therefore the first thing that was expected of these Catholic Irish in the event of a French landing was that they would attack the Protestants, manhandle them, and plunder all the wealthy country seats.<sup>29</sup>

Küttner’s account of the ‘consternation’ caused by so-called ‘sham invasion’ is not unique.<sup>30</sup> It does, however, highlight the endurance of the divisions forged

27 Trotter, *Walks through Ireland*, pp. 272–3, 278, 299–300, 313, 330–1, 342, 371–3, 453–4, 531; T. Reid, *Travels in Ireland in 1822* (London: Longman, Hurst and Orme, 1823), pp. 264, 276–82, 309; J. Moky, *Why Ireland starved: a quantitative and analytical history of the Irish economy 1800–1850* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985).

28 T.M. Devine, ‘Unrest and stability in rural Ireland and Scotland 1760–1840’ in P. Roebuck and R. Mitchison (eds.), *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500–1939* (Edinburgh: John Donald, [1988]), pp. 126–39; J. Kelly, *Food rioting in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the ‘moral economy’ and the Irish crowd* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017).

29 ‘Travel account of Karl Gottlob Küttner, 1783’, pp. 27–8.

30 J. Kelly, ‘“Disappointing the boundless ambitions of France”: Irish Protestants and the fear of invasion, 1661–1815’, *Studia Hibernica*, 37 (2011), 85–7; S. Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 196–9.

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in the crucible of conflict in the 1680s and 1690s, which are further attested by the same author's account of the fact that both communities had different royal heroes: 'William III is held in especially high regard [by Protestants], and the nation has erected a pyramid [*sic*] in his honour ... not far from the Drogheda where he crossed the Boyne, and defeated his father-in-law ... The Catholics despise him ... heartily, and look upon James II as a saint.'<sup>31</sup> Consistent with the exclusion of Jacobitism from the public sphere, it is difficult to locate positive reference to James II in the printed record of either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. By comparison, reverential references to William III abound and his prominence in the material as well as visual culture of the age is no less complete. Indeed, as indicated by Küttner's allusion to the obelisk erected in the Boyne Valley in the 1730s, there were a number of royal monuments in symbolically significant locations. The most iconic, because it was the focal point of the state-sponsored commemoration every 4 November (William's birthday), was Grinling Gibbons' equestrian statue of the king outside the houses of parliament on College Green, Dublin. A proliferation of pottery, glass and other visual images, made possible by the development of techniques of mass production, ensured the image was available to all in the nineteenth century, but the cult of William of which they are expressions was anticipated in the eighteenth century by the practice of toasting 'the Glorious and immortal memory', which suited the contemporary passion for sociable dining and the related preference for affirming political identity by drinking toasts to political heroes.<sup>32</sup>

This was not the full extent of Protestant identity forging, moreover. Building on foundations put in place since the Restoration, the 1730s and 1740s witnessed a palpable quickening in the pulse of official and popular idealisation of the Hanoverian monarchy equivalent to that fostered in Georgian Britain. Its most emblematic feature was not royal imagery, though portraits and statues of George I and II were prominently located in Dublin and Cork, but the proliferation of occasions when a positive image of the monarchy was fostered by state, municipal, corporate and landed interests by means of entertainments that, *inter alia*, involved the ringing of bells, lighting bonfires

<sup>31</sup> 'Travel account of Karl Gottlob Küttner, 1783', p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> R. Usher, *Protestant Dublin, 1660–1760: architecture and iconography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012); J. Kelly, 'The Glorious and immortal memory: commemoration and Protestant identity in Ireland 1660–1800', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 94c (1994), 25–52; J. Kelly, 'The consumption and sociable use of alcohol in eighteenth-century Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 115c (2015), 249–54; M.J. Powell, 'Political toasting in eighteenth-century Ireland', *History*, 91 (2006), 508–29.



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and fireworks, public illuminations, and the provision of barrels of beer, hogs-heads of wine and roast oxen to inculcate positive associations.<sup>33</sup> The impact of these occasions on the Protestant population is attested by the ease with which popular loyalism negotiated the challenge posed to the ‘Glorious memory’ by Patriot commemorative practices during the 1770s and 1780s, and the still more subversive revolutionary commemorative calendar of political radicals in the 1790s, since it was the combination of devotion to the memory of William of Orange, respect for the Protestant succession and the harnessing of the extant tradition of popular loyalism, developed around the anniversary of battles fought between 1688 and 1691, that served to make popular loyalism such a potent force in the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> The claim, published by the *Kerry Evening Post*, that there were 160,000 Orange Lodges and 270,000 ‘Orangemen’ in the country in 1831 may have little connection with reality, given that the Orange Order was then an ‘unlawful association’. But the figures accurately reflect the Order’s attraction to the by then combined forces of Protestantism and Presbyterianism, and the appeal of a tradition that melded established patterns of demonstration (assembly, marching, toasting) with the rhetoric and ideology of uncompromising ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ that was developed in the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>35</sup>

By comparison, having been effectively excluded from the public sphere by 1710,<sup>36</sup> the inability of Irish Jacobitism to sustain a defiant presence in the public realm once the authorities had policed out of existence the practice of commemorating the Pretender’s birthday (10 June) forced Jacobites into the shadows.<sup>37</sup> Indicatively, positive references to James II, James III (the ‘Old Pretender’) and sundry other Jacobites are only encountered in Gaelic

33 H. Smith, *Georgian monarchy: politics and culture 1714–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 132–5; Kelly, ‘The Glorious and immortal memory’, pp. 36–8; Usher, *Protestant Dublin, 1660–1760*, chapter 3.

34 A. Blackstock, *Loyalism in Britain and Ireland, 1793–1839* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007); J. Hill, ‘Loyal societies in Ireland, 1690–1790’ in J. Kelly and M. Powell (eds.), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp. 181–202; A. Blackstock, ‘Loyalty and the monarchy in Ireland, c.1660–c.1840’ in A. Blackstock and F. O’Gorman (eds.), *Loyalism and the formation of the British world, 1775–1914* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 95–101; J. Kelly, *Sir Richard Musgrave, 1746–1818: ultra-Protestant ideologue* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009).

35 *Kerry Evening Post*, 13 April 1831; A. Blackstock, ‘The trajectories of loyalty and loyalism in Ireland, 1793–1849’ in Blackstock and O’Gorman (eds.), *Loyalism and the formation of the British world, 1775–1914*, pp. 103–24.

36 J. Kelly, ‘Regulating print: the state and the control of print in eighteenth-century Ireland’, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 23 (2008), 146–50.

37 P. Fagan, ‘The Dublin Catholic mob, 1700–1750’, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 4 (1989), 124–5; É. Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685–1766: a fatal attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002); Kelly, ‘The Glorious and immortal memory’, pp. 32–3.

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poetry, which circulated in manuscript.<sup>38</sup> Occasional acts of defiance, such as raising a toast to James III in public, demonstrate that Jacobitism persisted. But the power and authority of the Protestant state was so overwhelming that the likelihood of Jacobitism seriously testing, and still less undermining, the foundations of Protestant authority – a real possibility for at least a quarter century after the strategic withdrawal negotiated at Limerick in 1691 – continued to diminish.<sup>39</sup> It was not that a majority of members of the Irish Protestant interest ever felt sufficiently secure to believe that they could relax their guard. There were some, to be sure, who had concluded by the 1770s that the Penal Laws against Catholics were redundant, but those like the lord chancellor, John FitzGibbon, who maintained in 1793 in the debate on admitting Catholics to the franchise (of which they had been deprived in 1728) that the Penal Laws were ‘dictated by self-defence and self-preservation’ spoke for the many who remained unconvinced.<sup>40</sup> Thirty year earlier, such a step could not have been contemplated. In 1764, during the first of what was an irregular but defining sequence of regional agrarian protests, the Church of Ireland dean, William Henry, wrote to the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker, to alert him to ‘the secret springs and schemes’ of the Whiteboys; their purpose, he pronounced ominously, was to advance ‘the interest of Popery’, and they had done so to such effect ‘that unless some effectual remedies were applied in time, we should have the tragedy of 1641 acted over again upon the first rupture with France and Spain, and officers sent by those powers to head the Papists’.<sup>41</sup> Henry’s fears were misplaced, but the captivating power that the attentively cultivated memory of 1641 had on Protestant consciousness through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a critical factor in valorising those in their ranks who were ‘distinguished for [their] warm zeal for the Protestant religion, the British interest, and a steady adherence to [Glorious] Revolution principles’.<sup>42</sup>

The commitment to ‘the British and Protestant interest’ in which Henry zealously laboured (his term) during his lifetime dovetailed with the

38 V. Morley, *The popular mind in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), pp. 64–5, 72, 121–2, 274–5 and *passim*.

39 Kelly, ‘The Glorious and immortal memory’, p. 40; Kelly, ‘“Disappointing the boundless ambitions of France”’, pp. 51–70.

40 J. Kelly (ed.), *Proceedings of the Irish House of Lords 1771–1800*, 3 vols. (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2008), vol. II, p. 267.

41 Henry to Secker, 29 Dec. 1764 in R.G. Ingram (ed.), ‘“Popish cut-throats against us”’: Papists, Protestants and the problem of allegiance in eighteenth-century Ireland’ in M. Barber et al. (eds.), *From the Reformation to the Permissive Society: a miscellany*, Church of England Record Society 18 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 178.

42 *Ibid.*