

Review: *Trawsfurfio'r Seintiau: Llawysgrif
Yale o Fucheddau'r Saint* (Callander)



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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.

It was hiding in plain sight in the Beinecke Library of Yale University, USA, and Callander discovered it when an unrelated internet search brought up the relevant entry from the Beinecke catalogue. Nevertheless, up until that point it had been totally unknown to scholars in Wales. This monograph-length study provides a full account of the manuscript as well as editions of its most important new texts: a completely new medieval Latin Life of St Cybi of Holyhead, new versions of the Welsh Lives of SS Beuno and Collen, and an early modern English translation of Robert of Shrewsbury's *Vita Wenefrede*.

Chapter 1 introduces the manuscript. Yale, Beinecke Library Osborn fb229 was written in the 1620s and early 1630s. Though the script is very variable, and Callander originally believed that several hands were involved, Gruffudd Antur argued convincingly that the whole was written by a single person, Robert Davies II of Gwysaney, Flintshire, and that view is accepted in the book. Davies was a prolific copyist of Welsh genealogies, heraldry and poetry, and probably a Catholic, if not openly so, in a region of Wales where Catholic sympathies remained strong after the Reformation. The Yale manuscript appears to be his own compilation, made over time in a blank paper book, as is indicated by the changes in script and the numerous blank leaves left between the texts. The contents relate to British and Welsh saints, and include, beside the main texts listed above, a calendar, Welsh texts of *St Patrick's Purgatory* and the Legend of the Finding of the True Cross, a copy of Caradog of Llancarfan's *Vita Gildae*, the *Inventio Sancti Amphibali* and the *Vita* and *Miracula* of St Alban, selections from the *English Martyrologe* (of 1608), and at the very end some short, non-hagiographical wisdom texts in Welsh. For most of the contents of the Yale manuscript Davies's sources can be identified, some being printed texts, and others manuscript, but some are unknown. There is a likely connection with Llanstephan 117, a collection of mainly religious texts in Welsh made by Ieuan ap Wiliam ap Dafydd of Ruabon about a century earlier, from which Davies may have drawn three of the Welsh narrative texts, as well as some of the local saints in his calendar. The calendar is reproduced fully on pp. 7–10 and its entries reveal a clear interest in north Wales, particularly the north-east. Under February 3, *Llywelyn Blâs escop* is actually two entries, *Blâs escop* being St Blaise. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Robert Davies himself and some account of the later history of the manuscript: it appears to have left Gwysaney for the home of the Legh family at Lyme Park in Cheshire in the later seventeenth century, but after that its history is unclear until it reappeared in private hands at the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter 2 deals with the most important new text in the Yale manuscript, a Latin Life of St Cybi of Holyhead. Two Lives of this saint were known previously, both in the late twelfth-century Vespasian manuscript of saints' Lives from south Wales. The new Life is clearly related to these but there are substantial differences. As Callander notes, the appearance of this third Life forces a rethink of the relationship between the other two. It had been thought that *Vita II* was essentially a rewrite of a text very close to, but slightly antecedent to, *Vita I*, as I accepted in Lewis (2021: 165). I would still favour this view,

broadly speaking, because it accounts so well for the intensely close relationship between the two: they match each other sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase, and even word by word, but *Vita II* uses more recondite vocabulary (*latex* for *aqua*, and the like), and has extra padding (*qua de re*, and the like). But the *tertium comparationis* of the Yale Life shows that, in at least a few places, *Vita II* preserves wording from an older stage shared with the Yale Life, so that we are compelled to recognize that *Vita I* has made changes of its own.

Up till now, one appealing theory was that *Vita I* was an early draft of the Life of Cybi, and *Vita II* a rhetorical elaboration of it. The reason for thinking so is the peculiar style of *Vita I*. It is written in short, pungent sentences, with many conjugated verbs and few participles, and much use of *et* or *-que* to link clauses and sentences (Lewis 2021: 165), giving the strong impression that the text is an attempt to capture the essential information before much rhetorical elaboration was added. On this method of composition in two stages, see Dolbeau (1992: 61). A comparison with the Yale Life suggests, however, that *Vita I* is in fact a drastic abbreviation of an earlier text. In places, the Yale Life explains passages in *Vita I* that are so compressed as to be difficult to follow. An example occurs when Cybi leaves Ireland, driven out by the irascible Irish hermit Crubthir Fintam (*Cructurus* in Yale). Yale contains one final curse uttered by Cructurus against Cybi, namely, that he should not reach a safe port. This curse is absent from *Vita I* (and *II*), yet the saint is immediately plunged into danger at sea – a storm – and has to be rescued by God, who miraculously carves a way for Cybi's boat to land, through solid rock. Yale makes it clear that this miracle is the answer to Cructurus' curse, whereas in *Vita I* (and *II*) the storm appears unannounced and the division of the rock is described in such a summary manner that no motivation is given. Another, even clearer example is the departure of Cybi's disciple Caffo. Caffo has just miraculously carried hot coals in his garment, and in the Yale Life, Cybi takes this miracle as a sign that his disciple is ready to rule his own church, and dismisses him. In *Vita I*, by contrast, Cybi simply announces that he and Caffo 'cannot be together', giving no reason; what is more, the sentence is displaced, occurring a few lines down in the Life and in the middle of a new episode, the confrontation between Cybi and King Maelgwn. It is undoubtedly in its correct position in Yale, immediately following the episode of the coals.

Yale, then, probably shows that there was a longer and fuller ancestor behind all of the Lives, and that *Vita I* cannot any longer be taken as giving us a good view of the beginning of the tradition. That said, Yale is a seventeenth-century copy of what was undoubtedly a late medieval source, for the liturgical pieces at the end of the Life draw from a fifteenth-century sequence (p. 72). The genealogical material at the beginning of the Life may not be early either (p. 81). That means that Yale cannot be taken as a close reflection of the common ancestor either. The Yale Life is a text containing several chronological layers. As it stands, it is a series of six lessons for the saint's feast day, followed by some liturgical material. We have no idea where all this came from except that Robert Davies found it in an 'old manuscript'. Nor have we any idea whether this material was in use, say, at Holyhead in the late Middle Ages.

Callander argues that the Yale Life has a very strong focus on Cybi as a bishop, and on Holyhead as a bishop's church, which is less obvious in *Vita I* and *II* (it is not absent altogether), and that this suggests that Yale represents a derivative from the common ancestor in which this aspect was stressed (see his stemma, p. 82); the emphasis was not in the common ancestor itself because there is no clear reason why the various references to Cybi as a bishop should have been pared down in *Vita I* and *II*. This is, however, readily explicable if *Vita I* and *Vita II* derive from a drastically abbreviated summary, as now looks likely to be the case. Thus, the stage marked 'fersiwn esgobol' in the stemma on p. 82 may not need to be distinguished from the 'fersiwn gwreiddiol': the extensive references to Cybi as a bishop may well have been present from the earliest stage in the formation of the text.

The focus on episcopal status is also used by Callander to date the 'fersiwn esgobol' to the window of time between 1081 and 1092. This is defined by the serious arrival of Norman power in Gwynedd at the one end, and the appointment of a Norman bishop to Bangor at the other, marking the last point at which other churches in Gwynedd might have had any realistic chance of persuading the powers that be that they should have episcopal status. This, in Callander's view, is the likeliest period in which Holyhead might seek to promote itself as a bishop's see, and there are clear analogies in the *Vita S. Paterni* and *Vita S. David*, which belong to this very period and show other churches manoeuvring in the context of the tightening definition of authority in and over the Welsh church. The argument is not watertight by any means, but on the other hand, the *Vespasian Lives* are extant in a manuscript of the late twelfth century, and there are at least two stages to be posited behind them (the supposed ancestor shared with Yale and the drastic summary of that ancestor that lies immediately behind the *Vespasian Lives*). This makes Callander's late eleventh century date plausible. As noted above, it may not be necessary to posit an 'episcopal' version between Yale and the common ancestor of all the Lives, so the period 1081–92 may in fact have been the time at which the original Life was composed.

The chapter includes a full edition of the Yale Life, with Latin text, a full Welsh translation, and notes. There are quite a few places where the text is awkward, or even ungrammatical, suggesting that it has suffered in transmission: the smooth, even elegant quality of the Latin around these passages suggests that the problems do not go back to the composer(s). One can be cleared up here: the first sentence in §2, *Sanctus vero Kybi ... ad virtutum irregularem tam direxit vestigia*, is not grammatical Latin and, after some puzzling over the manuscript image, I would read the text here as *ad virtutum incrementa direxit vestigia*.

Chapter 4 turns to texts in Welsh, *Buchedd Beuno* and *Buchedd Collen*. These are texts that are extant in other and earlier manuscripts, so the interest here is in the changes made to them. The Yale versions are shorter and simpler. *Buchedd Beuno* in particular has been very greatly shortened, and refocused. The earlier Life, which likely came from the saint's main church of Clynnog Fawr, is a complex work that drew stories about St Beuno from southern Powys, Gwent, north-east Wales and the north-west. In the Yale text, by contrast, the

opening sections of the Life, set in southern Powys, and even more so the later sections set in the north-west, are abbreviated almost to vanishing point. However, the stories connected with Gwyddelwern survive, these being local to north-east Wales. Even more prominent is the interaction between Beuno and Gwenfrewi (Winefride) of Holywell, which becomes the central issue of the Yale text. It is not surprising that St Winefride's martyrdom should come to be seen as the most important part of the hagiography of Beuno by this date, since Holywell was unquestionably the premier pilgrimage site in north Wales and one whose pilgrimage proved tenacious in the teeth of the Protestant Reformation. Callander argues that the Yale text of *Buchedd Beuno* was probably taken from Llanstephan 117, a collection of mainly religious texts assembled in or near Ruabon in the 1540s and early 1550s. The same appears to be the case for *Buchedd Collen*, where again the Yale text agrees with the Ruabon manuscript against the other copies. The Welsh Life of St Collen is a much less well-understood text than *Buchedd Beuno*, and arguably one of the strangest of Welsh hagiographical texts. In places it reads more like romance than hagiography, and its date and sources are quite unclear. As in the case of the other Life, the Yale and Llanstephan 117 texts are rather shortened and simplified ones. They illustrate an appetite for short, simple hagiography in Welsh at the end of the Middle Ages, perhaps for preaching purposes, but also for lay devotional reading (the compiler of Llanstephan 117 seems to have been a layman). The chapter concludes with very useful editions of both texts in their Yale versions.

Chapter 5 concerns a text in English, a translation of Robert of Shrewsbury's *Vita et Translatio S. Wenefredae* by Edward Morgan. Morgan was a Catholic priest, a native of Flintshire, martyred in 1642. Callander shows here that the translation is a close and accurate one, especially in comparison with the much freer version of John Falconer, published in 1635. Again, a full edition of the Yale text is given.

Finally, chapter 6 reviews a series of short wisdom texts in Welsh, again giving the Yale versions in full and comparing them with earlier versions. Here the comparison is less detailed than in the other chapters, and reasonably so, for the texts are extant in many very divergent forms and the basic research on them remains unattempted, as Callander notes.

Trawsfurfio'r Seintiau is an important contribution to the study of Welsh hagiography and the author is to be commended both for making the Yale manuscript known to Welsh specialists and for publishing its most important materials in a timely and helpful manner. As he notes in his conclusion, he writes as a medievalist whose chief interest in the manuscript is as a repository for medieval texts, but Beinecke Osborn fb229 is equally a witness to Catholic literary activity in the early modern period, and it is to be hoped that early modern specialists will in time bring their own perspectives to its study.

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Pádraig Ó Laoghaire (1870–1896): An Irish Scholar from the Béarra Peninsula. Méidhbhín Ní Úrdail. Cumann Staire Bhéarra/Beara Historical Society, 2021. ix + 445 pp. €30. ISBN 978-1-5272-7181-4.

The awakening of Irish national awareness we witness in the second half of the nineteenth century was to manifest itself in many areas of the political and cultural life of the country, not least in a renewed interest in the fortunes of the Irish language and its literature. The bleak picture the census returns of 1851 had painted highlighted the perilous state of the spoken language in the wake of the Great Famine and the revival movement that grew in response to this resulted in several initiatives being undertaken in attempt to reverse its decline. These efforts culminated in the foundation in 1893 of Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League), a body that was to exert considerable influence on the cultural and indeed on the political life of the country down until independence.

Two years after the census of 1851, Johann Caspar Zeuss published his *Grammatica Celtica*, a work that was to lay the foundations for the modern discipline of Celtic Studies. The interest shown by continental scholars in Irish and in its literature, and the emphasis laid on its importance to our understanding of Europe's linguistic and cultural history, served as no small degree of affirmation for those active in the language movement here. Scholars such as Heinrich Zimmer from Germany and his Danish student Holger Pedersen had already spent periods in the late nineteenth century on the Aran Islands learning the modern language. The Norwegian, Carl Marstrand, was to station himself on the Great Blasket Island in 1907 for the same purpose.

The establishment in 1903 of the School of Irish Learning under the guidance of Kuno Meyer and John Strachan provided a basis for the further development of Celtic Studies in Ireland. Many remarkable figures who would distinguish themselves in Irish political and cultural life were to emerge from the language movement. Both Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill were founding members of Conradh na Gaeilge and others such as Pádraig Mac Piarais, Thomas MacDonagh, Éamonn Ceannt and Seán Mac Diarmada were subsequently drawn into its orbit. Several of the teachers and the students at the School of Irish Learning had been active in language circles and also were members of Conradh na Gaeilge.