

Providence College

DigitalCommons@Providence

History & Classics Undergraduate Theses

History & Classics

Spring 4-17-2024

“Alas Poor Ireland!”: British Prejudice, “the Irish Precedent, ” and the Origins of the American Revolution

David Arthur Salzillo, Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.providence.edu/history_undergrad_theses



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

“Alas Poor Ireland!”:
British Prejudice, “the Irish Precedent,” and the Origins of the American Revolution

David Arthur Salzillo Jr.

HIS 490-001

Dr. Edward Andrews

April 17, 2024

Contents

Introduction		1
Chapter 1	The Subjugated Kingdom of Ireland in the American Imagination	13
Chapter 2	“The Irish Precedent” and the First Stages of the Imperial Crisis	29
Chapter 3	“The Irish Precedent” and the Turn from Resistance to Rebellion	44
Conclusion		61
Bibliography		63

Introduction

Of all the claims in the *Declaration of Independence*, its surety about the existence of an intentional British “design to reduce” the colonists “under absolute Despotism” is perhaps the most questionable one to modern ears.¹ Did Great Britain’s imperial policy and its conduct during the Imperial Crisis amount to a conspiracy to deprive Americans of their liberties? Modern historians have largely dismissed such language and accompanying concerns about British “enslavement” of its Atlantic possessions. Consequently, the colonists’ comparisons of the alleged British plot to the American system of chattel slavery have generally been seen as “hyperbolic” at best and disingenuous at worst.²

Yet such a view fails to properly consider the anti-colonialist roots and implications of the American Revolution. Instead of taking the parallels between the American Revolution and modern anti-colonialist movements too far, modern historians have largely failed to take them far enough.³ Studying these parallels—and their connection above all to Ireland’s relationship with the British Empire—will help open up a new and more fruitful way of thinking about and teaching the American Revolution. When scholarship on the Revolution is put into better conversation with the anti-colonialist movements of the 1950s and 1960s, it can underscore the connections between past and present. It will also ensure that an increasingly diverse generation of Americans will gain

¹ Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” National Archives and Records Administration, accessed September 10, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript> for the language quoted above; emphasis mine.

² See, for example, Peter S. Onuf, “‘To Declare Them a Free and Independent People’: Race, Slavery, and National Identity in Jefferson’s Thought,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (1998): 1–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124731>. See particularly pg. 7. Onuf, to be sure, does not appear to endorse this position himself. Instead, he, to the contrary, “suggests a somewhat different relationship to the trope of slavery” among the colonists. Onuf, indeed, could help others explore how this paper’s conception of the causes of the American Revolution might inform the historiography on the relationship between the American Revolution and slavery.

³ For authors who have suggested that one can take the comparisons between the American Revolution and modern anti-colonialist movements too far, see Thomas C. Barrow, “The American Revolution as a Colonial War for Independence,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968): 452–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1921776>.

a greater appreciation of the legacy of the American Revolution and their place in it. Even apart from these more practical concerns, studying these parallels will add to an already-fascinating field of scholarship on the links between Ireland and America.⁴ While that scholarship—especially recently—has viewed the struggles of Ireland and America via an anti-colonialist perspective, it has generally done so without addressing the impact of “the Irish precedent” on the American Imperial Crisis.⁵ Studies on that will thus compliment the trends of existing research and indicate yet another point of connection between Ireland and America. The shared affinity between these two nations stretches back further than many scholars of the American Revolution have realized.

Ultimately, the American resistance movement’s rhetoric of enslavement reflected a reasonable fear of imperial exploitation. This rhetoric found especial resonance in the colonies given the example of British misrule over Ireland. In an effort to make sense of anti-American prejudice in England, as well as Britain’s plans for a more authoritarian model of empire in America, American colonists frequently looked back to the dreaded Irish precedent. Certain key events in the Imperial Crisis—such as the Quebec Act and the purported application of tactics used in the conquests of the Irish to British America—heightened American anxiety about English subjugation and exploitation à la Ireland. Concern about “the Irish precedent” shaped the nature of American resistance and eventually played a significant role in spurring armed conflict between the thirteen colonies and England.

⁴ Among others, see Patrick Griffin and Francis D. Cogliano, *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021) and Nicholas P. Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1999). Notably, Canny argued that Britain’s approach to colonizing Ireland influenced its later approach to colonizing America.

⁵ For another scholar who uses the quoted phrase in a similar (though not identical) way, see Sean Moore, “The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift’s Irish Satires in Early America,” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 348, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90009821>.

I. Historiography: Causes of the American Revolution

Historiographical works on the causes of the American Revolution are as old as the Revolution itself. The era's first historians, like David Ramsay, wrote detailed histories of the period a mere decade after conflict between the colonies and Great Britain first broke out. These early accounts generally painted the American Revolution in broad ideological strokes, seeing it as a "struggle between liberty and tyranny."⁶ Modern explanations of the American Revolution have either elaborated on or significantly qualified such views. The works of early 20th century historians Charles and Mary Beard, for example, first identified economic conditions as one of the driving factors behind American politics during and post-Imperial Crisis.⁷ According to historian Thomas C. Barrow, historians of Beard's tradition regarded "the period following the achievement of de-facto independence" as marking the unleashing and "triumph of radical democratic elements within American society."⁸ Later historians have found this oversimplified the issue. Barrow and many others argued that "the conservative nature of the American response suggests that something other than a radical re-structuring of society was what was debated or desired" by all colonists.⁹ As pertains to the subject of this paper, the Beards' explanation drew much of the focus

⁶ Cf. George Bancroft et al., *The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It?*, ed. George Athan Billias (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), 9.

⁷ Charles and Mary Beard were most well-known for applying this method of interpretation to the drafting and ratification of the Constitution. See Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1935).

⁸ Thomas C. Barrow, "The American Revolution as a Colonial War for Independence," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968): 460, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1921776>.

⁹ Barrow, "Colonial War for Independence," 461. As evidence for his argument, Barrow pointed to the example of the "formation of the governments for the new states," particularly as regards Massachusetts. He noted the contrast between the Massachusetts state constitution's "democratic method of discussion and adoption" and its status as one of the most conservative of all the state constitutions. Although more recent scholarship has pointed to Pennsylvania's original state constitution as the most democratic in these respects, Barrow's essential point seems to stand. Despite being one of the main hotbeds of rebellion against imperial England, the Massachusetts' state constitution, enacted through one of the most democratic methods of discussion and adoption, ended up bringing about a peculiarly conservative constitutional arrangement. The Beards' thesis and related theses have failed to account for such a glaring discrepancy.

away from the role of British imperial attitudes and prejudicial assumptions about Americans in causing the American Revolution. In framing the revolutionary struggle as a struggle against elites of all kinds, the Beards failed to convincingly account for 1) why the American elite would ever join such a struggle and 2) the language of conspiracy and the insistence with which Americans used it.

About 40 years later, historian Bernard Bailyn provided a different theory about a possible “overarching cause” of the American Revolution. His work came much closer to properly contextualizing the Imperial Crisis’ language of conspiracy. Unlike “most historians” of his time, Bailyn refused to dismiss it as “mere rhetoric and propaganda.”¹⁰ Based off the evidence of the pamphlets he compiled in his *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, Bailyn concluded that “‘slavery,’ ...and ‘conspiracy’ meant something very real” to almost every colonist involved in the American resistance.¹¹ In his most influential work, titled *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Bailyn used his in-depth study of American Revolutionary pamphlets to support his “rather old-fashioned view” of the Revolution as “above all else an ideological, constitutional, [and] political struggle and not primarily a controversy between social groups undertaken to force changes in...society or the economy.”¹² Of course, Bailyn contrasted his view with the Beards’, but also with historians and historiographers that portrayed American elites as manipulating the everyday American colonist into supporting a war that merely or mostly served as a means of advancing the elite’s economic and social interests.¹³ Regardless, in doing so, Bailyn inaccurately

¹⁰ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), viii-ix.

¹¹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, viii-ix.

¹² Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, vi.

¹³ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 144-160. This portrayal of the American elites failed to explain why politicians like Benjamin Franklin gave up both prestige and patronage in the British court system, and what would

portrayed the American Revolution as a fundamentally “libertarian” one.¹⁴ According to Bailyn, the American Revolution’s “intellectual switchboard” was English Country Party ideology.¹⁵ The English Country Party writers, spokesmen for “extreme libertarianism,” exhibited a deep-seated distrust of centralized power that Bailyn insisted the colonists internalized and applied to the Imperial Crisis.¹⁶

Bailyn’s explanation was lacking in a few ways. First, while without a doubt the Country Party ideology almost exclusively shaped the American self-image *during conflict with Britain*, both American and earlier Irish resistance to the British authoritarian model of empire framed imperial encroachments as one peoples lording power over another.¹⁷ Such thinking obviously went beyond a mere distrust of government in general. Second, Bailyn failed to fully account for “the strikingly emotional character of colonial” rhetoric, or why working-class Americans in places like Boston would rally so forcefully around abstract ideology.¹⁸ Third, Bailyn largely dismissed the language of conspiracy and its basis in reality, following another author in calling it

compel other American elites to risk their fortunes and their lives in a war against the greatest naval power of the 18th century. On top of that, even though the American Revolution was not *primarily* a war for radical democratic values, it certainly opened the American political conversation *to* these radical values. With that in mind, why would the American elite risk unleashing these democratic forces merely to secure an uncertain status boost in American society?

¹⁴ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), 35.

¹⁵ Cf. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 22-23.

¹⁶ Cf. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 35 and 202-203.

¹⁷ See Maurice J. Bric, “Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783,” *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 11 (1996): 90, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30070595>, especially where he quoted Molyneux.

¹⁸ For more on what this highly emotional political rhetoric looked like, and the source of the quoted language, cf. T. H. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 13–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>, particularly 29-33.

a “chimera.”¹⁹ Bailyn therefore characterized the American Revolution as a series of misunderstandings escalating “towards a disastrous deadlock.”²⁰ If British misunderstandings were the result of prejudicial attitudes, historians that follow Bailyn’s lead risk drawing a false equivalency between the colonists and English imperial officials.

Historian T.H. Breen’s 1997 article, titled “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising,” filled in some but not all of the gaps of Bailyn’s work. Breen explored a theme of the American Revolution that Bailyn only noted in passing: the role of English anti-American prejudice in shaping imperial policy and in shaping American resistance to that policy.²¹ Breen challenged Bailyn’s focus on the ideological debate, instead suggesting that Americans’ grievances ultimately turned on whether they were the equals of Englishmen in the Empire.²² His article raised important objections regarding the “series of misunderstandings” theory of the American Revolution. If British prejudices were a factor in the escalation of the Imperial Crisis, then seeing the American Revolution as simply “a series of miscommunications” ignores the bigger picture behind American resistance.

Breen’s analysis was not without its weaknesses. First, it did not fully tease out the anti-colonialist implications of the argument, and what bearing those implications had on the legitimacy

¹⁹ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 148-149.

²⁰ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 158-159. Bailyn cited Edmund Burke here.

²¹ To be more specific, Bailyn did observe that Americans believed that certain “invidious distinctions” had been made between them and English Britons, but he did not elaborate on the connection. For that, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), 307. In fact, some of the examples Bailyn used to support *his* argument would have better supported *Breen’s* thesis. For an example of that, see Bailyn’s quotation of Elisha Fish’s 1766 discourse *Joy and Gladness* in Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 127. Elisha Fish’s discourse will also serve to support the arguments of chapter 2 of this paper.

²² See Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism,” 29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>, for instance.

of the colonists' grievances.²³ Second, Breen did not draw enough attention to the language of cultural alienation, subjugation, and conquest that pervaded the Imperial Crisis. If he had, he might have brought into clearer view how the Patriot anxieties about becoming "Tributary Slaves" paralleled the real-life situation of the Irish under the British.²⁴ Finally, and most relevantly to this thesis, Breen asserts that American Revolutionary historians "should situate themselves firmly within a broader comparative framework, within an empire that included Scotland as well as *Ireland*."²⁵ Breen's work did correctly draw attention to the parallels between British anti-Irish and anti-American prejudices, as well as to the similarities between Irish and American natural rights claims.²⁶ Nonetheless, Breen did not pay enough attention to Ireland's "exclusion" from equality in the British Empire—beyond mere perception—and the consequences of that.²⁷ He likewise chose not to trace American fears to the Irish reality in a systematic way. At one point

²³ To be fair, some of Breen's other works did offer greater discussion of these implications. See T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2011).

²⁴ If Breen had explored the language of "Tributary Slavery," he might also have placed a lesser emphasis on the comparisons between colonists' "enslavement" and the colonists' own enslavement of Africans in their plantations, in their homes, and in other places of work. As this paper will show, the comparison to enslaved Africans, while emotionally resonant for colonial Americans, did not accurately express their true anxieties. For more on the example of the Carthaginians and Sardinians in American Patriot thinking, and their relationship to the Patriots' understanding of "the Irish precedent," see chapter 2 of this paper. For the use of the term "Tributary Slaves," see Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2016), 115.

²⁵ T. H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>; emphasis mine. To be clear, his book *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2011), particularly 79.

²⁶ See Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism," 21, 23, and 26-27. For another work that explores British ethnic stereotypes of the Irish (even Irish Protestants), see Michael P. Carroll, "How the Irish Became Protestant in America," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 16, no. 1 (2006): 29-30, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2006.16.1.25>.

²⁷ Cf. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism," 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>, and Breen's quotation of C.A. Bayly, who characterizes "[Protestant] Irish nationalism [as arising from] *perceived* exclusion from empire" (emphasis mine).

Breen even appeared uncertain about exactly how “much midcentury Americans knew about the politics of contemporary Scotland and Ireland.”²⁸ This paper—at least for Ireland—will answer that question with more certainty than Breen’s.

Other more recent historiographical trends have tried to better incorporate the stories of the colonial American laboring classes, enslaved Africans, colonial women of all social classes, and others into the story of American resistance and revolution. Historians doing this type of historiographical analysis have generally followed the earlier example of the Beards in analyzing social and economic conditions as causally contributing to the American Revolution.²⁹ Unlike many of these historians—and like Bailyn—this paper will suggest that fear of “the Irish precedent” was an overarching cause, a cause that united colonists of many diverse socioeconomic and even ethnic backgrounds. From there, “the Irish precedent” was the catalyst for some to radically rethink American politics and society.

II. Historiography: Ireland and the American Revolution

Historiography on American colonists’ fears of Irish-like subjugation has been relatively sparse. Ironically, the first historian to have come close to suggesting the theory was W.E.H. Lecky, a 19th century *English* historian. Even so, Lecky’s analysis appeared to focus more on how “the example of Ireland” *vindicated* American resistance.³⁰ More to the point, Lecky’s argument

²⁸ Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism,” 26.

²⁹ For a somewhat representative example of this type of historiographical analysis, see Alfred Fabian Young, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael, *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2012).

³⁰ Lecky, *History*, III, 443, 414, 418, 354, and 361, quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1976), 392. Additionally, Lecky limited his connection of America and Ireland to “the hereditary revenue, the scandalous pension list,” and patronage abuses. As this paper will show, American fears—especially come the 1770s—became far more expansive than that.

was inconsistent: in a different section of his book, he casted doubt on the applicability of the parallels between the raising of standing armies in Ireland and America.³¹ Far more often than not, the works of early 20th century American historians seemed to have even more doubts than Lecky did on the Ireland-America parallels. One article from 1910 by Martin I. J. Griffin was particularly skeptical of the notion. While Griffin did admit that “later, when the contest [i.e., the Revolution] was going on, several of the Patriots...declare[d] against...being reduced to the condition of Ireland,” he did not find the opinion “to be so general in expression as to be considered one of the justifications of the resistance to England.”³² Of course, Griffin did not have the benefit of conducting his research with the help of modern databases of American historical newspapers. If he did, he may have discovered *multiple* explicit declarations against “being reduced to the condition of Ireland” that date to a year before armed conflict broke out. Given that at least one newspaper writer explicitly correlated increasing tensions in 1774 and 1775 rural Massachusetts to exactly these types of anxieties, the later Patriot rhetoric Griffin alluded to should be understood in a much broader context.

Other early Ireland and the American Revolution historiography has either emphasized a supposedly widespread Irish participation in the Patriot struggle or the influence of Irish constitutional and political thought on the American elite.³³ As to the former theory, the question

³¹ James A. Woodburn, *The American Revolution 1763-1783, Being the Chapters and Passages Relating to America from [Lecky's] History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (N.Y. and London, 1898), 59-61. For more on those parallels, see chapter 2 of this paper.

³² Martin I. J. Griffin, “The Irish Catholics and the Revolution,” *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 6, no. 4 (1910): 340, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44374826>.

³³ For an example of the former, see Michael J. O’Brien, *A Hidden Phase of American History: Ireland's Part in America's Struggle for Liberty*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: The Devin-Adair Company, 1921). For an example of the latter, see Charles Howard McIlwain, *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958). For later works that follow O’Brien’s lead, see T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2011), particularly 5. For more recent works which take a similar approach to McIlwain, see perhaps Sean Moore, “The Irish Contribution to the

of whether the American Revolution was “an Irish revolution in America” is a contested one. Many of the earliest works promoting it originated out of the desire for a greater acceptance of Irish Americans. Because of that, they often seem to have fallen into the trap of confirmation bias.³⁴ This paper will largely sidestep the question entirely. However, it will do so to make a broader point: “the Irish precedent” influenced Americans of *many different* ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. As to the theory that Irish political thought shaped the thought of America’s elite, it hinges on the concept that Ireland in theory was a kingdom separate from Britain. It would thus contend that Americans desired a constitutional standing similar to Ireland’s. But all that begs the question: why did the American Patriots appeal to a constitutional precedent that the British largely ignored? Especially when at least some Patriots would have known of Ireland’s subordination to British whims, why would the colonists have aspired to the same status *as Ireland*?³⁵

Otherwise, recent mainstream historiography on the American Revolution has largely ignored the role of Ireland. In mvice versa few of the major recent book-length works on the Revolution in the last 2 to 3 years, Ireland received barely a mention.³⁶ Other seminal works on

Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift’s Irish Satires in Early America,” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 333–62.

³⁴ By the same token, later works like Breen’s *American Insurgents* seemed to have placed too much emphasis on anecdotal reports—such as the words of some Hessian soldiers who claimed that the Revolution was “nothing more or less than an Irish-Scotch-Presbyterian Rebellion.” See Breen, *American Insurgents*, 5. For works that cast doubt on the idea of the American Revolution as “an Irish Revolution in America,” see Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Matthew P. Dziennik, “Peasant, Soldiers, and Revolutionaries: Interpreting Irish Manpower in the Age of Revolutions,” essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 110. Again, this thesis does not depend on the broad and perhaps unsupported claim of “an Irish revolution in America,” particularly if the evidence suggests a universal fear of “the Irish precedent” among American colonists of all types.

³⁵ For an essay that makes a strikingly similar argument, see Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Gordon S. Wood, “The American Revolution and the Uses and Abuses of Ireland,” essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 53–68. This paper will provide a more convincing answer to that question.

³⁶ For one work that illustrates my point, see Stephen Lucas, *A Rhetorical History of the United States: Rhetoric, Independence, and Nationhood, 1760-1800*, vol. 2 (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2022), 441 (the index includes not one entry for Ireland).

the American Revolution only discussed Ireland in passing, if at all.³⁷ Even works that focused on Ireland and the American Revolution placed a greater focus on the Revolution's effect *on Ireland*, not vice-versa. One 2016 article on Ireland and the American Revolution asserted outright that "the American Revolution had a far greater impact on Ireland than Ireland had on the American Revolution."³⁸ That said, some very recent works have attempted to bring the Irish and American situation into better conversation with each other. They have even done so with a careful eye to the anti-colonialist undercurrents of American and Irish resistance. As the historian Peter Onuf wrote in *Ireland and America*, "[t]he outcome America feared [during the Imperial Crisis] was *foretold* in Ireland's history."³⁹ For the most part though, historians involved in these efforts either misinterpreted how Ireland influenced the rhetoric of the American Revolution or did not systematically explore the role of "the Irish precedent" in the American colonists' imagination.⁴⁰ Others who pursued a similar line of inquiry on "the Irish precedent" have either limited their

³⁷ See, for example, Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Vintage, 1993), 438. Also see P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2016), particularly the passages cited in their index (under "Ireland").

³⁸ Matthew P. Dziennik, "Ireland and the American Revolution," *Journal of the American Revolution*, August 28, 2016, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/05/ireland-and-the-american-revolution/>. See also Maurice J. Bric, "Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783," *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 11 (1996): 88–119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30070595> for similar statements.

³⁹ Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Peter Onuf, "Epilogue," essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 304; emphasis mine.

⁴⁰ For an essay that may have misinterpreted the role of Ireland in American Patriot rhetoric, see Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Gordon S. Wood, "The American Revolution and the Uses and Abuses of Ireland," essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 53–68. As to how other essays on Ireland and America have gone the *other* route, consider the Onuf passage quoted above. The footnote to that passage cited only a few pages of the introduction *to the same book*. The introduction does not include any substantive footnotes to back up Onuf's assertions.

scope to certain regions within the colonies or have merely focused on certain members of the American elite.⁴¹

So why has the American Revolution historiography so often neglected the role that “the Irish precedent” played in the Patriots’ “conspiratorial thinking?” One explanation may be the more general tendency to overlook the comparisons of the Revolution to the anti-colonialist movements of the 1950s and 1960s. A more daunting practical problem may also be at play here. How can historians try to consistently disentangle American Patriot opinions of—and, in some cases, prejudice *towards*—the different religious and ethnic groups within Ireland from the broader question of “the Irish precedent?” Yet if the historian accepts the challenge, and confronts the issue directly, they may find the issue not quite as daunting as it has initially appeared. Ultimately, almost every American Patriot agreed that America should not share in the fate of “poor Ireland.”

⁴¹ For the former, see Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 205 and Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1976), 171. For the latter, see Carla J. Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16, 100-101, 225, 229, 237, 245, 246, and 253.

Chapter 1

The Subjugated Kingdom of Ireland in the American Imagination

(Prelude to the Imperial Crisis, 1720-1763)

On November 20, 1729, three decades before the start of the Imperial Crisis, an upstart young printer named Benjamin Franklin published an article in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Its title was “Affairs of Ireland.” That Franklin, a man just starting out in the printing business, should have thought about the plight of the far away Irish people is notable in itself. After all, this was not the Franklin of the 1750s, 1760s, or even the 1770s. This Franklin was the mere son of a candlemaker, a person without any imperial connections or political prestige. And of course, Franklin the elder statesman would have had much more time to devote to studying imperial policy in Ireland than Franklin the printer ever did.

So why *would* young Franklin have taken such an interest in that little island across the Atlantic? The answer to that question reveals much about America, “the Irish precedent,” and the anti-colonialist roots of the American Revolution. Franklin was far from alone in his concern with Irish affairs.⁴² According to later historians, “[l]arge-scale immigration of [the] Irish to the colonies [attracted] considerable attention [in America] in 1729.”⁴³ Other newspapers at the time, including

⁴² Contrast this with Mulford’s analysis in Carla J. Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), which failed to pick up on this point and its broader significance. While Franklin was undoubtedly ahead of his time in seeing Ireland as a “negative example” (cf. 225) of what could happen to colonial governments in America, he at the same time consistently drew on a larger tradition of American distrust stemming from British subjugation and misrule of Ireland.

⁴³ “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162.] See especially the commentary.

The *New-England Weekly Journal*, carried reports of a substantial Irish outflow to the thirteen colonies.⁴⁴ The clamoring to America was apparently so desperate that “some 200 [Irish] died in passage on one ship” that embarked for the Delaware River.⁴⁵ Per Franklin himself, even “[t]he *English Papers* [were] frequent in their Accounts” of Ireland’s miseries.⁴⁶

To understand the future direction of the Imperial Crisis, one must pay attention to precisely *what* Mr. Franklin said about Ireland’s woes and their origins. Why? Because it was the example of Ireland that would likely form one of the “intellectual switchboards” of the American Revolution.⁴⁷ Franklin was perhaps a perfect case-in-point. Not only did Ireland’s oppressive conditions gain his attention so early on, but his diagnosis of Ireland’s troubles lined up well with the accounts of his contemporaries and the later accounts of Irish historians. If anything, Franklin’s experiences in the British imperial court, his travels to Ireland, and his extensive contacts with Irish political thinkers like Dr. Charles Lucas during the Imperial Crisis may have provided bitter confirmation of his earliest misgivings. These misgivings—and misgivings like them—would become a critical foundation for the American resistance movement of the 1760s and 1770s.

I. “[T]he Unhappy Circumstances of the Common People of Ireland”

Franklin’s article hinted at both a shared distrust and a shared common knowledge about Ireland’s miserable sociopolitical condition. First, Franklin drew his “Particulars...*entire[ly]* from

⁴⁴ “Affairs of Ireland,” *Founders Online*.

⁴⁵ “Affairs of Ireland,” *Founders Online*.

⁴⁶ “Affairs of Ireland,” *Founders Online*; emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ Cf. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), 22-23.

several late English Prints.”⁴⁸ If Franklin’s main work was in compiling the reports of English sources, then his article probably contained little that was unfamiliar to anyone even somewhat aware of the Irish situation. Further, since American printing and literary culture at the time depended heavily on English imports, it should follow that at least some of Franklin’s subscribers would have been acquainted with these “late English Prints” beforehand.

Despite Franklin’s seeming dependence on English and not Irish sources for his information, his portrait of Ireland was no less grim than those of either his Irish contemporaries or of later historians of Ireland. For example, Franklin’s article claimed that “Poverty, Wretchedness, Misery and Want are become *almost universal*” among the general Irish people.⁴⁹ If such rhetoric sounds hyperbolic, Irish writer Jonathan Swift described an Irish people on “the brink of ruin,” and an Ireland so destitute that one may have found it hard to imagine that “either law, religion, or *common humanity* is professed” there.⁵⁰ Modern Irish historian Thomas Barlett likewise argued that factors like population growth in Ireland during the early 18th century “put pressure on existing resources...ultimately leading to [even] greater immiseration” than before.⁵¹

⁴⁸ “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162.]; emphasis mine. Now, some historians might suggest that Franklin’s almost-exclusive reliance on “English Prints” implied a lack of “American Prints” and thus of general American interest in Ireland and Irish emigration. However, that view ignores both the evidence of the other American newspaper accounts and the context of America’s literary relationship with England.

⁴⁹ “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162.]; emphasis mine.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>; emphasis mine.

⁵¹ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140.

Franklin then explored the immediate causes of the dire poverty. Among them was “That [the common people’s] lands, being now turn’d to raising of Cattle,” left them unable to raise enough corn “for their [yearly] Subsistence.”⁵² Again, Franklin appeared to echo the sentiments of Irishmen like Swift and of later Irish scholars. Swift criticized the Irish political elite’s “[depopulation] of vast tracts of the best land” for the raising of animals in remarkably similar terms.⁵³ Modern scholarship, for its part, has provided an appropriately dark picture of Ireland’s “succession of poor harvests... [and accompanying] subsistence crises.”⁵⁴ These crises, more than just “[impoverishing Ireland’s] small farmers,” actually led to their “near starvation.”⁵⁵ From there Franklin connected Ireland’s social problems to its politics. The poor state of Irish manufacturing—a sector of Ireland’s economy that was “cramp’d and discourag’d” by the relevant political authorities—compounded Ireland’s agricultural failures and left “the labouring People” with “very little to do.”⁵⁶ Finally, per Franklin, “exceedingly heavy” taxes, a scarce money supply, and “the most merciless Racking Tyranny and Oppression” of “gripping avaricious Landlords” gave many Irish men and women no choice but to leave for America.⁵⁷

⁵² “Affairs of Ireland,” *Founders Online*.

⁵³ Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>. Of course, Swift was a leader of the established Church of Ireland and could be considered a member of the Irish political elite himself. However, here the term refers more to those within the Irish political elite who preferred to maintain the status quo.

⁵⁴ See Jonathan Swift, David Hayton, and Adam Rounce, “Introduction,” introduction, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725: A Modest Proposal and Other Works*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), xxiii.

⁵⁵ Hayton and Rounce, “Introduction,” xxiii.

⁵⁶ “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162.]

⁵⁷ “Affairs of Ireland,” *Founders Online*.

As early as 1729, Ireland was already a critical part of the rhetorical contrast between “the free New” and “the oppressive Old.” That contrast would become a touchstone of American rhetoric in the midst of the Imperial Crisis. Going by this article alone, Americans like Franklin clearly considered Ireland the perfect counterpoint to what they believed to be America’s promise. Yet leaving it at that overlooks a much more important point: once again, Franklin’s criticisms were hardly unique. Swift’s “A Short View of the State of Ireland” makes almost all—if not all—of the same points, and even Swift drew on earlier evaluations of Irish political and economic life.⁵⁸ Franklin’s analysis—although not groundbreaking—was wholly accurate, and gave its more attentive readers a good grasp on Irish affairs.

At the very least, Franklin’s relatively accurate and comprehensive analysis of Ireland’s plight demonstrates that people like him and his subscribers were well-aware of the Irish predicament as early as 1729. Other articles from America reporting on Irish immigration likely reiterated at least some of the same points, and likely borrowed from the same accounts in “the English Papers.” Regardless, given the heightened American interest in Irish immigration during the 1720s, Franklin and his subscribers could not have been the *only* people in the colonies aware of and even somewhat attentive to the sufferings of the Irish. Would these same Americans have understood the root causes behind Ireland’s miseries? And how would this have influenced how they approached the later Imperial Crisis?

⁵⁸ Jonathan Swift et al., “‘A Short View of the State of Ireland’,” essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 14 and 23, among others. For those other analyses of Ireland that Swift may have drew from, see Sir William Petty, “The Political Anatomy of Ireland... [1691],” *Early English Books Online*, accessed November 4, 2023, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A54620.0001.001/1:8.10?rgn=div2%3Bview>. In particular, see the section of Sir Petty’s work entitled “Of the Money of IRELAND,” 71.

II. The Sources of Poor Ireland's Troubles and the American Imperial Crisis

Before answering these questions, one must briefly discuss the root causes of Ireland's miseries. Most fundamentally, England's political misrule of Ireland was responsible for Ireland's poor economic progress, its "cramp'd and discourag'd" manufacturing industry, and its glaring economic inequalities. As Bartlett noted, "unlike the British Parliament," the Irish Parliament "[had no] role in the creation of an Irish government or executive."⁵⁹ Ireland's powerlessness to govern itself led to persistent complaints from Irish Patriots like Swift. Swift, for instance, argued that no people can be considered "a Free People" without "being Governed only by Laws *made with their own consent*."⁶⁰

These complaints had more than an ideological basis. England's Irish policy was not simply mistaken. It instead arose out a mix of English self-interest and a blatant disregard for the welfare of the Irish people. Sir Richard Cox's *Aphorisms Related to the Kingdom of Ireland*, a late 17th century pamphlet presented to the "Lords & Commons at the Great Convention at Westminster," represented the contemporary English view of Ireland well.⁶¹ As he put it, "Ireland is the Dominion of England and a kingdom *subordinate to it*...Without the *subjection* of Ireland, England cannot flourish [nor subsist]."⁶² The English, as will be shown later, applied this

⁵⁹ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Swift et al., "'A Short View of the State of Ireland'," essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 16; emphasis mine. Note the comparison to the later Imperial Crisis rhetoric, a point that, to be sure, has been made before in the Ireland and American Revolution scholarship.

⁶¹ Sir Richard Cox, *Aphorisms Related to the Kingdom of Ireland...* (London, UK: The Angel in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1689), title page.

⁶² Sir Richard Cox, *Aphorisms*, 1-2; emphasis mine. See also Kenneth L. Campbell, *Ireland's History: Prehistory to the Present* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014).

philosophy of subordination and subjection to its other British colonies and domains, including America.⁶³

In the case of Ireland, this outlook led England to make a concerted effort to restrain Irish commerce and economic development and to ensure Ireland's constitutional subordination to the mother country. A long tradition of English legislation—stretching at least as far back as the 1494 Poyning's law—ensured that this constitutional and economic arrangement became a centuries-long status quo.⁶⁴ Naturally, Ireland became ripe for English economic exploitation. Many of the “gripping avaricious landlords” Franklin referred to with contempt in “Affairs of Ireland” were absentee English landlords with little sense of Irish identity.⁶⁵ As Swift noted, these absentee landlords were considerable drains on the Irish economy—and yet were boons to England. Swift estimated that about “[o]ne Third of the Rents in Ireland” were “spent in England.”⁶⁶ Besides that, Swift wrote, these landlords were responsible for “[reducing] the miserable [common] people to a worse condition than” French peasants or German and Polish vassals.⁶⁷ Comparing statements like

⁶³ See P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 322. Marshall explains that Britain saw America as a possible competitor should it not be kept in due deference and submission to England. However, on 326, Marshall also suggests that fears of American competition to British manufacturing were more limited when compared to Irish manufacturing, since American manufacturing had not sufficiently developed enough to be a true challenge. Otherwise, see Nicholas P. Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1973): 575-598, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1918596>.

⁶⁴ Cf. Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 74. Also see Ferdinando Warner, *The History of Ireland*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London, UK: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand, 1763), 33 for how some saw this as a repressive status quo unfavorable to Ireland.

⁶⁵ For Irish criticism of English absentee landlords, see Thomas Prior, *A List of the Absentees of Ireland and the Yearly Value of Their Estates and Incomes...* (Dublin, IRE: Printed for R. Gunne in Capel-Street, 1729).

⁶⁶ Jonathan Swift et al., “‘A Short View of the State of Ireland’,” essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20. For other works that quantified (or attempted to quantify) the absentee landlords' drain on the Irish economy, see Prior, *List of Absentees*.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>. Note that the American colonists would later use the same type of

these with the example of French peasants in 1760s and 1770s American discourse reveals that the colonists thought of British imperial policies as having a similarly dangerous effect.⁶⁸

Irish economic exploitation was extremely lucrative for the English. Calculating from the profits of rents, combined with the profits that Englishmen made off of corrupt “Employments, Pensions, [and] Appeals” systems (among other things), Swift claimed that England came away with roughly “a *full half* of the income of the *Whole Kingdom*” of Ireland, a truly staggering statistic.⁶⁹ The British government became notorious for using “the Irish pension list to cater for the financial needs of indigent foreigners, aged royal mistresses, and *English* political hacks.”⁷⁰ De facto discrimination against Irish Protestants in the assigning of profitable crown appointments obviously did not help alleviate Irish resentment against English interference.⁷¹ The pattern of economic exploitation closely resembled the type of tyranny and court corruption that Americans often railed against to justify their resistance against British imperial policy during the 1760s and 1770s.

Underlying the history of Ireland’s economic exploitation was anti-Irish prejudice and a dark history of conquest. It all began with English King Henry II’s “[subduing] Ireland by means

rhetoric to express their anxieties about subjection to England. But see the later sections of my paper for more on this.

⁶⁸ For an example of American rhetoric which drew on the example of the French peasants, see “London, June 6,” *Boston Evening-Post*, September 7, 1767.

⁶⁹ Jonathan Swift et al., “‘A Short View of the State of Ireland’,” essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20; emphasis mine.

⁷⁰ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153; emphasis mine.

⁷¹ Bartlett, *Ireland*, 153. Bartlett notes that this “discrimination” was more the product of a “voracious [English] appetite for patronage” rather than “any general hostility to Irish candidates.”

of an English army” about a century after the 1066 Norman Conquest of England.⁷² Although Franklin’s Irish contemporaries continued to debate whether and to what extent King Henry II’s military incursion was a true conquest, modern Irish historians like Bartlett firmly characterized it as an “English invasion and partial conquest.”⁷³ Those historians seem to be more faithful to the historical reality. The English appeared to consider the native Irish an inferior conquered people. Early on, the English took great pains to distinguish themselves from “the Irish enemies,” codifying distinctions into legal writings like the 1367 Statutes of Kilkenny.⁷⁴ The statutes forbade intermarriage between English and Irish, mandated use of the English language amongst Englishmen in Ireland, and enacted other stringent measures designed to prevent intermixing.⁷⁵

Unfortunately for those who would later be called “the Old English,” forced separation from the natives failed to offer Irishmen of English descent much protection against the insular prejudices of mainland Britons. The Old English’s insistence on holding to the Catholic faith even after England’s conversion to Protestantism in the 16th century caused many mainland Britons to consider “Old English Catholics” a “degenerate” breed of Englishmen corrupted by the native

⁷² Ferdinando Warner, *The History of Ireland*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London, UK: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand, 1763), 31.

⁷³ See Warner, *Ireland*, 31-33, William Molyneux, “The Case of Ireland Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated [1698],” Online Library of Liberty, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/molyneux-the-case-of-ireland-being-bound-by-acts-of-parliament-in-england-stated>, and Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 34. It seems some 18th century Irishmen argued this point because of its unfortunate constitutional implications for Ireland. That may explain why their argument on this point is so unconvincing today. Molyneux’s argument that Ireland was not a conquest of England is perhaps the least persuasive part of his entire pamphlet.

⁷⁴ Cf. “The Statutes of Kilkenny [1367],” Corpus of Electronic Texts, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300001-001.html>.

⁷⁵ “Statutes of Kilkenny [1367],” <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300001-001.html>.

Irish.⁷⁶ Subsequent “re-conquests” of Ireland in the 17th century would entail the confiscation of Old English Catholic property and their relegation to second-class citizenship in Ireland.⁷⁷

Neither were the Anglo-Irish Protestants who would replace Old English Catholics exempt from the effects of English maladministration of Ireland or from mainland British prejudice. Vastly outnumbered by Irish “papists,” the Protestants lived in “continual fear” of their Catholic brethren after a legacy of bitter fighting and brutal massacres on both sides.⁷⁸ Ireland’s trouble with unruly standing armies became an ever-present reminder of the Anglo-Protestant’s precarious and bittersweet victory against the Catholics.⁷⁹ The Anglo-Irish also started to bristle at English condescension towards Ireland. Many mainland Englishmen, in fact, began to associate the Anglo-Irish with many of the same stereotypes once associated with the natives. Some Protestant Irish complained that Ireland—in name a separate kingdom—was really nothing more than an English “colony of outcasts” or a conquered province.⁸⁰ Americans would later complain about similar prejudices and condescending attitudes.⁸¹

III. Ireland’s Subjugation: Its Place in the Early American Mindset

⁷⁶ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91. Cf. Thomas Leland, *The History of Ireland...*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Dublin, IE: Printed by R. Marchbank, for R. Moncrieffe, 1774), 406-407.

⁷⁷ Cf. Bartlett, *Ireland*, 91, 124, and 138.

⁷⁸ Cf. Sir Richard Cox, *Aphorisms Related to the Kingdom of Ireland...* (London, UK: The Angel in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1689), 2 and Bartlett, *Ireland*, 115, 127, and 155, for example.

⁷⁹ For more on Ireland’s standing armies, see Thomas Bartlett, “The Augmentation of the Army in Ireland 1767-1769,” *The English Historical Review* 96, no. 380 (1981) and chapter 2 of this paper.

⁸⁰ For anti-Anglo-Irish prejudice and accompanying English condescension, see Bartlett, *Ireland*, 153 and 155-156. For the quoted language, see Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>.

⁸¹ See the next chapter of this paper.

Clearly, “the Irish precedent’s” legacy of economic exploitation, prejudice, and conquest at the hands of the mainland English would have been a concerning one. If American colonists feared being England’s “Tributary Slaves,” Ireland ought to have been the most appropriate reference-point for their later struggle against imperial consolidation.⁸² Hence, if Americans knew about the broader causes of Ireland’s subjugation *before 1763*, that alone would suggest the importance of “the Irish precedent” in igniting the conflicts culminating in the American Revolution.

Evidence from colonial newspapers first and foremost suggest that many American colonists had a great respect for “Dean [i.e., Jonathan] Swift” as an Irish political advocate. As far back as the late 1730s, American newspapers carried multiple reports from Dublin celebrating the “worthy Patriot,” a man considered so loyal to the cause of his people.⁸³ For example, a December 1, 1737 report from the *American Weekly Mercury* in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania recounted one group of Irish merchants “drinking long life to Dean Swift, and *Confusion to the Enemies of Ireland*.”⁸⁴ An almost identical report of such toasts found its way into the December 2, 1737 *Virginia Gazette*.⁸⁵ Another report from the January 12, 1738 *Boston-News Letter* of Swift’s patriotism and his popular support in Ireland bordered on the legendary: in that article (concerning

⁸² For the use of the term “Tributary Slaves,” see “Queries, 16–18 August 1768,” Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-15-02-0105>. [Original source: The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 15, January 1 through December 31, 1768, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 187–189.] This notion of “Tributary Slaves” suggests that Americans, while often using their own African slaves in Imperial Crisis rhetoric, really feared a different form of “slavery.” Namely, the colonists likely feared a form of slavery with more ancient precedents. The Queries’ use of the Carthaginians and Sardinians will prove important for the argument of chapter 2 of my paper.

⁸³ Cf. “Dublin, Sept. 6,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 10, 1737, 3.

⁸⁴ “Dublin, Sept. 13,” *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), December 1, 1737, 3; emphasis mine.

⁸⁵ “Dublin, Sept. 13,” *Virginia Gazette*, December 2, 1737, 3.

the Irish people's dissatisfaction with Irish monetary policy), Swift contended that "if he had held up his Finger the [Irish] People would have tore" one of Swift's political opponents "to Pieces."⁸⁶

Legendary or not, all these reports and anecdotes raise some interesting questions about Ireland in America's relationship to the British Empire. One, would Americans have understood these "Enemies of Ireland" to be the English imperial court and those who enforced its interests in Ireland? And two, how well would Americans have understood the anti-colonialist aspects of Swift's Irish patriotism? The answers to both questions have enormous implications. If Americans did understand the "Enemies of Ireland" to include the British imperial court, then "the Irish precedent" could have played an important if not critical role in fostering American suspicions of British imperial prerogatives and of a more centralized British Empire. At the very least, the evidence of the articles in itself suggests that such an explanation has been largely overlooked. It also suggests that the more ideological influences Bailyn described should be viewed in the context of real British imperial abuses in Ireland and England's persecution of the American religious dissenters who founded colonies like Massachusetts Bay.

Contemporary writings further indicated that Americans were avid readers of Swift and his Irish political writings. Issues of the *Boston Evening-Post* and the *New-York Evening Post* from the late 1740s and early 1750s, for instance, contained excerpts from the third volume of Swift's *Miscellanies*.⁸⁷ One of these excerpts, entitled "An infallible SCHEME to pay the publick Debt of Ireland in Six Months," clearly related to Swift's other Irish political writings.⁸⁸ Given American interest in Swift, some colonists would likely also have read at least parts of Swift's other works

⁸⁶ "London, October 13, 1737," *Boston News-Letter*, January 12, 1738, 1.

⁸⁷ See "From the Third Volume of Dean Swift's *Miscellanies*," Page 114 & C," *Boston Evening-Post*, December 5, 1748, "From Dean Swift's *Miscellanies*, Vol. 3," *Boston Evening-Post*, March 5, 1750, and "From Dean Swift's *Miscellanies*," *New-York Evening Post*, April 2, 1750.

⁸⁸ "From Dean Swift's *Miscellanies*, Vol. 3," *Boston Evening-Post*, March 5, 1750.

on Irish politics. That would include ones with greater popular appeal like “A Modest Proposal,” and “A Proposal on the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture.”⁸⁹ The multiple advertisements for books like “the Works and Life of Dean Swift” only serve to confirm this general impression.⁹⁰

Even entrenched members of the American elite took an interest in the works of Swift. Four volumes of Swift’s *Miscellanies* were part of the inventory of the Mt. Vernon Estate from as early as 1759.⁹¹ At around the same time, the circulation receipt books of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum in Newport, Rhode Island show that patrons borrowed multiple volumes of Swift’s works—six in total—over an approximately six-year period.⁹² This is a borrowing pattern that would continue to play a crucial role in the Imperial Crisis, as early American literature scholar Sean Moore’s study of the borrowing records at the Salem Social Library has appeared to demonstrate.⁹³

If the American colonists did read Swift’s more popular and renowned works on Ireland and Irish politics, they would have encountered striking indictments of British exploitation of Ireland.⁹⁴ Namely, Swift’s “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture” decried

⁸⁹ Cf. Sean Moore, “The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift’s Irish Satires in Early America,” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90009821>. Moore attributed Swift’s more populist style (i.e., when compared to someone like William Molyneux) to his greater popularity in the American colonies during the Imperial Crisis.

⁹⁰ See, for example, “Advertisement,” *Boston Gazette*, June 30, 1752, 2. Cf. Moore, “Irish Contribution,” 351. Moore in fact said that he “found no less than *forty-six* bookstore advertisements for imported books by Swift in the years from 1752 through 1785” in his search of *America’s Historical Newspapers* (emphasis mine).

⁹¹ “Appendix D. Inventory of the Books in the Estate, c.1759,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-06-02-0164-0026>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 6, 4 September 1758–26 December 1760, ed. W. W. Abbot. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, pp. 283–300.]

⁹² “Circulation Receipt Books, 1756-1761,” Redwood Archives, Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport.

⁹³ Sean Moore, “Irish Contribution,” 353-354.

⁹⁴ An objection might be made to my reliance on these book trade records: what about the many illiterate American colonists? To that, I would respond that many among these would have included Irish-born indentured

England's disregard for the well-being of Irish people, comparing it to "the fable [from Ovid] of Arachne and Pallas."⁹⁵ In that fable, a divine weaver, angry with a "young virgin" who was clearly her better, turned the poor girl into a spider and forced her to forever weave "out of her own bowels."⁹⁶ To that account, Swift added that England executed the same sentence on Ireland except "with further additions of rigour and severity...[because] the greatest part of our bowels and vitals are extracted, without allowing us the liberty of spinning and weaving them."⁹⁷ *A Modest Proposal*, similarly, has Swift defend his tongue-in-cheek proposal of having rich Englishmen cannibalize poor Irish babies by saying that he could "perhaps name a Country, which would be glad to Eat up [the] whole [Irish] Nation" regardless.⁹⁸ Indeed, Swift claimed that the English would gladly eat Ireland up *without salt*, a then-proverbial "expression of hatred" and "double barbarism."⁹⁹

Hence, Americans perusing these works would have discovered an England capable of "cannibalizing the Irish" and extracting "the greater part of [Ireland's] bowels and vitals" for its profit. From the beginning, Americans familiar with the context of Swift's Irish writings could have seen Ireland as an example of the British colonial system gone awry. Could colonists in the

servants, who would have probably been well-aware of Swift and of Irish misery under English rule. As historian Gordon Wood has observed, "[i]t has been estimated that one-half to two-thirds of all immigrants to the colonies came to the colonies [at this time] as indentured servants." For more on this, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Vintage, 1993), 51.

⁹⁵ Jonathan Swift, "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720]," 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>.

⁹⁶ Swift, "Proposal."

⁹⁷ Swift, "Proposal."

⁹⁸ Jonathan Swift et al., "'A Modest Proposal'," essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 158; emphasis deleted.

⁹⁹ See Swift, "Modest Proposal," 158, particularly the annotations on the same page.

Imperial Crisis have likewise perceived in Swift an England capable of “enslaving” American and inflicting similar barbarous cruelties against them? At any rate, the American colonists might have noted the inseparable connection between Irish subjugation and anti-Irish prejudice. Swift’s complaint that the English imperial administration “[looked] down upon this kingdom [of Ireland] as if it had been one of their colonies of outcasts *in America*” would become more and more relevant to Americans with the onset of the Imperial Crisis.¹⁰⁰

One final piece of evidence comes from English writer and political thinker David Hume. His *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (Part 1)—first published in 1741—provided a portrait of colonization and “the Irish precedent” that significantly shaped the oncoming Imperial Crisis. Remarkably, Hume seemed to anticipate *almost all* of the concerns of the later Patriot movement. Specifically, his claims that free states and not “absolute Monarchies” would be most oppressive to colonial subjects, and that “Restrictions by Trade and by Taxes” would ultimately precipitate colonial plundering, foreshadowed the concerns of “taxation without representation.”¹⁰¹ This makes it all the more notable that Hume pointed to Ireland as a then-contemporary example illustrating his broader point.

To start, Hume contrasted the Irish situation unfavorably with “the *Pais conquis* of France.”¹⁰² With a clear sympathy for Ireland’s suffering, he added that the country—since it was

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>. Similar protests from the American colonists that they would not become England’s “negroes” should be taken as part of that broader rhetorical tradition. Of course, see “Humphrey Ploughjogger to the *Boston Gazette*, 14 October 1765,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 1, *September 1755–October 1773*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 146–148.] for more on that strand of American rhetoric.

¹⁰¹ David Hume, “Essay III: That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science [1741],” Hume Texts Online, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://davidhume.org/texts/empl1/pr>; emphasis mine.

¹⁰² Hume, “Essay III”; italics not mine.

almost entirely “peopled from *England*”—“possesses so many Rights and Challenges as should naturally make it challenge better Treatment than that of a **Conquered Province**.”¹⁰³ Again, to Hume—and to the Americans that would have read him—Ireland was an almost-textbook example of unjust subjugation and the oppression resulting from it. Corsica, according to Hume, was “also an obvious Instance to the same Purpose.”¹⁰⁴ The later significance of Corsica in the American imagination—and in the decision of American Patriots to resist British imperial expansion during the Imperial Crisis—is practically beyond dispute. From there, the essay’s influence on the later Patriot movement is relatively easy to trace. Hamilton was likely only one of the most notable colonists who went on to cite Hume’s remarks explicitly and extensively in their own political pamphlets.¹⁰⁵

In short, from the late 1720s and maybe earlier, Americans would have been painfully aware of the plight of Ireland and many of its causes. At least some Americans such as Benjamin Franklin would have considered Ireland a negative counterpoint to the freedoms Americans enjoyed without British imperial interference. Nevertheless, it appeared that more pressing local concerns, a more pronounced British patriotism in the Americas, and an exalted view of America’s status in the Empire led the colonists to largely disregard the most alarming aspects of “the Irish precedent” and the British imperial project. That would change with the Imperial Crisis.

¹⁰³ Hume, “Essay III”; bolded sections mine.

¹⁰⁴ David Hume, “Essay IV. That POLITICS May Be Reduc’d to a SCIENCE [1741],” Eighteenth Century Collections Online, accessed February 17, 2023, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=ecco;c=ecco;idno=004806352.0001.000;node=004806352.0001.000:7;seq=1;rgn=div1;view=text>. Some 1741 publications of Hume’s essay—namely, those that list this essay as “Essay III”—did not contain this aside.

¹⁰⁵ “*The Farmer Refuted, &c.*, [23 February] 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, 1768–1778, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 81–165.]. Hamilton’s version cites Hume’s “Essay IV,” suggesting Hamilton possessed the version mentioning Corsica.

Chapter 2

“The Irish Precedent” and the First Stages of the American Imperial Crisis (1763-1769)

Benjamin Franklin’s odd yet impassioned “[d]efense” of “Indian Corn” in 1766 might seem to have little bearing on either “the Irish precedent” or even the Imperial Crisis.¹⁰⁶ Although part of Franklin’s famous response to British writer “Vindex Patriae,” many historians have dismissed it as at best peripheral to the broader concerns of Americans and American Patriots.¹⁰⁷ Yet that view would be mistaken. To Franklin, England’s condescending attitudes towards Irish and American diets were inseparable from its condescending model of empire. England’s “contempt for other nations” and other peoples—a contempt that extended even to their diets—demanded a forceful response.¹⁰⁸

“JOHN BULL,” Franklin caustically wrote, “shews in nothing more his great veneration for good eating, and how much he is always thinking of his belly, than in making the constant topic

¹⁰⁶ Cf. ““Homespun”: Further Defense of Indian Corn, 15 January 1766,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 44–49.]

¹⁰⁷ Cf. ““N.N.”: First Reply to Vindex Patriae, [28 December 1765],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-12-02-0204>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 12, *January 1, through December 31, 1765*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, pp. 413–416] for the quoted language. The “first reply” to Vindex Patriae mainly concerned Patriae’s use of anti-American “invectives” and his use of standard English talking points regarding the passage of legislation like the Stamp Act (i.e., “virtual representation,” references to American smuggling, etc.) Also, see the commentary to “Further Defense of Indian Corn” for the tendency of historians to dismiss it as less central to the Imperial Crisis debate.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. “Further Defense of Indian Corn.”

of his contempt for other nations, that *they do not eat so well as himself*.”¹⁰⁹ By no means, Franklin added, did this contemptuous attitude originate with the Americas. Before making the American colonists the target of their ire, Englishmen like Vindex Patriae offered similar reproaches to “the Welsh[,] with their leaks and toasted cheese, . . . the Scotch with their oatmeal,” and “*the Irish with their potatoes*.”¹¹⁰ These types of prejudices, Franklin contended, were the same prejudices that fueled Vindex Patriae’s denunciations of Americans as “a mixed rabble of Scotch, *Irish* and foreign vagabonds,” and a degenerate “race” descended from “*convicts, ungrateful rebels & c.*”¹¹¹ Most importantly, these were the same types of prejudices that legitimized treatment of Americans as “Englishmen by fiction of law only.”¹¹²

Franklin clearly saw this as a problem stretching across the *whole* British Empire. The negative side of British cultural nationalism was by no means something that only affected America and Ireland. Nevertheless, a later passage demonstrated Franklin’s special concern for “the Irish precedent” and the plight of Ireland’s English settlers. “The Welsh,” he conceded, “you have *always* despised for submitting to your government: But why despise *your own English*, who

¹⁰⁹ Cf. ““Homespun”: Further Defense of Indian Corn, 15 January 1766,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 44–49.]; emphasis not mine.

¹¹⁰ Cf. “Further Defense of Indian Corn”; emphasis mine.

¹¹¹ Cf. ““N.N.”: First Reply to Vindex Patriae, [28 December 1765],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-12-02-0204>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 12, *January 1, through December 31, 1765*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, pp. 413–416.]; italics mostly deleted. For other places where Franklin observed a virulent anti-American prejudice in England, see “On Railing and Reviling, 6 January 1768,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-15-02-0002>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 15, *January 1 through December 31, 1768*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 13–14.]

¹¹² Cf. “First Reply”; emphasis deleted. While Franklin took an at best ambiguous position towards the Stamp Act itself, he clearly was taken aback with the anti-American abuse that accompanied its passage in England. In “First Reply,” Franklin often appeared to look for a “middle ground” between what he may have seen as at least somewhat righteous American indignation and the English view of British imperial prerogatives.

conquered and settled *Ireland* for you; who conquered and settled *America* for you?”¹¹³ Only with Ireland did Franklin pose such a direct affinity between the thirteen American colonies and another part of the British Empire. The Anglo-Irish and Anglo-American peoples, once respected partners in the English imperial mission, were soon after cast aside “because, forsooth, they [were considered] ...*conquered* people[s].”¹¹⁴ Franklin—and other Americans—subsequently feared a Britain emboldened to “treat [the Irish and now the Americans] as [they] please[d].”¹¹⁵ As British officials began to implement a newer, more authoritarian model of empire, these fears—and the Irish precedent which inspired them—animated “the strikingly emotional character of colonial” rhetoric.¹¹⁶ This can be seen from the very beginning of the Imperial Crisis.

Yet Franklin’s words also show the limits of American sympathy for the plight of the Irish at this point. Even Franklin’s more enlightened sensibilities extended mainly to Anglo-Irish settlers, not Gaelic Irish natives.¹¹⁷ Many colonists who opposed the British imperial project in America

¹¹³ Cf. ““Homespun”: Further Defense of Indian Corn, 15 January 1766,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 44–49.]; emphasis mine.

¹¹⁴ Cf. “Further Defense of Indian Corn”; emphasis not mine.

¹¹⁵ Cf. “Further Defense of Indian Corn.”

¹¹⁶ For previous references to this, see pg. 7 of this paper. For more on what this highly emotional political rhetoric looked like, and the source of the quoted language, cf. T. H. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 13–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>, particularly 29–33. For more on how the new authoritarian model of empire imposed its hierarchical perspective even on peoples of English descent, see Ollivier Hubert, François Furstenberg, and Christian R. Buset, “Quebec, Bengal, and the Rise of Authoritarian Legal Pluralism,” essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 134 and 136. Also see Ollivier Hubert, François Furstenberg, and Aaron Willis, “Rethinking Ireland and Assimilation: Quebec, Collaboration, and the Heterogeneous Empire,” essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 184.

¹¹⁷ Granted, Franklin did chastise Britain for forgetting in its condescension “that [it is] *related to all mankind*.” For that, see “Further Defense of Indian Corn”; emphasis not mine. That said, Franklin did not condemn Britain’s treatment of the Gaelic Irish natives by name. Furthermore, given the broader context of Franklin’s remarks, Franklin very likely condemned the treatment of *Protestant* Anglo-Irish settlers, not Old English Catholics.

from 1763 to 1769 shared a similarly limited vision of “the Irish precedent.” For Anglo-Americans, the Imperial Crisis was a contest to retain their birthrights as *Englishmen*—no more, no less. But by 1770, the colonists’ failure to securely establish their rights as Englishmen led to a deeper and more expansive concern about the sufferings of “poor Ireland.”

I. The “Abrupt Discovery of Inequality” and Initial Concerns About the Irish Precedent

As historian T.H. Breen observed, colonial Americans “confronted what must have seemed a radically ‘new’” midcentury Britain, founded on “a radically ‘new’ British [national] consciousness.”¹¹⁸ For the English at this time, Americans and Irishmen alike were “mysterious and paradoxical people[s].”¹¹⁹ Since geographical barriers separated both the Anglo-Irish and the Anglo-American from England, each peoples was “culturally [and engagingly] close [to Englishmen],...yet irritatingly different.”¹²⁰ Soon, “persons” of both American and “Celtic background[s]” became increasingly attentive “to their own marginality.”¹²¹ Humphrey Ploughjogger’s famously and “uncomfortably racist” rhetoric was an expression of the shock that Englishmen did *not* consider Americans just “as handsome [and free] as old English folks.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Cf. T. H. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 134.

¹²⁰ Colley, *Britons*, 134.

¹²¹ Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism,” 21. Cf. “Fragments of a Pamphlet on the Stamp Act, [January 1766],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0024>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 72–84], where Franklin worried that “the governing people in Britain should [soon] conceive...of Americans...as...fit only to be snubb’d, curb’d, shackled and plundered.”

¹²² Cf. Breen, “Ideology,” 29 and “Humphrey Ploughjogger to the *Boston Gazette*, 14 October 1765,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 1, *September 1755–October 1773*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 146–148.].

Adams was far from alone in his outrage at the “abrupt discovery of inequality.”¹²³ Many Americans borrowed from “the substance, if not the tone,” of Adams’s remarks.¹²⁴ Some, for instance, echoed William Pitt’s alleged admonition to English lawmakers that Americans were “the SONS, and not the BASTARDS of England.”¹²⁵ Many alluded to a widespread anti-American “prejudice.”¹²⁶ In 1766, one New England preacher compared the plots of corrupt English ministers to Hamon the Agagite’s schemes against the Jews, his people’s sworn enemies.¹²⁷ That *any* Americans considered the early stages of the Imperial Crisis comparable to the “us vs. them” inter-ethnic conflict recounted in the biblical Book of Esther is interesting in itself. Yet when taken in the context of Americans’ “increasingly shrill” rhetoric affirming their Englishness and Britishness, it obviously held a much greater significance.¹²⁸ For many Americans, the abuse of

¹²³ Cf. T. H. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising,” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>.

¹²⁴ Breen, “Ideology,” 29.

¹²⁵ John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Hall & Sellers (AAS Copy), 1768, 21 and 38; emphasis not mine. Note the significance of Dickinson citing *the exact same quote* twice.

¹²⁶ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 45 and 49-50. Also see Dickinson, *Letters*, 53. However, the sentiment is surprisingly commonplace in colonial American writings. For a later example of colonist complaints about British “prejudice,” and the view of self-government as protection from prejudice, see “*The Farmer Refuted, &c.*, [23 February] 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, 1768–1778, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 81–165.] The anti-American comments of English political and cultural figures like Samuel Johnson may provide evidence that the colonists’ fears were relatively well-grounded. For that, see Samuel Johnson and Frank Lynch, “Quotes on America and Americans,” The Samuel Johnson Sound Bite Page, accessed March 1, 2024, <https://www.samueljohnson.com/america.html>.

¹²⁷ Elisha Fish, “Joy and gladness: a thanksgiving discourse...preached in Upton,...May 28, 1766, occasioned by the repeal of the Stamp Act,” Evans Early American Imprint Collection, accessed January 24, 2024, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/n08310.0001.001>. Note that later American Imperial Crisis writings made similar reference to the events of the Book of Esther. For that, see Oliver Noble, *Some Strictures upon the...Book of Esther...* (Newburyport, 1775).

¹²⁸ Cf. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism,” 29. For instances of such shrill rhetoric, see James Otis Jr., *A Vindication of the British Colonies* (Boston, 1765), in *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), I, 568, among many others.

arbitrary imperial power was about more than political abstractions; it was about holding onto the preferential status “true Englishmen” enjoyed in the Empire.

Many colonists—recalling the example of Ireland—started to turn the plight of the Irish people into a natural point of comparison. Some did so more indirectly. For instance, a November 7, 1765 edition of the *Georgia Gazette* placed a report on chaos incited by members of the Irish standing army right next to another report concerning the Sons of Liberty and American resistance to the hated Stamp Act.¹²⁹ Unlike many of the *Gazette*’s other reports on world news, the story from Dublin included an update on the apprehension of the rogue soldiers.¹³⁰ The placement of this story next to examples of colonial resistance was likely not a coincidence. Instead, it seems to have been intended as an all-too relevant confirmation of American suspicions of standing armies and of the abuses of the British imperial project as a whole.¹³¹ Because of that, many literate and semi-literate colonists increasingly began to associate their resistance with the valiant efforts of Irish patriots like “Dean [i.e., Jonathan] Swift” to secure Irish self-governance. Part of this manifested in a greater audience for Dean Swift’s writings.¹³² To cite just one example, a June 20, 1765 edition of the *Boston News-Letter* advertised 8 volumes of “Dean Swifts [sic] works” alongside books like

¹²⁹ “Dublin, Aug. 8,” *Georgia Gazette*, November 7, 1765, 2. Note the similarity of this report to an incident described in Thomas Bartlett, “The Augmentation of the Army in Ireland 1767-1769,” *The English Historical Review* 96, no. 380 (1981): 542, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/568903>. For the version of the report published in *The New-York Mercury*, see “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, Aug. 8,” *New-York Mercury*, October 14, 1765. Otherwise, see “Promotions on the Irish Establishment,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, September 9, 1773.

¹³⁰ “Dublin,” *Georgia Gazette*, 2. The update was dated approximately 3 weeks after the initial report.

¹³¹ That the *Georgia Gazette* appeared to strategically place the Dublin story along with other British Empire news possibly relevant to the Imperial Crisis—such as developments in Canada—only provides further evidence to this end.

¹³² For a more extensive argument on this matter, see Sean Moore, “The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift’s Irish Satires in Early America,” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90009821>, particularly 351. Also see Moore’s analysis of the “Salem Social Library’s Charge Book” on Moore, “Irish Contribution,” 353-354 and the significance of that.

“Vattels [sic] law of nations.”¹³³ Vattel was a political thinker whose theory of natural rights played a pivotal role in the colonists’ decision to declare independence approximately ten years later. His significant influence on later American Patriot political theory only highlighted the place Dean Swift occupied in the broader American resistance. Likewise, the rise of establishments like “a Dean Swift’s Head bookstore in Philadelphia” in 1769 attested to the power of Swift’s populist Irish advocacy.¹³⁴ More to the point, though, it attested to the ways in which Swift became incorporated into “a brand *synonymous*” with the struggle in British North America—even among the more middling classes.¹³⁵

In the meantime, more members of the American printing establishment seemed compelled to speak to the Irish reality. For example, one excerpt from a February 23, 1767 edition of *The New-York Mercury* included a short yet heartfelt lament for Ireland. The writer began by noting that “it was said 17 new Peers [i.e., titles of nobility granted by the English monarch] were to be created in Ireland” and that not one of the people so honored “had *ever set foot* on that country.”¹³⁶ In reaction, he simply exclaimed, “*alas poor Ireland!*”¹³⁷ The article, republished shortly thereafter in multiple newspapers like the *Boston News-Letter*, apparently drew on a wellspring of American sympathy for Ireland. That wellspring, as the broader context appeared to indicate, originated from

¹³³ “Advertisement,” *Boston News-Letter*, June 20, 1765, 2.

¹³⁴ Moore, “Irish Contribution,” 337.

¹³⁵ Cf. Moore, “Irish Contribution,” 337; emphasis not mine.

¹³⁶ “Late Appointments,” *The New-York Mercury*, February 23, 1767; emphasis mine. Cf. Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153.

¹³⁷ “Late Appointments,” *The New-York Mercury*, February 23, 1767; emphasis not mine. Incidentally, the refrain of “*alas poor Ireland*”—or just “*poor Ireland*”—became more frequent as the Imperial Crisis dragged on. For that, see chapter 3 of this paper.

both an attentiveness to Ireland and a concern for whether its mistreatment foreshadowed the future abuse of America.¹³⁸

Others made a more comprehensive case for paying attention to Ireland. In one of his letters to Irish patriot Charles Lucas, the Sons of Liberty's Samuel Adams directly likened the abuses of Irish standing armies with "the Torrent of oppression & arbitrary Power" that Americans were trying to stop from spreading to their shores.¹³⁹ Yet Adams went further. Applying the same logic to the notoriously exploitative Irish pension system, he concluded his letter with the declaration that Ireland "has left...hardly any thing [sic] more than *the Name* of a free Constitution."¹⁴⁰ Like Franklin did almost three decades earlier, Adams contrasted Ireland's unenviable position with the freedoms Americans enjoyed under their prior constitutional arrangement. To lose that, Adams believed, would endanger the entire American experiment. John Dickinson—writer of the famous *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*—offered an even more extensive condemnation of the Irish pension system and English oppression of Ireland.¹⁴¹ Dickinson, in fact, devoted at least 4 *full pages* to Ireland's mistreatment.¹⁴² Ireland was the *only* historical or contemporary example Dickinson gave so much attention to; for most other case studies, Dickinson restricted himself to

¹³⁸ For the republication of this article, see "London, Nov. 27," *Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Massachusetts), March 12, 1767, 2.

¹³⁹ W. V. Wells, *Life of Samuel Adams*, vol. i., p. 383. Sir Charles Lucas was a prominent member of the Anglo-Irish resistance. For examples of Lucas's interactions with other prominent American leaders, see "From Benjamin Franklin to James Bowdoin, 13 January 1772," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-19-02-0005>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 19, *January 1 through December 31, 1772*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1975, pp. 8–13.] To be sure, these connections have been noted in the current body of Ireland and the American Revolution scholarship.

¹⁴⁰ Wells, *Samuel Adams*, p. 383; emphasis mine. Note that Adams's wording echoed the remarks of prominent Anglo-Irish leaders advocating for greater self-government (i.e., Molyneux, Swift, and others).

¹⁴¹ John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Hall & Sellers [AAS Copy], 1768), 50, among others.

¹⁴² Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 50-54.

a page or less.¹⁴³ Dickinson appeared more preoccupied with questions of oppression, hierarchy, and subordination than he did with the finer points of Country Party ideology.¹⁴⁴

In Dickinson's analysis, English mistreatment of Ireland and America in both the past and present all tied back to the problem of "prejudice."¹⁴⁵ English prejudice caused the English people and English imperial officials to see Irishmen and American colonists as peoples separate from themselves.¹⁴⁶ In Ireland, that compelled English imperial officials to "exert their [alleged] superiority over their dependent state."¹⁴⁷ That unfortunately meant taking every opportunity to "[prey] on [Ireland's] vitals" and to prevent friendly English-Irish trade on even somewhat equal terms.¹⁴⁸ In America, it led English imperial officials to become more susceptible to feelings of "jealousy" and rivalry towards their settler brethren.¹⁴⁹ These feelings, Dickinson seemed to imply, provided the foundation for a disconcerting expansion of imperial power over America. The thirteen colonies, Dickinson remarked, were comparable to "a city besieged" by a hostile foreign

¹⁴³ For a great case-in-point, see Dickinson's much-shorter, paragraph-length discussion of Spain's turn towards absolute rule in Dickinson, *Letters*, 49. Note that this particular example—unlike that of Ireland—more closely aligned with traditional Country Party arguments and rhetoric.

¹⁴⁴ Contra the thesis of Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 45, 49-50, and 53.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 21, 29, 38, 39 (see the footnote in Dickinson), 45, and 52, among others.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 52. Dickinson quoted Hume, a point that further underscores the central role that Hume's treatment of "the Irish precedent" in his *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* (Part 1) would have had on the American resistance movement during the Imperial Crisis.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 51-52. Dickinson quoted Irish writer Alexander M'Auley. Note the parallels to Jonathan Swift, "A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720]," 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>, particularly as relates to Swift's use of the fable of Arachne and Pallas (see also chapter 1 of this paper).

¹⁴⁹ Dickinson, *Letters*, 29.

nation.¹⁵⁰ To colonists like Dickinson, allowing prejudiced English officials to expand imperial governance meant possibly sharing in the fate of the Irish.

If Dickinson had left it at that, many attentive colonists would have well understood the connection between the American and Irish situations. Nonetheless, Dickinson's *Letters* also contained another more oblique reference to the dynamics of "the Irish precedent." Namely, at the end of *Letter II*, Dickinson warned Americans of "the ruin hanging over [their] heads" by pointing to the example of the Carthaginians and the Sardinians.¹⁵¹ As he recounted it,

When the Carthaginians were possessed of the island of Sardinia, they made a decree, that the Sardinians should not raise corn, nor get it any other way than from the Carthaginians. Then, by imposing any duties they would upon it, they drained from the miserable Sardinians any sums they pleased; and whenever those oppressed people made the least movement to assert their liberty, their tyrants [i.e., the Carthaginians] starved them to death or submission.¹⁵²

Dickinson was one of more than a few colonists to compare the plight of the "miserable Sardinians" to their potential doom.¹⁵³ The unusual vigor with which Dickinson and others made the point indicated that the story of Sardinian oppression had a clear emotional resonance with the American colonists.¹⁵⁴ The story of the Carthaginians and the Sardinians, in other words, was much more than a mere "stock example."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Dickinson, *Letters*, 12.

¹⁵¹ Dickinson, *Letters*, 12-13. Note that Dickinson wrote twelve letters under his "Farmer" persona.

¹⁵² Dickinson, *Letters*, 13.

¹⁵³ For a few instances of this, see "Queries, 16–18 August 1768," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-15-02-0105>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 15, *January 1 through December 31, 1768*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 187–189] and "Vindication," *Providence Gazette*, March 9, 1765, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Bernard Bailyn, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution: 1750-1776*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 735 and "Vindication," *Providence Gazette*, March 9, 1765, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. "Queries" (i.e., the introductory notes) for the quoted language.

More crucially, Dickinson's use of the analogy probably alluded to the more contemporary example of Ireland. As Bernard Bailyn has observed, the colonists' display of classical learning masked a frequently "superficial" knowledge of the relevant time periods.¹⁵⁶ Thus, colonial American writings tended to focus on "the political history of Rome from the *conquests* in the east...to *the establishment of the empire* on the ruins of the republic at the end of second century A.D.,"¹⁵⁷ These eras of Roman history clearly corresponded with the rise of Britain's own empire, a fact that did not escape most Americans. Then-contemporary political concerns determined how Americans both learned about and approached the legacy of Greece, Rome, Carthage, and all their dependent states.¹⁵⁸ Dickinson's "uncontrovertible [sic] conclusion[s]" drawn from classical history both reflected and shaped how he viewed England's exploitation of Ireland.

By placing the story of the Carthaginians and Sardinians *before* his in-depth discussion of Ireland, Dickinson hoped that everyday Americans would make similar parallels.¹⁵⁹ When readers of Dickinson's *Letters* read about wicked English officials "squandering the *national substance* of Ireland," they may have very well have thought back to the misery of the poor Sardinians.¹⁶⁰ Both Ireland and Sardinian were lands "abounding with all the riches of nature, yet [resigned] to beggary" because of oppressive commercial restrictions.¹⁶¹ Each place, ultimately tied to their

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971), 23-25.

¹⁵⁷ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 23-25; emphasis mine.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 23-25.

¹⁵⁹ John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Hall & Sellers [AAS Copy], 1768), 13.

¹⁶⁰ Dickinson, *Letters*, 51; again, Dickinson quoted M'Auley.

¹⁶¹ Dickinson, *Letters*, 51; see previous footnote.

masters by “force and violence,” hung under the constant threat of “national ruin.”¹⁶² To Dickinson, the Sardinians and the Irish were a word of warning to the American elite and the average American colonist alike. Although Americans had “English blood in their veins,” England seemed intent on treating Americans like a foreign and subjugated people.¹⁶³ If that meant subjugation à la the Sardinians and the Irish, then Dickinson thought the everyday Americans should be and indeed had every right to be worried.¹⁶⁴

Other Americans made similar use of “the Irish precedent.” In 1769, Georgia pamphleteer John Joachim Zubly lamented that Britain’s 1766 Declaratory Act against America was even harsher than its earlier Declaratory Act against Ireland.¹⁶⁵ Unlike Ireland’s, America’s Declaratory Act was “expressed” in the strongest and “most extensive terms,” binding America to Britain’s whims “IN ALL CASES WHATSOEVER.”¹⁶⁶ To Americans well-versed in “the Irish precedent,” the possibility of experiencing even more oppressive treatment than Ireland would have been an alarming prospect. In fact, the panic remarks like these likely generated may explain why

¹⁶² Dickinson, *Letters*, 51 and 52; emphasis deleted.

¹⁶³ Dickinson, *Letters*, 28.

¹⁶⁴ Dickinson’s claim to be just an ordinary—if highly-educated—farmer in his *Letters* was the clearest indicator of his desire to reach a popular audience. Dickinson’s subsequent success in gaining the popular attention is well-attested to in the relevant histories of the American Revolution. For other examples highlighting Dickinson’s talent for galvanizing popular opinion, see John Dickinson, “‘The Liberty Song’ (1768),” Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections, 2005, <https://archives.dickinson.edu/sundries/liberty-song-1768>.

¹⁶⁵ John Joachim Zubly, “An Humble Enquiry...[1769],” Evans Early American Imprint Collection, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;cc=evans;rgn=div1;view=text;idno=N09042.0001.001;node=N09042.0001.001:2>, 7-9. For the likeness between the 1766 Declaratory Act and the 1720 Declaratory Act respectively, see Charles Howard McIlwain, *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958), 50-51.

¹⁶⁶ Zubly, “Humble Enquiry,” 9; emphasis not mine. For other colonists that made similar points, see Edward Bancroft [a “Massachusetts-born physician”], *Remarks on the Review of the Controversy between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (London, 1769), 82, quoted in Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Eliga Gould, “The Path Not Taken: American Independence and the Irish Counterpoint,” essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 93 and “Vindication,” *Providence Gazette*, March 9, 1765, 1.

Americans could claim “the rights of an Englishman” and yet, if these claims were deemed insufficient, “[drop] them and [resort to claiming] the rights of an Irishman.”¹⁶⁷ What may at first seem like “inconsistent and erratic” American rhetoric was in reality a perhaps desperate attempt to secure at least *some* of the colonists’ rights under British rule.¹⁶⁸

To other Americans, “the Irish precedent” provided an opportunity to offer expansive critiques of Britain’s at best paternalistic and at worst oppressive imperial policy. Nowhere is this clearer than in the opinions of an “unguarded” Franklin, as expressed in his “Marginalia in *Good Humor*” written circa 1769.¹⁶⁹ Presumably written in the privacy of his own quarters, Franklin’s marginal comments “reveal, as nothing else does, Franklin’s *private* views on the developing Anglo-American controversy.”¹⁷⁰ In the “Marginalia,” Franklin developed his then-controversial and radical notion that “[t]he People of the Mother Country [were] Subjects not Governors,” and that Parliament therefore had no right to legislate over American colonists.¹⁷¹ More revealingly, Franklin vented his disgust with English pretensions to justice and fairness in imperial policy. “If...Parliament is so knowing and just,” Franklin observed, “how comes it to restrain *Ireland* in

¹⁶⁷ [Allan Ramsay], *Thoughts on the Origin and Nature of Government* (London, 1769), quoted in Patrick Griffin, Francis D. Cogliano, and Gordon S. Wood, “The American Revolution and the Uses and Abuses of Ireland,” essay, in *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021), 57.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Griffin, Cogliano, and Wood, “Uses and Abuses,” 57.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. “Marginalia in *Good Humour*, an Anonymous Pamphlet, [1769?],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-16-02-0178>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 16, *January 1 through December 31, 1769*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 276–283.]; see especially the introduction.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. “Marginalia,” introduction; emphasis mine. Contrast this with Franklin’s reluctance to fully express himself in his own letters, as they could always “get into the wrong hands.”

¹⁷¹ Cf. “Marginalia,” marginal notes on paragraph 6. According to Franklin, proper sovereignty over Britain’s American subjects belonged to the King alone. In 1769, Franklin’s views would have been “utterly unacceptable” to the English *and* to most Americans. Cf. “Marginalia,” introduction.

its Manufactures...[and] *America* in its Trade?”¹⁷² “Why,” Franklin added, “may not an Irishman or an American make the same Manufactures and carry them to the same ports *with an Englishman?*”¹⁷³ Bristling like many Irishmen did at “the fact of discrimination,” Franklin concluded with the declaration that “America...[could have] no Confidence in her [i.e., Britain’s] Equity.”¹⁷⁴ If England’s representatives had been “chosen by the People of Ireland,” the English people would have justifiably sought greater protections than “their Wisdom and Integrity as...[proper] Security.”¹⁷⁵ How was America’s “Case different” or any less just, should the “People of Britain [try to] chuse [sic] Legislators for the People of America?”¹⁷⁶

In sum, with the advent of the Imperial Crisis, many Americans quickly discovered that the English did not view them as equal partners in the British imperial project. To the contrary, many Americans believed that the English actively harbored dangerous anti-American prejudices. To make sense of their predicament, many of these same Americans looked to “the Irish precedent.” Their more attentive study of Ireland’s sufferings increased American concerns about what the expansion of British imperial power could mean for them. It also caused them to adopt a seemingly “inconsistent and erratic” approach towards advocating for their rights as English subjects. Yet American sympathies for the Irish people in the early years of the Imperial Crisis had its limits. Very few if any criticized the treatment of the Gaelic-Irish natives—some even appeared

¹⁷² “Marginalia,” notes on paragraphs 9-10; emphasis mine.

¹⁷³ “Marginalia,” 9-10; emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁴ “Marginalia,” 9-10. Cf. Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153.

¹⁷⁵ “Marginalia,” 9-10.

¹⁷⁶ “Marginalia,” 9-10.

to wholeheartedly approve of Anglo-Irish efforts to “[reform those] ...poor, ignorant [and] deluded” people.¹⁷⁷ Lastly, many colonists drew a critical distinction between “[free] colonies” and “conquered provinces,” with some occasionally claiming Ireland was the latter.¹⁷⁸ At any rate, the looming threat of an English conquest of America during the later stages of the Imperial Crisis would force Americans to radically rethink their relationship to the Irish struggle.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Hall & Sellers [AAS Copy], 1768), 51, quoting Alexander M’Auley. For similar anti-Irish Catholic sentiments, see “A Short History of the Proceedings of the Papists in Ireland, for some Years Past,” *Georgia Gazette*, November 12, 1766.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Dickinson, *Letters*, 40 for the distinction and John Joachim Zubly, “An Humble Enquiry...[1769],” Evans Early American Imprint Collection, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;cc=evans;rgn=div1;view=text;idno=N09042.0001.001;node=N09042.0001.001:2>, 19 on Ireland’s status.

Chapter 3

“The Irish Precedent” and the Turn from Resistance to Rebellion

(1769-1775)

“By what I could judge from the Proceedings of the Ministry,” Benjamin Franklin wrote in a 1775 letter to his son William, it apparently “wish’d to provoke the N.E. [New England] people into an open Rebellion.”¹⁷⁹ Franklin’s interactions with hostile English officials only reinforced his pessimistic assessment of the situation. The ministerial faction, as Franklin recalled, could only think to speak of Americans “with the utmost Contempt.”¹⁸⁰ They impugned “American Courage, Religion, Understanding,” and honesty.¹⁸¹ Some of the most hostile English lords went so far as to “[proclaim] that we [Americans] were all knaves, and wanted only...to avoid paying our Debts.”¹⁸² Franklin left the experience bitterly disillusioned with English government. The unrestrained “Passion and Prejudice” of the ministry’s supporters convinced him that England’s “Claim of Sovereignty over three Millions of [Americans]” was “the greatest [and most manifest] of Absurdities.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ “From Benjamin Franklin to William Franklin: Journal of Negotiations in London, 22 March 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0306>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 21, *January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 540–599.] In the excerpt of the letter cited here, Franklin was quoting from a conversation he had with prominent English merchant David Barclay.

¹⁸⁰ “Franklin, Journal of Negotiations.”

¹⁸¹ “Franklin, Journal of Negotiations.” Earlier on, some of the English people Franklin interacted with questioned him in ways that reflected the suspicion that Americans were rebelling because they were secretly aiming at complete independence from Britain all along. Cf. chapter 1 of this paper for the parallels between this and British suspicions of Irish designs for independence in the 18th century.

¹⁸² “Franklin, Journal of Negotiations.”

¹⁸³ “Franklin, Journal of Negotiations.”

Franklin, once again, was far from alone in his sentiments. Just two years earlier, official correspondences from “[t]wo [small Massachusetts] towns where Scots-Irish emigrants had settled” made similar insinuations.¹⁸⁴ Drawing on their credentials as “eyewitnesses” to British cruelties, these Scots-Irish statesmen declared that “it is [clearly] the design of this present administration to serve us as they have our brethren in Ireland.”¹⁸⁵ Britain would first seek “to raise a revenue from us sufficient to support a standing army.”¹⁸⁶ After accomplishing that, they would soon afterwards establish “men and pensioners, and then laugh at our calamities and glut themselves on our spoil.”¹⁸⁷

These ominous predictions appeared to bring many American colonists to the brink of war. One January 18, 1774 article from the *Essex Gazette* at minimum suggested that fears of “the Irish precedent” went far beyond the small Scotch-Irish towns. As they put it, the “base Stratagems” of the British ministry “to reduce this Country to the wretched, slavish State of poor Ireland, are now to be well understood by almost *every* American Country Village.”¹⁸⁸ What may have initially seemed like one Scots Irish town’s minor contribution to the rhetoric of the American Imperial Crisis was in actuality much more than that. To the writer of this *Essex Gazette* article, it was a fear that *almost all* of the small communities on the Massachusetts countryside shared. If the writer’s characterization of the political climate was accurate, it may have explained why these same colonists instigated what scholars like Ray Raphael would call “the first American

¹⁸⁴ Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1976), 171.

¹⁸⁵ Colrain, Letters and Proceedings, quoted in Brown, *Revolutionary Politics*, 171.

¹⁸⁶ Colrain, Letters and Proceedings, quoted in Brown, *Revolutionary Politics*, 171.

¹⁸⁷ Colrain, Letters and Proceedings, quoted in Brown, *Revolutionary Politics*, 171.

¹⁸⁸ “Salem, January 18,” *Essex Gazette*, January 18, 1774, 2; emphasis mine.

Revolution.”¹⁸⁹ That is, during the “late summer and early fall of 1774, the people of [the] Massachusetts [countryside] *completely and forcibly* overthrew the established government and began to set up their own” almost a year before the battles at Lexington and Concord.¹⁹⁰ Borrowing—consciously or unconsciously—from the language of none other than Irish patriot “Dean [i.e., Jonathan] Swift,” many in the countryside bemoaned that “oppression will make wise Men mad.”¹⁹¹ That “oppression” eventually culminated in direct action.

The story of “the first American Revolution” and the American Revolution proper shared a common dread of “the Irish precedent.” For many colonists, that precedent became a dire warning to Americans navigating the later stages of the Imperial Crisis. Complaints about English condescension increasingly gave way to growing fears of conquest. What may have most unnerved many American colonists was the possibility of being treated like the “degenerate English,” or the Old English Irish Catholics.¹⁹² British imperial policy from 1774 to 1775, for its part, had the look of confirming the worst of the colonists’ suspicions. Above all, the passage of the Quebec Act and the purported application of earlier Irish precedents of conquest to the Americas alarmed many in

¹⁸⁹ Ray Raphael, *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord* (New York, NY: New Press, 2002), 1-3.

¹⁹⁰ Raphael, *First American Revolution*, 3; emphasis mine.

¹⁹¹ “From John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 May 1807,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-5186>. [This is an **Early Access document** from The Adams Papers. It is not an authoritative final version.]; emphasis mine. Also see Raphael, *First American Revolution*, 46-47 and Jonathan Swift, “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720],” 2014, <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>. The quoted language from Swift appeared right after his use of the story of Arachne and Pallas (cf. chapter 1 of this paper) to make his point about British exploitation of Irish resources. Swift, to be clear, was quoting from the Book of Ecclesiastes, a book that many Americans would most likely have been familiar with. Notwithstanding, Swift was probably unique in applying the biblical verse to oppression at the hands of an early modern imperial power like Great Britain.

¹⁹² That is, the Old English Irish Catholics as distinguished from the Protestant Anglo-Irish. Cf. Thomas Leland, *The History of Ireland...*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Dublin, IE: Printed by R. Marchbank, for R. Moncrieffe, 1774), 406-407 and Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91.

the Patriot movement. These concerns—and concerns like them—would before long put Patriots into direct armed conflict with the British Empire.

I. Disillusionment and Disgust: “The Irish Precedent” Pre-1773

Throughout 1769, the American elite displayed a clear interest in gaining a more detailed understanding of Irish history. In January of 1769, for example, Benjamin Franklin sent a series of books to Charles Thomson and Thomas Mifflin.¹⁹³ Thomson and Mifflin would later become key figures in the American Patriot movement; Thomson was an important Irish-born patriot, and Mifflin was chosen to be president of the Continental Congress in 1783.¹⁹⁴ Among the many books that Franklin apparently loaned or gave them, at least three and maybe four or five related to Irish history.¹⁹⁵ By contrast, only one volume in that collection of Franklin books was about Corsica and the life of Pascal Paoli.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, in October of 1769, Perkins, Buchanan & Brown delivered an invoice to Thomas Jefferson of books “order’d [from] Mr. [in all likelihood, John]

¹⁹³ “From Benjamin Franklin to Charles Thomson and Thomas Mifflin, 27 January 1769,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-16-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 16, *January 1 through December 31, 1769*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 27–29.]

¹⁹⁴ See “Charles Thomson,” University Archives and Records Center, accessed February 26, 2024, <https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-people/biography/charles-thomson/> and “Thomas Mifflin,” U.S. Army Center of Military History, accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.history.army.mil/books/revwar/ss/mifflin.htm>.

¹⁹⁵ “From Benjamin Franklin.” That is, three books Franklin had transferred definitely had a connection to Irish history and culture, another was about King Henry the Second—who was responsible for the first English conquest of Ireland in the 12th century—, and the other would “probably” have been Warner’s *The History of the Rebellion and Civil War of Ireland* (2d ed., London, 1768). Incidentally, one of the other books Franklin sent over was “Jonathan Swift, *Letters, Written by the Late Jonathan Swift D.D. ... and Several of His Friends, From the Year 1703 to 1740 ...* (John Hawkesworth, ed.; new ed., 3 vols., London, 1766)” (cf. chapters 1 and 2 of this paper).

¹⁹⁶ I.e., “James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica; the Journal of a Tour to That Island; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli ...* (2d ed., London, 1768).” Cf. “From Benjamin Franklin.” See the previous chapter of this paper for the role that Corsica would have played in the mindset of the American resistance movement.

Adams.”¹⁹⁷ Of the sixteen books listed there, at least three pertained to Irish history. Two of those, Ferdinando Warner’s *History of Ireland* (originally published in 1763) and his *The History of the Rebellion and Civil War of Ireland* (originally published in 1768) comprised an expansive survey of medieval and then-contemporary Irish history.¹⁹⁸ Not coincidentally, Franklin’s earlier invoice to Thomson and Mifflin contained Warner’s *History of Ireland* and (chances are) his *History of the Rebellion and Civil War* as well.¹⁹⁹

Warner’s histories, far from adding to a significant body of existing English historical scholarship about Ireland, were arguably the first of their kind. Per Warner himself, “no general history [of Ireland], either edifying or impartial, ... [was still] extant” when he composed his own work.²⁰⁰ Despite Ireland’s intimate ties to England and the British Empire as a whole, Ireland’s “Heroes...are but little, or not at all, heard of in your [the King’s] native Country [England].”²⁰¹ Warner suggested that all this was not an accident. To the contrary, Warner mused that the English “[look] rather with an eye of prejudice and contempt on that deserving province [of Ireland].”²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ “To Thomas Jefferson from Perkins, Buchanan & Brown, 2 October 1769,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0022>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 33–34.]

¹⁹⁸ “To Thomas Jefferson.” See also Ferdinando Warner, *The History of Ireland*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London, UK: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand, 1763), and Ferdinando Warner, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil-War in Ireland*, vol. 2, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London, UK: Printed for T. Cadell...in the Strand, 1768).

¹⁹⁹ Cf. “From Benjamin Franklin to Charles Thomson and Thomas Mifflin, 27 January 1769,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-16-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 16, *January 1 through December 31, 1769*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 27–29] and footnote 195.

²⁰⁰ Warner, Dedication of *The History of Ireland*, 3-4; emphasis mine.

²⁰¹ Warner, Dedication of *The History of Ireland*, 3.

²⁰² Warner, Dedication of *The History of Ireland*, 3.

In all, for Jefferson, Franklin, *and* Adams to be circulating these rare works of systematic Irish history in itself demonstrates the extent of American interest in Ireland.²⁰³

The sentiments expressed in Warner would have surely held great significance for Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson. To Jefferson especially, Warner's words would have provided important guidance for the future of the Imperial Crisis. Earlier in 1769, Jefferson had joined the ranks of the Virginia House of Burgesses, which had been and would become a hotbed of American resistance.²⁰⁴ Not surprisingly then, all of the other books ordered for Jefferson related directly to the Imperial Crisis and the developing American political philosophy. Besides containing the seminal works of John Locke, Montesquieu, and others, Jefferson's invoice also had four volumes on Parliament and the history of Parliament.²⁰⁵ Therefore, Jefferson's choice to borrow two of *the only available* and comprehensive works on Irish history demonstrated how critical he thought "the Irish precedent" was to navigating the future course of events in America. If Jefferson read Warner's *History of Ireland* in that state of mind, he would have found plenty of material to interest him. From very early on in his *History*, Warner excoriated the oppressive economic policies of England towards their Irish brethren. Most memorably, Warner launched into a biting critique of the British restrictions on Irish "woollen [sic]," saying "that every shilling [the English] got by the Irish was defrauding us of [one]."²⁰⁶ Again, Americans would have seen in Warner's description a parallel to the seemingly oppressive policies of the 1760s.

²⁰³ For evidence of more widespread circulation, see "Advertisement," *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, July 15, 1773, among others.

²⁰⁴ "To Thomas Jefferson," introduction and annotations.

²⁰⁵ "To Thomas Jefferson from Perkins, Buchanan & Brown, 2 October 1769," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0022>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 33–34.]

²⁰⁶ Ferdinando Warner, *The History of Ireland*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London, UK: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand, 1763), 33.

By any measure, Jefferson could have discovered something more disturbing in the third book found in the invoice: “Pettys Survey of Ireland.”²⁰⁷ Now known as the Down Survey of Ireland, it was undertaken in 1689 to aid in the redistribution of lands confiscated from Irish “Old English Catholic” landowners.²⁰⁸ Although the exact reasons Jefferson chose to borrow the Down Survey are unclear, a few factors implied that Jefferson was concerned about the precedents of conquest highlighted there. The Down Survey, first of all, focused on the Irish province of Ulster, a province many Irishmen came from to emigrate to America.²⁰⁹ Second, the Down Survey would likely have touched on the same conquests contained in Warner’s *The History of the Rebellion and Civil War of Ireland*, including the aftermath of the Old English Catholic rebellions against British rule. Taken together, Jefferson’s reading list may have exhibited an early concern that those same precedents of conquest could be used against British dominions in America. Franklin and others within the American elite would have presumably come to similar conclusions as the notion spread from beyond the Virginia House of Burgesses.

Other factors would likewise serve to gradually move members of the American elite towards supporting armed resistance. In Franklin’s case, his 1772 trip to Ireland would be a crucial turning-point, strengthening in him a “desire [for America] to [eventually] leave the British Empire.”²¹⁰ In a letter written to Thomas Cushing in 1772 remembering that dispiriting trip, Franklin

²⁰⁷ Cf. “To Thomas Jefferson.”

²⁰⁸ See Sir William Petty, “The Province of Ulster Surveyed by Sir William Petty,” The Library of Congress, accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668671/>.

²⁰⁹ See, among others, “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162]. Still, most of those emigrants from Ulster would have been Irish Presbyterians and not Irish Catholics.

²¹⁰ Carla J. Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 245.

emphasized British oppression and Irish poverty. According to Franklin, Dublin, though in other respects a “magnificent City,” was a place of “general extreme [destitution] among the lower People.”²¹¹ Its poor peasants “[lived] in wretched Hovels of Mud and Straw, [were] clothed in Rags, and subsist[ed] chiefly on Potatoes.”²¹² The “New England Farmers of the poorest sort” were “Princes” compared to their closest Irish counterparts.²¹³ The suffering of the vast majority of Irish people under British mismanagement subsequently forced Franklin “to recognize the ingrained assumptions of superiority that kept British people from [seeing] their common heritage of rights.” That hard realization required Franklin to abandon any idea of “[trying to create] American legislative parity with Ireland.”²¹⁴

Meanwhile, the American popular readership continued to receive a series of reports on Ireland’s terrible condition. Each one was more critical of British policy than the next. One October 11, 1770 article from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*—entitled “The Present State of Europe”—began with a terse summary of the circumstances of the many peoples of Europe. The Russians were constantly “fighting,” the Turks constantly “running away,” the Italians constantly “praying,” and so on.²¹⁵ Yet revealingly, the writer described the Irish as constantly “grumbling” and the English

²¹¹ “From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing, 13 January 1772,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-19-02-0007>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 19, *January 1 through December 31, 1772*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1975, pp. 16–24.]

²¹² “From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing.”

²¹³ “From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing.”

²¹⁴ Carla J. Mulford, *Benjamin Franklin and the Ends of Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 245. Regardless, one might ask why Franklin *ever* pursued the idea. He surely should have been aware that Ireland’s “constitutional protections” were wholly ineffective. For a possible answer to this question, see pg. 41 of this paper.

²¹⁵ “Dublin, August 21. The Present State of Europe,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 18, 1770. It was also shortly thereafter republished in the October 30, 1770 edition of *The Massachusetts Spy*. For that, see “Dublin, August 21. The Present State of Europe,” *The Massachusetts Spy*, October 30, 1770, 2.

as “*doing nothing at all.*”²¹⁶ Behind that snide closing remark about England was what appeared to be a disgust with its neglect of both Irish *and American* pleas and petitions to the ministry.²¹⁷ In a more detailed report, the same author handed down a message from a correspondent in Ireland reinforcing the broader point. “What must *poor Ireland* at length come to,” that correspondent brooded, “It need not be wondered that we are kept poor, when such Sums are continually draining from us.”²¹⁸ As noted before, the image of Britain “draining” money from Ireland for its own benefit was emblematic of both American attitudes towards Britain and towards the historical reality of oppression in Ireland.

Other Irish correspondents for American newspapers posed a clearer connection between Ireland’s problems and America’s. “[T]he English ministry,” another one of them stated, “by whose powerful Influence our Houses of Parliament are governed, contrive every Pretence [sic] to drain *poor Ireland* of Money.”²¹⁹ Going on, the correspondent explained that “the Consequence” of Britain’s drainage of Irish resources was “severely felt by many, and in Time [it] must diffuse its baneful Effects throughout all Degrees of People, *if not put a stop to.*”²²⁰ In the correspondent’s thinking, America was the vanguard of what Ireland had so bitterly lost. For this reason, and “as you [Americans] have [so] desired,” the Dubliner “[gave]...a short View of our Situation; and it is the Opinion of several that America will in a few years rival [the squalor of] this drecreasing

²¹⁶ “Dublin,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 2; emphasis mine.

²¹⁷ Other American newspapers referenced the hostilities between the people of Ireland and England more directly. Cf. “Extract of a Letter from Petersburg, July 24,” *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, October 11, 1773, 2.

²¹⁸ “Dublin,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 2; emphasis mine.

²¹⁹ “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, July 21,” *Boston Post-Boy*, October 11, 1773; emphasis not mine. For subsequent republications of this article, see “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, July 21,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, October 14, 1773; “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, Dated July 21,” *Newport Mercury*, October 18, 1773; and “A Letter from Dublin, Dated July 21,” *Providence Gazette*, November 13, 1773, among others.

²²⁰ “Extract,” *Boston Post-Boy*; emphasis mine.

[sic; decreasing] Island.”²²¹ Significantly, the Dubliner responded to American *requests* for the latest Irish news. As time went on, the American colonists solicited both the Dubliner’s “Opinion” and the opinions of others well-informed about Ireland. Just nine days after the *Boston Post-Boy* published the above article, the *Pennsylvania Journal, or, Weekly Advertiser* published another dire report on the Irish state of affairs. As the writer put it, “[p]oor Ireland” was languishing “in a state of bankruptcy.”²²² The “weight upon [her] back” was “so heavy that she is upon the point of giving her last groan.”²²³ Elaborating on that motif of a dying Ireland, the writer declared that, “[t]he public poverty has at length, as might naturally be expected, communicated itself to the government, which is now in a deplorable state in that kingdom.”²²⁴ Like Swift, the writer agreed that Ireland’s poverty was inseparable from its constitutional subordination. Problems within the government had spread to society, and vice versa.²²⁵

II. A Sense of Impending Danger: “The Irish Precedent” From 1773-1775

Later events hardened American resolve against preventing the disease of Irish oppression from spreading to the New World. Many scholars, to cite one instance, have noted that the passage of the 1774 Quebec Act was crucial in turning American public opinion against King George vs.

²²¹ “Extract,” *Boston Post-Boy*.

²²² “Extract of a letter from Lisbon,” *Pennsylvania Journal, or, Weekly Advertiser*, October 20, 1773, 2.

²²³ “Extract,” *Pennsylvania Journal*.

²²⁴ “Extract,” *Pennsylvania Journal*.

²²⁵ For another notable article post-1769 that draws a connection between Irish and American oppression, see “London, January 10,” *Virginia Gazette*, March 23, 1775. While it mainly meant to counteract arguments that America “did not pay any pensions” “*as a matter of favor*” on the part of British imperial officials, it too complained that “*poor Ireland*[’s]” pension system “[oblige] them] to provide for *every rapacious favorite*” (emphasis mine). Cf. Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153.

Parliament alone.²²⁶ It led some colonists to insinuate that the King’s support for the hated Act amounted to a violation of his coronation oath, and thereby provided a potential “*legal* justification to absolve their allegiance to the monarch.”²²⁷ Others speculated that the King was a co-conspirator in a “well-concerted scheme to give a check on the rest of [the] colonies.”²²⁸ The scheme, meant to keep the colonists in fear of attacks from their ostensibly emboldened Canadian French-Catholic neighbors, would have the effect of “[subduing] those head-strong Colonists, who pretend to be governed by English laws.”²²⁹ In effect, the Quebec Act prepared American Patriots to take arms against a king and a ministry they thought intent on “subduing” its American colonial possessions.

Once again, the colonists’ views hearkened back to that of an earlier Irish writer. In his *State of the Protestants in Ireland* (1691), William King (later the Archbishop of Dublin) defended a Protestant Irish rebellion against the Catholic King James II (and VI) by proclaiming that, “if a King design to root out *a people* [the Protestant Irish], or destroy one main part of his Subjects in favour [sic] of another *whom he loves better* [the Irish Catholics],...they [the Protestant Irish] may prevent it *even by opposing him with force*.”²³⁰ If Americans read these statements, then they could have believed that King George III—and Britain as a whole—would utilize a similar divide-and-conquer strategy against the Empire’s American subjects. Those fears, though largely shaped by anti-Catholicism, were not unreasonable. Modern American and Irish historians alike have agreed

²²⁶ See, for example, Brad A. Jones, “A ‘Fit Instrument’: The Quebec Act and the Outbreak of Rebellion in Two British Atlantic Port Cities,” essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 237.

²²⁷ Jones, “Fit Instrument,” 237; emphasis mine. Also see “From the *Newport Mercury*, January 9,” *The New York Journal; or, The General Advertiser*, February 9, 1775, 1.

²²⁸ “Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings,” *Boston News-Letter*, August 25, 1774.

²²⁹ “Legislative Acts,” *Boston News-Letter*.

²³⁰ William King, “The State of the Protestants of Ireland...[1691],” Early English Books Online, accessed February 28, 2024, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ebo/A47446.0001.001?view=toc>; emphasis mine.

that Great Britain used the vulnerable position of the Protestant Anglo-Irish to secure Anglo-Irish concessions and continued British domination over all the Irish peoples.²³¹ Some evidence suggested that at least a few Americans would have known about King's *State of the Protestants in Ireland* and maybe even this very excerpt. Most Protestant American colonists lionized the heroes of the Protestant Irish cause and circulated a whole host of literature about them.²³² Beyond that, many of the more educated colonists would have been familiar with Archbishop King's religious treatises, including his famous *On the Origin of Evil*.²³³ In any case, places like the Mt. Vernon Library possessed copies of *State of the Protestants* from as early as 1759.²³⁴

²³¹ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 155-158. Cf. Robert F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London, UK: Penguin Press, 1988), 244-245 and Ollivier Hubert, François Furstenberg, and Christian R. Buset, "Quebec, Bengal, and the Rise of Authoritarian Legal Pluralism," essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 136. Foster suggested that Britain's increasingly "relaxed" policies towards its Catholic subjects inspired both the Quebec Act and a 1774 British law "allowing Irish Catholics to take an Oath of Allegiance."

²³² For examples, see "Plain Truth, 17 November 1747," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0091>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 3, *January 1, 1745, through June 30, 1750*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 180–204] and the almost-hagiographical writings referenced in "Advertisement," *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, June 28, 1773.

²³³ For references to *On the Origin of Evil* in the *Founders Online* archives, see "To Benjamin Franklin from William Strahan, 26 August 1752," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-04-02-0129>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 4, *July 1, 1750, through June 30, 1753*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 350–353]; "From George Washington to Robert Cary & Company, 6 October 1773," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0268>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 9, *8 January 1772–18 March 1774*, ed. W. W. Abbot and Dorothy Twohig. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 343–345]; and "[Fragmentary Draft of a Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law, February 1765.]," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-01-02-0009-0002-0001>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers, Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 1, *1755–1770*, ed. L. H. Butterfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 255–258.]

²³⁴ See "Appendix D. Inventory of the Books in the Estate, c.1759," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-06-02-0164-0026>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 6, *4 September 1758–26 December 1760*, ed. W. W. Abbot. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, pp. 283–300.] At any rate, even if they had not read *State of the Protestants*, Archbishop King himself drew from a similar passage in Grotius's *De jure Belli & Pacis*, which was much more familiar to members of the American elite. For that, see "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania, [October 1749]," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0166>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin*

To be sure, “the Irish precedent” influenced the American response to the Quebec Act in other more obvious ways. Alexander Hamilton’s series of pamphlets on the Quebec Bill may be most representative. He was far from alone in his apprehensions that the terms of the Quebec Bill would “attract droves of emigrants, from all the Roman catholic states in Europe, and surround “these colonies” with “innumerable hosts of neighbours disaffected to [Americans].”²³⁵ In essence, people like Hamilton seemed to believe that America post-Quebec Act would transform into “another Ireland,” with a small Protestant minority placed in a precarious position under British rule. The 1774 comments of British undersecretary William Knox could hardly have comforted them. In his official defense, Knox sought to use the Irish Protestants’ “sense of precariousness” as an argument *in favor of* the American Quebec bill.²³⁶ Even so, Knox’s reflections on the augmentation of the army in Ireland and on how Irish Protestants more generally “[constantly thought] themselves in the utmost danger of being massacred by papists” might have made the situation worse.²³⁷

Franklin, vol. 3, *January 1, 1745, through June 30, 1750*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 397–421]; “Thursday [sic] Jany. 9th. 1765 [i.e. 1766].,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-01-02-0010-0001-0009>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 1, 1755–1770, ed. L. H. Butterfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 288–290]; and “From George Washington to Robert Cary & Company, 6 October 1773,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0268>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 9, 8 January 1772–18 March 1774, ed. W. W. Abbot and Dorothy Twohig. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 343–345], among others.

²³⁵ “Remarks on the Quebec Bill: Part Two, [22 June 1775],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0059>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, 1768–1778, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 169–176.]

²³⁶ Ollivier Hubert, François Furstenberg, and Aaron Willis, “Rethinking Ireland and Assimilation: Quebec, Collaboration, and the Heterogeneous Empire,” essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 182.

²³⁷ William Knox, *Justice and Policy of the Late Act*, 21 and 22–23, quoted in Willis, “Rethinking Ireland,” 182; emphasis mine.

Predictably, rumors spread of British efforts to recruit Catholic subjects—even French-Canadian Catholic subjects—in their efforts to violently subdue American resistance.²³⁸ These rumors drew on the legacy of “the Irish precedent.” One report from the Protestant Canadian region of Halifax claimed that “a possible third Jacobite rebellion [could be] unfolding on the continent.”²³⁹ The Young Pretender [i.e., a rival Catholic claimant to the English throne], the article explained, “[would use] the Quebec Act ‘to gain [that] Kingdom [i.e., Canada] he so highly longs to govern.’”²⁴⁰ At least some newspaper reports from America seconded the Halifaxian outcry. In their versions, “the Chevalier Stuart (commonly called the Pretender) [was] preparing to set out on a voyage to *New-England*,” acting on certain “advices [sic] from Rome.”²⁴¹ The alleged Catholic conspiracy depicted above—although in many ways the product of a feverish anti-Catholic imagination—is not without historical precedent. Jonathan Swift, writing fifty years earlier, had mentioned the presence of Jacobites recruiting in Ireland for similar purposes. Moreover, the Jacobite recruiting efforts were apparently great successes, persuading a significant proportion of Irish Catholics to leave “their dear native Country to fight *for the Pretender* [i.e., one of the elder Pretenders] *in Spain*.”²⁴² Intimately acquainted with how these developments played

²³⁸ Reports on—and objections to—the Quebec Act often went in tandem with reports on the dispatch of “more troops” (most of the time, Irish regiments) to Boston to quell the rebellions there. For the type of reports that would often appear together in this way, see “Baltimore, October 26,” *Maryland Journal*, October 26, 1774 and “London, Nov. 1,” *New-York Journal*, January 26, 1775. See Kenneth L. Campbell, *Ireland’s History: Prehistory to the Present* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014), 160 for indications that these Irish regiments would have incorporated a sizable amount of Catholic Irishmen.

²³⁹ Brad A. Jones, “A ‘Fit Instrument’: The Quebec Act and the Outbreak of Rebellion in Two British Atlantic Port Cities,” essay, in *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire* (Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 247.

²⁴⁰ Jones, “Fit Instrument,” 247.

²⁴¹ “Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings,” *Providence Gazette*, September 3, 1774, 2; emphasis mine.

²⁴² Jonathan Swift et al., “A Modest Proposal,” essay, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)*, vol. 14 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 146.

out in Ireland, Americans were on the watch against any signs the same type of uprising could occur on their continent.

Still, the Quebec Act was part of a much bigger problem American Patriots had with the British ministry. The passage of *all* the so-called “Intolerable Acts” increased suspicion about English motives in expanding imperial power. More and more Americans demonstrated a fear of an English conquest à la those of Ireland. The then-recent release of Thomas Leland’s 1773 *History of Ireland, From the Invasion of Henry II* hence occasioned a great amount of interest in American newspapers.²⁴³ A relatively long series of excerpts from Leland’s book—which clearly related to events surrounding the conquest of Ireland—appeared in prominent newspaperman James Rivington’s *New York Gazetteer*.²⁴⁴ Again, given the abovementioned lack of interest in Irish history in England, the intense American curiosity about Leland’s *History of Ireland* was all the more significant.

Certain passages from Leland’s *History* provide further hints as to why the book caused such a furor in the colonies. For one, the selections quoted in Rivington’s *Gazetteer* alluded to what Leland elsewhere referred to as “the degenerate [Old] English” in Ireland.²⁴⁵ Later in Leland’s history—and in any modern history of Ireland—these “degenerate English” would become the victims of conquest and property confiscation at the hands of a newly-transformed Protestant

²⁴³ See “Advertisement,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, July 8, 1773, “Advertisement,” *Pennsylvania Packet*, September 20, 1773, “Advertisement,” *Providence Gazette*, October 30, 1773, “Advertisement,” *Massachusetts Spy*, November 26, 1773, and “Advertisement,” *Pennsylvania Ledger: or the Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New-Jersey Weekly Advertiser*, January 28, 1775, 3 for a somewhat representative sample.

²⁴⁴ “Historical Anecdotes, Collected from Dr. Leland’s New History of Ireland,” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, January 13, 1774. Ironically, Rivington later placed his fortunes with the Loyalist camp during the American Revolution.

²⁴⁵ Cf. “Historical Anecdotes,” *New York Gazetteer* and Thomas Leland, *The History of Ireland...*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Dublin, IE: Printed by R. Marchbank, for R. Moncrieffe, 1774), 406-407. To be clear, Leland’s use of the phrase was more likely than not following British custom; he does not seem to bear any especial animosity towards the Old English in Ireland.

England. Chances are the parallels were not lost on Americans. Many Britons too considered them a breed of “degenerate English.”²⁴⁶ Some could have expected that conquest and subjugation were next.

Certain reports raised even more questions about British intentions. One October 11, 1774 *Essex Gazette* article regarding false rumors of an imminent repeal of “the Boston port bill” was illustrative.²⁴⁷ While it did optimistically observe that the “operation [of the law] will [still] be suspended,” it also indirectly compared the legislation itself to “the Popish laws in Ireland.”²⁴⁸ Expounding on this, the writer pointed out that “though [the laws] are very severe, and in many respects unconstitutional,...[they] still hang over the natives in *terrorem*.”²⁴⁹ Suspension of the Boston port bill, so the argument went, subjected Bostonians to the same treatment and constant threat of coercion. About two weeks later, an article from the *New- York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury* published an article implying that Bostonians could expect worse. In their words,

An evening paper says, we hear, that the last resolution in the Cabinet relative to the Bostonians was as follows: To use conciliating measures for the present, call the Parliament early in the winter, and to prevail upon them to pass an act empowering a committee of twelve (of whom Gen. Gage is to be President) to *forfeit the lands* of those refractory spirits who sign conventions, or in any other way *disturb the public tranquility*. This immediate attack upon private property, with a power of devolving on others, is thought the most direct scheme of *bringing them to obedience*. The *precedent* is drawn from the civil wars *in Ireland* in the reigns of Charles I. and William III.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Cf. “From Benjamin Franklin to William Franklin: Journal of Negotiations in London, 22 March 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0306>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 21, *January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 540–599.]

²⁴⁷ “London,” *Essex Gazette*, October 11, 1774.

²⁴⁸ “London,” *Essex Gazette*.

²⁴⁹ “London,” *Essex Gazette*; emphasis not mine.

²⁵⁰ “Extract of a Letter from Bayuck-Camarchi, July 17, Three Hours after Signing the Peace,” *New- York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, October 24, 1774; emphasis mine.

The news imaginably looked like it confirmed all the worst of the American hysteria. The British *were* seeking to ensure the subjugation and conquest of America. If that was not bad enough, their model for doing so was the model once perfected in Ireland.

Ergo, that people across the Massachusetts countryside became convinced of Great Britain's designs "to reduce [the colonies] to the wretched, slavish State of poor Ireland" should not be surprising at all.²⁵¹ Neither should the fact that a seemingly irate John Adams devoted large sections of his famous Novanglus letters to distinguishing the *conquest* of Ireland from the *colonization* of America.²⁵² Whatever Adams's motives, his efforts were of no avail. The forces that spurred a political conflict with Great Britain soon thereafter led to an armed one. "The first American revolution"—a revolution led by those determined not to suffer the fate of Ireland—exploded into a conflict between the British Empire and thirteen colonies not wishing to become conquered provinces.

²⁵¹ Cf. "Salem, January 18," *Essex Gazette*, January 18, 1774, 2.

²⁵² "VI. To the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, 27 February 1775," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-02-02-0072-0007>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 2, *December 1773–April 1775*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 288–307.] Adams did also deal with precedents of conquest in Wales. Even so, Adams apparently did not view the Welsh as America's "fellow slaves"; only the Irish received that designation. Moreover, the example of Wales received much less attention than the example of Ireland did.

Conclusion

By 1785, Franklin arguably reached the height of his disillusionment and disgust with the British imperial project. In a March letter to Benjamin Vaughan, Franklin launched into an aggressive tirade against English society and its “oppressive Conduct” abroad.²⁵³ In response to those who wondered at England’s especially severe problems with crime and criminal behavior, Franklin blamed “the Deficiency of Justice & Morality in [its] national Government, [as] manifested in” English oppression of fellow subjects.²⁵⁴ The examples of these injustices were many, Franklin wrote. “View,” perhaps, “the plundering Government exercis’d by [British] Merchants in the Indies.”²⁵⁵ Or, “the *confiscating War* made upon the American Colonies.”²⁵⁶ Or, better yet, “the *long persisted-in* [and manifestly] unjust monopolizing treatment of [poor] Ireland!”²⁵⁷ After the English government employed its people to rob the Irish and so many others, was it really so shocking that Englishmen would take to “[robbing] one another?”²⁵⁸ Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* provided a similar picture of English moral degeneracy, except his indictment of English society went back to its most ancient foundations. As Paine would have it, the problem started with nothing less than the institution of kingship itself. England’s first king, Paine opined, was little more than a “*French* bastard landing with an armed banditti...and

²⁵³ “From Benjamin Franklin to Benjamin Vaughan, 14 March 1785,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-43-02-0335>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 43, *August 16, 1784, through March 15, 1785*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 491–498.]

²⁵⁴ “From Benjamin Franklin.”

²⁵⁵ “From Benjamin Franklin.”

²⁵⁶ “From Benjamin Franklin”; emphasis mine.

²⁵⁷ “From Benjamin Franklin”; emphasis mine.

²⁵⁸ “From Benjamin Franklin.”

establishing himself king of England *against the consent of the natives.*”²⁵⁹ The claim of English King Henry II and his successors over Ireland rested on no less shaky grounds. But Paine was adamant: no king could ever override the right of “the natives” to govern over themselves as they saw fit.

In other words, the discovery of the “inalienable rights” of the American people to govern themselves was inseparable from the American understanding of “the Irish precedent.” From the late 1720s and maybe earlier, more than a few Americans clearly saw Ireland as the counterpoint to all the freedoms they enjoyed free from British imperial encroachment. During the Imperial Crisis, many colonists began to view “the Irish precedent” as a word of warning. If they continued to tolerate British condescension and imperial expansion, they might share in the dreaded fate of the entire Irish people. In the mid-1770s, the Quebec Act and the purported application of Irish conquest precedents to British America brought tensions to a boiling point. Convinced of British plans to initiate a new era of imperial exploitation à la Ireland, everyday colonists across the Massachusetts countryside responded by igniting “the first American revolution.” In mere months, those same people would take up arms in a war against the greatest military and naval power of the 18th century.

In these extraordinary developments, and in the extraordinary events which followed, historians can see the enduring impact of “the Irish precedent” on America’s founding. America and Ireland’s struggles for freedom were—and are—forever interlinked.

²⁵⁹ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense; Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, On the Following Interesting Subjects*, 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: W. & T. Bradford, 1776, 26.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- “VI. To the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, 27 February 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-02-02-0072-0007>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 2, *December 1773–April 1775*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 288–307.]
- “Advertisement.” *Boston Gazette*, June 30, 1752.
- “Advertisement.” *Boston News-Letter*, June 20, 1765.
- “Advertisement.” *Massachusetts Spy*, November 26, 1773.
- “Advertisement.” *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, June 28, 1773.
- “Advertisement.” *Pennsylvania Ledger: or the Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New-Jersey Weekly Advertiser*, January 28, 1775.
- “Advertisement.” *Pennsylvania Packet*, September 20, 1773.
- “Advertisement.” *Providence Gazette*, October 30, 1773.
- “Advertisement.” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, July 8, 1773.
- “Advertisement.” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, July 15, 1773.
- “Affairs of Ireland, 20 November 1729,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-01-02-0045>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. 162.]
- “A Letter from Dublin, Dated July 21.” *Providence Gazette*, November 13, 1773.
- “Appendix D. Inventory of the Books in the Estate, c.1759.” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-06-02-0164-0026>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 6, *4 September 1758–26 December 1760*, ed. W. W. Abbot. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, pp. 283–300.]

- “A Short History of the Proceedings of the Papists in Ireland, for some Years Past.” *Georgia Gazette*, November 12, 1766.
- “Baltimore, October 26.” *Maryland Journal*, October 26, 1774
- “Circulation Receipt Books, 1756-1761.” Redwood Archives, Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport.
- Cox, Richard. *Aphorisms Related to the Kingdom of Ireland...* London, UK: The Angel in St. Paul’s Church-yard, 1689.
- Dickinson, John. *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Hall & Sellers (AAS Copy), 1768.
- Dickinson, John. “‘The Liberty Song’ (1768).” Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections, 2005. <https://archives.dickinson.edu/sundries/liberty-song-1768>.
- “Dublin, August 21. The Present State of Europe.” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 18, 1770.
- “Dublin, August 21. The Present State of Europe.” *The Massachusetts Spy*, October 30, 1770.
- “Dublin, Sept. 13.” *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), December 1, 1737.
- “Dublin, Sept. 13.” *Virginia Gazette*, December 2, 1737.
- “Extract of a Letter from Bayuck-Camarchi, July 17, Three Hours after Signing the Peace.” *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, October 24, 1774.
- “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, Aug. 8.” *New-York Mercury*, October 14, 1765.
- “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, July 21.” *Boston Post-Boy*, October 11, 1773.
- “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, Dated July 21.” *Newport Mercury*, October 18, 1773,
- “Extract of a Letter from Dublin, July 21.” *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, October 14, 1773
- “Extract of a letter from Lisbon.” *Pennsylvania Journal, or, Weekly Advertiser*, October 20, 1773.
- “Extract of a Letter from Petersburg, July 24.” *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, October 11, 1773.
- Fish, Elisha. “Joy and gladness: a thanksgiving discourse...preached in Upton,...May 28, 1766, occasioned by the repeal of the Stamp Act.” Evans Early American Imprint Collection. Accessed January 24, 2024. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/n08310.0001.001>.

- “Fragments of a Pamphlet on the Stamp Act, [January 1766],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0024>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 72–84.]
- “From Benjamin Franklin to Benjamin Vaughan, 14 March 1785,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-43-02-0335>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 43, *August 16, 1784, through March 15, 1785*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018, pp. 491–498.]
- “From Benjamin Franklin to Charles Thomson and Thomas Mifflin, 27 January 1769,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-16-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 16, *January 1 through December 31, 1769*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 27–29.]
- “From Benjamin Franklin to Samuel Cooper, 14 April 1770,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-17-02-0060>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 17, *January 1 through December 31, 1770*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973, pp. 123–124.]
- “From Benjamin Franklin to Thomas Cushing, 13 January 1772,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-19-02-0007>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 19, *January 1 through December 31, 1772*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1975, pp. 16–24.]
- “From Benjamin Franklin to William Franklin: Journal of Negotiations in London, 22 March 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0306>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 21, *January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978, pp. 540–599.]
- “From George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, 24 August 1774,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0097>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Colonial Series, vol. 10, *21 March 1774–15 June 1775*, ed. W. W. Abbot and Dorothy Twohig. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995, pp. 154–156.]
- “From John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 May 1807,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-5186>. [This is an **Early Access document** from The Adams Papers. It is not an authoritative final version.]

- “From the *Newport Mercury*, January 9.” *The New York Journal; or, The General Advertiser*, February 9, 1775.
- “From the Third Volume of Dean Swift’s Miscellanies, Page 114 & C.” *Boston Evening-Post*, December 5, 1748.
- “From Dean Swift’s Miscellanies, Vol. 3.” *Boston Evening-Post*, March 5, 1750.
- “From Dean Swift’s Miscellanies.” *New-York Evening Post*, April 2, 1750.
- ““Homespun”: Further Defense of Indian Corn, 15 January 1766,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0014>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 13, *January 1 through December 31, 1766*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 44–49.]
- Hume, David. “Essay III: That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science [1741].” Hume Texts Online. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://davidhume.org/texts/empl1/pr>.
- Hume, David. “Essay IV. That POLITICS May Be Reduc’d to a SCIENCE [1741].” Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Accessed February 17, 2024. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=ecco%3Bc>.
- “Humphrey Ploughjogger to the *Boston Gazette*, 14 October 1765,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, Papers of John Adams, vol. 1, *September 1755–October 1773*, ed. Robert J. Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, pp. 146–148.]
- Jefferson, Thomas. “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription.” National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed September 10, 2023. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.
- Johnson, Samuel, and Frank Lynch. “Quotes on America and Americans.” The Samuel Johnson Sound Bite Page. Accessed March 1, 2024. <https://www.samueljohnson.com/america.html>.
- King, William. “The State of the Protestants of Ireland...[1691].” Early English Books Online. Accessed February 28, 2024. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A47446.0001.001?view=toc>.
- “Late Appointments.” *The New-York Mercury*, February 23, 1767.
- “Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings.” *Boston News-Letter*, August 25, 1774.
- “Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings.” *Providence Gazette*, September 3, 1774.

Leland, Thomas. *The History of Ireland...* Vol. 1. 3 vols. Dublin, IE: Printed by R. Marchbank, for R. Moncrieffe, 1774. From *America's Historical Imprints*.

“London, January 10.” *Virginia Gazette*, March 23, 1775.

“London, Nov. 1.” *New-York Journal*, January 26, 1775.

“London, Nov. 27.” *Boston News-Letter*, March 12, 1767.

“London, October 13, 1737.” *Boston News-Letter*, January 12, 1738.

“Marginalia in *Good Humour*, an Anonymous Pamphlet, [1769?],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-16-02-0178>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 16, *January 1 through December 31, 1769*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 276–283.]

Molyneux, William. “The Case of Ireland Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated [1698].” Online Library of Liberty. Accessed November 7, 2023. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/molyneux-the-case-of-ireland-being-bound-by-acts-of-parliament-in-england-stated>.

“‘N.N.’: First Reply to Vindex Patriae, [28 December 1765],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-12-02-0204>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 12, *January 1, through December 31, 1765*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, pp. 413–416.]

“On Railing and Reviling, 6 January 1768,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-15-02-0002>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 15, *January 1 through December 31, 1768*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 13–14.]

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense; Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, On the Following Interesting Subjects*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: W. & T. Bradford, 1776.

Petty, Sir William. “The Political Anatomy of Ireland...[1691].” Early English Books Online. Accessed November 4, 2023. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A54620.0001.001/1:8.10?rgn=div2%3Bview>.

Petty, Sir William. “The Province of Ulster Surveyed by Sir William Petty [1689].” The Library of Congress. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668671/>.

“Plain Truth, 17 November 1747,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0091>. [Original source: *The*

Papers of Benjamin Franklin, vol. 3, *January 1, 1745, through June 30, 1750*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 180–204.]

Prior, Thomas. *A List of the Absentees of Ireland and the Yearly Value of their Estates and Incomes...* Dublin, IRE: Printed for R. Gunne in Capel-Street, 1729.

“Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania, [October 1749],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0166>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 3, *January 1, 1745, through June 30, 1750*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 397–421.]

“Queries, 16–18 August 1768,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-15-02-0105>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 15, *January 1 through December 31, 1768*, ed. William B. Willcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, pp. 187–189.]

“Remarks on the Quebec Bill: Part Two, [22 June 1775],” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0059>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, *1768–1778*, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 169–176.]

“Salem, January 18.” *Essex Gazette*, January 18, 1774.

Swift, Jonathan, David Hayton, and Adam Rounce. “‘A Modest Proposal’ .” Essay. In *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)* 14, 14:143–60. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Swift, Jonathan. “A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture [1720].” *Corpus of Electronic Texts Edition*, 2014. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/E700001-024.html>.

Swift, Jonathan, David Hayton and Adam Rounce. “‘A Short View of the State of Ireland,’” Essay. In *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jonathan Swift: Irish Political Writings After 1725 (A Modest Proposal and Other Works)* 14, 14:12–26. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

“*The Farmer Refuted, &c.*, [23 February] 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0057>. [Original source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, *1768–1778*, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 81–165.]

“The Statutes of Kilkenny [1367].” *Corpus of Electronic Texts*. Accessed November 7, 2023. <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300001-001.html>.

“To Benjamin Franklin from William Strahan, 26 August 1752,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-04-02-0129>. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 4, *July 1, 1750, through June 30, 1753*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 350–353.]

“To Thomas Jefferson from Perkins, Buchanan & Brown, 2 October 1769,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0022>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, *1760–1776*, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 33–34.]

“Thurdsday [sic] Jany. 9th. 1765 [i.e. 1766].,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/01-01-02-0010-0001-0009>. [Original source: *The Adams Papers*, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 1, *1755–1770*, ed. L. H. Butterfield. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 288–290.]

“Vindication.” *Providence Gazette*, March 9, 1765

Warner, Ferdinando. *The History of Ireland*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. London, UK: Printed for J. and R. Tonson, in the Strand, 1763.

Wells, W.V. *Life of Samuel Adams*, vol. i..

Zubly, John Joachim. “An Humble Enquiry...[1769].” Evans Early American Imprint Collection. Accessed February 23, 2024. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=evans;cc=evans;rgn=div1;view=text;idno=N09042.0001.001;node=N09042.0001.001:2>

Secondary Sources

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. 5th ed. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971.

Bailyn, Bernard. *Pamphlets of the American Revolution: 1750-1776*. Vol. 1. 4 vols. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965.

Bailyn, Bernard. *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974.

Barrow, Thomas C. “The American Revolution as a Colonial War for Independence.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1968): 452–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1921776>.

Bartlett, Thomas. *Ireland: A History*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Bartlett, Thomas. “The Augmentation of the Army in Ireland 1767-1769.” *The English Historical Review* 96, no. 380 (1981): 540–59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/568903>.

- Beard, Charles A. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1935.
- Bonwick, Colin. "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986): 355–73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27554789>.
- Breen, T. H. "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising." *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 13–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>.
- Breen, T. H. *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2011.
- Bric, Maurice J. "Ireland, America and the Reassessment of a Special Relationship, 1760-1783." *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an Dá Chultúr* 11 (1996): 88–119. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30070595>.
- Brown, Richard D. *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1976.
- Bushman, Richard L. *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Campbell, Kenneth L. *Ireland's History: Prehistory to the Present*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2014.
- Canny, Nicholas P. *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1999.
- Canny, Nicholas P. "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1973, pp. 575–98. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1918596>. Accessed 28 Mar. 2024.
- Carroll, Michael P. "How the Irish Became Protestant in America." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 16, no. 1 (2006): 25–54. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2006.16.1.25>.
- "Charles Thomson." University Archives and Records Center. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-people/biography/charles-thomson/>.
- Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. New Haven and London, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Dziennik, Matthew P. "Ireland and the American Revolution." *Journal of the American Revolution*, August 28, 2016. <https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/05/ireland-and-the-american-revolution/>.

- Foster, Robert F. *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972*. London, UK: Penguin Press, 1988.
- Griffin, Martin I. J. "The Irish Catholics and the Revolution." *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 6, no. 4 (1910): 340–42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44374826>.
- Griffin, Patrick, Francis D. Cogliano, and Gordon S. Wood. "The American Revolution and the Uses and Abuses of Ireland." Essay. In *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty*, 53–68. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021.
- Griffin, Patrick, Francis D. Cogliano, and Matthew P. Dziennik. "Peasants, Soldiers, and Revolutionaries: Interpreting Irish Manpower in the Age of Revolutions." Essay. In *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty*, 105-125. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021.
- Griffin, Patrick, Francis D. Cogliano, and Peter Onuf. "Epilogue." Essay. In *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty*, 301-321. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2021.
- Hubert, Ollivier, François Furstenberg, and Aaron Willis. "Rethinking Ireland and Assimilation: Quebec, Collaboration, and the Heterogeneous Empire." Essay. In *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire*, 165–94. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.
- Hubert, Ollivier, François Furstenberg, and Brad A. Jones. "A 'Fit Instrument': The Quebec Act and the Outbreak of Rebellion in Two British Atlantic Port Cities." Essay. In *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire*, 232–64. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.
- Hubert, Ollivier, François Furstenberg, and Christian R. Burset. "Quebec, Bengal, and the Rise of Authoritarian Legal Pluralism." Essay. In *Entangling the Quebec Act: Transnational Contexts, Meanings, and Legacies in North America and the British Empire*, 131–62. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020.
- Lucas, Stephen, ed. *A Rhetorical History of the United States: Rhetoric, Independence, and Nationhood, 1760-1800*. Vol. 2. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2022.
- McIlwain, Charles Howard. *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958.
- Moore, Sean. "The Irish Contribution to the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution: Nonimportation and the Reception of Jonathan Swift's Irish Satires in Early America." *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 333–62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90009821>.
- O'Brien, Michael J. *A Hidden Phase of American History: Ireland's Part in America's Struggle for Liberty*. 1st ed. New York, NY: The Devin-Adair Company, 1921.

- Onuf, Peter S. “‘To Declare Them a Free and Independent People’: Race, Slavery, and National Identity in Jefferson’s Thought.” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (1998): 1–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124731>.
- Raphael, Ray. *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord*. New York, NY: New Press, 2002.
- Ruppert, Bob. “Paoli: Hero of the Sons of Liberty.” *Journal of the American Revolution*, May 11, 2016. <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/05/paoli-hero-of-the-sons-of-liberty/>.
- Taylor, Alan. *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 2016.
- “Thomas Mifflin.” U.S. Army Center of Military History. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://www.history.army.mil/books/revwar/ss/mifflin.htm>.
- Wokeck, Marianne S. “Irish Immigration to the Delaware Valley before the American Revolution.” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 96C, no. 5 (1996): 103–35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25516172>.
- Wood, Gordon S. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Vintage, 1993.
- Young, Alfred Fabian, Gary B. Nash, and Ray Raphael. *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2012.