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MULTILINGUALISM IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN WORLDS

EDITED BY
ALEX MULLEN AND PATRICK JAMES
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CHAPTER 8
Greek in early medieval Ireland
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INTRODUCTION

This study explores bilingualism in the area of literary education, that is, the formal study of another language using written documents. Its focus is the study of Greek in early medieval Ireland, in the period from the seventh to the ninth century. Though never absorbed into the Roman Empire, by the seventh century Ireland had thoroughly embraced Christian culture, and with it the prerequisite of Latin literacy. In their study of the Latin language, using late antique school books and commentaries, the monastic schools of early medieval Ireland might be regarded to some extent as inheritors of the Graeco-Roman tradition, and in particular the late antique grammatical tradition. It has long been suggested that the Irish interest in classical languages was not limited to Latin (itself a foreign language), but extended also to Greek. Although the means by which such a knowledge may have been acquired has never been clear, this discussion presents new evidence for the study of Greek in Ireland, and explores how late antique manuals of bilingual Greek–Latin instruction were later reused in circumstances far removed from those of their origins.

Knowledge of Greek in the West is generally held to have declined sharply by the end of the fifth century, when the compulsory efforts of Latin writers Boethius, Macrobius and Marcellus Capella provided the main points of access to Greek literary culture for subsequent generations. There are plenty of indications, however, that the Greek language maintained a special prestige. It was recognised as the language of the New Testament and featured on the titulus of Christ’s cross. Accordingly it was classed among the ‘three sacred languages’ (tres linguae sacrae) during the Middle Ages, along with Latin and Hebrew. Augustine regarded these as ‘pre-eminent languages’, and praised Jerome for his singular attainment in all three. Greek learning was also acknowledged as the foundation of secular scholarship.

The study of Greek among the early medieval Irish, both at home and abroad, has been the subject of a long and often lively debate since Ludwig Traube’s seminal article ‘O Roma nobilis’ (1891), which identified circles of Irish scholars on the Continent in the ninth century, distinguished among other things by their shared interest in Greek. Traube remarked that ‘anyone on the Continent who knew Greek during the time of Charles the Bald [King of the West Franks, 843–877] was either an Irishman or without question had acquired this knowledge from an Irishman, or else the report which surrounded the person with such renown was a fraud’. This position found concord with a romantic view of medieval Ireland as a sanctuary for classical learning during the barbarian Dark Ages. The inevitable critical reaction was first articulated by Mario Esposito (1912), who dismissed the methods of earlier writers, characterising knowledge of Greek in Ireland before the ninth century as ‘almost non-existent’, while that of Irishmen in Carolingian circles (with the exception of Ériugena) was an ‘inaccurate and uncritical smearing’. Max Laistner took a more moderate position, concluding that ‘Traube’s thesis is still sound, if by Irish we understand those who came to the Continent from Columban’s time on; for there is no satisfactory evidence that they could have acquired any Greek, apart from a few ecclesiastical terms, in their homeland’.

5 An Old Irish gloss on the St Gall Priscian comments on a remark in the grammarian’s introduction: ‘The Latins have such love for the Greeks that they follow even their errors’ (Hoffman 1996: vol. 1, 99, vol. 2, 5).
6 Cited in translation by Berschin 1988b: 132, who endorses this position.
7 Exemplified in Bensch 1998a: 95, citing Fermin-Díez 1875 (translation): ‘Hellenism, banned from the western reaches of the Continent, sought refuge further away on the island which had escaped the Roman conqueror: Ireland... The mysticism which constitutes the basis of the Irish character disposed them to philosophical reveries, which explains their ardour for Plato. The study of the Greek language was thus one of the foundations of their education.’
8 Esposito 1912: 685.

1 When considering Greek in the West, my focus is principally outside Italy, which Bischoff (1967: 246) characterises as something of an exception.
2 The principal survey is Bensch in 1988a, with an overview for the early medieval period in Bensch in 1988b. See also Laistner 1994 and Bischoff 1967, who emphasises the activities of medieval Irish scholars. Howlet 1998 and Herren 2000 have more recently surveyed Irish sources.
Irish vernacular evidence has been all but ignored in this long debate.11 This paper will focus on early Irish glossaries, texts compiled in Ireland from the eighth century, comprising etymological and other notes on several thousand Irish words, very often comparing these with similar-sounding words in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Welsh, Norse, English and (in one case) Pictish.12 Paul Russell (2000) was the first to show that, in relation to the study of Greek, these texts contain evidence for the availability in Ireland of some of the same sources as those circulating on the Continent in the ninth century. I hope here to identify these sources more closely, and in the process show not only that Greek was indeed actively studied in Ireland, but how the language was studied, and to evaluate how well it was known. My focus here will be on O’Mulconry’s glossary (OM), being the earliest such text and concentrating on Greek far more than any other.

2 Evidence Previously Discussed

It may be instructive to outline in brief the evidence for the Irish knowledge of Greek discussed in previous assessments. In the first place, there is almost no reliable evidence for access to native speakers of the language. Mo-Sinu mac Mín, the abbot of Bangor who died in 610, is recorded as having learnt his computus from ‘a certain learned Greek’.13 However, nothing is known about this anonymous teacher, and in other cases the term Graeco can be merely synonymous with sapiens. The more significant figures are Theodore of Tarsus, the archbishop of Canterbury sent from Rome in 669, and his companion the abbot Hadrian, formerly of Naples. Bede, writing some sixty years later, tells us that Theodore’s pupils spoke Greek as well as their native tongue,14 and there were certainly close cultural contacts between Britain and Ireland throughout the period. However, there is little to corroborate Bede’s testimony, and there is no evidence for any continuity of such proficiency in subsequent generations.

The Greek alphabet was certainly widely known, and was tabulated in computistical manuscripts along with its numerical values, the names of the letters and the names of the Greek numbers.15 The Greek alphabet was also

11 Ua Nuaillín 1909 collects some interesting material in a study apparently unfinished.
12 I list the languages in order of their frequency of citation. For an overview of early Irish glossaries, see Russell 1989.
14 Historia ecclesiastica 4.3 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors 1969).
15 These tables generally include the numerical letter digamma (in its medieval form resembling digamma ẑ = ẑ, labelled ἑυκόλων), koppa (ẑ = ṭ) and sampi (ϡ = ρ), labelled ἕβωκων. See for example, Jones 1949: 181.

16 Latin Graeco is given the hybrid abbreviation XPI. On nomina sacra, cf. Lindsay 1951: 403.
17 Schaffhausen, Stadtbibliothek, MS Generalia 1, pp. 22, 105b and 147a, respectively; ed. Anderson and Anderson 1964.
18 Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 52. This use of script is generally characterised as ‘playful’ or similar. However, there is some consistency. In the Schaffhausen manuscript, Greek script is used both for emphasis (e.g. in explicitus) and to mark foreign words, much as italics are used in modern typography. Similarly in the Book of Armagh, its Paternoster in Greek script emphasises a key passage in Jesus’ own words, perhaps alluding to the original language of the Gospel.
19 See Blom, this volume, on code-switching in liturgical texts.
20 Reproductions of this page are in Benchin 1982: 503 and Benchin 1988b: PL 4.
22 Macalister 1949–1954: 1172. Photograph in Benchin 1982: PL 16. Confusion of τ and Φ (e.g. in τυρφ) is very common in the sources discussed here. The Latin equivalent, gloria et hono patri et filio et spiritui sancto, begins the last of a series of anthems following the Gloria in excelsis in the Antiphonary of Bangor (fol. 139). It is the Mozarabic antiphon prescribed in the Fourth Synod of Toledo in 649, and Warran (1983-1985: 21–22) has shown that the anthem closely corresponds to the opening of the 'Opitou (Laus') in the Greek Euchologion, cf. Hillgarth 1961: 155.
23 I derive these lists from the indices to their editions.
The term is translated *nunc gloria* 'vainglory' in Anglo-Saxon glossaries (cf. Stevenson 1999: 310; the substitution of *or* for *er* (in the element *keo*- 'empty') is a classicising hyphenation, probably under influence of *concordium* ('monastic community').

13. Ci Stevenson 1999, who assigns the poem to Ioana in the second half of the seventh century.


16. From the index in Reeves 1857.

17. *hoos orthographia sociobii in liberis Graecastic mi innocens* (2.27). On this basis, Manius 1911–1931: 236 inferred that Adomnan had learnt Greek.


21. The dates and authorship of the *Rubrica* and *Adelphus adelphae meter* are a matter of speculation, with Herren suggesting Bobbio c. 800 and possibly Lirianit in the ninth or tenth centuries respectively; given this uncertainty I will pass over them here.

c. 848) wrote a Greek Psalter with Latin interlinear translation. This was more than an exercise in penmanship: Walter Berschin remarks that its supplementary material 'attests to the author's acumen in textual criticism'. Similarly the Basel Psalter, the St Gall Gospels and the Codex Boernerianus (Pauline epistles) were all identified by Traube as belonging to the same circle of Irish scholars and associated by him with Sedulius.

Other manuscripts contain grammatical material relating to Greek. Martinus Hiberniensis at Laon possessed a copy of the enormous Greek–Latin Harleian glossary, in a manuscript also containing Greek idioms and paradigms, lists of Greek words in Priscian and in the poems of Martinus' contemporary Eriugena (John Scottus), and other notes. A similar miscellany may be found in the anonymous scholar's notebook from Reichenau. Its eight folios contain a short Greek–Latin glossary with declensional paradigms, a paradigm of the Greek article (very faulty) and of the noun *καὶ θεριστής*, as well as Latin hymns, Irish poetry and miscellaneous notes on Latin grammar, exegesis and astronomy.

Eriugena is credited with a knowledge of Greek far exceeding that of his contemporaries, as is evident in his translation from Greek of the theological works of Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor. His achievement must have been facilitated in part by his study of Macrobius' comparative grammar *De differentiis et societatis Graeci Latinique urbis*, his extracts providing an important witness for its reconstruction.

So the evidence points to a considerable disparity between the study of Greek in Ireland and that among Irishmen on the Continent, supporting Laistser's view of Greek in Ireland being almost non-existent. But how
much of this is down to disparity of evidence? In fact, very few manuscripts survive from early medieval Ireland at all. With a small number of exceptions, the extant manuscripts are mostly scriptural and liturgical books. However, we do have a large corpus of Irish-language material in later medieval manuscripts, much of which can be dated linguistically to the same period as that of the Carolingian manuscripts discussed above. And this evidence may help to bridge the gap.

3 GREEK IN IRISH ETYMOLOGICAL TRACTS

O'Mulconry's glossary is the modern title given to a work found in an Irish manuscript of 1772,44 with three other fragmentary witnesses of similar date. The language of the core part of the text, however, has been dated to the late seventh or early eighth century.45 The glossary presents etymologies for about 880 Irish words,46 very frequently deriving these from Latin, Greek or Hebrew. It begins:

incipit discretio de origine Scottiae linguae quam congregauerunt religiosi uiri, adunctionis nominibus ex Hebr <ae> <aci> H<ei> ronim <oni> et tactationibus, i.e. Ambrosii et Cassiani et Augustini et Eisiordii. Virgil, Prisciani, Commianus, Ciceronis, necnon per literas Graeco-
rum, i.e. Atticae, Doricae, Eoliciae ling<v>ae, quia Scoti de Graecis originem duxerunt, sic et ling<u>v>ae.47

Here begins a description of the origin of the Irish language which religious men compiled, having combined Jerome's Hebrew names and [other] discussions, i.e. by Ambrose and Cassian and August-
tine and Isidore, Virgil, Priscian, Commianus, Ciceron; and also by means of Greek literature, i.e. in the Attic, Doric and Acolic lan-
guage, because the Irish derive their origin from the Greeks, and thus too their language.

The sources stated fall into three groups coinciding with the three sacred languages. Hebrew is accounted for by Jerome's tract on Hebrew names. Authorities given for Latin are four Church Fathers and then (dropping

44 The Yellow Book of Lecan: Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 1518 (H.2.16), cols. 88-122. The text was published, without translation, in Stokes 1908. Reference numbers, prefixed 'OM', are from this edition. Paul Russell, Sharon Arthurs and the present author have been engaged in editing this and related texts as part of the Early Irish Glossaries Project. Transcriptions and links to manuscript images, where available, can be accessed at: www.ucd.cam.ac.uk/ig.

45 Mac Neill 1910-1932. It is clear that the text suffered in transmission. Discussion of corruptions and problems of interpretation is avoided here, but will be treated in depth in the forthcoming editions (see previous note).

46 It is not always clear where a glossary entry begins or ends, making any count somewhat arbitrary.

47 adjuntivi, adiunctis MSS, adscripti, adserent v.l.

the conjunction of four secular authorities. By contrast, the sources for Greek are unnamed.

About 246 entries (about 28 per cent) contain etymologies for Irish words from Latin, and many of these posit relationships that are still borne out. Irish almion 'pleasant' is derived from Latin amoenus (OM 79) and aine 'fasting' from ivia (OM 80), which are genuine borrowings from Latin into Irish. Irish czech 'blind' from Latin cecus (OM 196) and ingen 'nail' from unguis (OM 720) associate words which we now regard as Indo-European cognates (PIE *kweyker, *bʰyogעוב). Of the 192 entries (about 22 per cent) which provide etymologies from Greek words, very few identify any real linguistic relationships, not surprisingly given the absence of language contact between Greek and Irish, except through Greek words borrowed into Latin. The first example below recognises one such case, showing awareness of the original sense of basilica < βασιλική 'royal'. The second distinguishes the original Greek sense of the Latin borrowing gymnasium:

OM 182 Basilec <i.a. basilica> i.e. basilica <basilica> i.e. basilica, ecclesia Latein, tech rig nime.

Basilec 'church', i.e. from βασιλική in Greek, ecclesia in Latin, house of the King of heaven.

OM 175 Βασίλιον οικία as básidei i.e. basileia, ι. gymnasium, ι. nosophoríthd cél. 

Básidei 'a submerging, defeat', from βασίλειον, i.e. μνεια, i.e. μνεια, i.e. naked exercise,48

More commonly, however, Irish and Greek words are paired on the basis of formal similarity, and some additional explanation is supplied to bridge the semantic gap. For example:

OM 222 Cerd grece ciros i.e. manus ... ar cach dán doimiat iámhlae is cerd dónairthe i.e. lámh.

Cerd 'craf', in Greek ζήτησι, i.e. 'hands' ... for every skill which hands perform is called a craft, i.e. handwork.

This is, of course, typical of medieval etymology, and goes back to Varro and beyond to the Greek grammatical tradition.49 As Mark Amsler points

46 The orthography of Latin words (e.g. basileia = basileia) is generally non-classical and very likely subject to excessive corruption in places. I retain the manuscript spellings here, but for clarity give classical forms in translations. The Irish translation of μνεια is inaccurate, rendering it as though μνεια.

47 See Amsler 1989 for a full discussion.
out, it is precisely this 'extra-systemic justification' that invokes the wrath of modern linguists. The real value of this material in the present context is that, with nearly 200 such entries citing Greek words, we can treat them as a corpus with which to build some coherent profile of sources and to appreciate how these sources were used.

Isidore of Seville is the fourth Latin authority in the prologue, and his influence is very clear throughout the glossary. His Etymologiae was well known in Ireland soon after its completion in 636, and his etymological method must have been a model for the Irish glossary compilers. Passages from Isidore are cited frequently in the text, and two entries mention him by name. One entry cites a passage which is corrupt in Isidore's manuscript tradition:

**OM 126:** Brat greeke brathin lamminas a tenuitate.

*Brat* 'cloak', in Greek *brathin*, sheet, from [its] thinness.

_c.f. Etym._ 16.18.2: *brattiu dicitur tenuissima lamina, ἀπὸ τοῦ βραθυ-

toῦ, qui est δυσμεντοτοιχα crepitandi, ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑπραττοῦ* lamina.

The thinnest sheet [of metal] is called *brattea*, from *brathetov* [c.f. *brathov* 'clamour'], which is onomatopoeia for rattling, or from *[bratov]*, a sheet.

It should be no surprise to find Isidore used, not least because his work circulated widely in the early Middle Ages, but also because he cites hundreds of Greek words in his text. About seventy Greek words cited in the glossaries may be traced to Isidore. However, the Irish compiler's enthusiasm for mining such words sometimes leads him astray. In the following entry he misidentifies an uncommon Latin word in his source as Greek:

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53 On Isidore in Ireland, see Herren 1990. The Etymologiae was the authority most often cited in the corpus of 9,412 glosses in the St Gall codex of Priscian; c.f. Hofman 1996: 150.
55 OM 141 (*Etym._ 14.4.23), OM 292 (*Etym._ 15.3.3). In the latter his abbreviated name was recognized in Mac Neill 1919-1932: 119.
56 Similarly OM 315, referring to *merum* 'pure' (found in *Etym._ 3.2.4, etc.) and OM 751, referring to eikiam (probably a late form of beliwum 'bay (colour)') and citing *Etym._ 19.28.7. These Latin terms are not described as Greek by Isidore, though the Irish glossary compiler assumes them to be so.
57 A similar confusion over *merum* occurs in the Munich Computus, an Irish computational tract (as noted in Bischoff 1967: 249).

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**OM 415:** Éric grece ericiscunda diuicio communis rei.
*Éric* 'payment, compensation', in Greek, *ericiscunda* [division of inheritance], division of common wealth.


For division was called *herciscunda* by the ancients.

Perhaps a more telling entry is the following:

**OM 375:** Égem, egemmon Grece, dux Latinie, quia est uox *<quac>-

ducit omnes quo uactit. Vel egem ab ega i. capra, quia clamat in morte, unde dicitur: Egium mare i. di laibrati thondi, Namm inter Tenedum <et Chium> saxum *<est in>* mare simile capre, quam Greci egam dicunt.

*Égem* 'a shout', *ṇγειμ* in Greek, leader *dux* 'leader' in Latin, because it is the voice which leads all to where it goes. Or *égem* from *dg&a* i.e. 'goat', because it shouts in death: from which the Aegean Sea is named, i.e. from the sounds of a wave. For between between Tenedos and Chios there is a stone in the sea similar to a she-goat, which the Greeks call *egam*.

The second part of the etymology links Irish *égem* 'a shout' and Greek *dg&a* (apparently on the basis some curious animal lore), and incidentally cites *Etym._ 13.16.5 on the name of the Aegean sea. The transcription *e* for *a* reflects contemporary Greek pronunciation, which prevails in these texts. Isidore cites the word *cf* 'goat' in its accusative case. However, the compiler treats this as a first-declension Latin noun, and then goes on to hypercorrect Isidore by adding a Latin accusative ending *-m*. This indicates that not only was he unfamiliar with this basic word, but he was probably unaware of the morphology of Greek consonant-stem nouns.

The second authority to feature prominently as a source for Greek in the glossaries is that named Comminianus, which appears to be an error for Comminianus, under which name the grammarian Charisius was transmitted in Insular circles. The author is also cited by name in the main text:

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58 Irish *énric* is a legal term for compensation, sometimes due collectively from one's kin group.
59 This is most likely related contact with native speakers of Greek, though not necessarily directly; see Moran 2001. The first etymology, drawing on the tenuous parallels between *égem* and *ṛg*<sub>śva</sub>, *duck* and *cow* may be an echo of Priscian (GL v. 6.4.5): *uox anstatri duvet a uov, uet dux a uoxuna, nel erha to o fii, uet quihiedom place*

60 Alternatively, the spelling *égem* may reflect the remodelling which took place in the Greek declen-
sional system whereby an accusative ending *-m* spread to consonant stems. I am grateful to Patrick James for this suggestion.
Charisius compiled his Ars grammatica around the middle of the fourth century, and it is clear that his grammar was intended to teach Latin to Greeks. He frequently includes Greek translations in lists of Latin words illustrative of points of Latin grammar, as in the following extract discussing the genitive formation of certain Latin nouns:


The pedagogical strategy extends beyond merely explaining unfamiliar Latin words. This kind of grammar contrasts significantly with Latin grammars written for Roman schoolboys, epitomised in the work of Aelius Donatus. Donatus’ work is spare, mostly concerned with explaining grammatical terminology, categorising the parts of speech, and providing clear examples of tenses, solemcisms, barbarisms, and so on. In his Ars minor, he provides a paradigm for a single verb only (λέγω). After all, his pupils could already speak Latin, they just needed to learn to speak and write correct Latin. Greek students, on the other hand, needed to build their vocabulary and learn the morphology of a wide range of Latin words. The same situation later pertained in the early medieval West, and vocabulary-building was a particular imperative in those areas where learners did not already speak a variety of Late Latin or Proto-Romance as their native tongue. Isidore and Charisius would together account for about a hundred, or roughly half, of the Greek words cited in O’Mullcahy’s edition. The other authorities named in the prologue occasionally offer some parallels, but fail to fill the remaining gap, though one notable parallel occurs with a single short and enigmatic entry:

OM 319: Fer a uiro. i. uir a uirute licet Cominiuus dicit: uirus unde uir appellatur.

Fer ‘man’ from uir ‘man’, i.e. uir from uirute ‘viritue’, though Cominius says: uirus ‘noxious fluid, semen’, from which uir is named.

cf. Etym. 10.274: uir a uirute and Charisius (Barwick 1925: 40.12-13):
uirus (lōs ἐξ ἔλεγος ἔλεγμος) unde uir appellatur.

OM 318: Deōr grece dorforas i. satellitis.

Deōr ‘base, unfree’, in Greek δορφόρος, i.e. attendant.

cf. Charisius 47.15: satelles δορφόρος satellites.

But some more serious misunderstandings could arise as a result of the change of the text’s intended use. Reverse-engineering a dictionary can be a fraught process, particularly when there is not an exact equivalence on both sides. Two Greek words translating a single Latin term may be either synonyms or one coherent phrase. Word division can also be challenging, as in the entries below:

OM 140: Bēim grece bemandro i. paus.

Bēim ‘a beat, blow, strike’, in Greek βῆμα δωρός, i.e. a step.

cf. Charisius 55.7: passus βῆμα δωρός passus.

OM 203: Caint Grece cantabato i. sentes i. deliggi . . .

Caint[e] ‘satirist’ (l), in Greek καντατάβατο, i.e. thorns . . .

cf. Charisius 35.3: sentes ἀκούσα ξύλα, βέτος.

Isidore and Charisius would together account for about a hundred, or roughly half, of the Greek words cited in O’Mullcahy’s edition. The other authorities named in the prologue occasionally offer some parallels, but fail to fill the remaining gap, though one notable parallel occurs with a single short and enigmatic entry:

64 Similarly OM 480 Bēn [‘slope’] Grece Sarum i. walis (cf. Charisius 46.15: wallis φυτεύς wallis) and OM 53 Argg [‘heard’] Grece inodier . . . cf. Charisius 46.10: inodos ἐπιθύμος, though the sense of the latter entry is unclear.


66 The first pair of Greek words comprise a noun followed by a qualifying adjective, the second two synonyms. MacNeil 1992: 109 argued that passus ‘step’ was here misunderstood by the glossary compiler as the perfect passive participle of patiōn ‘having suffered’ (based on the frequency violent connotation of bēum). Alternatively, he may have had the best of both worlds in mind: the context within a list of nouns in Charisius would reinforce this interpretation.

67 Where the Greek translations comprise two words, the second word is sometimes a modifying noun in the genitive (σύμπτωσις σωμάτων ‘collapse of bodies’, βοῦδος φυτεύς ‘ditch for planting’), sometimes a synonym (e.g. μνήμειον, δέραν [LS] u. δέραν), both with a sense ‘neck ornament’. In the case of weree ‘male swine, boar’, βιβοτάσας may serve to restrict the sense of κέπρος, which may refer to either gender, to masculine (LS) explains the word ‘stallion, Glosaristus’, referring to CGL ii, 480 βιβοτάσας admixtus.

68 The definitive study and edition is Holtz 1981.

OM 160: Bríathar insce apud Eoles.

Bríathar, ‘word’ in Aecolic.

Bríathar and insce both mean ‘word’ in Old Irish. Stokes added the note: ‘An Aecolic ἔρητορ seems intended; cf. Eleaen ἔρητος’.66 The attested Aecolic ἔρητορ ‘orator’ (Attic-Ionic ἔρητος) provides a closer formal match.67 Latin grammarians tended to regard the digamma as characteristic of Aecolian Greek.68 Priscian is the only one to note that in Aecolic texts β tends to be written for υ before ρ at the start of words:

in b etiam solet apud Aecolios transire υ digamma, quotiens ab ρ incipit dictio, quae solet aspirari, ut [θ]ήτωρ βήτωρ dicunt, quod digamma nisi uocali praepositi et in principio syllabae non posset.69

The Aecolians change θ to β when a word begins with aspirated ρ; thus for [θ]ήτωρ they said βήτωρ, because digamma can only be placed at the start of a syllable and before a vowel.

Although the entry relies on a convenient blurring of the distinction between ἔρητορ ‘speaker’ and ἔρητος ‘speech’, it would appear to justify the prologue’s claim not only to use Priscian, but that the Irish language derived from Greek dialects including Aecolic.

So far, we have traced only about half of the sources for Greek words in the Irish glossary. In going further, we might recall that the actual stated source for Greek is not a named author at all, but a rather vague reference to litterae Graecorum (recalling Adomnán’s reference to libri Graecitatis). This is compatible with the use of anonymous Greek–Latin glossaries. Such texts are often invoked as a last resort in source analysis, and the genre tends to be treated by scholars as something of an amorphous mass. While the tradition of glossing and glossary-compiling goes back at least to Hellenistic times, the medieval transmission of bilingual Greek–Latin glossaries appears to have its roots in the early centuries AD.70 The surviving corpus may be divided into two well-defined groups. The first, known as idiomata, lists peculiarities in the comparative grammar of Greek and Latin.71 Idiomata focus in particular on the nominal class, and are grouped into categories listing nouns with different genders in Latin and Greek (idiomata generum), verbs which govern different cases (idiomata casuum), and defective nouns (singularia/pluralia tantum).72 The categories are in turn subdivided under headings such as apud Latinos masculina, apud Graecos feminina (e.g. hic aduentus ἡ παρθενος), apud Latinos feminina, apud Graecos neutralia (e.g. hæc aqua τὸ ὕδωρ), and so on. Such lists are also associated with Latin grammarians such as Chassius, who makes references to idiomata being among his sources.73

The second major category of Greek–Latin glossarial material is known as hermenenwma (Latin interpretationes).74 These derive from late antique classroom texts intended for elementary bilingual instruction.75 Carlotta Dionisiotti divided their constituent parts into four main elements.76 The first two are word-lists, one alphabetical with a particular focus on verbs (including inflected forms), the other organised into class lists (capitula) covering topics, such as names of pagan gods and goddesses, the heavens, houses and temples, feast days, spectacles, winds, parts of the body, and so on. The third, perhaps most characteristic, element is a colloquium between master and pupil, consisting of rudimentary exchanges on topics

67 Going on the date of O’Malley, it is possible that bríathas would originally have been written (and pronounced) bríθas. This early form of the word also occurs in the Irish Priscian glosses: cf. Strachan 1903.
68 E.g. Pomponius’ commentary on Donatus (GL V.103,4-4): quid est digamma? Graeci habent varias linguas, ibem et una lingua quae dicitur Aecolica. apud Isos Aecolica est una lingua quae appellatur digammos, quos duo gamma superposita. What is digamma? The Greeks have various dialects; moreover there is one dialect which is called Aecolic. Among those Aecolians there is a letter which is called digamma, like two gammas superimposed.
69 GL u. 18,5. In his edition, Hertz did not print the digamma before θήτωρ, which I give in brackets here and I think makes more sense in the context. This is also the reading found in the Irish St Gall manuscript, and the same passage is paraphrased by the glossator: cf. Hoffman 1986: 1126/1143. Allen 1968: 48 notes that this spelling (β for υ) is found in texts of Sappho and other Lesbian poets.
71 For a discussion of this material in glossaries and Latin grammars, and Bede’s use of it, see Dionisiotti 1983a.
72 The most important manuscript witnesses are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Ms lat. 7590 (Monte Cassino, 779 × 797), printed in CGL III 149-151; Naples, Biblioteca nazionale, Ms w.A.8 (Bobbio, s. viii, Irish manuscript), CGL III 337-348, also printed in Barbier’s edition of Chassius, 379-386, 410-415; London, British Library, Ms Harl. 1759 (s. viii), CGL III 477-478 = Laon, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms 644 (Laon, 958 × 866).
73 E.g. 66d C. Julius Romanus ex verba idiomata appellavit (337-338). Kaster (1988: 444-445) suggests that Julius Romanus may date to the third century AD.
74 St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Ms 902 (s. xii), was one of the first manuscripts to be rediscovered by Humanists. As the manuscript also contains Donatus’ bilingual grammar, the text became known as Hermeneumata Donithaea. This authorship was rejected by Krumbacher (1885), who referred to the author as magistrius neciusque. (High-quality images of the St Gall manuscript are now available on-line via www.o-codices.ch.)
75 The question of whether they were composed to reach Greek to Latin speakers or vice versa is a matter of debate. Dionisiotti (1983b: 93) has argued that they were used to teach Greek in Roman schools on the basis of a Western manuscript transmission.
concerning the classroom environment and daily routine. A final part comprises extracts of texts for reading practice.77

Besides the *idiomata* and *hermeneumata*, two major dictionaries survive from the early medieval period. The Harleian Greek–Latin glossary is a massive lexicon, running to about 270 pages in Georg Goetz’s edition.78 It is found in an eighth-century Italian manuscript that once belonged to Nicholas of Cusa;79 nothing is known of its history between the eighth and fifteenth centuries. A copy, however, is preserved in Laon 444, the manuscript owned by Martinus Hiberniensis.80 Joseph Vendryes 1904 observed that this manuscript contains misplaced quire signatures written in Old Irish, indicating that its exemplar was organised by an Irishman, and raising at least the possibility that it might have been written in Ireland. The second major dictionary, known as Pseudo-Philoxenus, is the only Latin–Greek lexicon to survive from this period, originally compiled for Greek speakers needing to read Latin.81

Russell noted that the rigidly formulaic citation of Greek in Irish glossaries (X *Grece*, Y *Latine*) has affinities with the format of Greek–Latin glossaries.82 He observed that the bilingual glossaries published in *CGL* offered a potential source for many entries that could not otherwise be traced, and in particular the large Harleian glossary. Russell suggested that there was a ‘strong likelihood that a version of this glossary, or material closely related to it, was available to the compilers of the material which ended up in the early Irish vernacular glossaries’.83

Was the Harleian glossary available in Ireland? The implications are not small: the Harleian glossary has been described as the *Thesaurus Linguarum Graecarum* of its day;84 if such a resource were really available in Ireland as early as the seventh century it would substantially change our picture of the knowledge of Greek in Ireland at that time.

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77 Goetz published five major *hermeneumata* in vol. iii of *CGL*: Hermeneumata Leidensia, Amplitoniensis, Monacensis, Einsidlensis, Montepessulana. He also included, under the heading *hermeneumata uraria*, several fragments, extracts and other material derived from lost texts, including lost fragments printed by Stephanus. For a very useful table of contents and manuscripts, see Dionisioti 1988: 87, revised in Dionisioti 1988: 16–28. The Leiden version was recently edited in Flannery 2004. A new edition and study is soon to be published: see Dickey 2011; this book appeared too late for me to consult it.

78 *CGL* ii, 213–483. It is also referred to (after Stephanus) as Pseudo-Cyril or the Cyrillic glossary, to be distinguished from the Byzantine lexicon of the same name.


82 Russell 2000: 411. The invariable abbreviation in manuscripts of *Græce*, *Latine* further underlines this formulaic character. I expand g, and similar here with the medieval spelling Greek.


Table 8.2 Glosaries in CGL II–III with most entries matching O’Mulanry (untraced sources)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>CGL</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Avg/page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Glossarium Leidense</td>
<td>III 398–421.21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harleian (Cyriacus)</td>
<td>glossary</td>
<td>II 233–483</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Monacensia</td>
<td>III 119–220</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Montepessulanus</td>
<td>III 281–343</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philoxenus glossary</td>
<td>II 3–212</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Leidensis</td>
<td>II 1–72.45</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Stephani</td>
<td>III 347–90</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Stephani</td>
<td>III 438–67.1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Glosae Bertenses</td>
<td>III 487–506.1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Amphloniiana</td>
<td>II 21–94</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Glossae Vaticanae</td>
<td>III 506–31.31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Einsidletiae</td>
<td>III 223–79</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Frag. Bruxellense</td>
<td>III 393–98.39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. uria: Stephani II</td>
<td>III 467–74.48</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiomata (Paris. 5792)</td>
<td>II 487–506</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossae Seruii Grammatici</td>
<td>III 507–33.28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glosses from Laron 444</td>
<td>III 533–44–59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herm. Medicobotonica Vetustiora</td>
<td>III 535–63</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idiomata (Naples IV.A.8)</td>
<td>II 537–48</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

seventy-eight) even though it is less than one tenth of its size (twenty-three pages), and Fragmentum Bruxellense, which shares twenty-one entries in under five pages.

I have already argued that both Isidore and Charisius were used directly by the compiler of O’Mulanry, and these sources furnish about half of the Greek words found in that glossary. Many of these words also occur in the Greek–Latin glossaries, and it is of course very possible that our author came across the same terms in more than one source. But where words occur in Isidore or Charisius, they hardly constitute useful evidence for the use of Greek–Latin glossaries. Accordingly, Table 8.2 lists correspondences for words otherwise not accounted for (ordered by number of correspondences).

In this context, the Glossarium Leidense, already noted above, appears to be far more significant. It contains more of these entries than any other (including the Harleian glossary), despite being one of shortest glossaries in CGL. The text is found in Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS VLF 26 (Amiens, s. vii11), the earliest surviving manuscript of any of the hermeneumata. In fact, it represents the partial reworking of a hermeneumata text into a conventional alphabetical glossary, and its original form is preserved in a later manuscript, Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, MS 1828–1830 (s. x). This is the text printed by Goetz as Fragmentum Bruxellense, and although the shortest text printed in CGL II or III (fewer than five pages), it has the highest average correspondence of any. It seems likely, therefore, that the hermeneumata text available to the author of O’Mulanry was much more similar to that represented in Goetz’s Glossarium Leidense/Fragmentum Bruxellense than to the Harleian lexicon. It may be significant that the Brussels manuscript was written in England, the only hermeneumata manuscript with an Insular provenance.

If the use of Isidore, Charisius and the Brussels Hermeneumata together provides the most economical account of the sources for O’Mulanry, this still leaves about forty-five entries (roughly a quarter) untraced. Some of these occur in various parts of CGL, without any particular pattern evident. Some could potentially have been derived from the works of Servius, Martianus Capella and other authors, although cumulative evidence pointing to dependence on one or other work is similarly lacking. I have been unable to trace the few words to any printed Latin source. This is perhaps not surprising. Of all genres of text, glossaries may have suffered the vicissitudes of manuscript transmission more than most, generally lacking the authority either of a named author or a non-generic title (other than glossae, interpretamenta, or similar). We can be sure that many early glossary sources no longer survive. Indeed, the Brussels Hermeneumata is partially a case in point. The elements that survive are fragments, lacking the usual colloquia or reading passages, and an earlier, more complete, version may well have accounted for several more entries in the Irish glossary.

What about other bilingual texts? I have noted above (pp. 176–177) the existence of bilingual ninth-century Irish manuscripts of the Psalter, Gospels and Pauline epistles, as well as an early eighth-century Paternoster in Greek only (p. 175), which might relatively easily have been converted into such a bilingual. Could the remaining Irish glossary entries have been derived from the study of such a text? The very restricted range of words cited in the Irish glossary would indicate that these were not culled from a continuous text, however. There is a preponderance of nouns in particular (about 70 per cent), with the remainder mostly verbs, and a handful of adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. The grammatical forms are similarly

8) Goetz printed the Brussels capitula only under the heading (CGL III 393–398.39).
To build a truer picture of the extent of Greek known to the compiler, we must extrapolate from the evidence of the sources. Isidore and Charisius both contain large amounts of Greek vocabulary. Neither source, however, was intended to teach Greek. Isidore aimed to provide enough Greek to explain the etymology of Latin words, while Charisius supplied Greek words as a crib to those who knew the language already, in order to aid their study of Latin vocabulary. We have seen, in both cases, that confusion could arise in the use of these texts by Irish scholars for a purpose for which they were not designed.

Certainly, with the range of vocabulary in these sources being largely restricted to nouns in the nominative singular, the potential to read continuous Greek would have been very limited. The evidence for the availability of hermeneutics, however, suggests that some more progress in the language may have been possible. After all, these were texts written specifically for language learners. Whether originally composed for Greek-speaking students of Latin or vice versa, the parallel texts in both languages closely correspond, and could therefore have been applied to either scenario. Their word-lists were intended specifically to supply common vocabulary, and the conversation texts were pedagogically oriented: simple sentences, repetition, and variation, introduction to basic grammar.

The overall picture, therefore, points to some passive knowledge and at best very basic reading ability. Dionisotti warns against evaluating such knowledge in absolute terms: "We should beware of... creating a strange antithesis between the "use of glossaries", on the one hand, and "real knowledge of Greek", on the other - as if a Westerner could wake up in the morning knowing the meaning of Greek words without learning them from somewhere."

The main challenge for anyone attempting to acquire a reading knowledge of Greek in this period was the absence of sources for grammatical information, particularly in relation to the verbal system. This was later discovered in Macrobius' comparative grammar of the Greek and Latin verb, excerpted by Eriugena in the ninth century, and the contemporary interest in producing bilingual biblical manuscripts suggests that this was another avenue into a more advanced study of Greek. The etymological

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87 A search of the text of Isidore on the CETEDOC CD-ROM returns about 1,000 passages citing Greek words.

88 Dionisotti 1988: 2. Vendryes (1913: 224) expressed a similar point (referring to Cormac mac Cuilennín, to whom the related Irish glossary *Sanas Cormaic* is attributed): "Est que veut dire M. Esposti quand il soutient que Cormac ne savait pas le grec... qu'il n'en possédait pas l'histoire et la littérature autant qu'un Bude ou Walchowitz? C'est certain. Mais s'il ne savait pas le grec, il est indubitable que Cormac savait du grec." (Italics as printed.)

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restricted, nouns being almost always in the nominative singular, verbs in the first person singular present indicative active, with a smaller number of imperatives, infinitives and present participles. If we argued that the Greek words cited are normalised versions of oblique forms found in running text, we would need to demonstrate a knowledge of Greek grammar which the glossaries do not support. And there are no indications of declensional errors, or other grammatical mistakes that might be expected in any such process of normalisation. The evidence instead points to the use of vocabularies and Latin texts citing Greek words in isolation.

4 CONCLUSIONS: KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK

Based on the sources identified above, how do we assess the knowledge of Greek evident in the work of the glossary compiler? On the face of it, 192 words in O'Mullony's glossary does not seem to amount to very much. The original tally may have been somewhat higher, allowing for its faulty transmission and in particular the fact that only the first half of the glossary appears to have survived (the number of entries falls off very sharply after letter I).

Even so, this is to miss the point. For the author did not set out to write a text about Greek at all, but instead to produce an etymological tract exploring the origins of Irish words. As mentioned, these etymologies draw in not just Greek, but Latin and Hebrew, and also all of the languages spoken in Britain and Ireland in the early medieval period. At a time when medieval Irish historians were attempting to reconcile traditional accounts of Irish history with received Christian and classical traditions (by positing a Greek origin for the Irish race, for example), students of language were trying to understand the relationship of Irish to classical and biblical languages, as well as those of their neighbours. The Irish glossaries might thus be considered as an early stage in the history of comparative linguistics.

Accordingly, the compiler cites only Greek words that suit his purpose, that is, Greek words that correspond roughly with Irish words in both sound and sense. We may take it that not every Greek word known would answer to an Irish word in this way (even allowing for the broad parameters of ancient etymology), and that the compiler must have drawn on a stock of Greek many multiples greater than that cited in the text.

86 The exception being the treatment of aíla discussed above (p. 181), which is clearly in this case derived from Isidore.
tracts compiled in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries show a
very resourceful use, and minute study, of all available material containing
information on Greek, and provided a foundation of learning on which
later Irish scholars were to build. 86

86 Part of this research was funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social
Sciences.

CHAPTER 9

An habes linguam Latinam? Non tam bene sapio
Views of multilingualism from the early medieval West

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I CAROLINGIAN GAUL AND IRELAND

When Charlemagne came to power in the second half of the eighth cen-
tury AD, he rewrote the existing written laws, had the unwritten laws of
the Germanic tribes and their ancient barbaric poems written down, and
began the composition of a grammar of his native language; Einhard, his
biographer, writing c. 817–836, relates:

post suscepit imperiale nomen, cum aduerteret multa legibus pop-
ulii sui deesse – nam Franci duas habent leges, in plurimis locis ulde
diuersas – cогitavit quae decrart addere et discrepantium unire, prava
quoque ac perperam prolata corriger, sed de his nihil aliud ab eo
factum est, nisi quod paucis capitula, et ea imperfecta, legibus addidit.
omnium tamen nationum, quae sub eius dominatu erant, iura quae
scripta non erant describere ac litteris mandari fecit. item barbara et
antiqissima carmina, quibus uterum regum actus et bella caneban-
tur, scripsit memoriaeque mandavit. inchoavit et grammaticam patrii
sermonis.

After assuming the imperial title [Charles] realizing that there were
many deficiencies in the laws of his own people – for the Franks have
two sets of laws that differ tremendously at a number of points –
decided, therefore, to fill in what was lacking, to reconcile the dis-
agreements, and also to set right what was bad and wrongly expressed.
He did nothing more about this than to add a few items to these laws,
but even those in an imperfect state. But he did direct that the un-
written laws of all the peoples under his control should be gathered up
and written down. [Charles] also [ordered] that the very old poems, in
which the deeds and wars of ancient kings were sung, should be writ-
ten down and preserved for posterity. He began [as well] a grammar
of his own language. 1

1 Einhard, Vita Karoli Magni § 29 (ed. Holder-Egger 1911: 33; translation in Dutton 1998: 34). This
probably refers to when he assumed sole power in 771 rather than when he came to joint power.

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