Seiler, A., C. Benati & S. M. Ponz-Sans (eds.): *Medieval Glossaries from North-Western Europe: Tradition and Innovation*. The Medieval Translator / Traduire au moyen âge 19. Brepols: Turnhout. 2023. XIII + 762 pp. ISBN: 978-2-503-58457-7. Price: €135.

A reference work of this kind has long been overdue – it ventures to "bridge the gap between the different strands of research on medieval glossaries. As a *vademecum* for researchers, it provides access to different glossary traditions, focusing on Britain and Ireland, as well as the Germanic speaking areas on the Continent" (p. 15). This is a tall order, but the three editors have acquitted themselves admirably of this task. It is not a hollow phrase, then, to claim that this will be a standard work for many years to come.

Moreover, it appears at an opportune time, since the field of medieval glossing has recently produced several cross-disciplinary surveys, which suggests the discipline is taking stock. While Blom (2017) and Bulitta & Pelle (2024) remain largely confined to the English and German traditions, Cinato, Lahaussois & Whitman (2023) also include extensive work on East-Asian forms of glossing next to the medieval European, whereas the handbook currently prepared by Moran & Zisk (forthcoming) even promises to cover most of the historically known glossing cultures, from Ireland in the West to Japan in the East.

The encyclopedic scope of this book recalls the similarly monumental two-volume *Handbuch* (Bergmann & Stricker 2009). Even so, apart from the important fact that this new collaborative volume is written in the (sadly, but realistically) more accessible English *lingua franca*, it also has thrown the net significantly wider. It includes the Old and Middle English glossary traditions, as well as, albeit in somewhat less detail, the fields of early Latin, Anglo-Norman, Middle Dutch, Middle Low German, Irish, and medieval Scandinavian glossaries.

Still, despite the professed claim of "focusing […] on Ireland" (p. 15) as well as the, in relative terms, better-known Old English and Continental Germanic traditions, in fact only two of the fifty chapters in total are concerned with any Irish material at all. That said, several other chapters bear indirectly on the Irish glossary tradition, which is why a general impression of this book shall be given first, before I focus on the only chapter specifically devoted to the here so-called "Celtic Tradition".

The volume consists of four main parts. The first, entitled "Cultural, Intellectual and Textual Concepts", contains much material relevant to our current understanding of the Irish glossarial tradition, even if it barely touches upon it directly. These primarily conceptual chapters are all, as indeed is the rest

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of the book, abundantly provided with cross-references, making the navigation of such varied terrain considerably easier for the reader. However, as the editors themselves admit, "given the unequal degree of scholarly engagement with different glossaries, some of the chapters, by necessity, offer cutting-edge research, while others bring together a unified account of our present state of knowledge" (p. 24). Thus, the terminology used, and some further definitions and theoretical approaches, have deliberately not been brought into line: "we have not implemented any artificial streamlining of definitions and terminology; rather, the volume aims to draw attention to different conceptualisations undertaken in separate scholarly traditions and to facilitate communication across disciplinary boundaries by highlighting such issues" (p. 26). This is a realistic approach, as the English-language and the German-language traditions have developed their own concepts and terminology, mostly independently it would seem, and thus "due to the breadth of the field, scholarship on medieval glossaries is highly fragmented" (p. 15). Still, this otherwise understandable decision occasionally leads to a curious juxtaposition of sometimes contradictory terminology, such as the term *glossae collectae*, or even *glossary* (see below), which may confuse the less well-versed reader of what claims to be a *vademecum*.

The admirably clearly written "Introduction", provided by the editors themselves, covers essential comparative ground, looking into the "Sources of Glossaries"; presenting "A Genre Perspective on Medieval Glossaries", and by comparing "Glosses and Glossaries", "Glossaries and Lists", "Contextualised Glossaries", and "Glossary vs. Dictionary". It also contains a very useful discussion of "Medieval Designations for Glossaries", both Latin and vernacular, and provides, finally, an overview of the main scholarly editions currently in existence of Latin and Romance glossaries, glossaries from the British Isles, Continental Germanic, and Scandinavian glossaries.

Most of the chapters making up Part I are similarly of interest to Celticists. Thus, the contributions on "Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*" (by Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann) and the "*Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*" (a complex group of Greek-Latin bilingual glossaries, sometimes alphabetic, sometimes thematic; by Lucia Degiovanni) provide state-of-the-art introductions to the most influential texts to have fueled all medieval glossarial traditions, including the Irish one. Rolf H. Bremmer sketches out the various "Functions of Glossaries" in their medieval setting – even if other contributions in this volume do this in much greater detail – but, perhaps more originally, also in terms of the uses to which medieval glossaries have been put by modern scholars.

On the basis of several concrete examples from the Old English record, Cees Dekker's chapter "Glosses, Glossaries and Wisdom Texts" concludes that these three genres "provide numerous indications which suggest that, despite their differences, they were produced, processed, absorbed and disseminated in a shared intellectual and educational environment" (p. 116). Dekker distinguishes

between what he calls their "manifest intertextuality", that is, "shared topics, sources and phraseology", testifying to a common tradition of knowledge familiar to both glossaries and authors of wisdom texts; and their "constitutive intertextuality" by which is meant "the shared use of discursive features or discourse conventions, such as form, style, text typology and structure" (p. 116). These two types of intertextuality, observable in glossaries, glosses and wisdom texts, could not have existed without a shared intellectual and educational context, suggesting "a pattern of interconnected learning where analogous elements covered long distances, both in time and place" (p. 117) in which memorisation and oral communication were an important factor. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, who also includes examples from Irish and Welsh, floats similar ideas in her contribution to the volume under review (see below).

Particularly helpful is the chapter by Franck Cinato on "The Oldest Latin Glossaries", which concentrates on the period from the oldest testimonies in the sixth century to the extensive Carolingian compilations of the ninth, like the *Liber Glossarum*. Cinato presents several ideas that run counter to some of the more traditional views found elsewhere in *Medieval Glossaries from North-Western Europe*. For example, he proposes to use the term *glossary* only for lists "organised according to a more or less deep alphabetical order […]. I will use the word 'glossary' in this restricted sense, as opposed to 'a list of words' or 'collected glosses', which do not have an alphabetic order but follow a thematic organisation for the former and, for the latter, keep the order of the given text" (pp. 149–50). Moreover, Cinato emphasises glossaries' "evolutionary nature and their propensity to concentration on the *plures in unum* model. Like living species, glossaries generate other glossaries […] a glossary in the early mediaeval period was not a fixed document" (p. 169). Also important is his hammering home of the notion that some early attestations are indirect (for example from *testimonia* by grammarians in the earliest period), whereas some later ones, such as the ninth-century *Liber Glossarum*, are in fact late witnesses to the state of materials transmitted much earlier, at the time of Isidore of Seville. In so doing, he challenges the (mostly implied) received assumptions about the linear chronological development of our attested glossaries. Instead, Cinato prefers to think of glossaries in terms a *family*. Indeed, "glossaries not only display variation within a family, they also contain materials from other families" (p. 151). Thus, the much-repeated notion about the composition of glossaries "ultimately and entirely from glosses gleaned from the margins of texts" needs to be revised (pp. 151–52). While many chapters in this volume keep repeating this received wisdom, Cinato convincingly argues that glossaries in fact had many sources, including various kinds of word lists such as the *Synonyma Ciceronis*, and that "therefore, most early medieval glossaries go back, in part, to older glossaries" (p. 152). His detailed discussions of "Glossary Amplification and Alphabetical Order" and "Typology" (pp. 152–56), as well as his case studies (pp. 161–68) handsomely illustrate these arguments.

Claudia Wich-Reif's chapter "A Typology of Glossaries", on the other hand, repeats the traditional view that marginal and interlinear text glosses "were collected into text glossaries, which were sorted according to the first letter of the words to create an alphabetical text glossary […]" (p. 69). The typology she presents, albeit ably enough (i.e., text glossaries, topical glossaries, alphabetical glossaries), also remains doggedly traditional and appears to reflect the somewhat static and rigid approach common to the Germanophone study of glosses and glossaries.

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh's "Medieval Glossaries in a Multilingual Context" instead "seeks to situate glossaries in [a] multilingual milieu and […] [to] address attitudes to language, Latinate learning and pedagogy" (p. 86) as borne out in sources from early medieval Britain and Ireland. First, rare glimpses of contemporary language attitudes are detected in the work of Bede (for example regarding Cædmon's hymn) and Alfred (in his Preface to the *Pastoral Care*), as well as in the writings of Adomnán and the *Auraicept na nÉces*. The interface of the vernacular with Latinate learning is subsequently illustrated with Irish, English and Welsh examples and located in centres that could have sparked this type of multilingual interaction – places like the Canterbury of Theodore and Hadrian, and the monasteries of Iona, Rath Melsigi and Echternach in the times of Willibrord, where both Latin and various vernaculars were used in written, but very likely also oral, communication. Indeed, the pedagogical setting of the classroom especially must have embodied "a vibrant, multilingual intellectual culture defined by interrogation of linguistic forms and meaning, and characterised by sophisticated interplay between Latin and vernacular and between vernaculars of various types. Linguistic interaction of this type, as well as intense interest in the essence of language itself is manifest in much of the early writing that has come down to us from Britain and Ireland" (p. 96).

The second part may be entitled "Glossaries from Britain and Ireland" but deals almost exclusively with English-language material. Thus, the late Hans Sauer provided a general overview of Old English glossaries, whereas renowned specialists contributed further chapters on all the major sources, such as the *Leiden Glossary* (Rolf H. Bremmer and Kees Dekker), the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary (David Porter), the *Cleopatra Glossaries* (Phillip Rushe), the *Antwerp-London Glossaries* (David Porter), Ælfric*'s Glossary* (Lucia Kornexl) and the glossaries on Aldhelm (Emily Thornbury). The genre of legal glossaries, finally, is discussed by editor Sara Pons-Sanz, and that of herbal glossaries by Hans Sauer.

The less well-trodden Middle English terrain is introduced masterfully by Patrizia Lendinara, while some separate glossaries are treated in more detail by Claudio Cataldi ("Bodley 730") and Annette Horn ("Bilingual Dictionaries from the Fifteenth Century" on Latin-English dictionaries). Anglo-Norman glossaries (introduced by Heather Pagan), finally, and bilingual verse vocabularies (discussed

by Thomas Hinton who focuses on Walter of Bibbesworth's French-English *Tretiz* from the thirteenth century) are necessary to complete the Insular picture. Even so, these contributions, like the chapter on the "Celtic" tradition that closes this part of the book (see below), feel like something of an afterthought, or indeed a footnote, after the overwhelming focus on English-language material.

The third part, then, deals with "Continental Germanic and Scandinavian Glossaries". Most of this concerns the familiar ground that was covered, even in terms of the contributing authors, in the aforementioned *Handbuch* (Bergmann & Stricker 2009) and therefore has little new to offer, even if its treatment in English will presumably make it more widely accessible. Thus, the Old High German glossary tradition is introduced by Stefanie Stricker, and subsequently the most important texts are discussed in detail: the *Vocabularius Sancti Galli*, *Abrogans* and "Salomonian Glossary" (all by Andreas Nievergelt), the *Mondsee Bible Glossary* (by Claudia Wich-Reif), and the *Summarium Heinrici* (by Vreni Markwardt). Even so, the introduction of various High German glossaries from the later period (AD 1050–1515, introduced by Elke Krotz), but especially the chapters on Old Saxon and Low German (contributed by Chiara Benati), Middle Dutch (by Piet van Sterkenburg), and medieval Scandinavian glossaries (by Simon Skovgaard Boeck and, again, Chiara Benati) are fresh additions to an otherwise rather traditional menu.

The considerably smaller fourth part, finally, presents another aspect of the encouragingly broadening horizon in the study of medieval glossaries, namely, the study of their *Nachleben* in the (Early) Modern period. The opening chapter ("Medieval Glossaries and Renaissance Lexicography" by John Considine) deals with general tendencies, whereas two subsequent chapters address Early Modern German (Krotz) and Scandinavian (Boeck) lexicography. The final chapter on Busbecq's sixteenth-century Crimean Gothic word list, discussed by Ludwig Rübikeil, feels somewhat like a footnote appended to this fourth part, albeit a fascinating one.

I now come to the only chapter directly concerned with Irish-language material, somewhat misleadingly entitled "The Celtic Tradition". It was contributed by the three main current experts in the field: Paul Russell, Sharon Arbuthnot and Pádraic Moran. Despite the title, however, it in fact deals exclusively with three extensive Irish "etymological" glossaries arranged in the so-called *a*-order, that is, ordered mostly by first letter: *De origine scoticae linguae* (traditionally known as *O'Mulconry's Glossary*), *Dúil Dromma Cetta* and *Sanas Cormaic*, as well the much smaller *Irsan*.

This is a justified choice, as the authors explain that "the Celtic tradition of glossary-making might more correctly be termed an "Irish" tradition, in that there is a clearly defined style of glossary found in medieval Ireland which lacks

any obvious counterpart in other parts of the Celtic-speaking world" (p. 351). In addition, the matrix language of these "etymological" glossaries tends to be Irish, even if they also draw on Latin, and to a lesser extent on Greek and Hebrew, for etymologies. In fact, there is nothing remotely comparable to be found in the Brittonic-speaking world, with the one exception of the so-called *Vocabularium Cornicum*, in which Old Cornish (and some Welsh) words were added to a version of Ælfric's Glossary (p. 371; cf. Blom 2009 and Blom 2013).

The bulk of the chapter consists of detailed discussions of the structure, glossing strategies, and the likely sources and composition history of the three main glossaries, of which only *De origine scoticae linguae* ("On the Origin of the Irish Language") has received a modern critical edition (Moran 2019; reviewed in Blom 2020). Not surprisingly, then, the chapter's section on *De origine* reads like a summary of the introduction to Moran (2019), running quickly through the "Structure, Date and Origin", "Manuscripts" and "Sources and Topics" of *De origine*, noting the textual overlap with the other two main glossaries, and providing a short description of *Irsan*.

The second Irish glossary, *Dúil Dromma Cetta* ("The Collection of Druimm Cett"), is "unusual amongst the major early Irish glossaries in that, although a text of this title has been known to scholarship since at least 1859, no translation of any complete version has been published as yet, and scholarly commentary to aid in the interpretation of the (often obscure) material unique to this glossary is available only for a small number of individual entries" (p. 357). The presentation that follows is the real gem in this chapter, since it presents the kind of detailed introduction that would normally accompany a critical edition, and is therefore genuinely new, comprehensive, and state-of-the-art. As such, the extant four manuscripts are introduced, before the various types of entry in the glossary are illustrated. Then follows an exposition of the "Number and Arrangement of Entries" and the textual relations to *Sanas Cormaic* as well as between the four extant manuscript versions, detailed in two thorough discussions entitled "The Relationship between D^1 and D^2" and "A D^3/D^4 Version?"; the section on *Dúil Dromma Cetta* finishes with an attempt to establish the date of the various versions.

Sanas Cormaic ("Cormac's Glossary"), finally, may be the longest and most elaborate of the three "etymological" Irish glossaries, but, even if it has been in print in a number of versions since the nineteenth century, the only complete translation was in fact published by Whitley Stokes and John O'Donovan as far back as 1868. *Sanas Cormaic* is attested in a short and a long form, both of them attested in four extant manuscripts. These are briefly introduced here, as well as the title *sanas* and other Irish terms for "glossary" such as *dúil*, before the dating of the collection is discussed. The treatment of the likely sources of this glossary is by necessity more hypothetical, since, unlike *De origine*, *Sanas Cormaic* lacks a prologue listing them: "*Sanas Cormaic* is the most complicated

of these glossary collections and probably had multiple sources. Study of the entries which deal with legal terminology suggests that it has not been compiled directly from the texts, but from smaller legal glossaries" (p. 369). Even so, the process of compilation proposed subsequently is the "traditional" one also laid out by Wich-Reif in her chapter on "Typology", that is: the collecting of interlinear and marginal glosses allegedly led to batches of *glossae collectae* in textual order, which are subsequently put into *a(b)*-order and then merged with other groups, after which the glossaries grew by consuming other glossaries. We have seen above, however, that Cinato presents a more nuanced scenario that could also be taken into consideration when dealing with the Irish tradition. Still, the chapter finishes with the admission that "all of this needs more work […] it remains the case that we do not yet really know how much glossarial material has survived; the discussion above has focused on the best-known examples, but there are numerous fragments lying unpublished and only minimally catalogued, and in order to understand the larger products of the tradition […] we need to gain a better understanding of the smaller collections from which they were compiled" (p. 371).

Despite the admirable clarity and high quality of the chapter on Irish glossaries, I will finish on two notes of criticism. First, while it is obvious and understandable that the authors needed to concentrate on these "etymological" glossaries for reasons of focus and the presumably limited available space, a general overview of the Irish tradition in a *vademecum* of this type could have spent a few more words on other Irish glossaries with little, or no, textual relationship to those discussed above.

O'Davoren's Glossary, for example, is a large collection of more than 1600 terms, associated with Domhnall Ó Duibh Dá Bhoireann, a sixteenth-century scribe of the Mac Aedhagáin law school at Park, Co. Galway, attested in two manuscripts. Headwords in *O'Davoren* are explained concisely and subsequently illustrated with citations, mostly from legal texts. Significantly, however, several strata in this glossary have been thought to derive, not only from Irish legal tracts, but also from other early texts such as *Amrae Coluimb Chille* ("Poem for Saint Columba"), and *Félire Óenguso* ("Martyrology of Óengus") (Breatnach 2005: 100–159). Similarly, the manuscript known as Dublin, Trinity College Library, H.3.18 (which, incidentally, also contains *Sanas Cormaic*) contains several glossaries on specific texts, such as, again, *Félire Óenguso*, *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* (the "latest *Bretha Nemed*") and *Amrae Coluimb Chille*.

Admittedly, the authors mention the three "metrical" glossaries *Forus focal* ("Knowledge of Words"), *Deirbhšiur don eagna inn éigsi* ("Poetry [is] the Sister to Wisdom"), and the so-called *Egerton* metrical glossary. These in fact raise their own questions about composition history – Stokes had argued that such glossaries had been compiled in crude *deibide*-metre from earlier sources, and

were later, in their turn, developed into prose-word lists. However, it seems much more likely that word lists consisting of entries of the type *A .i. B* instead provided the raw material for such versification, perhaps done by young poets (as argued by Russell 2017: 8–11). The best known of such word lists are the so-called *Lecan Glossary*, the *Uí Mhaine Glossary*, and an alphabetised version known as the *Stowe Glossaries* (Blom 2024: 196).

Two further glossaries, finally, should not go unmentioned. First of these is the glossary known as *Dúil Laithne* ("A Latin Collection"), only attested in a single manuscript written and signed in May 1643 by no one less than Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh (*ca*. 1600–1671), the famous Irish scribe and scholar. Despite the title, it has nothing to do with Latin, but instead constitutes a collection of Irish words, not listed in alphabetical order, and mostly pertaining to poetry. However, the same Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh compiled the one manuscript (Dublin, Trinity College, H.2.15b) in which virtually all the surviving glossaries described above are contained: *Sanas Cormaic* (versions H^{1a} and H^{1b}), *Dúil Laithne*, versions OM^{2} and OM^{3} of *De origine scoticae linguae*, and *O'Davoren's Glossary*. Significant, again, is the fact that Dubhaltach's compilation contains other learned Old Irish texts as well such as, again, *Bretha Nemed* and *Auraicept na nÉces*, together with place-name lore. Finally, another Early Modern glossary based on older material is the one published in Louvain, also in 1643, by the great scholar Mícháel Ó Cléirigh (*ca*. 1590–1643) as *Foclóir nó sanasán nuadh*, also known as *O'Clery's Glossary*. It is a fully alphabetised compilation from a number of sources (see Blom 2024: 197 for editions and further references).

My second point of criticism is that any comparison of the Irish glossarial tradition with some of the others featured in *Medieval Glossaries from North-Western Europe*, as well as their possible connections, has been left out entirely. Indeed, Paolo Vaciago contributed a whole chapter on "Insular-Continental Connections", but the term "insular" seems here to have been sadly restricted to the larger of the two islands.

Admittedly, there is little to suggest any substantial textual overlap in vernacular material between Irish, Old English and Continental Germanic glossaries, but the matter would have deserved mentioning. For example, two Old English items occur in *Sanas Cormaic*: *langp<h>eitir* 'long fetter' and *lang* 'long'. Equally, Irish elements occur in Old English glossaries. For example, Old Irish *gabulrind* (literally 'fork-point'), glossing *circinus* 'compass', occurs in *Sanas Cormaic* as well as in *Leiden* and *Erfurt* (Pheifer 1987: 29; Herren & Sauer 2016: 142), whereas Old Irish items occasionally crop up in Old High German glossaries (Bulitta 2011: 170–71).

Still, the differences are the most striking. A first fundamental difference between the Irish and the other traditions is that Irish glossaries treat vernacular words as headwords, which is the complete reverse of the other vernacular

traditions. Thus, Irish glossaries are conceived towards explicating the *Irish* language, instead of the Latin, sometimes applying Latin or other languages for this purpose. Moreover, Irish glossaries are generally more discursive in style than the Old English and Old High German ones (even if Dekker in this volume presents some good examples of discursive glosses in Old English). Instead of single-word explanations, Irish glossaries frequently elaborate on the sense of the headword, quoting copiously from authorities and citing examples to exemplify usage. Finally, there is the Irish predilection for etymological analysis, which is much rarer, even if also present, in the other glossary traditions.

In this respect, as Moran (2007: 153) noticed, Irish glossaries have far more in common with entries found in lemmatised Latin commentaries, as inspired by Servius' epochal commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid*. Equally similar in approach is Isidore, of course, but the methods of earlier compilators such M. Valerius Flaccus' *De uerborum significatu*, now mostly lost but abridged in the second century by Sextus Pompeius Festus, and Nonius Marcellus' fourth-century *De compendiosa doctrina*, may have fuelled the Irish tradition as well.

Speaking about more general Latinate influences on the Irish glossarial tradition, it needs to be remembered that the striking use of etymology was not only important to Isidore, but also formed a common element in the tradition of Latin commentary, as represented by Servius, Charisius and the Late Latin grammars that were known in Ireland (cf. Law 1982). While there is no evidence for direct knowledge in Ireland of earlier representatives of the classical and late Antique commentary tradition, such as Varro and Flaccus, there are nonetheless strong Irish associations with the Latin commentary tradition, as attested at several continental European monastic centres. Moreover, some plausible, if indirect, evidence exists for the availability of such works in Ireland. Indeed, several of these commentaries must have been transmitted to Ireland, since their influence can be discerned in extant Hiberno-Latin commentaries such as the *Ars Laureshamensis*, the *Ars anonyma Bernensis* and the *Ars Ambrosiana*, as well as those by Sedulius and Murethach. A broad-ranging exploration of the relationship between the Irish glossaries and learned Latin texts and commentaries therefore remains a major desideratum (Blom 2024: 209). As to the vicissitudes of the tradition of Latin *glossaries* in Ireland, finally, such texts would likewise be expected to have been attested. However, there is in fact little manuscript evidence for the circulation of Latin glossaries in Ireland. There are, perhaps, some meagre suggestions for the use of glossaries in the St Gall glosses on Priscian, or, most promisingly, in a fragment of the *Abba* glossary from Bobbio, itself an Irish foundation (Moran 2007: 151).

However, these remarks are mere trifles considering the necessarily limited focus of the three authors of "The Celtic Tradition". Their chapter is one of the highlights in an already remarkable volume.

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