

First Diaspora

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1 Beginnings

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How did the English language begin, this supple, economic, subtle instrument of communication, commerce, and belles lettres that has become de facto and in many institutions and contexts de jure the lingua franca of the world? What were the linguistic, historical, and cultural factors that joined to make this language of so small an island “conquer” so great a swath of territory throughout the world? For that we have to reach far into the Indo-European past.

The Germanic tribes had departed the Indo-European primeval home probably by the beginning of the Common Era at the latest. They drifted into western Europe and settled in what today is northern Germany, the Low Countries, and southern Scandinavia. The Baltic Sea, the shallow inland sea that separates Germany and Denmark from Norway and Sweden, was more of a boggy marsh than a sea when the Germanic peoples made this their dampish home, thus easing ingress and movement throughout the area.

The Germanic tribes – Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Frisians – were a roving, restless, pushy lot like their Indo-European forebears, always seeing the other side of rivers, of valleys, of bodies of water as greener, more fertile, than where they were living. That this other side might be inhabited by other people, well, so much the better: let the games begin! This hereditary trait, this restlessness, this urge to jump in a boat and find new lands to conquer and different people to terrorize, the English later were to display in abundance.

Around 449 the restless continental Germanic tribes began what we may call the Germanic Conquest of England. The English Channel in good weather is not much of a barrier to even small craft sailing from countries such as Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the northern coast of Germany. Already in Roman times bands of Germanic invaders (we usually call them “Vikings”) had been a nuisance for the Romans, always grabbing women and things that did not

belong to them, plundering, causing mischief. It was only after Roman rule had become ineffectual against the warriors landing from the north that Germanic invasion on a large scale could succeed. The Celts, those who did not assimilate to Germanic ways, moved west and south into Cornwall and Wales; Scotland with its hills, wild terrain, and rain remained untamed by both Roman and Saxon for a long time to come.

Thus came into being an Anglo-Saxon Civilization. Its language was Old English (also known as Anglo-Saxon), which we nominally date 450–1150, a fusion language to which various of the Germanic invading tribes had contributed, most particularly the Saxons from northern Germany.

What resemblance did Old English, this rough beast of a language, bear to the English of modern times? The answer is: very little. Old English, like the Old Saxon to which it owes most, was a “heavy” language: heavily inflected and richly conjugated, with three genders and four cases, and numerous subclasses of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The Old English verb conjugations are no less complex in comparison with modern English: where English today has in the present indicative only one marked ending *-(e)s*, in the third-person singular (*goes, tries, kills*), Old English had four. Even the simple, anodyne definite article *the* of modern English required eighteen different forms to decline it: three genders in the singular, four cases for the singular and the plural, plus an instrumental case for masculine and neuter singular.

So much for the language. What about the literature it produced? The greatest single work in Old English is *Beowulf*, a story of heroes and dragons and great deeds still studied today as a classic of world literature. Besides *Beowulf* there is the great war poem *The Battle of Maldon* and numerous religious poems. Under the Anglo-Saxon king Alfred the Great (ruled 871–899) and due directly to him we have outstanding translations from the Latin of such works as Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

Old English already was disposed toward linguistic hospitality, an openness to the influence of other languages which endures to the present day, welcoming new words from the languages with which it shared territory (Latin, Celtic) and from the languages of influential figures such as warriors and priests who came speaking no English. Many place-names point back to the Celtic linguistic substratum (*Kent, Cornwall, York*) as do words such as *crag* and *bin*. Of far greater importance and extent were borrowings from Latin, earlier from the Latin of Roman conquest, later from the Latin of Christian conquest. From the earlier period we have *camp, mile, pit, cheap, wine*, and many other domestic words so well integrated into English that only an enthusiast would know them not to be originally Germanic. Christianity came to Britain in 597, though it was not to displace local religious traditions until centuries had passed. Its impact on English vocabulary is great: church words such as *bishop, angel, disciple, human, relic*, and *rule*; school words like *school, verse, meter*, and *grammar*; and words not easily categorized such as *elephant, radish, oyster, talent*, and *crisp*.

In depth and mass of linguistic imprint on the English language, however, all else vanishes to nothing in comparison with the French influence that followed

upon the Norman Conquest. In 1066 the king of England died without an heir. The wrangling began, and a second cousin to the deceased king soon announced that he was the rightful successor and all other pretenders be damned. This cousin was William, duke of Normandy, French down to his capillaries (although a Northman, loaded with Viking genes). William had had a hard childhood, having to overcome the stigma of illegitimacy among much else, and he rose to his dukedom through physical toughness mixed with shrewdness. William made careful preparations for invasion, taking care to cultivate supporters on the English side of the channel (a "Fifth Column"), and in 1066 he sailed with his soldiers across the English Channel, the Channel being very narrow and easy to traverse at this point. It is no accident that the D-Day invasion of 6 June 1944 going the other direction chose the beaches of Normandy to land on.

William and his men landed at Hastings, then as now a town on the Channel not far south of London. The battle did not last long. On Christmas day, 1066, William was crowned king of England. One of the first effects of the Norman Conquest was the creation of a new French-speaking Norman aristocracy. While William did not complete his conquest for several years to come, a Norman royal court in southeast England came into being almost overnight. It was not the way in those days to "impose" a language on a conquered people, as the Soviet Union for example imposed Russian on most of its member states. The Normans did not "impose" French, but William's court was French speaking, and the Normans he had brought with him and who followed spoke French.

Two centuries after the Conquest English kings clawed their way back into power, and the French court was a memory. By the beginning of the fourteenth century English was again the language of the country, but this was a very different kind of English from the English that had preceded the Norman Conquest. It had been profoundly transformed by the normal course of linguistic evolution and by its fateful encounter with French – "dumbed-down," one might say.

It was a far different English from that of *Beowulf*. Alfred would have needed an interpreter. Many of the words with which French had permanently enriched English are from the legal and governing (*legal* and *govern* themselves are French) lexical domains: *crime*, *criminal*, *criminality*, *regal*, *regental*, *judge*, *plea*, *royal*, *sue*, *defend*, *defendant* – it would be quite impossible to try a case in an English-speaking court anywhere in the world even today without using a French loanword every half minute or so. But not all of what we got from French is abstract and polysyllabic: regard *joy*, *face*, *cap*, *force*, *war*, *chase*, *paint*, and *pay*.

But we got more from the French than individual loanwords. Because those loanwords often came in pairs, for example *críminal/criminálity*, *légal/legálity*, *régent/regéntal*, *diffícult/diffículty* (with the acute accent ´ marking the location of main stress in the word), we inherited from French a more complex set of rules for marking word-stress than we had had before when English vocabulary was more monolithically Germanic.

It was not only French that had changed the language so much since Alfred's day. The inexorable force of linguistic change had done its work. By the end of

the Middle English period (1150–1500) the language had come to be something not that different from modern English. In nouns for example –s had become the only suffix, signifying as it does today either the genitive *day's* or the plural *days*. The multiplicity of unstressed vowels in Old English (the vowels *a, e, u, o* in the final syllables of, for example, *giefa, giefe, giefum, curon*) had been reduced to a single unstressed –e. Of the numerous different forms of the definite article only *the* and *that* have remained. Some strong verbs became weak, some weak verbs strong; 'give, gave' had been weak in Old English: *giefan, giefde*. The language had become grammatically simpler, especially in its morphology, leaner somehow – and it is this streamlining of the language that later would make it so easy a language to export.

The creation of Early Modern English (or Late Middle English) coincided with the onset of the Age of Discovery. Ships were bigger and better, navigational aids were more reliable, and something in the European *Zeitgeist* insisted on exploration. What was the English like that was sent out in search of countries to claim as Britain embarked on its quest to "rule the seas"?

It was to begin with a "light" language when compared with Old English, which I earlier described as "heavy." Gone the Indo-Germanic/Germanic complex morphology, gone the Germanic fashions in word compounding and word-derivation, gone many of the sounds of Old English (such as the velar fricative [x], spelled 'gh' in words such as *light* and *knight*). What remained is what we have today: an English with a preponderance of monosyllabic words, with sounds that are on the whole easy to pronounce or to approximate (though *th* is a stumbling block for speakers of many languages), a simple morphology, a language mostly free of elite academy-driven notions of correctness. (The *Académie française* regularly issues austere injunctions against using words like *weekend*, *whisky*, and *OK*; no ordinary speaker of French pays them the slightest mind if they even know about them. English has never been disposed to put up with such preciousness from the other side of the Channel.)

Let us take the English language of 1600 as a starting point. This is a useful date because it was on December 31 of that year that Queen Elizabeth granted a royal charter to a group of merchants for purpose of exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India.

The English East India Company was for a century and a half a major facilitator of the English language. What was the English like that John Company, as the English East India Company was sometimes jocularly called in India, exported to these far-off lands?

It would have been richly diverse for one thing. On the lower decks Cockney English would have been well represented along with every conceivable kind of regional English: Yorkshire accents, Devon accents, Welsh accents, Irish accents, Scots accents – even the odd Yankee (American) twang of some luckless drunk who had been pressed into service. There would have been "r-less" dialects of English alongside "r-ful" dialects. There would be *very* along with 'very' and *vind* beside 'wind'. "It was 'is to 'ave" would have cheerfully coexisted with "'E hain't 'appy." There would be lots of [f] for *th*, *nuffin* for 'nothing' and *wif* for 'with'.

There would be speakers for whom *lace* and *lice* rhymed. Words now archaic like *gart* 'caused or made', *sollicker* 'force', and *to fossick* 'to search' would have abounded. Received Pronunciation ("the King's English," "Oxford English," "BBC English") was not a concept at this time, so even the captains and upper-class loungers who fanned out across the world would have had by today's standards huge differences in pronunciation and usage.

And so the stage was set for the triumphant march of the English language to the ends of the earth. The Age of Discovery transformed the world's view of horizon and limitation, as the frigates and brigs and men o'war set out under full sail from this tiny island of England and the Union Jack was planted on alien terrain such as India, Australia, Hong Kong, and America. It is inconceivable that in the minds of these captains and men or those who had sent them lurked even an inkling of what their ultimate and most enduring achievement would be.

They thought they were exploring, trying to find the Northwest Passage, trying to find faster ways to sail to Japan and China. They thought they were going to get rich by locating sources of spices or profiting from the appeal of a new drink like tea. They thought they were claiming some God-forsaken barren island or peninsula for Crown and Country forever. Or they were transporting some kind of plant, breadfruit for example, out to a new location to see whether it could be made to grow there as an inexpensive food for slaves to the profit of slave owners and John Company.

And so they were. They were doing all these things. But little did these empire-warriors know that their one enduring, their one permanent accomplishment would be to make English first among the world's languages – first not in intrinsic worth or beauty or goodness but first in practicality and first as a means of expression for word-gifted people whose first language might be something other than English.

The British Empire is now gone. The money it made is long since gone. The islands and peninsulas where once the Union Jack was proudly planted are now ruled by their own people (if they are inhabited at all). The breadfruit never seemed to find the right kind of soil to prosper in, so it never became a profitable crop; besides, most of the plants died on the way out. Slave plantations are gone, and so is John Company.

What remains, however, is infinitely more enduring, more chaste and nobler, more of a great thing, than land or plants or possessions. What remains is the English language, to paraphrase Auden, a "way of speaking, a mouth," a gift to the globe, to millions of people, often to people who would not be able to express themselves to a wider audience if not for English. One of the greatest and most underacknowledged gifts of the British Raj to India was English prose style. Not simply narrative prose – after all, the *Laws of Manu* were written in Sanskrit prose – but the prose style of the polished English essay, of a Macaulay, of Samuel Johnson's *Idler*, of Edmund Burke or John Stuart Mill. This kind of graceful, spare, ironic prose was something altogether different from the forms of prose in indigenous literature. It was initially foreign to the "cut" of any Indian language, from Sanskrit down to the meanest vernacular. But something about it kindled fire in

the Indian mind. By the end it would produce masters of the English language – Rabindranath Tagore, Arabindo Ghose, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and his historian son, Sarvepalli Gopal, Raja Rao, Nirad Chaudhuri, Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru. The English language remains in India after most other traces of the British Raj have decayed and receded from view.

What was true of India is true of all the other countries where English once was the language of rule: former British colonies in Africa, Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, the West Indies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and of course America. English is one of the natural means by which gifted writers express themselves in countries once under British rule. And when they write their graceful prose and eloquent poetry, they doubtless do not often stop to reflect on how it came about that it is *English* that is their instrument of choice rather than Bengali or Tamil or Nigerian. And when a Frenchman has dealings with a German or a Swede, when they perforce move into English to advance their negotiations, none of them surely thinks back to that day in 449 when Saxons from the north of Germany sailed their ships to southern England and decided to stay there.

“Our beginnings never know our ends,” wrote T.S. Eliot. The end is not in sight, but how far we have come from those early days when German and Scandinavian warriors descended on the south of England, unloading their languages and reckless ambitions along with their weapons of conquest.

2 First Steps: Wales and Ireland

2.1 *Wales*

When we tell the story of the replacement of one language by another, it is almost impossible to resist reaching for military metaphors to give a name to what happened. We talk of a “conquest.” We write of the “victory” of the *langue d’oïl* over the *langue d’oc* in the “battle” for what was to become standard French. Vulgar Latin ceded ground to Old French as the Middle Ages waned. The French of Quebec has since the 1970s regained ground from English in the “battle” of language loyalties in eastern Canada. Even though this kind of muscular military linguistic usage is vaguely reprehensible in a sober discipline like linguistics, most of us talk and write that way because the replacement of one language by another does have points in common with “conquests” and “victories.”

Let us have some terminology first. Linguists use the abbreviations H (for “High”) and L (for “Low”) to distinguish between two important kinds of usage domain. H is the variety of language used in formal, ceremonial, institutional, and other ‘serious’ domains. L is everyday language, spoken in family and other intimate and informal settings. Legal and religious matters – wills, marriage certificates, and contracts for example – are usually H functions. Farmers arguing about the best kind of dung to spread on their fields will nine times out of ten be conversing in L. Furthermore, H and L can refer to different languages, for example when speaking of the command of Latin over H functions when medieval English

was relegated to L functions, but they can also refer to variants of the same language so different that mutual intelligibility is complicated (standard French and Creole in Haiti, for example, or standard Arabic and vernacular Arabic in most places in the Arab-speaking world). To this latter situation, which is altogether commonplace except in the most literate parts of the world, Charles Ferguson gave the name *diglossia*.

When two languages fight over the same ground, as English and Welsh did in Wales and English and Irish (now the preferred name for the language, not “Gaelic”) did in Ireland, for example, what usually ensues is a conflict between the two languages for domain power, for H status. One of the two languages comes to be perceived as H, perhaps through force of arms, perhaps because of economic power, perhaps by strength of numbers, perhaps because it is a newcomer language with greater claims to culture and literature or to a more enviable set of social structures and better manners. We then say that the H language “wins” and the L language “loses.” The winning language becomes the “superstratum” language, the losing one the “substratum.” Whether the substratum language survives or not, it will almost certainly leave traces in the superstratum language.

Ultimately this is the story of English in Wales and Ireland – the story of battles between languages over which is to be H. The first expansions – “conquests” – of the English language outside southeast England were of Wales and Ireland. But the use of the metaphor “conquest” is seriously misleading here, precisely because of the confusion of H and L functions among a number of competing languages in the Middle Ages – Latin, French, Welsh, Irish, and English. We will come to that, but first this story – the story of the spread of English to Wales and Ireland – must be understood against the setting of the general retreat of Celts, of Celtic religion and culture, and of Celtic languages across Europe.

At the height of its dominion (nominally circa 400 BCE) the Celtic presence stretched from the British Isles to eastern Europe and Turkey, from a line running just south of Denmark through the middle of Germany down through France and into Italy and Greece. Celtic history thenceforth down to the beginning of the Common Era is one of withdrawal, retraction, and reduction. On the continent the Celts were vanquished by or absorbed into their invaders: Romans, Germans, Slavs, and Huns.

The Romans led by Julius Caesar invaded England in 55 BCE, but it required almost a century of hard fighting to consolidate their position. They never achieved a really firm control of Britain outside their southeastern base (around what today is London). Linguistically speaking, they never made much of an issue out of imposing their language, Latin, on the Celtic inhabitants outside their immediate domains of power. If you were upwardly mobile, then you learned Latin. Nor were the Romans disposed to interfere in religious matters as long as a religion did not threaten the Roman state, which Druidism, the major Celtic religion, did not.

Contacts between the Welsh and the Romans were extensive, especially among the Welsh ruling classes who out of necessity had to come to grips with the fact that the Romans were running things. At this point we must begin to treat the Welsh and Irish situations separately, though they have many features in common.

It is primarily a matter of chronology: English came to Wales earlier than it did to Ireland, which because of its island fastness and the barrier of the Irish Sea was quarantined against most English and continental fevers.

Latin influenced the Welsh language during Roman times especially in the area of the lexicon (technically we should speak of “Brittonic” here and reserve “Welsh” for the period after 850), but the linguistic influence became much stronger after Britain was converted to Christianity. By 300 CE the Christian religion was several lengths ahead of the other religions competing in Rome, and its position as the quasi-official religion was symbolically marked when the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity on his deathbed in 337. By 400, the state religion of Rome was Christianity. By the middle of the fourth century England was thoroughly Christianized, especially among its ruling and urban classes, and along with Christianity came monasteries, abbots and bishops, manuscripts, priories, and monks – and Latin as the language of high purpose (H), Latin being the official language of the Roman Catholic Church. Probably the Welsh ruling classes were bilingual in both Welsh and Latin, although outside their sphere of influence, in the countryside, one must assume that Welsh alone was the language of the people.

In contrast, Ireland was never under Roman rule, probably owing more to the daunting logistics of attack and Roman fear of dividing forces rather than lack of appetite among the Romans. It became Christian in the fifth century. By tradition Patrick (Saint Patrick), who was probably born in the west of Britain, converted Ireland between 432 and 461. At a time when many western European males were carousing, stealing, and smashing what they could not carry off, Irish monasteries were a refuge of cultural preservation and learning.

Thus, by the time the Germanic tribes began their conquest of England (449 CE) the Welsh language and the Irish language were solidly in place as the spoken languages of their respective lands, Wales and Ireland. Both had impressive literatures before the English did. There were poems, stories, narratives, and an opulence of creative writing. Welsh was the language of the law. The *Welsh Lawbooks* are rich in legal vocabulary, but they are stylistically rich as well, and therefore are accounted part of the literary tradition of Wales as well as the legal. The Welsh nobility were great patrons of Welsh literature and music, so both flourished. Social and governing structures were solid, in fact more solid than anything the English had in place prior to the appearance of Alfred the Great. Early Irish literature was rich and varied, still studied today as a glory.

And now we can turn to the question of the “conquest” of English in Wales and Ireland. Given that the English were aggressive and growing more numerous and economically powerful all the time, was it not inevitable that their language would displace the principal indigenous Celtic languages – Welsh and Scots Gaelic and then Irish, in time? Does not the most fleeting glance at a map of the British Isles make it glaringly clear that things could have no other outcome? Wales on the western coast of England has no natural defenses against determined expansion from southern England, the locus of the English language in medieval times. Nor is Ireland that far away, though the Irish Sea was always a deterrent, and an English

invasion of Ireland would have been a much more difficult military operation than a march into Wales. (However, one is bound to reflect on the fact that the Irish Sea would have been a trifling obstacle for the Viking ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons-Normans. And did it discourage the Christian missionaries? No.)

However, maps are deceptive things, perhaps most especially so when it comes to illustrating the “power” relationships of languages on the ground: it is hard to map the linguistic battle between H and L. In the early going, let us say to the end of the medieval period, it was not the manifest destiny of the English language to spread throughout the British Isles, geography and appearances to the contrary. Prior to something like 1500 CE it was never a certain thing that English would come to prevail over the strongest indigenous Celtic languages of the region, Welsh and Irish, which claimed the largest numbers of speakers and the strongest governing and societal structures. The position of the other Celtic substrate languages such as Cornish and Manx or even Scots Gaelic was never as strong as that of Welsh and Irish nor were their speakers ever as numerous, and so perhaps it was a foregone conclusion that they would succumb under the English juggernaut. But not Irish and Welsh.

The trouble here lies in the conflicting and often confused “H:L” relationships that existed among English, Latin, French, Welsh, and Irish in the Middle Ages. Which of these languages was H, which ones were L? Latin was throughout, both in Wales and Ireland as well as England, one of the H languages and often *the* H language. This was true both during Roman rule and the Christian era. Legal and religious documents were almost always in Latin, and if they appear in one of the other languages it is usually as a translation from Latin.

There were “confusions” of H:L function. Where literature was concerned, *Beowulf* was Germanic to the core, genuinely Old English, as were many other shorter pieces such as *Widsith* and *Deor*, and the great war poems *The Battle of Maldon* and *The Battle of Brunanburh*. These, it must be remembered, were part of the spoken tradition, and while they were being passed down around campfires and through generations, English could lay claim to a sort of modified H function. English may have been the spoken language of the people, but Latin was the unquestioned H language. There was a relatively brief period during which Old English could lay claim to a share of the H prize. This was during the reign of Alfred the Great (871–899). Alfred lamented the decay of the book culture of Old English, and he himself acquired Latin, presumably between battles and other great deeds, in order to spearhead a program of translation into Old English of major works of literature originally written in Latin; Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Pope Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*, and Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Ælfric and Wulfstan carried on the tradition of Old English prose, but Latin remained the H language.

The Norman Conquest brought French into the picture, and for at least a couple of centuries after 1066 French took command of H functions, in competition with Latin, and English dropped further behind in the race. Welsh and Irish were still largely sovereign in their respective lands, though Wales naturally was more subject to influences from England, from Latin, French, and to a lesser extent at this

time, from English. But for most H purposes, in both Wales and Ireland, Latin was the choice. French had its own set of worries, for the French of the Normans was about to lose the contest for Best French, an award that would shortly go to the French of the *Ile de France*. Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342–1400) famously made fun of the French of his Prioress in the *Canterbury Tales*:

And French she spak ful faire and fetisly,
After the scole of Stratford ate Bowe,
For French of Paris was to hir unknowe.

And so we have, by around 1400, a glorious jumble of languages struggling to sort out the H:L relationships in England. By the fifteenth century English had replaced French and Latin as the language of law. Englishmen were writing their wills and their letters in English. The English language thus took command of the H ground, and with a growing population and growing economic power it was now really only a matter of time before Wales would succumb to a further tightening of English control. In 1536, in the reign of Henry VIII, Wales came under English dominion in what is called the Act of Union, a political event that was to have almost immediate linguistic implications. One of its clauses mandated English fluency if you wanted a government job.

Welsh was still the spoken language of the vast majority of Welsh, but the speech of the upper classes shifted over time from bilingual in Welsh and English (and/or French) to English. Welsh literature continued to flourish, and in the domain of folk literature the Welsh language continued its H function, but this too gradually passed as the Welsh nobility, traditional patrons of Welsh literature, swung to English. Welsh was perhaps most tenacious in the Welsh church, and it is no exaggeration to say that the preservation of the Welsh language owes much to its Wesleyan (Methodist) preachers. The 1991 census reported that 18.7% of the population of Wales had knowledge of Welsh, though the percentages are much higher in the northern and western counties of Gwynedd and Dyfed – there Welsh exults in a glorious and public victory over the English language, spoken on every street, in every pub, in every intimate occasion of life.

2.2 *Ireland*

The earliest recorded use of English in Ireland dates from the thirteenth century. Latin and to a lesser degree French occupied most H domains, with Irish commanding L domains throughout the island. English, because of mostly trade-related increased immigration from England, began to make inroads into Ireland in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, first showing up in legal documents, town records, and the like. Curiously, in the fourteenth century there is evidence that spoken English among the Anglo-Irish gentry went into decline, with more and more of them adopting Irish as their home language. The Statutes of Kilkenny (1366), written in French, ordained that “every Englishman use the English

language, and be named by an English name." It is a linguistic truism that linguistic proclamations like this – "use language X!" – are certain proof that most people are doing the exact opposite – not using language X.

In 1541, Henry VIII was proclaimed King of Ireland at the Irish Parliament. Most of the documents associated with this and other acts of Parliament at the time were still in Latin, but other evidence shows clearly that English was encroaching on the H domains of Latin (and French). In swearing loyalty to the new king there is much of a mixture among the Irish lords between the English and Irish languages. Some lairds required an interpreter to put their oath of fealty into English, while others were able to do so in "good Inglishe."

By no means did English become the spoken language of Ireland overnight just because Ireland was subject to English rule. It was never foreordained that the victory would be so cheaply earned. It was only in the reigns of Queen Mary and King James I in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that the tide rose dramatically in favor of English. Mary and James instituted the so-called "plantations," here meaning the planting of people – English speakers – in Ireland, notably the planned settlement of Scots in Ulster, what is today Northern Ireland. Thus were the seeds of conflict sown.

The population mix between Irish and English then began to inexorably shift toward the English, and a census taken in 1659 showed that while Irish was still the majority spoken language in the country English was coming up rapidly, especially in regions such as Ulster and Dublin more accessible from England. Western Ireland remained strongly Irish speaking, and it is in the west that the *Gaeltacht* – the Irish-speaking area – is located today. Successive censuses show a steady decline in numbers of Irish speakers, and current surveys generally report around 3% of the population as native Irish-speaking.

That brings us to the end of the story of English in Wales and Ireland. What began as a battle between noble languages, fought over a muddled terrain of H and L, of superstratum and substratum, has ended up in a kind of stasis. English is the usual language of discourse in Wales and Ireland, though this is truer of Ireland than of Wales. Welsh and Irish are alive and well in Wales and Ireland, a statement one is more comfortable with in regard to Welsh. Both Welsh and Irish enjoy – now, not a century or less ago – strong governmental support and a touching degree of affection among the Welsh and Irish people as a link to their past and to their identity. How happy it makes the linguist, *this* linguist, at least, to walk into a pub in Holyhead (a point of departure for the ferry to Dublin) and hear *everybody* in the pub speaking Welsh, and then to have the bartender switch effortlessly to English to serve the poor outlander who only wants a pint of bitter (and an opportunity to hear Welsh in a totally natural ambience). Such is the easy bliss of the linguist!

Since linguistic "conquest" has so often meant the *extinction* of the substratum language, one is happy to note that the first expansion of the English language did *not* end in complete victory of English. In linguistics, as perhaps in other kinds of warfare, a partial victory is a better outcome than total victory.

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