THE LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM OF CONQUEST IN IRELAND, *c.* 1790–1850*

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ABSTRACT. The question of whether Ireland had been conquered by England
has received some attention from historians of eighteenth-century Ireland, mainly
because it preoccupied William Molyneux, author of the influential *The Case of
Ireland ... Stated* (1698). Molyneux defended Irish parliamentary rights by denying
the reality of a medieval conquest of Ireland by English monarchs, but he did
allow for what could be called 'aristocratic conquest'. The seventeenth century, too,
had left a legacy of conquest, and this paper examines evidence of consciousness
among Irish Protestants of descent from ancestral conquerors. It considers how and
why this consciousness took a more pronounced sectarian turn during the 1790s.
Williamite anniversaries, increasingly associated with the Orange Order, became
identified in the Catholic mind as symbolic reminders of conquest. Thanks to the
protracted struggle for 'Catholic emancipation', this issue continued to feature in
political debate about Ireland well into the nineteenth century, while the passing
of the Act of Union (1800) revitalised the older debate about whether England could
be said to have conquered Ireland. Liberal Protestants and Catholics contended
that England had invariably intervened to prevent any possibility of reconciliation
between conquerors and conquered. Thus the language of conquest remained highly
adaptable.

The announcement yesterday that Northern Ireland's First Minister, Dr
Ian Paisley, is to visit the site of the battle of the Boyne (1690) in County
Meath, at the invitation of Republic of Ireland Taoiseach Mr Bertie
Ahern, has aroused much interest. The importance of that battle in
Irish history, and later in the anniversary tradition of the Orange Order,
suggests that the visit will be of particular significance. The event relates
to the theme of this paper because it was during the 1790s that seventeenth-
century events came to dominate talk of conquest in the public domain,
with lasting consequences for Irish history.

The subject of conquest has received considerable attention from
historians of medieval and early modern Ireland, but less so for later

periods.[1] This paper focuses not on whether conquest did or did not occur in the past,[2] but on how it was perceived, and its wider significance in the public and political sphere. It examines why, during the 1790s, attention shifted from the invasion of Henry II to events in the 1690s, and the subsequent significance of that development. For the purposes of comparison, the language of conquest in the period from the Williamite wars down to the 1780s will first be considered.

I

Ideas about conquest in the eighteenth century have received some attention from historians because they featured in William Molyneux's influential *The Case of Ireland's Being Bound by Acts of Parliament in England, Stated* (Dublin, 1698). In the absence of a legislative union (which Molyneux commended briefly but thought unobtainable), *The Case* defended the integrity of Ireland's parliament. By passing laws purporting to bind Ireland, such as curbs on the woollen industry, the English parliament was allegedly acting beyond its powers. *The Case*, which went through nine reprintings during the eighteenth century,[3] had a bearing on conquest in two main ways. First, the question of whether the invasions of 1167–71 could be said to constitute conquest. In a much-cited passage, Molyneux argued that there had been no conquest by Henry II:

> [By contrast to the opposition given to William I in England] ... *Henry* the Second receiv'd not the least Opposition in *Ireland*, all came in Peaceably, and had large Concessions made them of the like Laws and Liberties with the People of *England*, which they gladly Accepted ... From what foregoes, I presume it Appears that *Ireland* cannot properly be said *so to be Conquer'd* by *Henry* the Second, as to give the Parliament of *England* any Jurisdiction over us.[4]

In arguing that Henry II's sovereignty had been accepted, freely, by the native Irish leaders, and that no conquest had occurred, Molyneux was attaching particular importance to one strand in the historiographical traditions surrounding the invasion. Giraldus Cambrensis, the first

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[1] See, e.g., R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest. The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100–1300* (Cambridge, 1990); Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland* (Hassocks, 1976); Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest* (Dublin, 1994); Hans Pawlisch, *Sir John Davies and the Conquest of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1985); Patrick Kelly, 'Conquest versus Consent as the Basis of the English Title to Ireland in William Molyneux's *Case of Ireland*', in *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer (Cambridge, 2005), 334–56.

[2] For which see Anthony Carty, *Was Ireland Conquered? International Law and the Irish Question* (1996).

[3] Patrick Kelly, 'William Molyneux and the Spirit of Liberty in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 3 (1988), 136.

[4] William Molyneux, *The Case of Ireland Stated*, reprint of 1st edn (Dublin, 1977), 31, 33.

historian of those events, considered that at least a partial conquest had occurred.[5] His view had been endorsed by others who took conquest for granted, and this was widely accepted in Anglo-Irish circles in the early modern period.[6] Molyneux was, however, close to the position of another influential commentator, the Old English Catholic Geoffrey Keating, whose *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (written in the 1630s and published in English as *The General History of Ireland* in 1723) became a highly respected source for eighteenth-century ideas about Irish history. Keating contended that Henry II's authority, legitimated by Pope Adrian IV's bull *Laudabiliter* (1155), had been willingly accepted by most of the Irish clergy and nobility, and his account gave no grounds for supposing that Ireland had been conquered.[7] Molyneux – a Protestant and a friend of Locke – did not mention *Laudabiliter*, and gave what he called the 'Original Compact' between Henry II and the Irish leaders a more Lockian flavour than Keating had done, but his main deduction was that laws binding Ireland should receive the Irish parliament's assent.[8] A further attraction of the idea of a constitution obtained by consent, Patrick Kelly has recently argued, was its implication that the native Irish could claim no subsequent right of resistance to royal authority.[9]

The British government's verdict on Molyneux's arguments was enshrined in the Declaratory Act (1720), which affirmed the British parliament's right to legislate for Ireland. Although this right was used sparingly, *The Case* became an inspiration for those 'Patriots' who sought to defend what Colin Kidd has called 'the regnal privileges of the Irish kingdom'. The stakes were raised in the 1760s with Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, which asserted that Ireland had been conquered;[10] and as the campaign to defend Irish privileges neared its climax in the late 1770s, Patriots complained that it was in this spirit that Ireland was being governed.[11] Subsequently, the heat evaporated when, during the American revolutionary crisis of 1782–3, the British parliament

[5] *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, by Giraldus Cambrensis, ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), 231–3.

[6] Ciaran Brady, 'The Decline of the Irish Kingdom', in *Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Mark Greengrass (1991), 96–7; Kelly, 'Conquest versus Consent', 335–40.

[7] Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), 148–51.

[8] *Ibid.*, 111–12, 165–6; Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 40–7.

[9] Kelly, 'Conquest versus Consent', 354–5.

[10] Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), 254–5; Stephen Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776–1798* (Oxford, 2002), 62.

[11] R. B. McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750–1800* (1944), 45–6; Small, *Political Thought*, 60–3, 78–80.

acknowledged the exclusive right of the Irish parliament to legislate for Ireland.

However, it has been shown that Molyneux's arguments about conquest were more complex than might at first appear. While the main thrust of *The Case* was that there had been no conquest of Ireland by Henry II, Molyneux did allow for what can be called 'aristocratic conquest' in Ireland.[12] Noting that Henry II's arrival had been preceded by 'some Conflicts between [the first Adventurers] and the *Irish*, in which the latter were constantly beaten', he argued that 'the Conquests obtain'd by those Adventurers, who came over only by the King's *License* and *Permission*, and not at all by his particular *Command* . . . can never be call'd the Conquest of *Henry* the Second'. And he continued:

> Supposing *Hen.* II had *Right* to Invade this Island, and that he had been opposed therein by the Inhabitants, it was only the *Ancient Race* of the *Irish*, that could suffer by this Subjugation; the *English* and *Britains* that came over and Conquered with him, retain'd all the Freedoms and Immunities of *Free-born* Subjects; they nor their Descendants could not in reason lose these, for being Successful and Victorious.

Molyneux softened the implications of this hypothetical conquest by proceeding, in a much-debated passage, to argue that 'the great Body of the present People of *Ireland*, are the progeny of the *English* and *Britains* that from time to time have come over into this Kingdom; and there remains but a meer handful of the Antient *Irish* at this day; I may say not one in a thousand'.[13] In making that statement, so apparently at odds with Irish realities, Molyneux has been variously interpreted as being disingenuous; as referring to the landed elite as the people of Ireland; or reflecting a belief that even the native Irish were originally of British extraction.[14] Whatever his meaning, the point was that conquest, and, more important, conquerors, were slipping in by the back door. For while Molyneux might seem to present such a conquest in purely hypothetical terms, the practical implications of the idea were too useful to remain hypothetical. By associating 'the present People of Ireland' with the descendants of those '*English* and *Britains*' who had conquered with Henry II, Molyneux was enhancing the importance to the crown of those free-born descendants of conquerors, and bolstering their claims to the full enjoyment of the rights associated with the kingdom of Ireland.

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[12] C. D. A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime* (Dublin, 1994), 31–7; Jacqueline Hill, 'Ireland without Union: Molyneux and his Legacy', in *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge, 1995), 280–2; Kelly, 'Conquest versus Consent', 350–3.

[13] Molyneux, *Case of Ireland*, 32, 34–5.

[14] Jim Smyth, '"Like Amphibious Animals": Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons, 1691– 1707', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 789–91; Hill, 'Molyneux', 280–1; Kelly, 'Conquest versus Consent', 351.

It was, of course, the case that whereas Molyneux was speaking on behalf of an exclusively Protestant political elite, those conquering ancestors had been Old English Catholics, whose political rights in the 1690s were being eroded by those very Protestants. Molyneux was silent on this, but the point was made forcefully by the anonymous Jacobite author of 'A Light to the Blind' (*c.* 1711):

> The just interest of the crown of England is only preserved in Ireland by maintaining in a high state the true conquerors of that kingdom, who by their blood annexed the Irish crown to the English diadem . . . Those victors, being Catholics, landed from England . . . under Henry the Second . . . Their posterity have continued in the like . . . loyalty even to this day, propping the true kings of England . . . while the upstart Protestants have of late years endeavoured to cast down those crowned heads.[15]

But the Jacobite defeat, and subsequent introduction of new penal laws against Catholics, left political power in the hands of the Protestant minority, who for decades to come were able to concentrate on relations with Britain. Accordingly, as noted above, for the political elite the language of conquest in that period was mainly directed outwards, towards Anglo-Irish relations, and (inspired by Molyneux) denying the reality of conquest. Yet, as Cadoc Leighton has argued, the idea of descent from conquerors remained familiar to Irish Protestants.[16] Thus Archbishop King defended Irish constitutional rights by invoking conquests 'by the English that came into Ireland', while Jonathan Swift referred to 'the savage Irish, who our Ancestors conquered several hundred years ago'.[17]

The obvious inconsistency of Protestant Irishmen, most of whom had arrived in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, assuming the mantle of medieval Old English Catholics does not appear to have troubled the political elite; and this phenomenon may be regarded as simply one facet of what Kidd has called 'the protean character' of Anglo-Irish identity. In any case, it should not be inferred that in appropriating the identity of Old English settlers Protestants placed exclusive or even primary emphasis on the 'conquering' element in that inheritance. More important was a commitment (derived from supposed 'Gothic' ancestry shared with the English) to free institutions, and a limited (and Protestant) constitution.[18] Moreover, such references sprang from resentment at Ireland's treatment at English hands, rather than a desire to emphasise internal differences. And such language could be used in relatively inclusive ways. In 1753, on the eve of the contentious 'money-bill

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[15] Quoted in *A New History of Ireland*, III: *Early Modern Ireland, 1534–1691*, ed. T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (Oxford, 1976), lxii.

[16] Leighton, *Catholicism*, 78–9.

[17] Quoted in Hill, 'Molyneux', 292.

[18] Kidd, *British Identities*, 251–7.

dispute', the earl of Kildare, a Protestant of Old English descent, and Ireland's leading 'Patriot' peer, addressed the king, complaining of the conduct of the Irish administration. His memorial began by setting out:

> THAT your memorialist is the eldest peer of the realm, by descent, as lineally sprung from . . . the noble Earl of Kildare, who came over under the invincible banner of your august predecessor Henry the Second, when his arms conquered the kingdom of Ireland. That your memorialist, on this foundation, has the greater presumption to address your august majesty, as his ancestors have ever proved themselves steady adherents to the conquest of that kingdom, and were greatly instrumental in the reduction thereof . . . That though they were first sent over with letters patent, under Henry the Second's banner, to conquer that kingdom, yet by the inheritance of lands, by intermarriages with princesses of the kingdom, they became powerful, and might have conquered for themselves, notwithstanding which, their allegiance was such, as that, on that sovereign's mandate to stop the progress of war, we obeyed, and relinquished our title of conquest, laid down our arms, and received that monarch with due homage and allegiance, resigning our conquests as became subjects . . . That on this presumption, your memorialist has, in the most humble manner, at the request of the natives of Ireland, your majesty's true liege subjects, not only the aborigines thereof, but the English colonies [*sic*], sent over by Henry the Second, Richard the Second, . . . William the Third of glorious memory, and other kings, your majesty's predecessors, and the conquerors of Ireland, made bold to lay before your majesty, the true state of their several and respective grievances.[19]

Two points stand out about Kildare's references to conquest. In contrast to those made by Archbishop King and Swift, they were very self-conscious. Addressing the king in his own person, Kildare would have wished to mention all his credentials as a peer of the realm and loyal subject. Reference to the conquest of Henry II allowed him to mention that those 'who conquered with him' (to use Molyneux's phrase) included direct ancestors of his own.[20] He emphasised his ancestors' willingness to resign their own conquests in favour of royal claims. There was no sign of the usual Patriot insistence that no royal conquest had occurred, and which doubtless in other contexts Kildare would have endorsed.

Secondly, while Kildare distinguished between 'the aborigines [of Ireland]' and 'the English colonies sent over by Henry the Second', he stressed that he regarded himself as speaking on behalf of all 'the natives of Ireland' (those born in Ireland, as opposed to the English-born ministers about whom he was complaining). This representative character was reinforced by mention of the intermarriage of his ancestors with (Old Irish) 'princesses'. Thus, although in practice Kildare was speaking on behalf of Protestants, his talk of conquest, informed by aristocratic rather than religious values, owed nothing to sectarian divisions.

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[19] Quoted in Francis Plowden, *A Historical Review of the State of Ireland, from the Invasion of that Country under Henry II to its Union with Great Britain* (5 vols., Philadelphia, 1805), II, Appendix LVIII, 8–10.

[20] See M. T. Flanagan, 'Fitzgerald, Maurice (d. 1176)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

It has been argued thus far that the language of conquest in the eighteenth century prioritised medieval events; focused on Anglo-Irish relations; and did not dwell unduly on internal divisions stemming from a consciousness of conquest. However, there were more recent events in Irish history that could be said to constitute conquest. The anniversary of the battle of the Boyne (1 July 1690 (OS)) had been celebrated by Protestants from the 1690s onwards (the equestrian statue of King William in Dublin was inaugurated on 1 July 1701). In the 1730s veterans of that battle paraded under arms, proclaiming 'We ... conquered [at?] the Boyne.'[21] Subsequently, while Dublin Castle and the political elite annually celebrated King William's birthday (4 November), Boyne and Aughrim societies were formed to commemorate Williamite military victories. These events featured processions of armed Protestants, drawn chiefly from the lesser gentry and middle classes.[22]

Moreover, seventeenth-century conquests had also involved Presbyterians, who invoked conquest in both agrarian and religious causes.[23] Writing in 1787, the Reverend Samuel Barber, Minister of Rathfriland (County Down), complained that Presbyterians as well as Catholics were obliged to pay tithes to the established church. Future readers, he suggested, would be astonished to discover

> that [Presbyterians] fought at their [the Church of Ireland] side and conquered with them; that they planted, civilised and improved the province of Ulster, and while they were doing so, forged their own chains ... they assisted in conquering the Roman Chatholicks [*sic*], and were reduced to the same servitude.[24]

That such a comment could be made, not by a rabid anti-Catholic, but by a reformer later accused of being a United Irishman,[25] is suggestive of how unexceptional was a sense of conquering status among eighteenth-century Protestants. Preaching to Volunteers at Strabane, County Tyrone, in 1779, the New Light Presbyterian minister Andrew Alexander defended Volunteering because 'gross mismanagement' of the empire had rendered 'the sons of conquerors ... dupes of a blundering adm[—]n'.[26] Such attitudes had political and social roots. Not until 1774 did it prove possible to frame an oath allowing Catholics to swear allegiance to the Hanoverians, and it was 1793 before Catholics were

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[21] Quoted in James Kelly, '"The Glorious and Immortal Memory": Commemoration and Protestant Identity in Ireland 1660–1800', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 94, Sect. C (1994), 32, 37.

[22] *Ibid.*, 32, 41–4.

[23] Leighton, *Catholicism*, 68.

[24] Samuel Barber, *Remarks on a Pamphlet, Intitled* [*sic*] *The Present State of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1787), 36.

[25] I. R. McBride, 'Barber, Samuel (1737/8–1811), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[26] Quoted in Allan Blackstock, 'Armed Citizens and Christian Soldiers: Crisis Sermons and Ulster Presbyterians, 1715–1803', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 22 (2007), 96–7.

legally entitled to bear arms. Surrounded by a Catholic (and putatively Jacobite) majority, Irish Protestants kept up a system of 'public banding' long after it had been abandoned in Great Britain; and Protestant tenants, including Presbyterians, were commonly called out under their landlords' leadership against a variety of foreign and domestic dangers.[27] Appeals to the spirit of the 'citizen soldier' might be couched in purely defensive terms, but could be more bellicose. Appealing for volunteers during the Jacobite scare of 1745, Reverend William Henry urged his mixed Presbyterian/Church of Ireland Ulster audience to defend the liberties of their country, but also invoked the spirit of 'our glorious Deliverer King WILLIAM, [who], when he marched through the *North* of *Ireland*, drew his Sword, and said, "it was a Country well worth the fighting for"'.[28]

II

The 1790s marked an irrevocable change in Irish politics, with the emergence of political rights for Catholics, which would dominate debate for nearly forty years. Although various civil rights, including the right to teach, and to buy and sell land, had been conceded by the early 1780s, the question of political rights was too sensitive (given Ireland's Catholic majority) to have encouraged much public discussion. But the French Revolution, and especially France's civil constitution of the clergy (1790), removed some inhibitions on discussion of this topic. As the prospect of war between Britain and France grew, ministers in London became readier to listen to those (including Edmund Burke) who recommended granting political rights to Irish Catholics to reinforce their supposed commitment to traditional institutions. Burke was not alone in commending this step – radicals in Belfast and Dublin hoped to win Catholic support for reform – but as someone standing outside Irish politics he could be blunter in his analysis of the political situation, and (as the author of the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*), far more influential. In his *Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe* (February 1792), Burke distinguished between the Glorious Revolution in England and its Irish counterpart, describing the latter as 'not a revolution, but a conquest'. Alluding to Locke's contention that following conquest, conquerors and conquered usually became reconciled, Burke noted that this had not happened in Ireland. He blamed Irish Protestants, who had developed the principles of a 'master-cast' [*sic*], and a 'colonial garrison'. The penal laws were a manifestation of 'hatred and scorn towards a conquered people'. He was particularly critical of the Protestant monopoly of Irish political rights

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[27] David W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin, 1978), 25.

[28] [Willam Henry], *A Philippic Oration, against the Pretender's Son, &* (Dublin, 1745), 14–15. I am grateful to Allan Blackstock for this reference.

because it extended beyond the landed class: 'a plebeian oligarchy is a monster'. And to compound Protestant discomfiture, Burke challenged the fixed Protestant nature of the Williamite settlement, noting that Irish Catholics had not been deprived of the vote until the 1720s.[29]

The idea of conquest – already the subject of Enlightenment critique – was coming under pressure from other sources at this time, notably Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791–2), which sold in Ireland even more robustly than in Britain.[30] Paine's contention that aristocratic rights stemmed from conquest was hardly new, but it added to the pressures on Protestants in Ireland, where aristocratic and landed interests faced serious challenges in the 1790s. After the 1790s, it became less common for even hard-line or ultra-Protestants to articulate publicly their former, largely unselfconscious self-image as descendants of conquering ancestors. A new term was coming into use, one that had arisen in the 1780s as contemporaries sought to describe the realities of Protestant control, 'Protestant ascendancy'.[31] This term was deployed early on by Dublin Corporation, in its *Letter to the Protestants of Ireland* (September 1792), which, following repeal of the ban on Catholics practising law earlier in the year, sought to rally Protestants against further concessions. The Corporation – the very embodiment of that 'plebeian' element in the Protestant elite which Burke had deplored – defended 'Protestant ascendancy', defined as maintaining the exclusively Protestant character of the apparatus of government, established church, parliament and electorate.

However, the Corporation was not ready to surrender the idea of a Protestant constitution acquired by sword right. Positing a Lockian 'appeal to heaven' to describe the clash between William of Orange and James II, the Corporation contended that 'the great ruler of all things decided in favour of our ancestors, he gave them victory and Ireland became a Protestant nation enjoying a British constitution'.[32]

[29] Edmund Burke, *A Letter to Sir Hecules Langrishe, Bart. M.P., on the Subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland*, in *The Works of Edmund Burke* (6 vols., 1884–99), III, 304–5, 312–15, 319–21; Hill, 'Molyneux', 293. Burke's views on conquest are further discussed by Sean Patrick Donlan, 'The "Genuine Voice of its Records and Monuments"? Edmund Burke's "Interior History of Ireland"', in *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities*, ed. Sean Patrick Donlan (Dublin, 2007), 69–101, and Richard Bourke, 'Edmund Burke and the Politics of Conquest', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4, 3 (2007), 403–32.

[30] Jacqueline Hill, 'Politics and the Writing of History: The Impact of the 1690s and 1790s on Irish Historiography', in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. D. George Boyce, R. Eccleshall and V. Geoghegan (Basingstoke, 2001), 231; David Dickson, 'Paine and Ireland', in *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*, ed. David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (Dublin, 1993), 136–7.

[31] James Kelly, 'Eighteenth-Century Ascendancy: A Commentary', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 5 (1990), 173–87.

[32] *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, ed. J. T. Gilbert and R. M. Gilbert (19 vols., Dublin, 1889–1944), XIV, 285–6.

A providential interpretation of the Williamite intervention had been aired by Protestants in the 1690s, but the Corporation's construction was consistent with recent interest being shown in Locke's views on government.[33] Catholics and liberal Protestants were outraged. The Catholic Society of Dublin counterattacked, using Patriot language: 'If conquest and the right of the sword could justify the stronger in retaining dominion, why did Great Britain abdicate her legislative supremacy over Ireland?' Henry Grattan argued that Catholics could plead the Corporation's 'law of conquest' to justify rebellion.[34]

The view that the Williamite revolution was a once-for-all transaction, stemming from providential conquest, and establishing an unalterable Protestant constitution securing civil and religious liberty, was endorsed by the first Orange societies, founded following clashes between (Protestant) Peep O'Day Boys and (Catholic) Defenders in County Armagh in 1795 ('We associate together . . . to defend the Protestant Ascendancy, for which our ancestors fought and conquered').[35] Orange lodges – exclusively Protestant, and with a strong demotic element – were soon caught up in the spread of counter-revolutionary loyalism in the mid-1790s, which was more militaristic and less open to accommodation with Catholics than the Irish loyalist associations of 1793–4. Orangemen commemorated primarily not William's birthday (still strongly associated with the elite) but, like the Boyne and Aughrim societies, his military victories. Down to 1795, the battle of the Boyne (1 July OS) was still being celebrated on 1 July (NS), despite the calendar change in 1752, which would have brought it to 12 July (NS); by adopting 12 July (NS) as the Boyne anniversary, the Orangemen were able to incorporate the anniversary of the battle of Aughrim (12 July (OS)). Gentry in mid-Ulster contributed to the reinvention of the Boyne tradition when in 1797 they actively encouraged plebeian Orangemen to see their clashes with Defenders (now allied with United Irishmen) as part of a military tradition stretching back to the Williamite era.[36]

From the outset, the new celebrations of the twelfth were controversial: those in 1796 followed serious disturbances in County Armagh, involving

[33] Ian McBride, *The Seige of Derry in Ulster Protestant Mythology* (Dublin, 1997), 20–1; Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin Civic Politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660–1840* (Oxford, 1997), 224–5; Patrick Kelly, 'Perceptions of Locke in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 89, Sect. C (1989), 276–8.

[34] Both quoted in Dennis Taaffe, *An Impartial History of Ireland, from the Period of the English Invasion to the Present Time* (4 vols., Dublin, 1811), IV, 341, 393–4.

[35] Statement of General Principles, meeting of masters of Orange lodges, Armagh city, 1797, in *The Formation of the Orange Order 1795–1798: The Edited Papers of Colonel William Blacker and Colonel Robert Wallace*, ed. Cecil Kilpatrick and Brian Kennaway (Belfast, 1994), 109; Allan Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland 1789–1829* (Woodbridge, 2007), 57.

[36] Blackstock, *Loyalism*, 63–8, 72–5; and on choice of date, Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke, 1997), 111–17.

the expulsion of hundreds of Catholics from their homes.[37] But even before the Order's foundation, Williamite anniversaries – once (allegedly) accepted phlegmatically in Catholic circles[38] – were beginning to be deprecated as symbolic reminders of conquest. Thus the *Declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin* (1791), which also expressed resentment at plebeian Protestant privilege, to which Burke would allude in 1792:

> The liberty of Ireland [the constitution of 1782] to those of our communion is a cala-
> mity . . . They may look with envy to the subjects of an arbitrary Monarch, and contrast
> that government in which one great tyrant ravages the land, with the thousand inferior
> despots whom at every instant they must encounter . . . [We complain particularly] of
> the celebration of festivals memorable only, as they denote the era, and the events, from
> which we date our bondage.[39]

Despite Protestant misgivings, Irish Catholics were granted many political rights in 1793, including the right to vote, and, crucially, to bear arms.[40] Only membership of parliament and some public service posts remained closed. However, exercising the new rights (frequently dependent on Protestant goodwill) often proved difficult, fuelling the demand for full political equality. During the 1790s that cause was beginning to be described in language like that of the anti-slave trade campaign, as involving Catholic 'emancipation'.[41] But powerful interests opposed further concessions, and meanwhile radicals of all three major denominations planned (with French help) to break the link with Britain. By 1798 Catholics were perceived to pose a special threat, and Dublin Castle reluctantly agreed to a partial arming of Orangemen. Incidents during the rebellion of 1798 prompted accusations that Catholics had aimed at extirpating Protestants,[42] and some Protestants became more amenable to legislative union with Britain. Since strategic considerations were leading the British government to think on unionist lines, an Act of Union was passed – not without opposition – in 1800.

III

During the first half of the nineteenth century, conquest continued to feature in political debate about Ireland because of its perceived connection with two great issues of the period – Catholic 'emancipation'

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[37] Hereward Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1795–1836* (1996), 29–36.

[38] Jacqueline Hill, 'National Festivals, the State, and "Protestant Ascendancy" in Ireland, 1790–1829', *Irish Historical Studies*, 24 (1984), 34.

[39] *Transactions of the General Committee of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, during the Year 1791* (Dublin, 1792), 12.

[40] 33 Geo. III, c. 21.

[41] David Dickson, *New Foundations: Ireland 1660–1800*, 2nd edn (Dublin, 2000), 197.

[42] Blackstock, *Loyalism*, 90–3; Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland, from the Arrival of the English* (1801), 4th edn (Fort Wayne, 1995), 81, 115 n. 1.

and the Act of Union. Despite Catholic condemnation of Williamite anniversaries as symbolic of conquest, such events were acquiring new significance. This was principally owing to the Orange Order, but wartime considerations also applied. A string of victories over revolutionary France in 1795 invited comparisons with the 1690s, and Dublin Castle extended its countenance to the Boyne anniversary.[43]

It was not until 1806, when a new viceroy, the duke of Bedford, absented himself from the annual procession to mark King William's birthday that the state began to distance itself from the Williamite anniversary tradition – and even so, flags continued to be flown at the Castle on such occasions for some years to come, and popular celebrations continued.[44] Critics urged government to discountenance such events completely. William Parnell, a liberal Protestant, contended that they were 'notoriously intended by one party, and felt by the other, as a parade of insulting domination'.[45] According to Dennis Taaffe, a Catholic (and former United Irishman),

> party malevolence is kept alive and fomented, by annual commemorations of party success or calumny, invented by Machiavel [sic] statesmen for the ruin of some party in religion or politics. When . . . countenanced by public authority, they must be considered as annual manifestoes [sic], provoking civil war.[46]

Such comments reflected a sense that any official sanction for the reinvented Williamite tradition implied indefinite postponement of full 'emancipation'. There were certainly strong arguments in favour of emancipation – not least the growing reliance on Irish Catholics in the British armed forces. But various obstacles remained. The opposition of George III, and (more unexpectedly) of the prince regent, and English public opinion generally, were probably less important than the fact that before the establishment in 1822 of Robert Peel's county constabulary (recruited on non-sectarian lines), post-rebellion tranquillity in Ireland depended in practice on continued use of the yeomanry. Since the rebellion, the yeomanry had become almost entirely Protestant, much influenced by ultra-Protestant or Orange assumptions. Whereas loyalism in Great Britain had retained its original, inclusive character, in post-union Ireland the high profile of the yeomanry and the vitality of the Williamite anniversary tradition combined to suggest that post-rebellion loyalism was an exclusively Protestant preserve.[47] Thus requests by liberal Protestants and Catholics for restrictions on Williamite anniversaries had

[43] Hill, 'National Festivals', 37.

[44] *Ibid.*, 40–1.

[45] William Parnell, *An Historical Apology for the Irish Catholics* (Dublin, 1807), 139–40.

[46] Taaffe, *Impartial History*, II, 379–80.

[47] Blackstock, *Loyalism*, 129–30; *idem*, *An Ascendancy Army: The Irish Yeomanry, 1796–1834* (Dublin, 1998), 262–3, 278–91.

little effect. Those events, increasingly orchestrated by Orangemen, took place both in Ulster, with its Protestant majority, and in other areas with a significant Protestant presence. In Dublin, the decoration of King William's statue in Orange accoutrements was particularly contentious.

It was thus not until the 1820s that systematic attempts began to curb the displays on 12 July. George IV's visit to Ireland in 1821, and subsequent endorsement of 'conciliation', together with the appointment of a pro-Catholic viceroy, Lord Wellesley, culminated in 1822 in the first successful ban on the decoration of the Dublin statue. When Orangemen expressed their resentment during Wellesley's visit to the Theatre Royal, and a bottle was thrown at or near the viceregal box, the ringleaders were put on trial.[48] Speaking for the crown at the trial, the Irish attorney general, William Conyngham Plunket, reflected on the outcome of the Williamite wars in Ireland:

> No candid man can ... fairly say, that he thinks worse of the Roman Catholic, for having ... abided by his lawful Sovereign and his ancient faith. What was the result? They were conquered – conquered into freedom and happiness – a freedom and happiness to which the successful result of their ill-fated struggles would have been destructive. There is no rational Roman Catholic in Ireland who does not feel this to be the fact ... The memory of their unfortunate struggles is lost in the conviction of the reality of those blessings, which have been derived from their results equally to the conqueror and to the conquered. What wise or good man can feel a pleasure in recalling to a people so circumstanced, the fact that they have been conquered? ... He is a mischievous man, who for the gratification of his own whim, desires to celebrate, in the midst of that people, the anniversary of their conquest.[49]

The view that the Irish were fortunate to have been conquered was not new – variations on the theme stretched back to sixteenth-century commentators such as Edmund Campion.[50] But since the 1790s a generation of pro-Catholic spokesmen had highlighted the negative legacy for Catholics of Williamite conquest. Liberal Protestants, such as Plunket, faced a dilemma. Supporters of Catholic emancipation, they deplored what they regarded as the exclusive spirit of contemporary Williamite anniversaries. Yet no Protestant could afford to discountenance the Williamite revolution, with its connotations of civil and religious liberty, entirely. The best that could be done was to emphasise William's own tolerant values, and try to wrest his legacy from the more exclusive ultra-Protestants. But this did not necessarily satisfy Catholics, who had proud military traditions of their own. A palpable sense of indignation permeated Daniel O'Connell's post-emancipation history, *A Memoir on*

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[48] Hill, *Patriots to Unionists*, 324–9; Christopher Morash, *A History of the Irish Theatre 1601–2000* (Cambridge, 2002), 94–102.

[49] *A Report of the Trial of James Forbes [et al.] for a Conspiracy to Create a Riot* (Dublin, 1823), 37–8.

[50] Hill, 'Politics and the Writing of History', 230.

Ireland Native and Saxon (1843). Inscribing the work to Queen Victoria, O'Connell was at pains to disabuse the sovereign of any misconceptions about the 1690s. Referring to the Treaty of Limerick (1691), which had ended the Williamite wars, he insisted: 'the Irish were not conquered, Lady, in the war. They had, in the year preceding the treaty, driven William the Third with defeat and disgrace from Limerick.' And O'Connell turned the issue of conquest on its head by presenting Catholics as the moral victors in the emancipation campaign:

> Wellington and Peel – blessed be heaven! We defeated you. Our peaceable combination . . . was too strong for the military glory – bah! – of the one, and for all the little arts . . . of the other . . . Peel and Wellington, we defeated and drove you before us into coerced liberality, and you left every remnant of character behind you as the spoil of the victors.[51]

The passing of Catholic emancipation in 1829 afforded political equality to Catholics, but redressing the balance in public life would take much longer. Meanwhile bastions of Protestant privilege, including the established Church of Ireland, remained in place, its status guaranteed 'for ever' under the Act of Union. These realities, plus growing Catholic self-confidence, helped fuel demand for repeal of the Union in the 1830s and 1840s. Long before this, debates on the principle of legislative union had revitalised the Patriot tendency to use conquest to explain 'England's' cavalier attitude towards Irish institutions. Protestant critics of union spoke of despotism, slavery and tyranny. For Charles Kendal Bushe, Union represented 'a revival of the odious and absurd title of conquest'.[52] Admittedly, Francis Plowden, an English Catholic, writing when some optimism for speedy emancipation still remained, thought that the Union proved that England did not regard Ireland as a conquered country;[53] but as the emancipation campaign dragged on, and the economy deteriorated, others disagreed. One Protestant critic was George Ensor, of Armagh, whose *Addresses to the People of Ireland* (1822) urged readers to concentrate on opposing the Union rather than obtaining Catholic emancipation. Describing the Union as 'the ultimate act of conquest', Ensor claimed that Ireland had been 'seized as a conquered country, and . . . ruled by the laws of war'. 'Remedial measures', he suggested, 'lie in disconquest. The primary measure is to conciliate the parties and factions which the conquerors have hitherto fomented, first as English and Irish, and afterwards as Protestant and Catholic, to continue their tyranny over the Irish nation.'[54] Thus conquest was being blamed both

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[51] Daniel O'Connell, *A Memoir on Ireland Native and Saxon* (Dublin, 1843), 9, 33.

[52] W. J. Battersby, *The Fall and Rise of Ireland, or the Repealer's Manual*, 2nd edn (Dublin, 1834), 306, 310, 324, 349, 352, 370.

[53] Plowden, *Historical Review*, I, 28–9.

[54] George Ensor, *Addresses to the People of Ireland* (Dublin, [1822]), 9, 16, 21, 25–6.

for the loss of the Irish parliament, and for the enduring divisions in Ireland.

The years 1829–31 saw Irish politics transformed by the winning of Catholic emancipation, the advent of a Whig government under Lord Grey (an opponent of Union in 1800), the onset of the tithe war, which led to a brief reactivation of the yeomanry, and O'Connell's announcement that he would seek repeal of the Union. Few Protestants were willing to support repeal under Catholic leadership, though Sir Jonah Barrington argued that unless England was prepared to repeal the Union, Ireland could only be governed 'by physical force of arms, and the temporary right of conquest'.[55]

Such allegations sat awkwardly beside a sense of national identity in Britain that took for granted British constitutional superiority as against autocratic and militaristic continental regimes.[56] To the extent that conquest was perceived to have a role in Britain's 'empire of the sea', this was conquest in the interests of trade and the protection of British liberties at home and in the colonies of settlement – and the latter were in any case coming in for criticism as the age of mercantilism gave way to that of free trade. With Scottish and Irish legislative unions in place, there was little incentive to dwell on the historic military dimensions of creating a single government for the 'British Isles'. Defending the Union against O'Connellite attack in 1834, British statesmen avoided mentioning conquest. However, there was talk of the portentous consequences of repeal. Peel declared that it 'would involve a separation of the two countries, either immediate, or protracted only by a long, disastrous, and perhaps fatal conflict', while Prime Minister Lord Grey considered that repeal 'must inevitably prove fatal to the power and safety of the United Kingdom'.[57] Journalistic comment could be blunter. The *London Morning Post* contended:

> The necessity that Ireland shall be abandoned, or reconquered; abandoned to the unmitigated reign of a dark and brutal superstition, to degenerate into barbarism, to become the opprobrium of civilised Europe, ... certainly a thorn in the side of Great Britain; or reconquered through oceans of blood ... Such would be the fatal and inevitable consequences of giving to Ireland a separate Legislature.[58]

By the 1840s some British MPs were more sympathetic, not to repeal of the Union, but to the underlying grievances; and in condemning British policy towards Ireland they too spoke of conquest. The Radical J. A.

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[55] Jonah Barrington, *The Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation* (Dublin, [1833]), vi.

[56] Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire of Virtue', in *An Imperial State at War*, ed. Lawrence Stone (1994), 128–64; J. P. Parry, 'The Impact of Napoleon III on British Politics, 1851–1880', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 11 (2001), 149–50.

[57] *Hansard*, 4 Feb. 1834, XXI, cols. 5, 99.

[58] Quoted in *Dublin Evening Mail*, 17 Jan. 1831.

Roebuck asked, rhetorically, 'are we to govern Ireland as a conquered country, by means of the garrison we have placed there in the Protestants of Ireland?' And the colonial reformer Charles Buller pronounced: 'The great evil of Ireland . . . has been originally the conquest of the country by the English invasion, and attempting to force the Church of the conqueror on the conquered people.'[59]

Not everyone was prepared to accept this verdict. In 1843 a Protestant Unionist, Robert Montgomery Martin, commenced his *Ireland Before and After the Union* by claiming: 'England stands charged before the civilised world with having conquered Ireland, and destroyed its independence as a kingdom; [and] with having practised the most cruel oppression towards Ireland for more than seven centuries.' On the contrary, argued Martin, 'poverty, degradation, and conquest' would have been Ireland's fate, 'had England not been truly generous'. Union, he asserted, had brought many benefits to Ireland, and would have brought more, had it not been for 'continuous agitation'.[60] Thus conquest was becoming a point of contention between Repealers and Unionists; and Molyneux's reputation in the post-Union period reflected this. During debates preceding the Act of Union, Molyneux continued to be mentioned with respect, but his brief commendation of Union in *The Case* meant that he was more often invoked by pro- than anti-Unionists.[61] As repealing the Union became an issue in the 1830s and 1840s both sides continued to enlist his authority.[62] However, much of the historical detail in *The Case* no longer seemed so compelling, and Thomas Moore chided Molyneux for suggesting that English rulers had ever accorded much significance to the Irish parliament.[63]

Mention of Molyneux is an indication that preoccupation with conquest affected perceptions of Ireland's past. The 1798 rebellion prompted contemporaries to return to the issue that Burke had raised. Why had there been no reconciliation in Ireland between conquerors and conquered? *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* by ultra-Protestant Sir Richard Musgrave was influential in Britain as well as Ireland. Although he spoke little of conquest directly, Musgrave characterised Protestants in seventeenth-century Ireland as 'conquerors', and (like Giraldus Cambrensis) defended English medieval settlers on the grounds

[59] *Hansard*, 11, 12 July 1843, LXX, cols. 963, 1057–8.

[60] R. M. Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union with Great Britain* (1843), 3rd edn (1848) Preface, ix, xxxvii.

[61] Kelly, 'William Molyneux', 144–7.

[62] Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 1–2; Battersby, *Repealer's Manual*, 105–6; and on the pro-Union side see reference to Thomas Spring Rice by M[ichael] Staunton, 'Reasons for a Repeal of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland', in *Repeal Prize Essays: Essays on the Repeal of the Union* (Dublin, 1845), 82–6.

[63] Thomas Moore, *The History of Ireland* (4 vols., 1835–45), II, 333.

that they were more civilised and could make better use of the land than the 'barbarous' Irish. But the real issue, in his view, was religion. Under the tutelage of their priests and the Papacy, Irish Catholics were inherently intolerant and anti-Protestant, and therefore prone to rebellion and murder.[64] The idea that Catholics were in bondage to their priests and the pope was not new, but would be expressed more frequently in the nineteenth century, together with calls for the evangelisation of the Catholics. Ultra-Protestantism took on stronger religious overtones, tending to dilute its earlier militaristic and political character (although this could resurface at times of crisis, such as the late 1820s when the imminence of emancipation called forth the Brunswick club movement). The Dublin Protestant Association argued that the answer to Ireland's problems lay in 'Christian laws', to be obtained 'not by victory on the battlefield', but 'by the word of God'.[65]

On the pro-Catholic side, writers condemned a string of historians (including Musgrave) for depicting Irish Catholics in a false light. All this seemed to confirm the importance of religion as a cause of divisions in Ireland.[66] However, several of these critics stressed that problems had arisen long before the Reformation. Burke himself had suggested that 'the spirit of the Popery laws . . . as applied between Englishry and Irishry, had existed . . . before the words Protestant and Papist were heard of' and this cue was widely taken up.[67] Although Geoffrey Keating had regarded the first English invasion relatively benignly, there had always been Catholic historians who dissented,[68] and among pro-Catholic writers a negative view now became general. According to Dennis Taaffe, from the first English incursion, 'the Popish pale was as truly hostile to the national interest as the Orange confederation may be supposed now'. The real problem was 'clashing interests and national antipathies, necessarily subsisting between a conquering and an oppressed nation'. Liberal Protestant William Parnell set out to show from history that 'it is the principle of persecution adopted against the religion which makes the Catholics zealous and disaffected', and he traced persecution back to the

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[64] Musgrave, *Memoirs*, 4–26, 582; see also James Kelly, *Sir Richard Musgrave 1746–1818: Ultra-Protestant Ideologue* (forthcoming).

[65] 'Address to the Protestant Young Men of Ireland', *The Warder*, 12 Sept. 1846; *Dublin Journal*, 24 Mar. 1804; *Reply of the Orangemen of Dublin to the Address of the Repealers* (Dublin, 1848), 6. See also Blackstock, *Loyalism*, 182–3, 214–16, 227–62.

[66] Taaffe, *Impartial History*, II, 377–80; *The Belfast Politics, Enlarged*, ed. John Lawless (Belfast, 1818), 1–2; Moore, *History*, II, 285–6, 342. See also Donal McCartney, 'The Writing of History in Ireland, 1800–50', *Irish Historical Studies*, 10 (1957), 353.

[67] Burke, *Langrishe*, 320.

[68] Abbé [James] MacGeoghegan, *Histoire de l'Irlande Ancienne et Moderne* (2 vols., Paris, 1758), I, xii–xiii.

medieval conquest, when the rights of native chieftains had been swept away by 'the English'.[69]

Not all critics agreed as to whether the twelfth-century invasion, or King William's victories, might properly be called conquests, but there was widespread agreement that the spirit emanating from both events was a conquering one, and that the English settlers, as well as the native Irish, had been victims of it. This helped explain why they in turn had oppressed the native Irish. According to Plowden, Henry II had behaved 'like a conquering despot to his Norman adventurers', making them 'feudatory princes' who had appropriated Irish land. This had laid 'the corner-stone of that rancorous animosity, which has withstood the revolutions of six centuries'. Thus 'the arrogance of conquest begat oppression [and] oppression engendered hatred and implacable revenge'. Taaffe noted that 'while the English colony ... so tyrannically ... persecuted the natives, their masters, in England, as arrogantly, deprived them of their legis-lative ... rights'.[70]

There was also a growing emphasis on racial differences: this was, after all, a period of early 'Celtic revival'.[71] Thomas Moore stressed the Celtic character of the Irish, denying that the first inhabitants of Ireland had originated in Britain, and praising Ireland's ancient Celtic laws and culture, which had only been finally subdued 'by the code of the conqueror' in the seventeenth century.[72] Moreover, by occasionally identifying the twelfth-century invaders as 'Normans', or 'Anglo-Normans' rather than 'English', as they had usually (and, it is argued, more correctly) been described, Moore was using a relatively new terminology, inspired in part by Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), and the French historian Augustin Thierry's *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* (Paris, 1825).[73] Both these works depicted the conquest of England as producing enmity between Normans and Saxons – 'animosity between conqueror and conquered' – which had endured until the 1190s, much longer than had been generally assumed.[74]

[69] Taaffe, *Impartial History*, I, 47; Parnell, *Historical Apology*, 3, 27–30.

[70] Plowden, *Historical Review*, I, 28–9; Taaffe, *Impartial History*, III, 571.

[71] Jeanne Sheehy, *The Rediscovery of Ireland's Past: The Celtic Revival 1830–1930* (1980), ch. 2; Damien Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840–80* (Maynooth, 2000), ch. 1.

[72] Moore, *History*, I, 1–2, ch. 2, 160.

[73] *Ibid.*, II, 213, 217, 222. For reasons for preferring 'English' to 'Normans' to describe the invaders, see 'Normans' in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, ed. S. J. Connolly (Oxford, 1998), 389–90, and John Gillingham, 'Normanizing the English Invaders of Ireland', in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies*, ed. Huw Price and John Watts (Oxford, 2007), 85–97. I am grateful to Professor Gillingham for allowing me to read his article before publication.

[74] Augustin Thierry, *History of the Conquest of England by the Normans; with its Causes, and Consequences to the Present Time* (1841), ix.

Thierry echoed Plowden and Taaffe in suggesting that a feature of the Irish conquest was that 'the conquerors of Ireland, justly classed as oppressors of the indigenous people, are to be considered as having been themselves equally oppressed by their countrymen who remained in England'. As for the native Irish, 'from the first day of the invasion the will of that race of men has been constantly opposed to the arbitrary will of its conquerors'. Hence, although 'the posterity of the Anglo-Normans has gradually become impoverished like that of the Irish', 'in our own days blood has flowed . . . for the old quarrel of the conquest'.[75] Thierry's concern for the fate of conquered peoples found a receptive audience among Irish Repealers, notably stimulating Thomas Davis's interest in conquest.[76] The Reverend James Godkin, a Presbyterian, produced a prize-winning Repeal Association essay in 1845, which discussed 'the Anglo-Norman conquest' of Ireland in the wider English and European context that Thierry had outlined, stressing the ill-treatment of Saxons by Normans in England as a precedent for the treatment of the Irish by Henry II, and (with a nod, too, to Lord Durham's report (1839) on the causes of conflict in Canada) highlighting 'the deadly antagonism of *races* between the English and the Irish'.[77]

Portraying internal Irish divisions in racial terms did not signify a desire to copper-fasten those divisions. The point was not to highlight biological difference between Celts and Saxons (or Normans), but to condemn conquest for fostering a slavish mentality on the one side, and arrogance on the other.[78] For these historians, racial conflict, however severe, could be overcome – as illustrated by Normans and Saxons in England. It was argued that in Ireland conquerors and conquered had occasionally been close to reconciliation, but England's influence had invariably blocked this.[79] According to Godkin, 'a *master*-nation will inevitably oppress' and therefore 'Ireland never can be one with England': the only solution lay in repeal of the Union.[80] When Thomas Davis observed that five-sixths of the Irish people were Celts, he merely intended non-Celts to recognise the value of cultural difference as a defence against English

[75] *Ibid.*, 233–4, 273.

[76] Helen F. Mulvey, *Thomas Davis and Ireland: A Biographical Study* (Washington, 2003), 218–21.

[77] James Godkin, 'The Rights of Ireland', in *Repeal Prize Essays*, ch. 2, 33. Cf. 'I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races; . . . the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English', in *The Report of the Earl of Durham* (new edn, 1902), x.

[78] Moore, *History*, III, 74–5; Godkin, 'Rights', 53.

[79] Thierry, *Conquest*, vii, 273–80; Godkin, 'Rights', 2, 24–5, 62.

[80] Godkin, 'Rights', 67, 144, 159.

misrule: 'Had Ireland used Irish in 1782, would it not have impeded England's re-conquest of us?'[81]

One work that brought together some of these themes was Macaulay's *History of England*. Published in 1848, and an immediate bestseller, it was a characteristically Whiggish history of gradual improvement, except where it touched on Ireland. Macaulay's account of English history down to the Normans treated prominently of race and conquest, but emphasised that by the early 1200s Norman and Saxon conflicts had been largely overcome. Any ambitions for continental conquest were abandoned after the Hundred Years War, and England had become celebrated as the best governed country in Europe. Medieval Ireland, however, was ruled 'as a dependency won by the sword'. 'The English colonists submitted to the dictation of the mother country … and indemnified themselves by trampling on the people among whom they had settled.' As for 'the vanquished race', 'the new feud of Protestant and Papist inflamed the old feud of Saxon and Celt', and in 1641 'the smothered rage of the Irish broke forth into acts of fearful violence'. An admirer of the Glorious Revolution, Macaulay's ambivalence about its Irish counterpart was apparent in his account of 'the Saxon defenders of Londonderry' and 'the Celtic defenders of Limerick': 'to this day a more than Spartan haughtiness alloys the many noble qualities which characterise the children of the victors, while a Helot feeling, compounded of awe and hatred, is but too often discernible in the children of the vanquished'.[82]

And in Ireland, divisions continued. The Orange Order was dissolved under parliamentary pressure in 1825, and again in 1836, but anniversary commemorations were only temporarily interrupted. By the mid-1840s the Order was being reconstituted and experiencing one of several revivals. Orangemen associated the Repeal campaign's mass mobilisation of Catholics with the disturbances of the 1790s, and insisted that 'the blessings purchased by the brave blood of their fore-fathers' would not be handed over to 'rebel hands'.[83] Such attitudes posed problems for Repealers seeking electoral support from Protestants as well as Catholics. Addressing Protestant freemen (mostly artisans and tradesmen) in Dublin at the general election of 1847, the Irish Confederation (the political voice of Young Ireland) urged: 'You need not forget your fathers' victories, nor let their anniversaries pass by unhonoured, but honour them in a larger,

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[81] Thomas Davis, *Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Charles Gavan Duffy (Dublin, 1845), 176–8; see also Murray, *Romanticism*, 102–3.

[82] T. B. Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James II* (4 vols., I and II, 1849, III and IV, 1855), I, 3–18, 67–8, 105, II, 127–9.

[83] Report of Enniskillen meeting, *The Warder*, 8 Aug. 1846.

more generous, and national spirit . . . Only in Ireland is memory of civil war perpetuated in the animosities of faction.'[84]

In conclusion, it has been argued that after a century in which the language of conquest mainly concerned Anglo-Irish relations, during the 1790s the focus shifted from external to internal conquest, and from medieval to seventeenth-century events. The main reason for this was the granting of extensive political rights to Catholics. Undertaken for essentially conservative reasons, this nevertheless had a destabilising effect because under the penal laws even plebeian Protestants had belonged to a privileged minority. One privilege had been the exclusive right to bear arms. During the eighteenth century, a culture of commemoration of Williamite victories had taken root outside the elite, marked by parades under arms. That tradition was resented by Catholics, as symbolising a spirit of conquest, even before the foundation of the Orange Order, which would reinvent the anniversary tradition and carry it forward into the 1800s and beyond.

Of course the proposition that Orangeism could be reduced to a single component was untenable. Those who paraded on 12 July were celebrating many things, including civil and religious liberty, loyalty to the dynasty and the link with Britain. They were also bidding defiance to 'Popery', perceived as inimical to those values and a threat to the very existence of Protestantism in Ireland. But given the exclusion of Catholics from membership,[85] and the significance accorded to Williamite victories, defenders of the Order could not be surprised if such anniversaries continued to rankle as symbolising Protestant conquest.

After 1798, the absence of reconciliation in Ireland between conquerors and conquered seemed more serious than ever. No agreed diagnosis was forthcoming. Ultra-Protestants highlighted Catholic bondage to Rome; evangelicals contended that little had been done to convert Catholics; Catholics and liberal Protestants blamed government. All sides paid lip service to the need to overcome divisions, and one attraction of redirecting the language of conquest outwards once more, against the Union, was the possibility of rekindling Protestant resentment against England's hegemony. Irish history was reinterpreted by liberal Protestants and Repealers, to emphasise the enduring effects of conquest by England from the twelfth century onwards in perpetuating internal divisions and damaging Anglo-Irish relations. (England was even accused of a general 'tendency to war' and a 'thirst of conquest'; which must have perplexed any English readers, more accustomed to associate such sentiments with

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[84] Address of Irish Confederation to the Protestants of Ireland, *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1847.

[85] 'Rules of the Orange Society, 1798', in Senior, *Orangeism*, App. A, 299, 301.

the French.)[86] However, political realities at this period did not favour reconciliation. Even before Catholics finally obtained emancipation, Protestant support for reform and repeal of the Union was coming to be regarded by some Catholic leaders as merely auxiliary.[87] Meanwhile, Protestants increasingly saw their own interests as bound up with the Union, which the governing classes in Britain had come to consider, for the time being, as fundamental to British security. All this helped ensure that the various forms of conquest rhetoric remained highly adaptable.

Postscript: Speaking at his meeting with Mr Ahern at the battle of the Boyne site on 11 May 2007, Dr Paisley said:

For Protestants and Unionists the Boyne carries with it a powerful significance for our culture, our history and our pride. It represents liberty, triumph and determination, features that have too often been forgotten because of more recent troubles. [The Boyne has a wider European importance] but it is here in Ireland that the Boyne is most significant. I welcome that at last we can embrace this battle site as part of our shared history.

Presenting Mr Ahern with a Jacobite musket carried away from the battlefield, Dr Paisley concluded:

This musket was used by a soldier in King James's army, I need not remind you that was the losing side. But you can declare to this weapon, 'welcome home'.[88]

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[86] Godkin, 'Rights', p. 144.

[87] Daniel O'Connell to Lord Cloncurry, 24 Sept. 1828, in *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, ed. M. R. O'Connell (8 vols., Dublin, 1972–80), III, letter 1489.

[88] *Irish Times*, 12 May 2007.