

A View of the Irish Language: Language and History in Ireland from the Middle Ages to the Present

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Sí an Ghaeilge gnáth-theanga na ndaoine san am i láthair i limistéirí beaga na hÉireann agus na hAlban; ach téann litriocht na Gaeilge siar go dtí deireadh na 6ú haoise. In Éirinn is í an Ghaeilge ‘an chéad teanga náisiúnta’, le comb-stádas le Sacs-Bhéarla; ach déanta na fírinne nil ann ach fíorbheagán a labhrann an Ghaeilge go rialta, in ainneoin gurb éigean do scolairí an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim ar feadh deich mbliana ar a laghad ar scoil. Go háirithe le críochdheighilt na hÉireann agus le bunú an dá stáit nua sna fichidí, áfach, d’éirigh conspóid idir náisiúnaithe agus aontachtaithe fá ghluaiseacht na Gaeilge: chonacthas d’aontachtaithe Uladh i dTuaisceart Éireann gur straitéis í gluaiseacht na Gaeilge le tolladh faoi fhéiniúlacht Bhreatnach Stát Tuaisceart Éireann. Chuaigh an chonspóid seo i gcion ar scríobh na staire chomh maith. Ba mhian le náisiúnaithe béim a chur ar leanúnachas na staire agus an traidisiúin Ghaelaigh, idir sochaí Gaelach dúchasach na meán-aoise agus Éire an lae inniu, agus sa chomhthéacs seo cuireadh béim ar theagasc agus scríbhneoireacht na staire trí mheán na Gaeilge. In ainneoin tacatocht an stáit, áfach, ba theip i gcoitinne an straitéis seo. Coinníodh ar stair na hÉireann a scríobh as Béarla go mórmhór, cé gur teanga an choncais Sasanaigh é an Sacs-Bhéarla: ach le difríochtaí a dhéanamh idir dhá leagán den stair agus den staireolaíocht (leagán na hÉireann agus leagán na Breataine), forbraíodh téarmaí agus coincheapanna ar leith, m.sh. maidir le stair na nGall sa dá thír. Ag deireadh thiar thall, áfach, is léir gurb é an dátheangachas an bealach is fearr: stair na nGael ina dteanga féin agus stair na nGall i mBéarla.



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Gaelic has the oldest living vernacular literature in Europe, with an elegy composed on the death of St Colm Cille in 597 AD and Gaelic glosses on the Epistles of St Paul dating from around a century later¹. Gaelic is still the native language of small parts of western Ireland and western Scotland. In Ireland, it is the

Republic’s ‘first national language’, and in statutory instruments the Irish language version of

statutes and articles of the constitution has priority over the version in English which is also an official language². Official statistics show that around 11/2 million people can speak Irish and c. 340,000 do so on a daily basis³. In June 2005 it was agreed that Irish will become the 21st official (and working) language of the European Union as from 1 January 2007. My university, National University of Ireland, Galway, is bilingual, the only university in which a full range of degree programmes, including History, is available through the medium of Irish, although in practice only a small minority of students choose to take their courses through Irish.

Last semester, for instance, I taught a Final Year undergraduate course on the Tudor conquest of Ireland: at least three of the 61 students registered for that course were fluent in Irish, would chat with each other in Irish before the start of tutorials, and would respond if asked questions in Irish; but all three preferred to do the course in English, even though it was also offered in Irish, because most of the literature for the course is in English and they would have had to learn the English terminology in any case. This small example epitomises the difficulties face by the Irish government in implementing its stated policy since the foundation of the state in 1922 of trying to revive the language. Since then, large sums have been spent on the language in pursuit of a bilingual Ireland. In theory, the language enjoys equal status with English: you can correspond with government departments in Irish, watch TG4 on TV, and catch a tram to Áth an Ghainibh (Sandyford, near Dublin), but in practice successive governments have been fighting a losing battle against the advance of English. Irish is still compulsory in the schools, but even after eleven years of compulsory Irish, the vast majority of schoolchildren are still not fluent in the language, and most of those who are quickly forget it after they leave school. So the reality is a 'first national language' which few actually speak regularly – least of all the politicians who read prepared texts in halting Irish and begin their speeches with the customary *cupla focal* (a few words) before retreating into English. Of Ireland's MEPs, for instance, only four out of thirty are in any way fluent in the language: so viewers of EuroNews on TV will have a long wait to hear speeches in the European parliament in Irish.

So why all this fuss about reviving the Gaelic language? Essentially, it is because both the founding fathers of the Irish Free State and also those other Irish nationalists (from whom the present IRA descends) who denounced the Free State as a sell-out of the republican ideals of 1916 regarded the War of Independence against British rule as the culmination of a seven-century struggle by the native Gaelic peoples against British colonial oppression. They campaigned for an Ireland which was Gaelic, republican, and free; and they denounced the 1920 partition of Ireland and the six-county 'statelet' of Northern Ireland erected by the British in north-eastern Ireland as a plot to perpetuate British rule in Ireland against the democratic wishes of the Irish nation. Accordingly, in nationalist Ireland the Gaelic language had to be restored to its rightful place as the native language of the Irish people. The result was that the Gaelic language and culture in Ireland found itself at the centre of a political struggle in 20th-century Ireland between those Irish who campaigned for an independent, all-Ireland Republic from Britain and the minority now entrenched in Northern Ireland who wished to preserve the Union with Great Britain. The situation was further complicated because, in a neat but ironic reversal of opposing politico-cultural identities from the time of Ireland's medieval two nations – the native Irish (*Gaedhil*), and the English settlers (*Gaill*) – the region which until 1603 had been the most Gaelic part of Ireland was now included in the new state of Northern Ireland – which loudly trumpeted its British identity: and the heartland of medieval English rule, the English Pale around Dublin, now became the political centre

of the Irish Free State – which presented itself as the true heir and custodian of Gaelic values. As frequently happens in other instances of competing states (for instance, East and West Germany from 1949 to 1989), both sides attempted to harness history to legitimate their particular perception of the present. Yet, for those seeking to harness history to the national cause, the relationship between the two nations of Ireland past and the twin states of Ireland present created intractable difficulties of an essentially historiographical nature: how to establish continuity between the Gaelic past and a state which, notwithstanding independence in 1922, remained recognizably English in terms of law, language, and administration.

For many Irish nationalists, the enhanced status in the Irish Free State of the Gaelic language (and other aspects of Gaelic culture) was a major plank in their campaign to establish this sense of continuity with the Gaelic past which British colonialism had systematically aimed to eradicate: quite simply, the Irish Free State established in 1922 [superseded by ‘Éire (Ireland)’ in 1937, and unofficially stiled since 1948 the Republic of Ireland] was the true legatee of traditional Gaelic values; the six-county ‘statelet’ imposed by the British in 1921 was an artificial construct to defraud the native people of their rights. Thus, political partition in turn politicized the Gaelic language which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been the subject of considerable academic interest by scholars whose political, cultural and religious convictions would after 1920 have placed them in the Unionist camp⁴. By contrast, in Northern Ireland (or Ulster) any attempt to promote Gaelic was viewed with grave suspicion by those who saw the language movement as part of a nationalist plot to undermine the Northern state. For Ulster Unionists, the Gaelic language was a foreign and dying language – spoken by a few illiterate peasants and nationalist zealots – which really had no place among well-affected loyalists in a British state.

In Ireland, therefore, the relationship between language and history is very much a political hot potato: in the Republic, the vast majority of the population identifies with a native and Gaelic past – it is (in the words of a recent officially-inspired slogan) ‘our language. It’s part of what we are.’ In Northern Ireland, by contrast, the majority population see themselves as the legatees of a colonial and civilizing mission to promote British values among primitive Gaelic savages. The reality, however, is that the Republic’s population includes huge numbers of people who are English or British by descent – as their surnames attest – while many Ulster Unionists are also descended from good Gaelic stock. In the remainder of this paper, a brief sketch is first offered of the structure of Irish: this is intended to highlight the difficulties which the language presents for Anglophones. There then follows a survey of the declining fortunes of Gaelic since medieval times. Finally, aspects of the attempted revival of Gaelic since the late 19th century and considered and, concurrently, the implications of language shift for our understanding of Irish history.

Not surprisingly, given its long history, Gaelic has a number of features which look rather antiquated in a modern Indo-European language. Like all Celtic languages, the word order is Verb – Subject – Object. There are no single words for Yes or No: in response to a question, the verb is simply repeated in indicative or negative form. The most common verbs also have separate dependent and independent forms; and all verbs have to be conjugated, like Latin, because the verb structure is partly synthetic, partly analytical. Adverbs, likewise, have separate personal forms. Each noun has four cases – Nominative/Accusative, Vocative, Genitive, and Dative – and since, depending on context, verbs and nouns also take aspiration or eclipsis at the front, the different forms can also look quite different from the basic noun or verb. There is no indefinite article; and in modern Irish there are only two genders, masculine and feminine – although

Old and Middle Irish had three – but there is a special dual form, between singular and plural. Finally, every consonant has two qualities, broad and slender, and these qualities are normally indicated by putting extra vowels in front or behind them. Thus, Gaelic words look to have a lot of redundant vowels.

All this means that the structure of the language is quite different from English, and indeed presents a number of challenging problems to Anglophones which were never really addressed by successive Irish governments in their language revival policies. These policies were rather suffused with the assumption that Irish people had subconsciously retained a latent ability to speak their native language – as exemplified by certain non-standard forms found in Hiberno-English which reflect borrowings from Gaelic. Accordingly, language policy seemed to focus on reawakening this Gaelic consciousness by exposing the native Irish to the sound of their own language, without bothering too much about sentence structure and grammar. The result has been disastrous. Despite eleven years of compulsory Irish in the schools, four generations of Irish are, for the most part, unable to speak the language fluently or to write Irish which is grammatically correct. The reason is of course that since Victorian times English, not Gaelic, has been the native language of most Irish people, and if they are to learn Irish, these Anglophones need to be taught the language in the same way as any other foreigner who chooses to learn.

Turning to the fortunes of the language, in 1400 Gaelic was spoken throughout most of Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man, with the exception of the Scottish lowlands and small parts of eastern and southern Ireland⁵. What is quite remarkable about late medieval Gaelic is that there had long evolved a standard literary form, classical common Gaelic (usually described in Ireland as ‘classical modern Irish’), which was written (and presumably spoken) by the Gaelic learned classes throughout the Gaelic world and was maintained by schools of native learning established in Ireland and Scotland⁶. Presumably, the peasantry must have spoken different dialects, but anything written in Gaelic was in this standard literary form, which was very much a scholarly language with a long tradition of writing on such topics as theology and medicine. Although Gaelic was denigrated by English and Scots princes as a barbarous language spoken by savages, the reality was that Gaelic in 1400 was far more of a literary language than English or Scots. In both Ireland and Scotland, moreover, the language was, if anything, gaining ground as a result of the impact of the Gaelic Revival. It was only as a result of two major developments in the 16th century that the status of Gaelic went into long-term decline⁷.

The first of these was the Tudor conquest of Ireland, together with related changes in Scotland which saw the consolidation of Scottish royal power over the hitherto quasi-autonomous Gaelic-speaking parts of the Scottish highlands and islands. In both regions, strong pressures were exerted on the Gaelic landowning clansmen to learn English and to adopt English/Scottish customs and law. Although Gaelic survived among the lower classes in the countryside, English was now everywhere the language of government and Gaelic law was proscribed. Further, this period saw the decline of the traditional political and cultural ties across the North Channel – epitomized hitherto by the powerful, maritime lordship of the Isles erected by Clan Donald in the later middle ages. Irish and Scottish Gaeldom were gradually absorbed into separate composite kingdoms of *Gaedhil* and *Gaill*; and by 1603 the new British multiple monarchy was able to bring unprecedented anglicizing pressures to bear on the weak and divided chieftaincies of the Gaelic world. Here, it should be noted too that the historical vocabulary and terminology available to describe these developments from a native perspective work much better in Gaelic than in English – not surprisingly!

The second major development which undermined Gaelic at this time was the impact of the Reformation. This eroded the status of Gaelic vis-à-vis English in two main ways. First, efforts to promote religious reform proved far more successful in Scotland than in Ireland, with the result that a strong vernacular Calvinist tradition developed in Gaelic Scotland, but not in Ireland. This meant that the two halves of the Gaelic world were now also divided by religion. In addition, the particular character of this ideological split was also unfortunate for the development of Gaelic. Traditionally, the Gaelic literary tradition had been stronger in Ireland, where most of the native schools had been located and the great books of Gaelic learning had mostly been compiled – the one major exception here was the Book of the Dean of Lismore, compiled in the early 16th century, the sole example of this type of manuscript to survive from a Scottish provenance⁸. The fact that Gaelic Ireland remained predominantly Catholic strangled the development of a Gaelic medium print culture in Ireland. The Church of Ireland did indeed make half-hearted attempts from Elizabeth's reign onwards to provide service books and Bibles in Gaelic: a catechism appeared in 1571, a Gaelic New Testament in 1603, and a Gaelic version of the Book of Common Prayer in 1608; but Protestantism made little progress among Gaelic landowners and *literati*, and so there was no tradition of services in Gaelic. Within the Catholic tradition, the same applied for other reasons: the retention of Latin meant that only a few books of religious instruction in Gaelic were published, beginning about 1610⁹.

These developments were disastrous for the language. The Gaelic *literati* and the schools of native learning had depended on the patronage of the chiefs. Yet with the collapse of the old Gaelic order – already by 1603 in Ireland, somewhat later in Scotland – the demand for Gaelic *brehons* (or judges) and the professional bards who had composed the traditional praise poems extolling the chief's generosity, valour, and victories in battle soon dried up. Likewise, as regards religion, the earliest publications in Gaelic – Protestant religious works such as Bishop Carswell's *Foirn na n-Urrnuidheadh* (1567) for the Church of Scotland (a translation of John Knox's *Book of Common Order*)¹⁰; and the catechism, New Testament, and prayer book of the Church of Ireland – had all appeared in classical common Gaelic, the standard literary language. Yet the religious divisions between Catholic Irish and Protestant Scottish Gaeldom also hastened the language's literary decline. The bards continued to compose their poems and *duanairi* (books of poetry) for as long as anyone could be found to buy them, but the bard and his poetry was increasingly out of tune with the new political realities: one of the last examples was the Black Book of Clanranald, composed by Niall MacMhuirich in Scotland around 1670¹¹; and by 1700 classical common Gaelic was dead. In terms of writing, the work of the professional bards was soon replaced by different brands of vernacular poetry in both Ireland and Scotland which broke with bardic conventions. The same thing happened with prose, and without a common print culture to sustain them, the dialects of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man (Manx) began to drift further apart. Already by 1688, when 'Irish' Bibles were reprinted for use in Scotland, extensive terminological revisions were needed to ensure that the language was intelligible to speakers of Scots Gaelic – and even this was only partly successful. And when publications in Manx Gaelic first appeared, in the 18th century, it was with English-style spelling, or orthography, which rendered the language almost unintelligible to readers of the other Gaelic dialects. By 1800, Irish Gaelic was predominantly the language of the illiterate Catholic peasantry, still spoken by perhaps a third of the island's population. A stronger Gaelic literary tradition had developed in Scotland, where the Highlands were still predominantly Gaelic-speaking; but there, too, English was increasingly understood. Manx Gaelic is now effectively dead¹².

Sometimes, when I have been teaching the Reformation to the *Gaeilgeoiri* (those students who opt to do their courses in Irish), I have handed out copies to them of passages from Carswell's *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* and asked them to identify what kind of Irish it is. Technically, it is classical common Gaelic. Another answer might be that it is Scots Gaelic, having been composed in Scotland. The usual answer, however, is some old form of Ulster, or Donegal, Irish, which indeed would be the closest modern form. Anyone reasonably well versed in modern Irish can read it because it is about like the difference between modern English and Shakespearean English. Gaelic scholars generally argue that modern Irish has three dialects, Munster, Connaught, and Ulster Irish; and each of these dialects retains some features of classical common Gaelic. Modern Scots Gaelic is generally much more difficult for speakers of Irish, but the dialects of the western isles in particular have features in common with north Donegal Irish because, into modern times, the north-west coast of Ireland still had trade links with western Scotland. And until its disappearance in the 1930s, the Irish of Rathlin Island and the Glens of Antrim was actually even closer to Scots Gaelic because these districts of Ulster had been settled by Gaelic speakers from Scotland¹³. In the early years of radio broadcasts in Irish, north Donegal speakers used to claim that they could understand Scots Gaelic much better than the Irish news broadcast from Dublin. This was because, before the advent of radio and television which have gradually changed things, the various spoken dialects of Gaelic represented a continuum from Cork and Kerry Irish in the far south-west to the dialects of northern Scotland. Most speakers of Irish now are more familiar with the vocabulary and pronunciation of the other Irish dialects because they hear them regularly on radio and television.

The modern movement to revive Irish Gaelic really got under way in 1893 with the founding of the Gaelic League; and from the outset the language movement was closely linked to the movement for political devolution. The first president of the Gaelic League, Dr. Douglas Hyde, eventually went on to become president of Ireland, in 1938; and another founding member of the League, Eoin MacNeill, was minister for education in the Irish Free State, 1922-25¹⁴. Linguistically, the Gaelic Leaguers and then the Free State government set out to transform the three main dialects spoken in Ireland into the national language, while ignoring those Gaelic dialects still spoken outside 'the national territory' in Scotland. In brief, this led to the production of a standard Irish grammar which, broadly, took Connaught Irish as the standard; and then in 1948 to a simplification of the spelling system which established an even clearer distinction between Irish and the Scottish dialects for which a version of the traditional spelling system has been retained. Perhaps the main result of this was the creation of a new form of government Irish to which the existing spoken dialects failed – in both grammar and pronunciation – to conform¹⁵.

Finally, if we turn to the implications of language shift in regard to Irish history, Ireland is in fact a good illustration, initially at least, of a fairly widespread phenomenon among the small European nation-states established in the aftermath of the 1st World War, that is, the tendency to promote the national language in the writing of the national history. The Free State government provided comparatively lavish funding for works published in Irish and also for translations. Academically, of course, there are also very sound reasons for studying the history of the *Gaedhil* in their own language, because the Gaelic language was shaped chiefly by the historical experiences and traditions of the *Gaedhil*. If the preoccupations and thought patterns of the *Gaedhil* down through the ages are to be understood, what better way to do it than to study and discuss how things are presented in their own language? There are also disadvantages, however. As elsewhere, the writing



Fig. 1 Language shift in the British Isles, 1500-1800. This map illustrates the advance of English and the decline of Celtic languages during the early modern period.

of national history in the national language has the effect of separating the nation and national territory from developments next door. It tends to skew the context of explanation in favour of the diachronic over the synchronic, so highlighting teleological versions of history focusing on 'the rise of the nation'. Key events in the national history are attributed to the pre-existing unique qualities of the nation already established centuries before – the theory, for instance, that the Irish were better Catholics than the English¹⁶ – rather than contemporary developments elsewhere.

In Ireland, however, it is now widely accepted that the government's language policy has been a failure. There are, for instance, no more than a dozen academic historians who regularly lecture in Irish. A few others might sometimes use Gaelic source material; but many more neither speak nor read Irish. At any rate, the unwillingness or inability of Irish historians to work through the medium of Irish left them with little alternative but to operate in English which is, after all, an international language and also indigenous to Ireland for the last eight centuries. The problem for nationally-minded historians, however, is that English was the language of the conqueror, but they wished rather to identify with a native past. Moreover, the adoption of a lingua franca naturally tends to intrude extraneous ideas and concepts from the majority culture in which the language developed, so serving to 'normalize' particular elements of the national story and to undermine arguments that Ireland is a special case – historically a distinct nation with a separate tradition, not a region of Britain. And given the unresolved question of Northern Ireland and the pervasive influence of Big Brother next door, this was a major problem.

One response was to refashion, or manipulate, historical vocabulary so as to promote the national agenda. Interestingly, this was essentially the same strategy as was pursued in the divided Germany by East German historians. So-called *DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft* met a similar problem of harnessing history to the service of the state in a language which was quite clearly more *kapitalistisch* than *sozialistisch*. One instructive example of this is the relabelling of Ireland's medieval English settlers as 'Anglo-Irish', in place of the 'English' that they called themselves, and the intrusion of a 15th-century Home Rule movement among the Englishry, so turning 'loyal English subjects' into 'Anglo-Irish separatists'. Politically, the newly-established Irish Free State needed to invest both native and settler alike with an Irish identity so as to develop a common front against the Unionists. Projecting current categories of national identity back into the past is of course a common device in other national historiographies. In this case, it not only set those *Gaedhil* and *Gaill* [=foreigners, speakers of English] living in Ireland apart from people of the same nation living outside 'the national territory', in Britain, but also misleadingly implied that there were other Irish besides the *Gaedhil*. 'Anglo-Irish separatism' and '15th-century Home Rule' also slotted quite nicely into another teleological perspective, the cult of national heroes manfully struggling down the centuries against British oppression. If the GDR had '*Helden der Arbeiter-und-Bauern Bewegung*' like Thomas Müntzer, nationalist Ireland had Silken Thomas and Hugh O'Neill¹⁷.

More generally, the refashioning of basic political vocabulary in this manner tended to highlight a weakness in the nationalist case: it was not, in point of fact, necessary to rewrite history quite so sweepingly to establish a case for devolution or independence – arguments grounded more modestly on British misrule would have been more convincing. And by seeming to claim too much, the nationalists also left themselves open to the obvious Unionist response – that a state which claims to be Gaelic, republican, and free remained very recognizably British in terms of its institutions. Bertie Ahern may well be *an taoiseach*, legislating through the houses of the *Oireachtas*, with an elected *Dáil* and also a *Seanad*; but these institutions, despite the Gaelic names, are impeccably

British – the prime minister, houses of parliament, the commons, and the lords. What is the point of a free state which simply perpetuates the instruments of the old British tyranny? Co. Dublin still has common-law juries and a sheriff, as it did in 1200.

What would have happened if the language movement had succeeded? My perception from teaching Irish history in both Gaelic and English over almost thirty years is that students with a good command of Irish are much more confident about their own background and culture. They feel less need to assert their separate Irish identity, whereas – at least until the 1990s and the advances towards a settlement in Northern Ireland – the more nationally-minded students in my English classes would undoubtedly have contested some of the comments here about the British identity of their Irish state. The Irish language, however, is a much sharper tool than English in terms of its basic vocabulary in regard to political identities. It has, for instance, no less than three words which translate as ‘English’, depending on context: *Sasanach* means ‘English’ in terms of geography and people, or sometimes religion; *Béarla* relates to the English language; and *Gallda* refers to English customs and culture. Of course, the linguistic coincidence of English by language, English by nationality, and England as the national territory is a commonplace: the Welsh language has *Cymraeg*, *Cymry*, *Cymru*. But in Gaelic, the word for ‘Ireland’, *Éire*, is quite separate from the people, *Gaedhil*, and their language, *Gaedhilge*, even though, in English, *Éireannach*, the adjective from *Éire*, and *Gaedhealach*, from *Gaedhil*, are both translated as ‘Irish’. Thus, in the 17th century, when Gaelic writers wished to highlight the unity of the new Irish nation of *Gaedhil* and *Gaill* (the descendants of the Irish natives and the English settlers of medieval Ireland), a unity now based on a common religion, Catholicism, and a common loyalty to their native land, Ireland, they coined a new word, *Éireannaigh*, to describe collectively the two – originally quite separate – peoples. And likewise they called those *Gaedhil* and *Gaill* who lived in Scotland and were now Calvinist by religion *Albanaigh*, a word which in modern Donegal Irish now means both a Scot and a Presbyterian¹⁸. The Gaelic language, therefore, is actually much more precise than English in terms of its basic political vocabulary.

What, ultimately, all this amounts to, I think, is a plea for bilingualism (or multi-lingualism) in regard to the study of history. Where the history of a particular country or region reflects a two-culture situation, as was clearly the case with Ireland from medieval times onwards, it is very dangerous to assume that the essence of Irish identity can be captured in one language, particularly if that language is the language of the conqueror. Every language has its own particular strengths and weaknesses, and as historians we need to be much more aware than we actually are of the basic role of language in the shaping and writing of history.



NOTES

Much of this chapter reflects a very personal view of the official status and present state of the Irish language, and I have for these sections deliberately not attempted to supply the traditional scholarly apparatus.

¹ D. Greene, *Irish as a vernacular before the Norman invasion*, in B.Ó Cuív, *A view of the Irish language*, Dublin 1969, pp. 11, 13, 15; [Gaelic glosses]. D. Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland 400-1200*, London 1995, pp 191-4; D. Corkery, *The fortunes of the Irish language*, Cork 1968, pp 27-8.

- ² *Bunreacht na hÉireann*: Constitution of Ireland, article 8.
- ³ See, for instance, the article in Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_language and the links there provided.
- ⁴ J.E.C. Williams - M. Ní Mhuiríos, *Traidisiún Liteartha na nGael*, Dublin 1979, chs. 11-12; N. Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*, Basingstoke 1997, pp 159-62.
- ⁵ S.G. Ellis, *Languages 1500-1800*, in *The Penguin Atlas of British and Irish History*, London 2001, pp. 152-3.
- ⁶ J. Carney, *Literature in Irish, 1169-1534*, in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland, II, Medieval Ireland, 1169-1534*, Oxford 1987, ch. 25; M. Newton, *A handbook of the Scottish Gaelic world*, Dublin 2000, ch. 3.
- ⁷ See, in general, S.G. Ellis, *The collapse of the Gaelic world, 1450-1650*, in "Irish Historical Studies", xxxi, 1999, pp. 449-69; Id., *Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule*, London 1998, ch. 10 for this and the next three paragraphs.
- ⁸ E.C. Quiggin, *Poems from the Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Cambridge 1937; W.J. Watson, *Scottish verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Edinburgh 1937.
- ⁹ B. Ó Cuív, *The Irish language in the early modern period*, in T.W. Moody - F.X. Martin - F.J. Byrne (eds.), *A new history of Ireland, III, Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*, Oxford 1976, pp. 532-3.
- ¹⁰ R.L. Thomson (ed.), *Foirn na n-Urrnuidheadh: John Carswell's Gaelic translation of the Book of Common Order*, Edinburgh 1970.
- ¹¹ *The Book of Clanranald* in A. Cameron, *Reliquiae Celticae: texts, papers, and studies in Gaelic literature and philosophy*, 2 vols., A. MacBain - J. Kennedy (eds.), Inverness 1892-94.
- ¹² Ellis, *Language 1500-1800* cit., pp 152-3. And see more generally, G. Price, *The languages of Britain*, London 1984; Id. (ed.), *The Celtic connection*, Gerrards Cross 1992; Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland* cit., pp 160-61, for examples of English orthography in Irish Gaelic; T.F. O'Rahilly, *Irish dialects past and present*, edited by B. Ó Cuív, Shannon 1971, pp 20, 120-21, 128.
- ¹³ O'Rahilly, *Irish dialects past and present* cit., pp. 163-166, 188, 191, 261.
- ¹⁴ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, London 1988, pp 447-8; S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history*, Oxford 1998, pp 215, 253, 338-9.
- ¹⁵ The 'official standard' is published as *Gramadach na Gaeilge agus Litriú na Gaeilge: an Caighdeán Oifigiúil*, Dublin 1958.
- ¹⁶ A recent variation on this theme is S.A. Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland: tradition and confessionalism, 1400-1690*, London 1997, which argues that the marked resilience of Irish Catholicism in the face of state-sponsored reform stemmed from the particular role of the Gaelic literati in transmitting religious beliefs and practices, thus imbuing Irish Christianity with a distinctively Gaelic, bardic tradition. Yet in Scotland the same bardic tradition was successfully harnessed to the cause of reform: J.E.A. Dawson, *Calvinism and the Gaidhealtachd*, in A. Petegree - A. Duke - G. Lewis (eds.), *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620*, Cambridge 1994, pp 231-54.
- ¹⁷ S.G. Ellis, *Revisionism*, in J. Eibach - G. Lottes (eds.), *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft: ein Handbuch*, Göttingen 2002, pp 346-8; Id., *Defending English ground: the Tudor frontiers in history and historiography*, in Id. - R. Esser (eds.), *Frontiers and the writing of history 1500-1850*, Laatzten 2006, forthcoming.
- ¹⁸ Ellis, *Collapse of the Gaelic world* cit.



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12 As fakin dy row Jee er chur roue ayns
ashlish, nagh row ad dy hyndaa gys Herod, jim-
mee ad gys nyn jeer hene raad elley.

13 As tra vad er gholl roue, haink Ainle y
Chiarn gys Joseph ayns ashlish, gra, irree as gow
yn Lianoo aeg as e voir, as gow er-chea gys
Egypt, as furree ayns shen, derrey verryms liam
fys hood: Son shirree Herod y liannoo dy stroie e.

14 Tra ve er nirree, ghow e yn liannoo as e
voir ayns yn ny, as hie e roish gys Egypt.

15 As ve ayns shen, derrey baase Herod: dy
voddagh shen ve cooilleenit va'n Chiarn er loart
liorish y Phadeyr, gra, Magh as Egypt deie mee
er my Vac.

16 ¶ Tra honnick Herod eisht, dy row e
mollit liorish ny deney creaney, ve fcer jymmoo-
fagh, as hug e magh farey, as vare ooilley yn
chloan v'ayns Bethlehem, as ayns ooilley ny ard-
jyn shen, vejh daa vlein dy cash as fo, cordail
rish yn earish ve dy imneagh er vriaght jeh ny
deney creaney.

17 Shen y tra va cooilleenit, ny va loarit liorish
Jeremy yn phadeyr gra,

18 Ayns Rama va coraa er y chlashtyn, ul-
laghey as keaney as dobberan moar, Rachel
keaney, son e cloan, as gobhal dy ve er y gerja-
ghey, er-yn-oyr nagh row ad er-maym.

19 ¶ Agh tra va Herod maroo, cur-my-ner
haink Ainle y Chiarn ayns ashlish gys Joseph
ayns Egypt.

20 Gra, irree as gow yn liannoo as e voir, as
gow gys talloo Israel, son tar adfyn maroo va
Ourrey bioys y liannoo.

21 As

Biblical texts in two different forms of Gaelic, Irish (left) and Manx (right).