

Some Welsh and Irish Translations of Spanish Writers

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Much Welsh and Irish literature consists of translation. Amongst the earliest records of the Celtic languages are glosses on Latin; at a later date we have religious and historical texts translated from Latin, and romances translated from French and (in the fifteenth century) English; in the sixteenth century Welsh and Irish first appear in print with translations of Protestant and Catholic texts; while from about 1800 appear various works conveniently described as 'modern'.

There is also a long tradition of translation from Welsh and Irish as well as into them. Early examples described in Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R. S. Loomis (Oxford, 1959), include the lost Welsh sources for the legends of King Arthur and Tristan and Isolde, and the Irish Fled Bricreen which provided the beheading theme for Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; while in recent years translations from Celtic have moved further afield, including Spanish versions of the Welsh Mabinogion and Irish Lebor Gabála.

For Welsh, D. Simon Evans, A Grammar of Middle Welsh (Dublin, 1964), xxixliv, provides a bibliography of Welsh literature to 1400 with indications of Latin and French sources, while in her 'Rhai Agweddau ar Gyfieithu yng Nghymru yn yr Oesoedd Canol', Ysgrifau Beirniadol, xiii (1985), 134-45, Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan

discusses how early Welsh translators worked vis-à-vis French romance. Irish material is surveyed in Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations and Adaptations into Irish', *Celtica*, xvi (1984), 107-24.

The Welsh and Irish versions of Spanish writers listed below perhaps suggest both the nature of the material, and possible approaches for Spanish researchers. The list below may help also dispel the idea that literature in the Celtic languages deals solely with myth, legend, and magic.

WELSH

1. St Raimundo de Peñafort, OP (c. 1180 Vilafranca del Penedés-1275 Barcelona). Penityas, a fourteenth-century text based on his widely-known Summa de Poenitentia et Matrimonio, appears in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 190. For an extract and discussion see Drychyr Oesoedd Canol, ed. Nesta Lloyd and Morfydd Owen (Cardiff, 1986), 7-8.
2. Juan Luis Vives (Valencia 1492 - Bruges 1540). Dysgeidiaeth Cristnoges o Ferch, a translation of part of his De instructione feminae Christianae made in 1552-53 by Richard Owen (of whom little else is known), appears in Aberystwyth, NLW, MS Peniarth 403. See the study by Garfield Hughes in Astudiaethau amrywiol a gyflwynir i Syr Thomas Parry -Williams, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1968).
3. Juan Alfonso de Polanco, S.J. (Burgos 1517 - Rome 1576). Athrawaeth Gristnogawl (Milan, 1568; reprinted Menston, 1972), a translation by Morus Clynnog of de Polanco's catechism De Doctrina Christiana, survives in a unique copy in the Newberry Library, Chicago. See Relación de un sacerdote Inglés ... de la visita de su Magestad a Valladolid, y al Colegio de los Ingleses (Madrid, 1592), and Andrew Breeze, 'Welsh and Cornish at Valladolid, 1591-1600', The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, xxxvii (1990).

4. Francisco Gómez de Quevedo y Villegas (Madrid 1580 - Villanueva de los Infantes 1645). Gweledigaethau y Bardd Cwsg (London, 1703), a version by Ellis Wynne (1671-1734) of Quevedo's Sueños, is a classic of Welsh prose. Wynne used the English translation of Quevedo by Sir Roger L'Estrange, The Visions of Don Francisco de Quevedo (London, 1667), but transformed his version into a completely Welsh work set in Wales; see Gwyn Thomas, Y Bardd Cwsg a'i Gefndir (Cardiff, 1974).
5. Federico García Lorca (Fuente Vaqueros 1898 - Granada 1936). Priodas Gwaed, a version of his Bodas de sangre by R. Bryn Williams and John Rowlands, has been published by University of Wales Press (Cardiff, 1977).

IRISH

6. Lucan (Córdoba 39 - Rome 65). In Cath Cathardha, ed. Whitley Stokes (Leipzig, 1909), a twelfth-century version of Lucan's Bellum civile or Pharsalia, is the oldest vernacular translation of a classical epic. See Robin Flower, The Irish Tradition (Oxford, 1947), 137, and Ní Shéaghda, 'Translations', 108-09. The Irish text is a free version of the original, which it uses mainly for its dramatic incidents and speeches.
7. Don Teccoscc Criosduidhe. This translation from Spanish, made by Flaithrí O Maolchonaire in 1593, survives in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 L 19, and is discussed in Brian O Cuív, 'Flaithrí O Maolchonaire's "Catechism of Christian Doctrine"', Celtica, i (1946), 161 ff., which I have been unable to see.

Flaithrí O Maolchonaire, OFM, was Archbishop of Tuam from 1609 to his death, though he worked mainly in Spain and the Netherlands and never visited his see. After study at Salamanca, he persuaded Philip III to found the Irish Franciscan college at Louvain in 1606 for the conversion of Ireland; the translation and printing at the college of Catholic works in Irish were part of this work. O

Maolchonaire died in 1629, at Madrid.

T. F. O’Rahilly, in his edition of O Maolchonaire’s Desiderius, otherwise called Sgáthán an Chrábhaidh (Dublin, 1941), xiii, refers to the present work as an unpublished compendium of Christian doctrine translated from Spanish to Irish. In his An Léann Eaglasta in Eirinn 1200-1900 (Dublin, 1988), 76, Fr. Máirtín Mac Conmara, repeating O’Rahilly, describes the work as still unpublished. He does not mention O Cuív’s article.

Whether published or not, the importance of this catechism as the first translation from Spanish into Irish needs no emphasis. A Spanish scholar would be well placed to relate the translator’s sources to the catechetics of the time, including the famous Spanish catechisms of Gaspar Astete (Salamanca 1537 - Burgos 1601), and his fellow-Jesuit Jerónimo Ripalda (Teruel c. 1537 - Toledo 1618); cf. Las edades del hombre: libros y documentos en la iglesia de Castilla y León (Burgos, 1990), 401-02.

Ó Maolchonaire’s catechism should not be confused with Bonabhentura Ó hEodhasa’s An Teagasc Críosdaidhe (Antwerp, 1611; Louvain, 1614-15), based on a work by Cardinal Bellarmine, and recently edited by Fearghal Mac Raghnaill, OFM (Dublin, 1976).

8. Miguel de Comalada (Catalonia, fl. c. 1500). Desiderius (Louvain, 1616), also called Sgáthán an Chrábhaidh, is a translation by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, perhaps via an English version of 1604 (reprinted Menston, 1971), of Tratado llamado el Deseoso, y por otro nombre, Espejo de Religiosos, itself a translation of Spill de la vida religiosa (Barcelona, 1515) attributed to the Hieronymite, Miguel de Comalada. For a full account of this Irish text see the edition by O’Rahilly cited above.
9. Juan Eusebio Nierenberg y Ottin, SJ (Madrid 1595 - Madrid 1658). An Bheatha Dhiadha nó an tSlighe Ríoghda is a translation of his La vida divina via Vita Divina seu Via Regia and Perfectionem, a Latin version of the text (by Martino Sibenio, SJ) published in Westphalia in 1642. The translator of the Irish text, edited by Anselm Ó Fachtna, OFM (Dublin, 1967), is not known for certain.
10. The Venerable Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (Barbastro 1902 - Rome 1975). Bealach, a translation (by Tomás Tóibín) of his

Camino, has been published by the Scepter Press (Dublin, 1967). Fr. Escrivá was the founder and first Grand Chancellor of the University of Navarre, Pamplona.