

Review: *Tintúd–Aistriú: Papers on
Translation in Irish Tradition* (Ó Donnchú)



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Ch. ii: *in ducatus popularis sublimatus honore*. This means ‘elevated to the honour of the leadership of the people’. The preposition *in* goes with *honore*, and *ducatus* is a preposed genitive. There is no need to emend to *ducatum*.

Ch. vi: *retrahens manum a conatu uoluntatis proprie*. Here Enda grabs a stick to ward off marauders, even though he has taken monastic vows, and has to be reminded that his head is tonsured. I would translate, ‘drawing back his hand from the attempting of his own will’, not ‘drawing back his hand by the effort of his own will’. It is Enda’s attempt to follow his own will – *conatus uoluntatis proprie* – by fighting off the marauders that is the problem here, and not the resolution, which is patiently to accept persecution as the will of God. Moreover, if *conatus* were grammatically the instrument it should not have the preposition *a*.

Ch. viii: *qui mire est sanctitatis*. This refers to Enda, not his monastery, and should be translated ‘who is ...’.

Ch. xi: *Midenses* is twice translated ‘Munstermen’ rather than ‘men of Meath’.

Ch. xix: *set nunc solo metallo eris uestitur*. ‘For the masters’ (dat. pl. of *erus*) is unlikely here. *eris* is probably a spelling of *heres*, i.e. the abbot or coarb of Enda. The gold- and silver-encrusted chasuble of Enda has decayed with age, but the metal parts survive, so that the coarb is now invested only in these. For parallels to this spelling, see Peter Stotz, *Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters*, iv (München, 1998), 77.

Ch. xxxiii: *ante consummacionem seculi*. This is much more likely to mean ‘before the end of the world’ than ‘before a century is completed’, and this is confirmed by the next sentence (*postquam ... de fine mundi prophetauit*). Cf. Matthew 28:20.

It is to be stressed, however, that the translation is generally excellent. The authors have provided a very useful resource which will be drawn on by all who wish to study the neglected hagiography of St Enda, and the introduction argues for a stimulatingly different way of reading medieval Irish hagiography from the ways that are currently dominant, either in Celtic studies or history.

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Tintúd–Aistriú: Papers on Translation in Irish Tradition. In eagar ag/edited by Ken Ó Donnchú. Cló Torna, University College Cork, Cork, 2022. xi + 240 pp. €15. ISBN 978-1-9996859-2-8.

In a wide-ranging and thoughtful introductory chapter entitled ‘Conceptualising “translation” in the early medieval Latin/Irish linguacultural context’, Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh sets the scene for the other contributions to *Tintúd–Aistriú: Papers on Translation in Irish Tradition*, edited by Ken Ó Donnchú. Stressing the value of the Latin/Irish code-mixing textual sources

which are available to us, Ó Dochartaigh explores the early interaction between the two cultures in the religious and writing spheres, based on the evidence which can be culled from a lexical-cum-semantic-field approach to the traces left by Latin in the vocabulary of Irish. Cogent examples cited are the direct loanword OIr *salm* 'psalm', from Lat. *psalmus*, and the additional transferred sense of 'translating, translation, version' given to OIr *tintúd* (verbal noun of *do-intaí*) 'act of returning, act of translating, translation, version', so that it could function as an equivalent of the Latin noun *translatio* 'a carrying across, removal, transporting, transferring', derived from *transfero* (p. 6). In this, she complements earlier studies of the Old Irish lexicon undertaken by Pierre-Yves Lambert and Damian McManus, and of the general translation process by Maria Tymoczko. However, Ó Dochartaigh persuasively argues for approaches which would transcend, not only a narrow interpretation of translation as word-for-word rendering, but also perhaps even the sense-for-sense rendering espoused by St Jerome in his Latin version of holy scripture. Instead, she embraces the consideration of wider cross-language adaptations, including the questions of genre influence, shifts and transformation. Many different aspects were in play in the Old Irish period, when the native language acquired not only the physical apparatus and tools for writing – tablets, quills, parchment and so on – but new concepts and novel ways of thinking. These ultimately served to complement and enrich the vibrant and sophisticated native traditions of learning, rather than overwhelm them.

Aspects of the fresh synergies which continued for many centuries into the Early Modern Irish period are examined in several of the subsequent chapters. One feature, specifically pertinent to religious texts, is the perennial tension between two aspects of the religious message to be promulgated: the need for comprehensibility on the one hand, and the frequent desire to clothe the divine message in an elevated language register on the other. In the latter instance, one has only to think of the cultural and literary status accorded the King James version of the Bible by English speakers, as well as the 'Jewish scholars who preferred the older, familiar Greek Septuagint translation' (p. 3) to Jerome's novel version, which, to their mind, was superfluous and unnecessary. However, as Jerome well recognised, an obscure, poorly understood message is pointless. In other words, *caint na ndaoine* sensibility, such as that of An tAthair Peadar Ua Laoghaire and his adherents, is essentially timeless, and not a phenomenon peculiar to *fin-de-siècle* Ireland.

Michael Clarke, 'Translation and creativity in the antiquity sagas: the arming of Julius Caesar in *In Cath Catharda*', draws on a corpus of five works composed between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries to examine stylistic convergences and resonances between translations from Latin and native Irish tales, in particular *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. He observes that in the antiquity sagas 'the Classical sources have been thoroughly assimilated to the imaginative modes and generic norms of indigenous Irish tradition', stressing that the 'dynamic also included room for pure imaginative creativity' (p. 25). Clarke then proceeds to explicate the intricacies of the arming-scene of Julius Caesar as set out in *In Cath Catharda*, applying the interesting concept of 'heroic vagueness' to

the tale's creative aesthetic, 'shifting back and forth between the vivid descriptions of contemporary realities and a level of fantasy determined by generic expectations rooted in earlier literature' (p. 43). This phenomenon raises the intriguing possibility of conceptual linking with the kind of magic realism to be found, for instance, in the works of several contemporary short story writers in Irish, including Daithí Ó Muirí, which in turn evokes the interplay of familiar locales, geographical remoteness and otherworldliness often encountered in traditional folktales, such as those collected by Douglas Hyde in the west of Ireland and published in *Beside the Fire* (1890). Finally, we may note the compliment paid by Clarke to the author of *In Cath Catharda*: 'When we are kept guessing as to whether to picture Caesar as a figure more resembling Conchobar Mac Nessa or an aristocratic knight of the thirteenth century, the ambiguity itself deserves to be seen as part of the author's accomplishment' (p. 43).

The linguistic analysis which is central to Uáitéar Mac Gearailt's extensive chapter, '*In Cath Catharda*: translation in transition in late Middle Irish and Early Modern Irish', opens with instances of continuity between *Togail Troí* and *In Cath Catharda*, the latter being the later work. While the overall comparative context includes 'the Irish *Aeneid*', known as *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, and the Irish *Thebaid*, *Togail na Tebe*, Mac Gearailt's paper focuses in particular on *In Cath Catharda* 'The Civil War', which is based on the epic poem *Bellum Civile* by Lucan (AD 39–65), concerning the civil war fought between Julius Caesar and his son-in-law Pompey (pp. 51–2). Mac Gearailt's close linguistic reading yields many examples of correspondences between *Togail Troí* and *In Cath Catharda*. Lexical cases cited include 'the presence of several instances of the English loanword *stiúrusmann* "helmsman" and the use of distinctive words such as *allguth* "great noise" and *(-)immarchoirthid* "ferryman", as well as phrases like *bárca bronnfairsiunga* and *long luchtmar lánmór*' (p. 54). Basing his arguments on a thorough analysis of the verbal system, Mac Gearailt takes issue with Alf Sommerfelt's conclusion that *In Cath Catharda* was composed in the early twelfth century and advocates a later date of c. 1200 (p. 62). The fruits of the author's attention to detail go beyond his tracing of influences from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Acallam na Senórach* on *In Cath Catharda*: they are to be seen in the distilling of lexical parallels not only from the period 1150 to 1400, but also from prose and verse works of the seventeenth century. More generally, it may be said that the study of the Irish version makes it 'clear that the notion of translating *Bellum Civile* word for word did not occur to the Irish author', who nonetheless 'appears to have been intent on conveying its atmosphere and content' (p. 85). In conclusion, Mac Gearailt states that all the evidence adduced 'points to the late twelfth century or the early thirteenth as the time when *In Cath Catharda* was written', before proceeding to provide a number of fascinating instances of later lexemes and phraseology, with the vocabulary reflecting continental developments in commerce and administration (pp. 112–13). These recall the extensive evidence provided by Henry Risk's studies of French loan-words in Irish in *Études Celtiques* 12 (1968–71) and 14 (1974).

As pointed out by Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha in one of the four contributions in Irish in *Tintúd–Aistriú*, “‘Caipittil ar an mbolgaigh Fhráncaigh’”: tionntódh leighis ón 16ú haois’, Irish medical manuscript texts belong to the period c. 1350 to c. 1700 and were, for the most part, translated from Latin originals, initially in manuscript form. However, following the invention of printing, published works came to play a significant part in the relationship between professional medical learning in Ireland and on the Continent. Nic Dhonnchadha’s chapter considers Eóghan Ultach’s (fl. 1563; ob. 1586) Irish abridgement of Remachus Fuchus’s book on *morbis Gallicus*, the French disease, usually identified as syphilis, which was published in Paris in 1541, and dealt with the curative properties of *lignum Guayacum* or Guaiac wood, found in the West Indies. In this paper we learn that, taken together, the two extant copies of Eóghan Ultach’s summary (along with a separated sheet now in RIA MS 23 O 57 (1366)) provide almost all of his original text. Both are contained in RIA MS 24 P 3 (451). Writing in 1676, the scribe, Éamonn Ó Caiside, includes a colophon, the first part of which reads: ‘Ag sin caipittil ar an mbolgaigh Fhráncaigh. Et is é Fuchus is ughdar léi 7 as é Eógan Ultach do rinne trannslasion as Laidin urrthe ...’ (‘That is a chapter on the French pox. And it is Fuchus who was its author and it is Eóghan Ultach who made the translation of it from Latin.’) (p. 125). Eóghan Ultach was a contemporary of the French physician Fuchus, who published seven works in Latin between 1541 and 1544. A second of these, his *Tabulae* on pharmacology was translated into Irish and Nic Dhonnchadha offers the plausible suggestion that this may also have been the work of Eóghan Ultach.

Eóghan Ultach’s summary of the original Latin treatise involved a drastic reduction from sixteen chapters and some 11,000 words to a single chapter of approximately 2,000 words: whole chapters were omitted and others were severely pruned. On the other hand, Eóghan Ultach actually added material from an as yet unidentified source or sources (p. 134). Interestingly, whereas Fuchus was content to leave the choice of medicine to the professional judgement of the individual doctor, Eóghan provides four detailed prescriptions, no doubt as an aid to practitioners and students alike (p. 138). In fact, the two works have markedly different emphases. Whereas Fuchus’s original Latin composition was a leisurely academic treatise which situated the disease and its treatment in an overall historical and learned context, as well as the social environment of contemporary medicine, Eóghan Ultach’s focus is on practical rather than theoretical matters, anticipating, no doubt correctly, that these were most likely to be the overriding concerns of his own readers. Finally, Nic Dhonnchadha observes that Eóghan Ultach’s summary is apparently the earliest text in Irish to treat of the French disease, having been composed well before *Párlia-ment na mBan* (late seventeenth century) and the first noting of the ‘French Pox’ in an official document in English in Dublin in the year 1683/4 (pp. 145–6).

Another paper in Irish which discusses a text from the Early Modern Irish period is ‘*Sdair na Lumbardach agus Leabhar Mharcais: dhá aistriúchán i Leabhar Mhéig Charthaigh Riabhaigh*’ by Andrea Palandri. Combining careful examination of the various quires and estimates of the length of the

translation tales contained in the manuscript known both as *The Book of Mac Carthaigh Riabhach* and *The Book of Lismore* allows the author to conclude that the scribe presented *Sdair na Lumbardach* and *Leabhar Mharcais* (the Irish title given here to *Marco Polo's Travels*) as a physical unit extending over three quires (p. 158). However, Palandri argues convincingly that there was also perceived to be a thematic connection between the two works. However, the thematic similarities – chronological continuity, north Italian pivot and anti-Islam religious bias – stand in contrast to the fundamental linguistic dissimilarities produced by the archaising register and orthography of *Leabhar Mharcais*. Furthermore, whereas *Sdair na Lumbardach* adheres fairly closely to its Latin original, *Leabhar Mharcais* departs widely from the earlier text. Palandri draws the interesting conclusion that the changes were probably made in order to highlight parallels between the circumstances of Kublai Khan and those of the scribe's patron Fínghean Mac Carthaigh Riabhach, observing that the scribe may also have been the author of this Irish translation of Marco Polo (pp. 165–6).

Sdair na Lumbardach is a translation of chapter 177 of the famed Latin text *Legenda Aurea*, written by Jacobus de Voragine in the thirteenth century (p. 160). This vast collection of saints' lives was extremely popular in Europe, and was also well known in Ireland, as is clearly demonstrated by Palandri's imposing summary of the evidence for Irish translations of a number of the saints' lives (pp. 167–9): some 950 manuscript copies of the work survive from the Middle Ages. Indeed, the work was in such demand that the Latin text was printed eighty-seven times between 1470 and 1500, while sixty-nine translations were made of it into various European languages in the same period. The evidence for widespread dissemination of the *Legenda Aurea* in Irish stands in marked contrast to the fate of *Marco Polo's Travels*, as no other reference to the traveller or to *Leabhar Mharcais* is found until the nineteenth century (p. 167). Whereas, from c. 1475 onwards, *Leabhar Mharcais* and many other texts were transmitted into Irish from England or through the English language, Palandri demonstrates that *Sdair na Lumbardach* cannot have been based on the English translation printed by William Caxton in Belgium in 1483, as it does not repeat a misunderstanding which had found its way into the English version (p. 170).

The chapter by Takako Haruki, entitled 'Translating *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* into Japanese', documents the painstaking care and resourcefulness of the author and his colleagues in their seven-year project to do justice to the eighteenth-century Clare poem in Japanese. The group's motivation is explained: 'We were intrigued not only by the vivid descriptions of the landscape, characters and intense drama but also by the dynamism of the vigorous yet controlled rhythm' (p. 177). The reader is informed that the modest work initially envisaged eventually expanded to become 'a large-sized book of 350 pages' (p. 178). Three main guidelines were adopted for the project. Firstly, the group wanted their readers to come into close touch 'with the spirit of vivacity, acuteness and boldness that the Merríman poem had' (p. 180). Musicality and overall rhythm were crucial to this. Secondly, they decided to leave 'space for ambiguities and different interpretations' (p. 181).

Thirdly, they resolved to employ their ‘oral and literary Japanese skills to the utmost’ so as ‘not to disturb the original order of lines’ (p. 182). To achieve their goal, we are told that the project members employed much ingenuity in maximising the three types of (non-alphabetic) Japanese writing systems. This chapter is a fascinating case-study of the seriousness and conscientious attention to detail which high-minded translators can bring to bear when confronted with the challenge of bridging a daunting cultural and temporal divide.

Also written in Irish, Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh’s contribution, ‘Fíon Gearmánach: Torna agus filíocht na Gearmáinise’, gives a multifaceted insight into the process of translation by the scholar Tadhg Ó Donnchadha, known as Torna (1874–1949), in *Fíon Gearmánach* (1930). However, most of the pieces which are gathered together in this anthology had been appearing in newspapers since 1911, so that they really represent the endeavours and outlook of a period somewhat earlier than the book’s publication date. Torna’s translations were prompted by an urge to repay the goodwill and benefit bestowed on Irish by scholars such as Kuno Meyer and by his perception of affinity between the poetical attributes of the two languages. Torna was a meticulous translator and he regularly sought advice from native speakers of German. For example, he consulted the German scholar, Ludwig Mühlhausen about sources and translations. It may be observed in passing that the image of a letter from Mühlhausen to Torna, written in Irish and gaelic script, and excellently reproduced here (pp. 201–2) is further evidence of Mühlhausen’s fine command of Irish, which is also clear from Prof. Maxim Fomin’s recent publication, *Ludwig Mühlhausen, Séamus Ó Caiside and Scéal Rí na Gréige: The Tale of ‘Three Golden Children’ (ATU 707) in 1937 Donegal* (2020).

Among the other interesting contextual matters which attracted Ní Ghearbhuigh’s attention is the conservative, defensive attitude of many of the revivalists. On the one hand, they were worried that Irish was so fragile that it would be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of literature available in other languages, while on the other, they shared the general anxiety of the day about immoral literary content emanating from foreign parts (cf. pp. 213–14). Among the other interesting points noted by the author are the large number of reviews which Torna’s *Fíon Gearmánach* attracted in newspapers and periodicals, the incipient hostility to An Gúm already evident in 1930, and the decision to publish the Irish translations without the original poems and details of provenance (cf. pp. 200, 209). While the failure to publish the original texts alongside the translations may seem somewhat odd to many readers today, one may note that, whatever about poetry anthologies, translated novels and prose works in general are rarely issued in dual-language format.

The final essay in this bilingual volume, ‘“Cé leis an imirt?” An t-aistriúchán agus filíocht chomhaimseartha na Gaeilge’, is based on an earlier English paper by the author, Daniela Theinová, viz. ‘“Who owns the game?”: the Gallery Press and poetry in Irish now’ (2018). As Theinová discusses the practice of translation from theoretical as well as practical perspectives, it is an appropriate *dúnadh* for a work which opened with Ó Dochartaigh’s

evaluation of the approaches to translation favoured by some of Ireland's earliest recorded writers. However, the code-mixing relationship between Irish and Latin at the start of the story has been succeeded by an uneasy contemporary translation relationship with English, and this dilemma is to the fore here. The author considers various ideological stances adopted by modern Irish-language poets towards the translation of their work into English. Whereas most of the earlier generations of post-Revivalist poets set their face against the practice, many of their contemporary successors welcome the prospect of reaching a wider audience. Indeed, some actually provide their own English versions as part of their creative enterprise. However, the desire of some for 'foreignising' translations, could be regarded as indicating an underlying unease, and as perhaps even embodying an actual contradiction. Creative originality in a particular language would seem to be in danger of ceding much of its relevance if the author's gaze constantly strays beyond their own primary language community and is distracted by the lure of another audience or audiences. Indeed, Theinová ascribes a new awareness of the disadvantages and the problems associated with translation to the poets Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh and Aifric Mac Aodha, one which stands in contrast to the attitude prevalent when Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's *Pharaoh's Daughter* was published in 1990. Theinová's appraisal of *The Coast Road* (2016) by Ní Ghearbhuigh and *Foreign News* (2017) by Mac Aodha leads her to state that the two poets insert new kinds of alterity in the binary connection between Irish and English, as they accept translation as part of human discourse and creativity (cf. pp. 232–3).

Published in hardback with good quality paper facilitating fine reproduction of images, and clear print throughout, the design of *Tintúd–Aistriú: Papers on Translation in Irish Tradition* is a credit to all involved in the book's production. Its chapters range widely and lively over the various periods of the Irish language. The collection analyses many of the different translation strategies and techniques which were in evidence over the centuries, and it considers leading theoretical approaches. The eight authors and their editor have significantly advanced the study of translation in Irish tradition. One hopes that they – and others – will carry their project further.

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Trawsfurfio'r Seintiau: Llawysgrif Yale o Fucheddau'r Saint. David Callander. University of Wales Press, Caerdydd [Cardiff], 2024. xvi + 294 pp. £24.99. ISBN 978-1-83772-120-7.

It is not often that an entire manuscript of medieval and early modern texts turns up of which specialists knew nothing, but, as David Callander explains in this fine new study, that is exactly what happened in 2018, when he discovered a new collection of hagiography of obvious Welsh origin. As Callander admits, the manuscript was not concealed in the crumbling stone wall of an old castle.