HEROIC SAGA AND CLASSICAL EPIC IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND

BRENT MILES

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D. S. BREWER

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NOTE ON TEXTS AND EDITIONS

I have silently corrected Stokes's text of the first recension of *Togail Troí* according to the corrections printed in *Irische Texte* (ed. Windisch and Stokes) 2, part 1, 142; *Irische Texte* 3, part 1, 282; and Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', 77–9. Otherwise, texts are quoted from the printed editions with minor alterations left unmarked. Various additions made to facilitate the comparison of Irish and Latin passages, for example the division of a text into numbered sections, are easily identified in context. Square brackets enclose textual emendations made by the editors. The editors' expansions of manuscript abbreviations have not been indicated, nor are italics used in my own transcriptions except where there may be a question as to the correct expansion. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated and, in order to ease the task of comparing the original Latin and Irish, aim to be literal.

Citations of primary sources are generally made to the line or verse number of the relevant editions. When not given in full, Latin authors are cited according to citation-formulae from the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* in the case of classical authors, and from the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* in the case of later authors.

ABBREVIATIONS

CMCS	*Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (formerly *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*)
DIL	*Dictionary of the Irish Language*, *Compact Edition* (ed. Quin)
H	*Togail Troí* in TCD MS 1319 (H.2.17) (ed. Stokes 'The Destruction')
HF-A	*The Hisperica Famina: I. The A-Text* (ed. Herren)
L	The Book of Leinster (ed. Best *et al*., cited by line no.)
Táin	*Táin Bó Cúailnge*, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cooley'
TBC-1	*Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension 1* (ed. O'Rahilly)
TBC-2	*Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (ed. O'Rahilly)

INTRODUCTION: *FIGMENTA POETICA* AND HEROIC SAGA

Táin Bó Cúailnge, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cooley', is a long prose tale from Christian medieval Ireland, in which are recounted the deeds of Iron Age kings and heroes from Ireland's pre-Christian past. The text is a sophisticated recreation of pre-history from the point of view of a society that had been literate in both Latin and its own vernacular, Irish, for centuries. Based ultimately on history that could be traced in oral tradition back to before the coming of Christianity, the *Táin* may have emerged as a written text as early as the seventh century. However, the written text grew and changed over time, and different versions survive today. The earliest complete surviving version was written sometime in the eleventh or twelfth century and is preserved in the twelfth-century vellum codex today called the Book of Leinster. At the text's conclusion, there are two colophons, one in Irish, and one, unusually, in Latin:

> Bendacht ar cech óen mebraigfes go hindraic Táin amlaid seo 7 ná tuillfe cruth aile furri.
>
> Sed ego qui scripsi hanc historiam aut uerius fabulam quibusdam fidem in hac historia aut fabula non accommodo. Quaedam enim ibi sunt praestrigia demonum, quaedam autem figmenta poetica, quaedam similia uero, quaedam non, quaedam ad delectationem stultorum.[1]
>
> (Irish) A blessing on every one who will study/learn the *Táin* faithfully in this way and who will not add any other form to it.
>
> (Latin) But I who wrote this *historia*, or rather *fabula*, do not give credence to certain things in this *historia* or *fabula*. For certain things in it are the deceptions of demons; certain things, however, are *figmenta poetica*; certain things resemble the truth, certain things do not, certain things are for the delectation of fools.

The change of tone between the two colophons, like the change of language, is striking. Of special interest is the attitude toward the text expressed in the second colophon. This version of the *Táin*, dubbed Recension 2 by modern critics, is one of the most ambitious literary creations of medieval Ireland. The Irish colophon expresses a justified sense of accomplishment in the work. The scorn for the tale evinced in the Latin colophon, therefore, comes as a shock. Pádraig Ó Néill suggested that the twelfth-century scribe was content to copy the *Táin* as he found it, but was provoked by the first colophon in Irish.[2] The *Táin* he had just copied had much material which a pious Christian might have considered objectionable. The scribe decided to register his opinion of this objectionable content, which includes supernatural animals and goddesses of war, by labeling

1 O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (hereafter TBC-2), 136.
2 Ó Néill, 'The Latin colophon' for the following.

it *figmenta poetica*, 'poetic fictions'. More interestingly, however, the scribe's concern is expressed using literary terminology from the medieval learned tradition inherited from ancient Roman rhetoric. He acknowledges that the work may be a *fabula*, 'fable', a genre which Christian writers tended to loathe. However, the Irish had a strong tradition of regarding texts such as the *Táin* as *historia*, 'history', a genre highly prized in Christian tradition. The scribe registers ambivalence by vacillating in his own usage of these two literary terms.

Figmenta poetica, which we can translate 'poetic products of artifice' or 'poetic inventions', does not feature conventionally in the scheme of literary terminology inherited from ancient rhetoric.[3] However, Erich Poppe has analyzed this same colophon with respect to the textual analysis taught in the medieval tradition of grammar, or *grammatica*. Noting the centrality of *grammatica* to many branches of medieval Irish learning, Poppe considers Irish interest in Augustine's discussion of *grammatica* and *dialectica* in the *Soliloquies*. Augustine wrote:

> Est autem grammatica uocis articulatae custos et moderatrix disciplina: cuius professionis necessitate cogitur humanae linguae omnia etiam *figmenta* colligere, quae memoriae litterisque mandata sunt. (*Soliloquia* 2.11.19; my italics)
>
> The discipline *grammatica* is the guardian of ordered speech and its governor; in its pursuit it has to collect even all *inventions* of human language which have been transmitted by memory or writing.[4]

Poppe notes that this passage is a 'good justification of a learned interest in the whole range of texts produced in a textual culture without regard for their intrinsic truth'. A vernacular gloss which accompanies this passage in an Irish copy of the text seems to stress this justification for preserving *figmenta*, and translates the phrase into Irish:

> isecen doneuch fosisedar dán inna grammatic continola innahuili *doilbthi*. (my italics)
>
> It is necessary for everyone who is interested in the art of *grammatica* to collect all *inventions* (= *figmenta*).[5]

Though *figmenta* might have a more positive connotation in this instance, Augustine in this passage also explains that *fabula* is a 'lie' and provides a verbal association with *delectatio*.[6] The *Soliloquies* may, therefore, have featured in an Irish tradition of literary analysis on which the Latin colophon from the Book of Leinster drew.

Both Ó Néill and Poppe note that echoes of *figmenta poetica* in a negative sense can be found in Christian tradition, especially in the variant *figmenta poetarum*, 'inventions of poets', throughout Augustine's *City of God*. An occurrence in Augustine of the phrase *figmenta poetica* specifically, however, has been neglected. In a discussion of how he learned to read, Augustine remembers that he developed an antipathy to the rote learning by which letters were taught in the discipline of *grammatica*. He was more interested in the literary component of *grammatica*'s program. As Augustine remembers it, this consisted of reading

3 This scheme, with reference to an explicit occurrence in Irish, is treated in detail below, 97–8.
4 Quoted from Poppe, '*Grammatica*', 205 (Poppe's translation).
5 Poppe quotes from Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus*, 2: 6.
6 Poppe, '*Grammatica*', 209.

Virgil's *Aeneid*. The adult Augustine came to appreciate the emphasis on memory in this early learning, for the literacy which he continued to enjoy as an adult:

> item si quaeram quid horum maiore vitae huius incommodo quisque obliviscatur, legere et scribere an poetica illa figmenta, quis non videat quid responsurus sit, qui non est penitus oblitus sui? Peccabam ergo puer cum illa inania istis utilioribus amore praeponebam, vel potius ista oderam, illa amabam. iam vero unum et unum duo, duo et duo quattuor, odiosa cantio mihi erat, et dulcissimum spectaculum vanitatis, equus ligneus plenus armatis et Troiae incendium atque ipsius umbra Creusae.[7]
>
> Likewise if I should ask which of these it will be a greater inconvenience in this life that a person should forget, ability to read and write or those *figmenta poetica*, who would not see the obvious answer unless he has completely taken leave of himself? For I sinned as a child when I preferred in my heart these empty things to those more useful things; or rather, I hated those things, I loved these. Indeed, 'one plus one equals two' and 'two plus two equals four' was a loathsome recitation to me, and of greatest delight was a spectacle of vanity, the wooden horse full of armed men and the burning of Troy and 'the shade of Creusa herself'.

As in the Latin colophon to the *Táin*, Augustine's *figmenta poetica* here is a pejorative term. In spite of the vehemence of the language, however, Augustine in this passage is not polemic, but reflective. Ambivalence runs through the discussion. His early love for Virgil did not seriously impede Augustine's progress in letters. If anything, he betrays some satisfaction in his continuing ability to quote the poem accurately, a rhetorical strategy which he otherwise reserves for the Bible. Augustine twice quotes Virgil in this discussion, once commenting how, as a child, he wept for the suicide Dido, that she had 'extinctam ferroque extrema secutam' ('perished, and with the sword had pursued her end') (*Confessions* 1.13.21; *Aeneid* 6.457); and secondly this closing memory of Creusa, murdered on the night of Troy's destruction (*Aeneid* 2.772). The choice of quotations reveals that the Christian continues to carry the poem in his head as a reader sensitive to its nuances and its pathos. These are the shades of the two women who loved Aeneas, his lover and his wife, returned in death to remind the hero of his losses. The poem apparently haunts post-conversion Augustine, and is perhaps remembered in connection with painful events in his own life.[8] Augustine's deceptively straightforward discussion of memory and *grammatica* contains a delicate meditation on the ambivalent psychology of conversion and loss.

Augustine's sincerity is not in doubt, but his mixed feelings are barely disguised. We do not have to posit Augustine here as a source for the Irish in order to see how the passage throws light on continuing questions of Christian piety, education and esteem for the unquestionable greatness of the poetry of pagan Rome. From late antiquity through to the Middle Ages, Virgil remained a fixture in the classroom wherever Latin was taught according to the tradition of *grammatica* established by ancient Roman schoolmasters. The medieval Irish, having no historical connection with Roman *imperium*, were the first people of Western Europe to become proficient in Latin as the test for admission to

[7] O'Donnell, *Augustine*. *Confessions*, 1.13.22.

[8] O'Donnell, *Augustine. Confessions*, 2: 79–82, notes the parallel in Augustine's life with his mother Monica and his concubine; Augustine's use of the Dido episode from the *Aeneid* becomes pronounced in 5.8.15; see O'Donnell *ad loc*.

Christian civilization. As such, they were the first people to know *grammatica* as the means by which Latin was acquired. Their intellectual investment in the discipline was profound and set the precedent for the rest of Europe. Less widely recognized is their investment in a discipline which probably accompanied their efforts to acquire Latin, their investment in Virgil. It is to the Irish, along with the English, that we owe thanks for the preservation of the ancient tradition of commentary on the poet. Most important in this tradition was the early-fifth-century commentary by Servius, the contemporary commentary attributed to Filargirius, and, possibly, the fourth-century commentary by Aelius Donatus.[9] The latter has been controversially associated with the Irish. In the case of the Filargirian commentary, an Irish Christian author worked through the text, made comments in Old Irish and, so to speak, turned the Roman commentary on the pagan poet into something serviceable for Christian Europe. Furthermore, the claim that the Irish, in their Golden Age of Learning from the seventh through to the ninth centuries, read Virgil's poems, though for a time contested, has been vindicated.[10] We do not have to doubt that, had any reader in medieval Ireland read through this passage in Augustine's *Confessions*, he would at least have understood what was at stake. Depending on any attachment he may have formed to beautiful Latin, he might have felt some sympathy.

As for *figmenta poetica*, there is somewhat more to this than would be conveyed if the phrase were simply translated 'poetic fictions' and dismissed. As noted above, the idea of such a thing was commonplace in antiquity, and Augustine uses the variant *figmenta poetarum* throughout the *City of God*. In Book 4 of the latter, Augustine, using the phrase, recalls a passage in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* where Cicero takes issue with Homer's anthropomorphized depictions of the Olympian gods from the *Iliad*.[11] This was a well-established tradition in philosophy by Cicero's time. Augustine drew on the same, and though his discussion is in the context of theatrical performances, the association with Homer, as the poet of pagan gods *par excellence*, remains behind the discussion. In the *Confessions*, Augustine's quotations show that the connotation of *figmenta poetica* had passed to Homer's Roman heir, Virgil.

Association of *figmenta poetica* with Virgil especially may have become a commonplace in its own right by late antiquity. Of Virgil's account of the transmigration of souls in *Aeneid* 6, Servius comments: 'miscet philosophiae figmenta poetica et ostendit tam quod est vulgare, quam quod continet veritas et ratio naturalis' ('[Virgil] mixes *figmenta poetica* and philosophy, making plain both what is commonly thought and what is true to nature and natural reason') (at *Aeneid* 6.719). This is the view of the poem's philosophical value that had fully vindicated Virgil and his *figmenta* by the twelfth century. Given that the obvious dactylic rhythm of *figmenta poetica* preselects it for hexameter verse, the phrase assuredly retained an association with epic at least. The anonymous author of a hexameter version of Dares Phrygius's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, a late-antique prose history of the Trojan War, uses the phrase when he begins by announcing that he aims to redress his age's fanciful distortions in the story of Troy:

9 See below, 23ff.
10 See below, 22.
11 Aug., *Civ*. 4.26; Cic., *Tusc. Disp*. 1.26.65.

Historiam Troiae figmenta poetica turbant.[12]

Figmenta poetica muddle the history of Troy.

The muddling account of the war to which the writer alludes must be the Latin tradition of Trojan history associated with Virgil's *Aeneid*. Some ambivalence to these *figmenta poetica* is suggested by the fact that the poet obviously recognized that the phrase made for a memorable opening to his (otherwise pedestrian) poem.[13] Even if Virgil was not felt to be the most obvious referent behind *figmenta poetica* in medieval usage, it is only in a world such as our own, where prose has taken over the role of verse in most traditional uses, that a person can miss the oddness of *figmenta poetica* as a comment on a composition primarily in prose. Such is the usage of the Latin colophon to the *Táin*. Given the connotations of *figmenta poetica* in the Latin tradition to which the author of the colophon was heir, an implied association of this *Táin* with epic is hard to miss.

The anonymous scribe of this section of the Book of Leinster has been dubbed T in the modern critical literature.[14] Ó Néill notes that if we accept that T wrote this colophon, the competent Latinity is in accordance with his scribal activity throughout the Book of Leinster, which shows the interests of a scholar.[15] The physical separation of the second colophon from the first, moreover, suggests some psychological distance from the Irish text, and, as Ó Néill suggests, 'a change of cultural and intellectual register'. Yet of the voluminous literature of the Ulster Cycle preserved in manuscripts over a period of several hundred years, only *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and this version alone, receives such a colophon. It may not be a coincidence that this is also the most developed, polished literary version of the *Táin*. This version is regarded by modern critics as the work of a single literary artist. To my knowledge, it has never been seriously argued that it was this single literary artist who also composed the Latin colophon, and not the later scribe T. Nevertheless, for the sake of introducing the themes which will dominate this book, what if we entertain the suggestion that the second colophon was, like the first, the original author's own conclusion to the *Táin* he had just composed?

Modesty and the conventions of Irish prose saga forbid him from naming himself, even here at the conclusion where any author in the learned tradition outside saga might be permitted the distinction. But he gives a good hint to his identity. He is a Latin scholar, and probably familiar to the intellectual elite of his time. He displays use of the sophisticated language of literary criticism inherited from Latin rhetorical instruction. Therefore, he may have connections with intellectual centers outside Ireland. He preempts criticism of his work from learned contemporaries by showing that he knows full well what distinguishes a *historia* from a *fabula*. The conscious mingling of the two in his work is signaled by his refusal to settle on either one term or the other. Even in the first colophon in Irish, pious enough on first consideration, lurks an author's pride. Other versions of the *Táin* existed before his, both oral and written, the latter in less rigorous forms and probably still circulating. It is these earlier versions which are suggested in

12 Godi, *Carmen*; the poem has not been convincingly dated.

13 Granted, the poet here knew a medieval convention of invoking these *figmenta* at the beginning of 'serious' poetry, for which, see Gompf, 'Figmenta poetarum'.

14 O'Sullivan, 'Notes'.

15 Ó Néill, 'The Latin colophon', 275, 271, for this and following quotation.

the colophon's 'cruth aile' ('other format'), which is not to be imposed on this superior version. Probably it is with reference to these less sophisticated versions that he concludes by noting how the tale contains things which have been 'ad delectationem stultorum' ('for the delectation of fools'). Alternatively, he is having some fun at his own expense and that of his readers. There is no offence, as only the non-foolish, that is, those with Latin, are in a position to get the joke and will assume themselves to be excluded. But it is in this polished version, *amlaid seo*, that future readers will know the *Táin*. What is this format that the author himself has introduced? Readers of Latin have the breadth of reading to appreciate it. If the Latin colophon does nothing more than alert posterity that this version of the *Táin* contains *figmenta poetica*, then it follows that the work's failings, as great as they may be, are shared with Virgil's *Aeneid*. This version of the *Táin*, therefore, is in good company. Presented ambiguously as if the opinion of a mere scribe, the colophon demonstrates that it takes a gifted writer indeed to feign modesty so unconvincingly.

The purpose of this mental exercise has been to demonstrate how our reading of a medieval work hinges somewhat upon what we think of the competence and sophistication of the original audience. If we think that the audience could be held to know *figmenta poetica* at first hand, then it follows that the author of the colophon probably did as well and used Latin literary terminology as something more than a dead letter. Familiarity with Augustine's *Confessions* is not prerequisite for appreciating the ambivalence he expresses. For any Christian who understands literature, time spent with Virgil is more than adequate to produce such conflict anew. Moreover, if the audience had even passing familiarity with Ovid or Roman satire, then so did the author, and all can be held fully able to recognize irony. The *Táin* is not particularly ironic, but it is full of humour. Once the author had code-switched to Latin, we can imagine that irony was well within his competence.

Most of this book is concerned with reading and interpretation. How we allow ourselves to read and interpret the colophon is preconditioned by what sophistication we believe the author and original audience brought to their own acts of reading. The second half of this book is dedicated to reading and interpreting the *Táin* on the understanding that the author and original audience had a fair familiarity with Latin epic and were practiced interpreters of written texts. The first part of this book presents arguments for why we should be prepared to make this assumption. Good arguments for oral culture notwithstanding, medieval Ireland had a thriving elite tradition of literacy. Attention to classical antiquity, Latin epic and the monuments of Latin literacy loomed large in that tradition. Delineating some neglected features in this tradition changes what we can expect from our medieval readers. In consequence, this changes somewhat what we can expect from our medieval texts.

Epic, Saga and Irish Literary Tradition

The controversy surrounding classical learning in medieval Ireland has been carried out in a mostly uncoordinated fashion within two distinct but related fields, Hiberno-Latin studies and Old Irish. Ironically, W. B. Stanford, the scholar who made the greatest effort to synthesize the fruits of research in these two

fields, was neither a Hiberno-Latinist, nor a scholar of Old Irish.[16] Although a fair reflection of where things stood in his day, his work is sorely out of date, and does not reflect the advances in our knowledge of the Latin culture of medieval Ireland that have been made in the last forty years. But while there has been great progress in the field of Hiberno-Latin since Stanford's time, the arguments put forward in this book will revolve principally around a collection of texts which have remained staples of the classicist's diet in any age. These are the Latin epics of Imperial Rome, in this case Statius's *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* and, above all, Virgil's *Aeneid*. The first part of this book especially is devoted to evidence for reading these poets in Ireland, and even more so, evidence for the scholarly study of their works as a component in the discipline of *grammatica*. It is argued that Irish interest in the poets and their ancient commentators was unusually secular in character and sensitive to aesthetic qualities of classical literature. For these reasons I choose to call Irish interest in the classics a nascent medieval Irish classical studies.

The *Táin* is the native Irish text to which scholars have most readily awarded the notional category 'epic'. It is not, therefore, an accident that it figures prominently in this book. For reasons examined below, the *Táin* is an unusually clear window on the richness and complexity of Irish learned traditions, including the tradition of reading classical epic. While the *Táin* may have first taken literate form in the seventh century, our earliest surviving witness to the text, the so-called Recension 1, is a work of an eleventh-century hand.[17] The other principal Irish text of this study is *Togail Troí*, 'The Destruction of Troy'.[18] This work is the earliest of the large corpus of texts in Irish which translate and adapt prose histories and hexameter epic inherited from pagan Rome. Alongside the *Táin*, *Togail Troí* is of equal relevance to the study of classical epic's influence on Irish literature. The most exhaustive effort to date *Togail Troí* has placed the text, like the *Táin*, in the eleventh century. We thus have a coincidence in dates between the *Táin* in the 'epic' shape in which we know it today, and the earliest of the classical tales in Irish.

Recension 1 of the *Táin* is manifestly a work of the eleventh century, but equally manifestly it is a compilation of much earlier materials. Our certainty that the work draws on earlier documents comes mostly from examination of the language. Old Irish is unique in medieval Europe for having had a standardized written form from its earliest attested remains, with no great evidence for dialect.[19] In regularity and longevity, Old Irish goes well beyond the standardization achieved by, say, Old English, and approaches the character of Medieval Latin. Unlike Latin, however, spoken Irish evolved greatly from the seventh to the twelfth century, and these changes were reflected in the literary language. It was in syntax and verbal inflection that changes, sometimes extreme, were noticeable. We are left with the paradox of a highly standardized literary language

16 Stanford, 'Towards a history'; and *Ireland*; Stanford, 'Towards a history', 30, explains that his work was intended primarily for classicists.

17 O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension 1* (hereafter TBC-1).

18 See Chapter 2 for editions and the different recensions.

19 Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, remains the most important description of the literary language, although specialists will supplement this with more recent studies; for an overview for non-specialists, see Russell, 'What was best'.

that changed drastically over time. Yet the consequence of these changes in the language is that short texts in Irish can generally be dated to certain periods. The major division would be texts which agree with the language preserved in the Irish glosses which survive in Latin manuscripts from pre-900, which can be described as Old Irish; and texts which show the innovations in the language evident in the vernacular codices from the twelfth century, which can be considered Middle Irish.[20]

The technique of linguistic dating is important, as many texts are anonymous and survive only in much later copies; if comparable linguistic criteria from inflection and syntax existed for dating unidentified texts in Medieval Latin, scholars would not hesitate to employ them. However, there are many difficulties with linguistic dating of Irish texts, especially in cases where any date more specific than 'period of Old Irish' or 'period of Middle Irish' is sought. These difficulties are familiar to specialists and, as problems of language and dating are very minor concerns in this book, are here passed over.[21] The only argument in this book that relies significantly on linguistic dating is Gearóid Mac Eoin's claim that the first recension of *Togail Troí* was composed in the eleventh century, perhaps based on an earlier version written in the tenth.[22] This places the text earlier than Recension 2 of the *Táin*, though Mac Eoin left the question of its chronology with the eleventh-century edition of Recension 1 unexamined; the earlier tenth-century form at least was earlier. In a literary discussion such as pursued in this book, it is unwise to place too much weight on a strictly formal chronology of texts which, in view of improvements which (one hopes) will be made to techniques of linguistic dating in the future, may need to be changed. Accordingly, I base my arguments on the modified claim that these early versions of *Togail Troí* and the eleventh-century *Táin* be accepted as roughly contemporary and products of the same literary culture. Comparisons made throughout this book between the *Táin* and *Togail Troí*, or from other texts which can be dated to roughly the same period, will rest primarily on literary critical techniques that are independent of linguistic dating.

Various scholars have attempted to construct growth models for the *Táin* which can account for the mix of Old and Middle Irish in the text, as well as various oddities within the text and between the many manuscript copies and recensions. The version we call Recension 1 shows clear signs of being a compilation of distinct sources, signaled in the text with intertextual notes such as 'iar slicht aile seo' ('according to a different version here'). Rudolf Thurneysen proposed that the *Táin* was first written in the seventh or eighth century, at which point it entered the oral repertory when the original written version was lost. This text then reemerged in the ninth century in two variant oral versions, both which were committed to parchment in their own right. The text we have today and which we call Recension 1 represents an eleventh-century compilation of the two ninth-century Old Irish written versions, to which have been

20 1200 is taken as the rough beginning of Modern Irish; for the periodization of the language and linguistic criteria for this division see Breatnach, 'An Mheán-Ghaeilge', especially 221–7.

21 The most accessible discussion is Mac Eoin, 'The dating'; see also McCone, 'The Würzburg '; and Mac Gearailt, 'Zur literarischen Sprache'.

22 See below, 53.

added many episodes showing features of the Middle Irish of the day.[23] With its emphasis on textual compilation, this model probably shows the influence of the Documentary Hypothesis of nineteenth-century biblical form criticism. Closer to Thurneysen's heart, however, was the application of text-critical techniques developed originally for classical Latin and sometimes called the 'Lachmannian method'. In Thurneysen's adaptation of this method, oral transmission is posited only to explain corruptions in different branches of a written text's transmission, somewhat as scribal interference over time is meant to account for corruptions in the textual branches of, say, the text of Lucretius. Recensions 2 and 3 are later, thoroughly literary works based on Recension 1.[24]

Although Thurneysen's account of the text remains the single most influential model, it has never stood unchallenged. Cecile O'Rahilly accepted Thurneysen's suggestion that two versions had been conflated. However, applying the concept of the 'theme' from the school of oral-formulaic poetry, she argued that some inconsistencies and doublets did not arise from conflation of two versions nor corruption, but arose in the course of oral improvisation on themes over a protracted period of time. With this argument, we see the second application to the *Táin* of a critical model borrowed from classical studies, in this case Milman Parry's theory of formulaic composition in archaic Greek poetry; this model was later refined by Parry's student Albert Lord into a full theory of oral composition.[25] Given that Irish heroic literature is mostly a prose literature, the analogy with Archaic Greek verse has always rested uncomfortably, all the while that the analogy with Homer has continued to prove irresistible.[26] The most startling application of classical learning to a growth-model for the *Táin*, however, comes indirectly in Hildegard Tristram's claim that the *Táin* did not exist as a complete text until the eleventh century. Tristram believes that the Irish did not develop the techniques for extended, written narrative in the vernacular until they had begun their program to translate works from classical history into Irish. This program began in the tenth century with the earliest version of *Togail Troí*, a rewriting of Dares Phrygius's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, and the compilation and translation of late-antique histories of Alexander the Great in *Scéla Alaxandair*. The narrative 'extension' met in these texts also features in ambitious native sagas such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and, therefore, is characteristic of texts which are produced only in the wake of the early classical tales.[27]

In medieval Irish studies, such a wealth of complicated textual theories, all showing awareness of models from classical studies, is virtually restricted to the *Táin*. The analogy I have been making between Irish and Latin in the Middle

23 See Thurneysen, 'Die Überlieferung', where he originally claimed an eighth-century origin; *Die irische Helden*, 109–13; and 'Colmán mac Lénéni', 209, for his acceptance that the first written form could have been in the seventh century.

24 For a clear review of Thurneysen's model with reference to later competing models, see Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 31.

25 The two principal works are Parry, *The Making*; and Lord, *The Singer*; O'Rahilly acknowledges Lord at TBC-2, xvi.

26 Michael Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles', 238, n. 6, comments on the oddity of the application of the Parry-Lord model to Irish prose; see also Ó Coileáin's closing comments in his review of Parry, *The Making*; otherwise, the oddity has not attracted much comment.

27 Tristram, 'Aspects'; aggregative historiographical texts such as the *Sex Aetates Mundi* are also central to Tristram's thesis; for a review of later efforts to date the *Táin* as well as her own, see Tristram, 'What is the purpose', especially 17–19.

Ages hints at my own belief that it is entirely reasonable to admit the influence of such models from classical studies on the study of Old Irish. Lebor na hUidre, the earliest extant manuscript containing Irish vernacular saga, is generally dated to *ca* 1106 on the basis of the *obit* of the scribe Máel Muire.[28] Yet critics have long recognized that the codex contains texts composed at various points in the preceding centuries. In fact, Irish literary history rests on the belief that sagas from the seventh to the ninth centuries, written in Old Irish, were copied with a fidelity analogous to that accorded Latin texts, by scribes who understood the historicity of forms in a literary language. We can say that Middle Irish manuscripts like Lebor na hUidre preserve an Old Irish *Táin* in the way that Carolingian manuscripts preserve the early Latin of Terence and the archaized language of Virgil. Even later manuscripts such as the late-fourteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan preserve the *Táin* more or less accurately, according to a model familiar to Latinists, *recentiores non deteriores*.[29] Such a situation cannot be taken as normal for the other vernaculars of Western Europe at this time. The Norman Invasion in England left standardized Old English an orphan by the twelfth century. The Romance vernaculars get under way too late to make an effective comparandum to the Irish, but the absence of any literary standard for Old French makes an effective contrast. Even there, a work such as *The Song of Roland* is known from a manuscript nearly contemporary with the poem, in the local dialect. The continued mangling of the text of Shakespeare well into the nineteenth century illustrates that the utility of preserving a text in its historical form is generally lost on people if the idea is not forcefully implemented by a conservative, learned class. Such a class existed in medieval Ireland. The early emergence of Irish as a standardized literary language and the unusual continuity in Irish learning is the reason that we can speak of an eleventh-century edition of a ninth-century *Táin* without the idea seeming fantastical.

The English waited for the Tudor period to take a significant interest in their Old English literature. The idea of going to old monastic manuscripts in search of literary riches had become familiar to them from the activity of the Humanists. The Irish possessed the idea long before the Humanists. The Irish manuscript revival of the fourteenth century, to which we owe thanks for the preservation of the second half of the *Táin*, is one period when we see the idea in practice in Ireland.[30] Earlier than this, however, we can point to an analogous revival of learning in the late tenth and eleventh century. It is well known that the Viking wars of the ninth century were at least partially responsible for the end of the so-called 'Golden Age' of Irish monasticism and Irish learning. Máire Herbert has analyzed the collections of writings in vernacular codices from the post-Viking era and argues that Irish military successes in the 980s, which marked a turning point in the Viking wars, also heralded what would become a major program of religious and scholarly renewal on the island.[31] Codices from before the Viking

28 Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, xii; the date has not gone uncontested; see Ó Concheanainn, 'The Reviser'; and the resumé of the succeeding controversy in Mac Eoin, 'The Interpolator', 39–40.

29 See O'Rahilly's edition of Recension 1 (TBC-1), which is based on the Yellow Book of Lecan for roughly the second half of the text. Changes wrought to the text in this late copy, however, are significant and feature in the discussion in Chapter 4.

30 For the manuscript revival, see Carney, 'Literature'.

31 This and the following paragraph draw on Herbert, 'Crossing'.

wars apparently in safe storage were taken out and their contents combed through and copied anew. The religious and cultural renewal of this period is unlike the Carolingian Revival or the English Benedictine revival of the tenth century in that there is no evidence for the importation of books from foreign sources and the settlement of scholars from abroad. Instead, indigenous scholars strove to recover the cultural and religious attainments of their own Golden Age. Armagh and Monasterboice in modern-day Louth were the early centers of the revival identified by Herbert. These monasteries' manuscript materials, however, made their way to the midlands monastery of Clonmacnoise, where we see them memorably preserved in the vernacular texts of Lebor na hUidre.

Herbert cautions that the revival was not antiquarian in character, and stresses that the revival was characterized by cultural synthesis between old and new.[32] Herbert draws special attention to 'scholarly practices designed to reach across a divide between past and present'.[33] These include the preparation of academic prefaces to hymns from the early Irish church, a scholarly technique borrowed from early Irish biblical exegesis.[34] In this revival period such prefaces are now prepared for works from the early church in Irish as well as Latin, and themselves are no longer in Latin, but in Irish. The emergence of Irish as the dominant scholarly language is exampled most clearly in the scholarly apparatus to the early-eleventh-century collection of Hiberno-Latin and Irish hymns in the Liber Hymnorum. The ascendancy of Irish in the revival is reflected as well in Lebor na hUidre, the earliest surviving codex to preserve native saga as well as religious texts. In the copy of the early Irish *Amra Coluim Cille* in Lebor na hUidre, Middle Irish glosses refer to the text's language as *in tengoedilg*, 'the old Irish'.[35] The remark reveals that scholars of the day recognized and understood what it meant that they were preserving texts written in the older form of their own contemporary language. Texts in this 'old Irish' needed exegesis as did difficult works in Latin. By implication, the contemporary language, which we by convention call 'Middle Irish', was an idiom fit for critical reflection on literature from the early Irish church, as the voluminous glosses on the *Amra* attest.

My analysis of the textual remains of medieval Irish classical studies follows, more or less, Herbert's model for a scholarly revival in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. This is to say, I view much of the later period's interest in the classics as part of the conscious scholarly program to integrate the learned culture of the earlier period into the new environment of transmillenial Ireland. The outstanding evidence of this program is of course the 'classical tales' of Middle Irish, the earliest example of which, *Togail Troí*, is the first of the two principal texts discussed in this book. As for the other principal text, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, this began to take shape in the period when the classics in Ireland were probably read mostly for the sake of their Latinity, from the seventh through to the ninth centuries. At this time Latin still doubtless reigned as the dominant prestige

32 For a vivid demonstration of the principle from the interplay between scholarship and politics, see Herbert, 'The preface'.

33 Herbert, 'Crossing', 96.

34 Herbert, 'Crossing', 89; and 'The preface', 68 and nn. 8–9; see also below, 78.

35 Herbert, 'Crossing', 97; the reader is warned that the Irish of the *Amra*, written as early as 598, is quite distant even from the language of the glosses of the eighth and ninth centuries, which in the current classification is named more exactly Classical Old Irish, and so the glossator's 'old Irish' is not identical with our Old Irish.

language on the island. The eleventh-century edition of the *Táin* we possess today, however, shows traces of Irish scholarship's new relationship with the classics. Classical studies had been redefined in such texts as *Togail Troí* as a discipline now conducted in the vernacular.

As for the question of classical epic's influence on Irish saga, this has been a matter of persistent, though generally secondary, interest in modern scholarship. This history is treated more fully in Chapter 4. What can be stated here is that most of the interest has concerned the early period and has coalesced around the question of the origin of the *Táin*. Beyond scholarship's fondness for making analogies between Irish saga and Homeric epic which began already in the nineteenth century, controversy got under way officially with Thurneysen's growth model for the *Táin*. Wishing to bolster his claim for a seventh- or eighth-century *Táin*, Thurneysen noted that there were certain 'reminiscences' in the *Táin* to features from epic, in particular to Virgil's *Aeneid*. In Thurneysen's argument, these reminiscences point to a date in the 'Golden Age' of Irish learning. According to views widely held in Thurneysen's day, it was only during those centuries that such familiarity with the Latin classics could be found in Ireland.[36] The most significant and sustained argument for classical influences, however, was the publication in 1955 of James Carney's *Studies in Irish Literature and History*. Carney's *Studies* was a polemic in which he meant to counter a view, which he believed to be then prevailing in Irish scholarship, that saga narrative in Old Irish represented the oral traditions of medieval Ireland inherited from pre-Christian centuries. Carney wrote:

> In lectures and conversations I have constantly come up against what I term the nativist conception of our early literatures. Scholars tend to conceive of our sagas as having had a long life in oral tradition before being (with suggestive phrase) 'committed to writing'. They find it hard to reject the sentimental notion – flattering, perhaps, to national vanity – that these tales are immemorially old and were recited generation after generation in the 'halls of the kings'.[37]

Carney did not deny the ultimate oral origin of much in early literature. His own researches supported the claim that there is a memory of fifth-century political configurations in the *Táin* which, of necessity, made it into writing by way of an oral tradition reaching back to the pre-literate period.[38] The thrust of Carney's argument was that early Irish literature, in spite of its use of traditional material, was a thoroughly literary phenomenon. Echoing Thurneysen's technique, Carney buttressed his claim by invoking the influence of the Latin classics on early Irish writing: such an influence could only have existed in the literate environment of post-conversion Ireland, in the Latin-trained environment of early Irish monasteries. As for what the classical influence meant for literary critical readings of early Irish narrative, Carney memorably stated: 'Irish literature has, in my opinion, approximately the same relationship to the European literature that preceded it – whether Christian or classical – as has Latin to Greek'.[39]

Carney's argument against the 'nativists' and their malevolent influence may

36 See below, 147.

37 Carney, *Studies*, 276; in the course of his discussion Carney had occasion to include H. Munro Chadwick, Myles Dillon and Van Hamel among the 'nativists' to whom he was reacting.

38 See Carney, 'Early Irish', a nuanced revision of his earlier polemic; see also below, 147.

39 Carney, *Studies*, 312.

have been slightly overstated. In retrospect, Carney's thesis of saga-origins is hardly felt to conflict with Thurneysen's influential model for the *Táin*. Moreover, Carney's view of the literate quality of early Irish literature has become more or less standard.[40] However, none of Carney's specific claims for classical influence has been widely accepted. Part of the reason for this was Carney's decision to continue with the favorite Homeric analogy, as he seemed to argue that Homer's *Iliad* was a major influence on the *Táin*. Carney suggested that Homeric influence was mediated via reminiscences of Homer in the learned Latin culture of medieval Ireland, which he termed a 'mixed culture' of pagan and Christian influences. His illustration of this, however, was undeveloped and failed to impress subsequent critics.[41]

The question of the origins of early Irish literature is only indirectly addressed in this book. As stated above, the 'literary' origin of this literature in the early Irish monasteries requires no further demonstration. The argument made here for a medieval Irish classical studies, however, is intended to throw light on some features of literacy and scholarly interest in the early monasteries that are familiar to Hiberno-Latin specialists but have never been assimilated into the criticism on the vernacular literature. Most of the book, moreover, is devoted to the continuation of Irish classical studies beyond the centuries generally examined by Hiberno-Latinists, into the period of the dominance of the vernacular and the post-Viking *renovatio* of learning on the island. The study will involve much that modern classical studies could class as reception studies. It is a central thesis of this book, however, that the reception of the classics in Ireland was always intimately bound up with the production of native literature in the vernacular. I would argue that division of the two into separate disciplines distorts the character of both.

This book has been written for several audiences. The argument has been structured in acknowledgement that some readers whose background is primarily Old Irish and Celtic Studies will wish to begin with the later chapters concerned specifically with the *Táin*. Readers not necessarily familiar with medieval Irish but interested in the reception of the classics in medieval Europe will find their way eased in the early chapters, which present material familiar to classicists and general medievalists. In fact, each chapter has its own theme and may, hopefully, stand on its own. All the same, the progression of these individual studies is intended to constitute a cumulative argument for the existence of a literary movement which I take to be collateral to medieval Irish classical studies. I call this movement medieval Irish classicism. Chapter 1 examines the interest of Irish scholars in classical studies throughout the medieval period, and draws primarily on work from the field of Hiberno-Latin. Chapter 2 examines the 'classical tales' as evidence for the survival of classical studies well into the eleventh century, and its expression among learned authors engaged in the revival of Irish learning and the production of vernacular texts. Chapter 3 then examines *Togail Troí* as a witness for one of the fruits of classical studies, the ambition to reproduce a classical, epic aesthetic in Irish prose. Chapter 4 reviews the question of classical influence in the *Táin* from the point of view of the tradition of *grammatica* and techniques of textual exegesis in Irish tradition; special emphasis is laid on the

40 See, especially, McCone, *Pagan Past*.
41 See below, 147.

presence of *imitatio*, 'literary imitation'. Chapter 5 concentrates on techniques of prose composition shared between *Togail Troí* and *In Carpat Serda 7 in Breslech Mór Maige Murthemne* and the sources for the portrayal of the greatest hero of Irish saga, Cú Chulainn. This eleventh-century episode from the *Táin* is taken as an index to the literary interests of the eleventh-century author/compiler of the text, and confirms the reality of Irish classicism in the vernacular period.

1

CLASSICAL LEARNING IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND: THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

Irish Latinity and Classical Learning

Because the aim of the present study is to examine classical studies in medieval Ireland, we would like, ideally, to distinguish between the Latin and Greek learning of Christian Ireland on the one hand, and the survival of specifically 'classical' or pagan learning on the other. In practice, this separation can be only imperfectly observed. Our records of the Christian conversion contain no explicit account of the origins of Latin literacy in Ireland. We are constrained to view the eventual vitality of Latin learning in Ireland as the fruit of one indivisible movement. In so far as the Latin grammarians read in Insular schools cited pagan authors, and in so far as favourite Christian poets such as Caelius Sedulius wrote in Virgilian hexameters, any notion of a division between pagan and Christian Latinity might have seemed forced to the Irish. James Carney may have had such an indivisible tradition in mind when he traced the 'form and technique of Irish prose saga' to the 'mixed Christian classical culture of the early monastic period', rather than to a specific secular tradition on the island.[1] A distinction between ecclesiastical and secular can be observed practically only in regards to content, the scheme adopted by Michael Herren in an invaluable survey of the field.[2]

In addition to an impractical distinction between ecclesiastical and secular learning, there are two distinct periods in time to consider. Hiberno-Latin studies has tended to concentrate on the distinctive character of the Latin of early Irish schools and Irish *peregrini* on the continent, roughly up to the Carolingian reforms of the ninth century. Even works demonstrably written on the continent, such as Columbanus's letters, have been judged to belong generically to the world of Irish scholarship by virtue of characteristics of language and style shared with writers such as Muirchú, who worked in Ireland.[3] Such formal criteria for distinguishing Irish from continental Latin diminish once Irish scholarship is assimilated into the European mainstream in the ninth century. The Carolingian reforms thus deprive us of an important indirect means of assessing scholarship in Ireland from the ninth century onwards. The Carolingian reforms also herald the end of the so-called Dark Ages, when the vaunted richness of Irish scholarship in the classics, if such ever existed, becomes less distinctive in the wake of the diminishing contrast provided by the continent after its own renewed interest in classical authors.

1 Carney, *Studies*, 306.
2 Herren, 'Classical'; Herren finds it necessary further to distinguish 'secular learning' from 'classical learning' in the strict sense.
3 See below, 19.

The attention paid to pre-Carolingian Hiberno-Latin has been greatly encouraged by Bernhard Bischoff's identification of a large, hitherto unidentified corpus of anonymous Hiberno-Latin biblical exegesis of the seventh and eighth centuries.[4] It was Bischoff who identified certain formal characteristics of language and syntax, his so-called 'Irish symptoms', by which Irish authorship can be posited. The ensuing critical search among Latin texts for features which would corroborate Bischoff's claims has naturally been made among pre-Carolingian works.[5] Yet the distinctiveness of early Hiberno-Latin has only encouraged the imbalance in the field. For example, Michael Herren's 1981 survey of Hiberno-Latin philology limits its field of consideration to the years 550–800.[6] In a more recent progress report on Hiberno-Latin scholarship, Thomas O'Loughlin typically treats the evidence up to John Scottus, but abandons the survey there. O'Loughlin does, however, draw attention to the need for scholars to bring together research from various fields, and, after the example of Anglo-Saxonists, publish a 'Books known to the Irish (before 1200 A.D.)'.[7] It is important to note the desirable extension of such a survey to at least 1200.[8]

Of greater consequence than the assimilation of Hiberno-Latin into Carolingian Latin, however, is the small number of surviving works from the generations which followed the exodus of Irish scholars to the continent. Given that the earlier period itself is witnessed mostly in continental manuscripts, the relative paucity of materials from the ninth century onwards may reflect the vagaries of manuscript survival. Once the removal of manuscripts to better storage conditions on the continent had been discontinued, new works of Hiberno-Latin scholarship were fated to a short material existence. The division into two periods, therefore, is real for us, but may not accurately reflect post-Carolingian Ireland itself. Either period, the earlier or the later, may be contemporary with the production of the bulk of surviving native sagas in Irish, depending on which strata of the individual saga-tales we privilege when assigning dates. The later period, however, is especially important to this study as being the period of the classical tales in Irish. This is also the period in which I believe the *Táin* and other native sagas received their most significant classicizing characteristics.

Classical Studies in Ireland up to the Ninth Century

It is a testimony to the power of the myth that Ireland was a haven of classical learning in Europe's so-called Dark Ages that the debate continued throughout the last quarter century of scholarship. If anything, the debate shows signs of intensifying. Although the myth may seem romantic, as exacting a scholar as Ludwig Bieler was sympathetic to the Irish claim. Bieler suggested, for example,

4 Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte', 1: 205–73; translated in McNamara, *Biblical Studies*, 73–160.

5 The literature examining Hiberno-Latin biblical exegesis is too vast to survey, but for representative installments in the controversy surrounding Bischoff's 'symptoms', see Gorman, 'The myth'; and Wright, 'Bischoff's theory'; the formal distinctiveness of Hiberno-Latin has been explored also with reference to other genres, especially ecclesiastical and grammatical; the most influential studies include Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, 27–47; and Löfstedt, *Der hibernolateinische Grammatiker*.

6 Herren, 'Hiberno-Latin'.

7 O'Loughlin, 'The Latin sources', 105.

8 Hiberno-Latin literature up to 1169 can now be surveyed in Ó Cróinín, 'Hiberno-Latin'.

that Ireland may have played a role in the transmission of Horace's poems in the eighth and ninth centuries.[9] This myth's hold on the minds of scholars cannot be without some foundation. Herren identifies the traditional sources for this myth, which include the reputation enjoyed by the Irish for classical studies in Carolingian Europe, quotations from classical poets in Irish compositions, and the 'special case of Columbanus'.[10] These points are examined in the following discussion.

The medieval *locus classicus* for the reality of Irish classical studies comes from the pen of the late-seventh to early-eighth-century English scholar Aldhelm. Advising the English student Wihtfrith against the moral dangers of traveling to Ireland for study, Aldhelm portrays an Irish scholarship made vicious by its preoccupation with pagan mythology:

> Quidnam, rogitans quaeso, orthodoxae fidei sacramento commodi affert circa temeratum spurcae Proserpinae incestum – quod abhorret fari enucleate – legendo scrutandoque sudescere aut Hermionam, petulantem Menelai et Helenae sobolem, quae, ut prisca produnt opuscula, despondebatur pridem iure dotis Oresti demumque sententia immutata Neoptolemo nupsit, lectionis praeconio venerari aut Lupercorum bacchantum antistites ritu litantium Priapo parasitorum heroico stilo historiae caraxere.[11]
>
> What, I eagerly ask, is the benefit to the sanctity of the orthodox faith to labour in the reading and study of filthy Proserpina's defiled incest – one shrinks from mentioning it openly – or to revere, through the commendation that follows study, Hermione, the lascivious offspring of Menelaus and Helen, who, as ancient works tell, was engaged once by right of dowry to Orestes, then, having changed her mind, married Neoptolemus; or to record, in the heroic style of epic, the priests of the *Luperci*, who revel like those cultists who make offerings to Priapus?

In a letter of *ca* 675 x 690 addressed to an English youth recently returned from Ireland, Aldhelm incidentally describes the teaching of grammar, geometry and physics in addition to exegesis on the island. However, he makes no further complaints of specifically classical learning.[12] We can trust that the English were well acquainted with the course of education in Ireland itself, as the passage in which Aldhelm describes the liberal arts among the Irish occurs in his account of the throngs of Englishmen who went to the island for study. Individuals from among these students could presumably have been informants. This exodus of English students is vouchsafed by Bede, who records that great numbers of Englishmen went to Ireland to study between the years 651 and 664.[13] However, the aim of their study appears to have been scriptural exegesis. Bede, who is consistent in praising the Irish for their expertise in biblical studies, makes no mention of classical studies on the island. Scholarly contacts between the Irish and the English are also proven by Aldhelm's evocative portrait of Irish students at Canterbury who circle around Archbishop Theodore, like hounds surrounding a wild boar, in obvious scholarly contention.[14] In view of the clear exchange of

9 Bieler, 'The classics', 48.
10 Herren, 'Classical', 4.
11 Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, 479; the punctuation has been slightly altered in accordance with the translation in Herren and Lapidge, *Aldhelm*, 154, which has been consulted for my own.
12 The 'Letter to Heahfrith', in Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, 488–94, at 490.
13 Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 3.27, at 313.
14 Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, 493.

scholarship between the Irish and the English in this period, it is worthwhile to remember that Aldhelm's own reading, a reflection of contemporary English collections presumably available to visiting Irish students, included Virgil's three poems, Statius's *Thebaid*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, and, possibly, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[15] As far as identifying the sources of Aldhelm's prodigious reading, Michael Herren sees no reason to question William of Malmesbury's claim that Aldhelm received his early education in the Irish monastic foundation at Malmesbury from the Irishman Maeldub.[16] However, we can only speculate how much of Aldhelm's classical learning reflects Irish training. Modern critical opinion inclines to regard his instruction under Hadrian as the more important formative stage in his education.[17]

Aldhelm's claims for non-sacred learning in Ireland receive corroboration from the reputation the Irish enjoyed on the continent. In his biography of Columbanus, the Italian Jonas, writing within a generation of the saint's death in 615, records details of Columbanus's early education in his native province of Leinster in the mid-sixth century:

> peractis itaque infantiae annis, in pueritiae aetate pubiscens, liberalium litterarum doctrinis et grammaticorum studiis ingenio capaci dare coepit laborem, quem per omnem pueritiae vel aduliscentiae tempus exercens, usque ad virilem aetatem uberi intentione defixit.[18]
>
> when he had completed the years of his infancy and had matured to the age of boyhood, he undertook with capacious intellect the teachings of liberal letters and the studies of the grammarians, on which he concentrated with fruitful attention, labouring through all the years of his boyhood, or adolescence, until the age of manhood.

The *litterae liberales*, 'liberal letters', described here need not imply classical studies. Gregory of Tours, for example, Columbanus's near-contemporary in Gaul, complains of the death of *liberalium cultura litterarum* in Francia in his time as a cause for his own rustic style.[19] Neil Wright translates *liberalium cultura litterarum* as 'the practice of literary composition', and notes that the complaint is belied by the great rhetorical skill which Gregory in fact exhibits in this passage.[20]

One wonders whether Jonas has employed *litterae liberales* also as a simple rhetorical trope. All the same, it is hard not to see in Jonas's admittedly cursory examination of Columbanus's education a nod to the *artes liberales*. It is possible that the basic two-tiered system of Roman education, classically divided between basic study under a *grammaticus*, 'grammarian', and advanced study under a *rhetor*, 'teacher of rhetoric', may have been reproduced in a rough fashion in the Ireland of Columbanus's youth. In the Irish scheme, the first stage, given over to *litterae liberales* and initial scriptural study, may have been followed by

15 Orchard, *The Poetic Art*, 126–238.
16 Herren, 'Scholarly', 29–30.
17 See Herren and Lapidge, *Aldhelm*, 138; for a suggestion that attempts to deny the Irish component to Aldhelm's education have been over-zealous, see Dempsey, 'Aldhelm'.
18 Krusch, *Ionae Vitae*, 155.
19 Greg.Tur., *Franc. Praef.*1; Gregory apparently understood the phrase as a synonym for the *studium litterarum* he mentions a few lines later.
20 Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 32.

a second stage devoted to the biblical exegesis for which the Irish were famous. This second stage may have been represented by Columbanus's later study under Sinilis, abbot of Bangor, 'qui eo tempore singulari religione et scripturarum sacrarum scientiae flore inter suos pollebat' ('who at that time was mighty among his own people in singular religious observance and in the flower of the knowledge of the sacred scriptures').[21] The progression in the curriculum may be detected in a passage where Jonas writes of the peril of wasting the fruits of a labour, 'quem potissimo ingenio desudaverat in grammaticam, rethoricam, geometricam vel divinarum scripturarum seriem' ('which [one] had exerted, with the greatest ingenuity, in the study of grammar, rhetoric, geometry and the series of the divine scriptures').[22] The practice of scriptural exegesis in Ireland is abundantly evidenced in a literature too broad to survey here. A comparable wealth of evidence for the presumed 'liberal arts' phase is available primarily in the field of grammar. Here the Irish achievement is again amply evidenced. The Irish were in fact innovators in the development of a medieval form of grammar adapted for second language learners, which contrasts significantly with the format they inherited from antiquity.[23] But while the study of grammar is concerned with fostering correct Latin, there is no reason for it to be considered especially classical. Jonas's *geometria*, moreover, probably refers to ecclesiastical *computus*, which applied mathematics and astronomy to the reckoning of the dates of Christian feasts. This element in the 'liberal arts', therefore, slightly departed from the ancient model.

The controversy surrounding Columbanus exemplifies the difficulty of assessing classical scholarship in Ireland from surviving continental evidence. While Columbanus received his early education in Ireland, the bulk of his extant writing dates to after his relocation to Francia *ca* 590. This first *peregrinus* to leave a substantial body of writings may, therefore, be evidence only for classical learning acquired on the continent. Yet Neil Wright has found nothing in the flawless, classical prose of Columbanus's *Epistulae* which is not consistent with the picture of Irish learning evident elsewhere. This includes the pervasive influence of the Bible, and the additional familiarity with Jerome, Caelius Sedulius and Gildas.[24] More relevant is the debate around the evidence of three poems in classical quantitative metres attributed to Columbanus: the *Versus Columbani ad Hunaldum*, *Versus Columbani ad Sethum*, and *Columbanus Fidolio Fratri Suo*.[25] In addition to showing a mastery of Latin prosody, the poems show direct knowledge of, among others, Virgil, Horace and Ovid. The evidence which these poems give for Latin learning in Ireland, however, was permanently called into question by Michael Lapidge, who argued that the attribution to this Columbanus of the early seventh century was mistaken.[26] The question was taken up by other Hiberno-Latinists in a subsequent series of studies which greatly enriched and enlivened the field. However, the question of authorship was never finally put to

21 Krusch, *Ionae Vitae*, 157; for these suggestions, see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 178–80; for this Sinilis, see Ó Cróinín, 'Mo Sinu'.

22 Krusch, *Ionae Vitae*, 156; Herren, 'Classical', 7, notes that this passage need not refer to Columbanus's own education.

23 See Law, *The Insular Latin Grammarians*.

24 Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*'.

25 Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, 184–97.

26 Lapidge, 'The authorship', including reference to earlier work on the subject by Smit.

rest, and these poems, for the moment at least, have been effectively removed from the canon of early Irish scholarship.[27]

Wright's examination of Columbanus's prose style leads him to deny that the author's Irish education included instruction in Roman rhetoric. Yet Gabriele Knappe detects the traces of Roman rhetorical teaching in the A-Text of the *Hisperica Famina*.[28] The *Hisperica Famina* have been dated to the mid-seventh century by their editor, and have been widely accepted as products of an Irish school.[29] Knappe argues that the *famina* were finished essays which marked the progression from strict grammatical studies, with their emphasis on *latinitas*, to rhetorical studies in a more advanced sense. The special aim of this rhetorical study was to exercise the virtue of *perspicuitas*. This program of study reflected the merging of grammar and rhetoric in late antiquity in a combined study under a *grammaticus*. What is most interesting about Knappe's argument is that she finds in the construction and themes of the *famina* themselves evidence that rhetorical instruction made use of Priscian's *Praeexercitamina*. Priscian's handbook outlines a program of compositional exercises arranged around twelve antique rhetorical categories, *descriptio* being the exercise adopted by the faminators.[30] The *Praeexercitamina* are a translation of a second-century BCE Greek treatise on rhetorical composition by Hermogenes. Interestingly, *descriptio* is not otherwise treated as a separate exercise in the Latin rhetorical tradition.[31]

Knappe's claim for the knowledge of the *Praeexercitamina* in Ireland cannot be corroborated by contemporary texts, and her argument from the *Hisperica Famina* themselves has not dispelled all readers' doubts.[32] Knappe suggests that the *famina* may play with the tension between grammatical rules of proper diction and rhetorical notions of *perspicuitas*: 'how far can you go with the use of "improper" words before a text becomes completely incomprehensible?'[33] However, the testing of the limits of intelligibility is an odd end to rhetorical instruction. Yet it accords with the view of these texts as products of classically oriented rhetorical composition that they are the earliest surviving witness for composition along secular themes in monasteries in Ireland. Herren notes the 'almost total absence of monastic routine' in the activities of the scholars. In light of pagan elements in the hisperic corpus he concludes that 'the authors of these works were attempting to preserve some remnants of the pagan culture of ancient Ireland'.[34] We cannot fail to miss the crucial parallel offered later by Irish monasteries and their patronage of vernacular saga, much with an ostentatious pagan setting. Yet the paganism evident in the *famina* is not especially Irish, but appears to be entirely classical. This version of paganism seems to reflect the assimilation of the classical *artes liberales* to be culled from authors like Isidore and the reading of pagan poets. Among the latter the dominant influence is certainly

27 See Lapidge, 'Epilogue'; and Ó Cróinín, 'Hiberno-Latin', 374, for references.
28 Knappe, 'On rhetoric'.
29 Herren, *The Hisperica Famina* (hereafter *HF*-A), 32–9 for date and provenance.
30 Passalacqua, *Prisciani Caesariensis Opuscula*, 33–49; see also below, 100–1.
31 Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 147.
32 For example, see Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 3; for the avenues through which the *Praeexercitamina* could have reached England and Ireland, see Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 147, n. 57.
33 Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 160.
34 Herren, *HF*-A, 39–42; Herren modified his views on the pagan character of the *famina* in light of the arguments put forward in Hughes and Hamlin, *The Modern Traveller*, 52–3; see Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 132, n. 12.

Virgil. Herren was convinced that the faminators knew Virgil's poems directly.[35] Orchard recently argued again for the faminators' familiarity with the *Aeneid*, especially in the pervasive martial language of the pieces, and echoes of the *Georgics* in the bucolic imagery.[36] Orchard's argument for the essentially literary character of the *famina* strengthens Knappe's view that they represent training in rhetorical composition, and not just practice in grammar or ornamentation. Whatever we finally decide is their purpose, the *Hisperica Famina* are records of a Christian education presumably offered for the most part in monasteries, but enjoyed by semi-monastic, wandering scholars. This pattern, interestingly, bears every affinity with the liberal arts curriculum of the universities known to the *vagantes* of succeeding centuries.[37]

The question whether Virgil's poems were known in Ireland has been central in discussions of classical learning in vernacular Irish saga. Ironically, the dispute has been clearly influenced by a controversy strictly outside Old Irish studies, which is the question for textual scholars whether the tradition of Virgil's poems went via Ireland in the pre-Carolingian period. This latter question effectively subsumes the puzzle of Irish acquaintance with Virgil into the larger question of the sources for the Carolingian Revival. At this time, according to the dominant narrative, classical authors were again read and copied after centuries of neglect. The romantic view that Ireland was the place far away from the continent where reading and copying of the classical poets flourished in the 'Dark Ages' continues to have some popular currency. This view, however, has a diminished hold on palaeographers and editors. These characteristically have a positivist approach which leads them to restrict their attention to surviving manuscripts. In this regard, medieval Ireland, from which no manuscripts of the pagan classical poets survive, fares poorly. Yet although of great interest, transmission studies of the classical poets in a narrow sense are of peripheral relevance to this book. As transmission studies are concerned with surviving traditions and the sources for our own modern editions, the field, of necessity, has little to say on medieval textual traditions which did not survive into our own era. The absence of observable Irish symptoms in the surviving tradition of Virgil, for example, says nothing about medieval Irish reading of the poet. It says only that there is no evidence that Irish manuscripts of Virgil were copied on the continent. Logic simply does not permit one to infer from the available evidence, which indicates that Virgil was read on the continent in the ninth century in continental manuscripts, that the poet was not read in Ireland in the same century or earlier in Irish manuscripts. David Daintree argues that the reputation enjoyed by the Irish for classical studies led to a simple reaction on the part of recent critics; he notes that 'the sceptics have thus successfully occupied what we might term the empirical high ground, because they control all the evidence, which is almost exclusively continental in origin'.[38] We can add that, strictly speaking, absence of surviving medieval Irish manuscripts of classical authors says nothing about the deficien-

35 Herren, *HF*-A, 24–7.

36 Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 25, 34; for the influence of Sedulius's *Carmen Paschale*, see below, 115.

37 See Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 4–6, for the identification of the *bactroperiti* from the 'Second Synod of Saint Patrick' with this group of wandering scholars.

38 Daintree, 'Virgil and Virgil scholia', 355.

cies of medieval Irish libraries. Their absence speaks only of the deficiencies of our own.[39]

If the matter is viewed not in light of surviving manuscript evidence but in terms of simple probability, there is no reason why the availability of Virgil in medieval Ireland should elicit any particular reaction, sceptical or otherwise. The ubiquity of Virgil in Roman culture determined that he would be Gildas's favourite pagan author.[40] Scholarship has had no difficulty in accepting that antiquity's greatest Latin poet was read in the seventh and eighth centuries in Anglo-Saxon England, as can be reasonably inferred from Aldhelm and Bede.[41] Virgil's presence in writings from Merovingian Gaul indicates that the poet retained his ancient preeminence there as well.[42] The ample case for the familiarity of the *peregrini* in Irish centers on the continent with Virgil was made in 1932 by Gerard Murphy.[43] Murphy even supplied vernacular evidence for the reading of Virgil in Ireland itself in the post-Carolingian period. This is interesting given the fact that Murphy later emerged as an antagonist to the theory of Virgilian influence on Irish saga. With the evidence for copying and interest in Virgil's works which has been preserved from the Carolingian Revival, arguments that the poet's works could not have been easily acquired from at least the ninth century onwards would amount to special pleading. The Middle Irish translation of the *Aeneid* proves, finally, that the poet's greatest poem was read in Ireland at least in the eleventh or twelfth century. Yet there are still no Irish manuscripts of the Latin poem from even that late period. As for vernacular evidence for the reading of the poet in the earlier period, it will be argued below that disputed Virgilian influence on the *Táin* especially, though believed by Thurneysen to be a product of the Dark Ages, can be more credibly dated to the post-Carolingian era, especially the tenth and eleventh century. In this period, the ready availability of Virgil's poems on the continent makes the question of their acquisition by the Irish in Ireland a matter of no great contention.

While the reading of Virgil in pre-Carolingian Ireland is not as important to vernacular studies as is sometimes maintained, it is interesting all the same that recent scholarship has increasingly accepted the existence of Virgil's poems in Ireland even before the Carolingian Revival. As discussed above, there is growing consensus that the *Hisperica Famina* show direct knowledge of the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics* in the mid-seventh century. The claim has been furthered by an examination of the Latin and Old Irish glosses to Virgilian quotations which were copied into a ninth-century Irish manuscript of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*. Brian Ó Cuív and Rijcklof Hofman demonstrate that the glosses which made their way into Priscian's text show that the glossators knew not only Servius's commentary, but of necessity also knew the full context of the glosses, to be had only by reading the poetry itself. [44] According to Hofman's

39 See Reynolds, *Texts*, xvii–xx, for an overview of the manuscript sources of the Carolingian revival; Reynolds is selective, and for the Irish evidence refers the reader to Brown, 'An historical introduction'; see also Dumville's more recent 'The early medieval'.

40 See Wright, 'Gildas's prose'.

41 Orchard, *The Poetic Art*, 130–5; Wright, 'Bede'.

42 See Riché, *Education*, 242–4 (translated by Contreni, *Education*, 199–201); for Gregory of Tours's familiarity with the *Aeneid*, see also below, 115.

43 Murphy, 'Vergilian'.

44 Ó Cuív, 'Medieval Irish scholars'; and Hofman, 'Some new facts'; the complete Latin and Old Irish commentary to Books 1–5 is edited by Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*.

theory, the manuscripts of Virgil which the Irish knew were evidently those with the Servian commentary copied alongside the poetry in parallel columns. These were working texts which would have been worn out with classroom use and ultimately discarded.[45] This view not only gives a common-sense explanation for the lack of surviving manuscripts from the early period, it posits that the lack is attributable not to the poet's being neglected, but to his being read too much.

Commentary on Virgil

Scholarship has never fully grasped the relevance of Virgilian commentary to the puzzle of Virgil in medieval Ireland. Charles Beeson demonstrated that the *Interpretationes Vergilianae* of Tiberius Claudius Donatus and the commentary on Virgil by Servius show traces of an Insular transmission.[46] Beeson suggested, moreover, that the orthography and system of abbreviations in the *Interpretationes* suggest a specifically Irish transmission. The presence of Tiberius Claudius Donatus in early-medieval Ireland ought to be of interest to anyone concerned with the Irish contribution to medieval classical studies. The *Interpretationes*, however, appear not to have been much read in the Middle Ages. The slight modern critical attention given the work may distort the picture, of course, and hitherto unexamined evidence for its influence may yet be discovered.[47] Lack of medieval interest in the *Interpretationes* may accurately reflect the nature of the work, which ill met the period's need for classroom texts which would aid in the acquisition of correct Latinity. Tiberius Claudius Donatus, who wrote probably in the second half of the fourth century, was not a professional teacher, but composed his *Interpretationes* to guide his young son Donatianus through the *Aeneid* episode by episode, in a format which has often been described (inaccurately) as simple paraphrase.[48] As Peter K. Marshall points out, Donatus's aim was above all to assure the correct moral reading of the *Aeneid* which, in his opinion, the schoolteachers neglected.[49] The work, therefore, by design contrasts with the format encountered in the bulk of competing ancient Virgilian commentary which survives, which mostly betrays the approach and interests of the *grammaticus*, that is the professional grammarian and schoolteacher.

The medieval appreciation of Tiberius Claudius Donatus's *Interpretationes* probably suffered above all through its comparison to the commentary on Virgil's three poems by the grammarian Servius.[50] Servius, who taught in Rome and whose commentary probably dates to the first decade of the fifth century, was roughly contemporary with Donatus.[51] Servius epitomised for his age the successful professional schoolteacher/grammarian. The aristocratic class represented by Donatus held grammarians in low regard, but they could not afford to

45 Hofman, 'Some new facts', 211–12.

46 Beeson, 'Insular'; this Donatus is not to be confused with Aelius Donatus, who is discussed below with reference to Servius Danielis.

47 See Marshall, *Servius*, 5–12.

48 Marshall, *Servius*; for Donatus's dates, see Murgia, 'The dating'.

49 Marshall, *Servius*, 7.

50 Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*; to date, the so-called 'Harvard Servius', preferable (for the most part) for its text, has published only the commentary to *Aeneid* 1–5; see Rand *et al*., and Stocker and Travis in the Bibliography; I cite Thilo and Hagen throughout.

51 Murgia, 'The dating'.

ignore grammarians' instruction in the canons of correct Latinity.[52] Macrobius shows considerable esteem for Servius in his *Saturnalia*, where he portrays the grammarian as an astute interpreter of Virgil's learning. A grammarian's earliest role was probably to provide education in fairly basic Latinity as a prelude to more advanced study in rhetoric, which was the prime concern of Roman education. Already in the first century, however, Quintilian noted that the grammarian had adopted literary study, a more advanced study that earlier had been considered the prerogative of the teacher of rhetoric, into his own sphere of instruction:

> Primus in eo qui scribendi legendique adeptus erit facultatem grammaticis est locus . . . Haec igitur professio, cum breuissime in duas partis diuidatur, recte loquendi scientiam et poetarum enarrationem, plus habet in recessu quam fronte promittit.
> (*Institutiones Oratoriae* 1.4.1–2)
>
> As soon as the boy has learned to read and write without difficulty, it is the turn for the *grammaticus* . . . This profession may be most briefly considered under two heads, the art of speaking correctly and the interpretation of the poets; but there is more beneath the surface than meets the eye.

Both these activities of the grammarian are in evidence in Servius's commentary on Virgil. The first component of a grammarian's instruction, the 'art of speaking correctly', is represented throughout by Servius's discussion of Virgil's language. This linguistic discussion probably made Servius a welcome text in the medieval classroom, and likely accounts for why his commentary was more popular than Donatus's *Interpretationes*. It is a fair guess that this feature of Servius's commentary would have encouraged the introduction of the poems themselves into the medieval classroom.[53] The whole of Servius's commentary of Virgil can, of course, be considered a demonstration of the grammarian's *enarratio poetarum*, 'interpretation of the poets'. To my mind, however, *enarratio*, which contains the word 'narration', is especially evocative of another feature of the commentary which has been of much more lasting interest than the linguistic, Servius's detailed expositions of Virgil's mythological references. The discussion below of medieval Irish classical studies will return again and again to what Servius, as well as other grammarians read by the Irish, had to say about stories from Greco-Roman mythology woven through all of Virgil's poems.

Beeson noted that the evidence for an Insular transmission of Servius is not adequate to determine whether Ireland or England was the specific route.[54] There are no manuscripts from Ireland itself, but Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 363, a continental manuscript in Irish script from the third quarter of the ninth century, is one of our earliest copies of the commentary.[55] The manuscript contains many glosses in Old Irish, but these appear to be unique to this copy, and say nothing about the history of Servius prior to the ninth century.[56] Alongside these Old

[52] For the tension between grammarian and Roman aristocrat, see Kaster, *Guardians*, especially 50–70.

[53] See below for indirect evidence from *Cormac's Glossary* for the reading of the *Eclogues*; and Daintree, 'The Virgil commentary', 74 and n. 30, who believes that the simplicity of some linguistic instruction in Servius evidences that the *Eclogues* especially were texts used in elementary instruction.

[54] Beeson, 'Insular symptoms', 86.

[55] See the facsimile edition of Hagen, *Codex*.

[56] See Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus*, 2: xxv, 235. Several manuscripts of Servius preserve two glosses in Old Irish, but these occur in a passage which is a long excerpt from the Filargirian

Irish glosses, however, the manuscript is richly annotated with the names of Irish scholars active in Francia in the ninth century; the names are placed next to passages in Servius's commentary which, Contreni proposes, the glossator thought could be elucidated with reference to specific works of the Irish *magistri* cited.[57] If not a direct witness to scholarship in Ireland itself, Bern 363 is a testimony to the esteem earned by Irish scholars of the Carolingian Revival for Virgilian studies.

The question of whether Servius was read in pre-Carolingian Ireland has not been settled to the satisfaction of all parties.[58] Servius had been mined extensively by Isidore in the *Etymologiae*, so it is not impossible that the Irish could have acquired the grammarian from Spain through the same channels by which they acquired Isidore already in the early seventh century.[59] The task of evaluating indirect evidence for Servius in the early period is made considerably more difficult by the existence of a variant version of the commentary, into which has been interpolated an extensive corpus of linguistic, historical and mythological lore, and which had a textual transmission distinct from Servius proper. Modern critics have dubbed this interpolated text 'Servius Auctus' or 'Servius Danielis', the latter from the first printed edition by Pierre Daniel (1600); the anonymous author of this interpolated commentary is generally referred to as the Compiler.[60] While the transmission of Servius Danielis appears, like Vulgate Servius, to be Insular, the place of the text's origin is still being debated. Murgia notes that the text of Servius employed by the Compiler already contained errors characteristic of Insular minuscule, meaning that he could not have worked earlier than the seventh century.[61] Elsewhere, however, Murgia suggests that Servius Danielis was used by Isidore, whose death in 636 would therefore set a *terminus ante quem* for the interpolated text.[62] The earliest fragment is from an English manuscript from the first half of the eighth century, a bifolium which also preserves glosses in Old English.[63] An epitome of Isidore's *Etymologiae* prepared probably

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commentary, for which see the following; as the excerpt does not occur in all versions it cannot be considered independent evidence for an Irish transmission; see Lambert, 'Les gloses', 91 (my comment regarding these glosses at 'Irish evidence', 128, is an error).

57 For an edition of the marginal notations referring to John Scottus specifically alongside the Servian text, see Contreni, 'The Irish'.

58 See Herren, 'Literary', 51, n. 12 for an overview of the question.

59 On the early transmission of the *Etymologiae* to Ireland, see Hillgarth, 'Ireland'; for MacFarlane's claim, 'Isidore', 8, 34, that Isidore also knew Filargirius, see Daintree and Geymonat, 'Scholia non serviana', 716, where the passage in question is more probably explained as an interpolation from Isidore into the text of the *Explanatio*; for Filargirius, see below.

60 Critical discussion most often refers to the expanded commentary as SD, and employs D for the interpolated material which editors have endeavoured to isolate from Servius's original work, discussed as S; see Marshall's discussion in Reynolds, *Texts*, 385–8. As the disambiguation of D from S is not an aim of this study, I use the term Servius Danielis to refer both to the expanded commentary and, for ease of reference, to the interpolated material itself which is the text's most distinguishing feature; the Compiler, however, has not merely added to Servius but often altered Servius's comments, for which see Goold, 'Servius', 105–17.

61 Murgia, 'The Servian', 303, n. 1.

62 Murgia, 'The Servian', 312, n. 7; Murgia concedes that the evidence is problematic; see also Fontaine, *Isidore*, who believed Isidore knew the interpolated text, though his comments are often equivocal; a survey of the literature persuades me that the question of whether the text we call Servius Danielis was available in Spain has not been finally decided.

63 Marburg, Hessisches Staatsarchiv 319 Pfarrei Spangenberg Hr Nr. 1 (formerly Spangenberg, Pfarrbibliotheck, s.n.); see Lowe, *Codices*, Suppl. 1806 (where Old English *fetherhaman* glossing

in Anglo-Saxon England *ca* 700 and which drew on Servius could point to the same milieu as the Anglo-Saxon fragment. The material employed, however, is not full enough to tell us whether it was the Danieline version of the commentary which the epitomator knew.[64]

The question of the origin of Servius Danielis will probably remain with us for a while, as it cannot be separated from the greater puzzle of the text's constituent elements, that is the sources for the interpolated material. Modern scholarship has settled into the convention of speaking of a single medieval Compiler. Georg Thilo, whose edition of Servius Danielis appeared between 1881 and 1887, conjectured that the Compiler worked in seventh-century Britain and possessed, apparently, an extraordinary collection of antique authors and scholastic sources.[65] Noting the presence of Irish names and glosses throughout the manuscripts of Servius Danielis and related contemporary commentaries which they contain, Thilo also remarked, oddly, that Irishmen lived and worked in Britain and the continent. Thilo thereby evaded the obvious conclusion, that Irish associations in the commentaries might imply an association with Ireland itself. In 1911 Karl Barwick suggested that the Compiler did not gather his material from various sources, but drew it from a single pre-Servian commentary; moreover, drawing on the same evidence available to Thilo, Barwick inferred that the Compiler worked in Ireland.[66] This association of Servius and Servius Danielis with Ireland has become familiar in scholarship in the wake of Barwick's influential study. However, as there has been hardly any significant new evidence that would support or refute the theory either way, the question of Irish authorship has been only a minor feature of subsequent discussions. It can be noted, however, that the evidence cited by Barwick for an Irish origin is circumstantial and, even by a generous measure, carries little weight.

As for Servius Danielis's sources, modern scholarship has mostly followed the lead of E. K. Rand, who, taking up Barwick's theory, proposed that this interpolated material had been drawn from the lost commentary on Virgil's complete poems by the fourth-century grammarian Aelius Donatus.[67] This Donatus (not to be confused with the Tiberius Claudius Donatus discussed above) was Jerome's teacher in Rome in the 350s, and authored, in addition to his Virgil commentary, a commentary on Terence and a hugely influential Latin grammar.[68] Donatus's work on Virgil was a variorum commentary, by which is meant a commentary in which were collected all critical notes of value that had been written about Virgil's works. The work was intended, by Donatus's own admission, as a reference for other grammarians.[69] The place and time in which Servius Danielis

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talaria is visible); and, more recently, Gneuss, 'Addenda', 304 (no. 849.6), who clarifies that the text is Servius Danielis.

64 Lapidge, 'An Isidorian epitome', 194–5; echoes of Servius's commentary in Aldhelm are noted by Herren, 'The transmission', 94–6, but these are again not specific enough to point to one text rather than the other.

65 Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*, 1: lxviii–lxix, for this and the following.

66 Barwick, 'Zur Serviusfrage', especially 145; for this discussion see also Goold, 'Servius', 103–5, with further references.

67 Rand, 'Is Donatus's'.

68 See Kaster, *Guardians*, 275–8, for references to the Terence commentary especially; for Donatus's grammatical works, see Holtz, *Donat*.

69 See the commentary's dedicatory letter, which survives alongside a Life of Virgil and a preface to the *Eclogues*, in Hardie, *Vitae*; on this feature of Donatus's work, see Kaster, *Guardians*, 169–70.

was created, therefore, though of only secondary interest to scholars of Servius proper, is a matter of great interest to those concerned with the transmission of classical learning to the Middle Ages. If Donatus was the Compiler's source for the material interpolated into Servius, it follows that his library was in possession of antiquity's fullest single source of Virgilian criticism. The possessor of a full copy of Donatus, it can be noted, would know more antique Virgilian commentary than we do today.[70]

Given what Servius Danielis says about the attainments of classical learning in the time and place of the Compiler's activity, it is surprising that Barwick's belief in Irish authorship has not been submitted to greater scrutiny. Goold, far from doubting the Irish origin of the text, manifestly reveled in the Irish attribution. He argued that text written by Servius can be distinguished from that written by this Irish Compiler largely by virtue of the incompetence of the latter, whom he called 'a hack, without taste or learning or brains'.[71] Interestingly, the material Goold discussed was drawn in great part from Barwick, whose own opinion of Irish scholarship, however, was hardly so hostile. E. K. Rand had expressed no preference for an English or Irish origin, but accepted the Insular milieu and felt that the conflated commentary was 'not too difficult an achievement for the early Middle Ages'.[72] The question of Irish authorship was revisited in 1984, when Louis Holtz proposed that the presentation of Virgil's text alongside commentary in parallel columns in medieval manuscripts, which he calls the 'commentated edition', was an Irish innovation. Holtz suggested that Servius Danielis was created in the process of preparing such commentated editions of Virgil in Ireland. There, the editors engaged in adapting antique commentary to this new format had occassion to combine scholia from various authors, including Servius and, presumably, Aelius Donatus.[73] Material attributed to a *Virgilianus*, 'Virgilian commentary', but agreeing with Servius Danielis in the St Gall manuscript of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*, illustrates that Servius Danielis, or the source from which Servius Danielis was created, was in Ireland by the mid-ninth century at least.[74] Documentary evidence, however, for the text in Ireland before that date is lacking.

The question of the fullness of the Compiler's library becomes even more complicated when we realize that it has by no means been demonstrated that Donatus's commentary was the Compiler's only source. The evidence for a single Compiler presented by Barwick, though appealing, has not proved that the Compiler's source was itself a 'pure' text of Donatus's commentary. That is, it has not been shown that the Compiler's source did not itself already bear the marks of conflation and borrowing which are characteristic of medieval treatment

70 For the question where and how late Donatus's commentary survived independently of Servius Danielis, see Savage, 'Was the commentary'; and Contreni, *The Cathedral*, 102. Interestingly, the evidence is from continental Irish books and Irish authors: Savage cites Bern 363 and the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Orosius, for which see below; Contreni's evidence is from Martin Hibernensis's handbook on Virgil (MS 468) from Laon; for Donatus's commentary in Anglo-Saxon England, see Murgia, 'Aldhelm'.

71 Goold, 'Servius', 116.

72 Rand, 'Is Donatus's', 159; see also 162.

73 Holtz, 'Les manuscrits', especially 162.

74 Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 72; and 2: 398; note that instances where Hofman claims Donatus's original commentary as a source for a gloss in the Priscian commentary are generally speculative; see also below, 32.

of commentary as a living tradition. David Daintree has called into question the entire Donatian thesis, suggesting that many stages of conflation may lie behind the text we call Servius Danielis.[75] Barwick's original suggestion that the Compiler was Irish itself rested largely on independent evidence that the Irish did possess what, on first consideration, would seem to have been a wealth of Virgilian commentary in the early Middle Ages. The three texts of commentary to be considered are the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii* of Iunius Filargirius, the so-called Bern Scholia (*Scholia Bernensia*) on the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, and the *Brevis Expositio Vergilii Georgicorum*.[76]

Of these three texts the one that can most decisively be associated with the Irish is the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*, the 'Interpretation of Virgil's *Bucolics/Eclogues*' of Iunius Filargirius.[77] The text, a line by line commentary on the *Eclogues* in the fashion of Servius, survives in two recensions, preserved in three French manuscripts, the earliest from the ninth century. Curiously, the two recensions follow one another in each of the manuscripts. Both recensions preserve numerous glosses in Old Irish. So-called Recension I concludes with the following colophon:

> EXPLANATIO IVNII FILARGIRII GRAMMATICI EXPLICIT. Deus mecum per omnia, ego sum in gloria. Optatio mentis meae haec est, ut ante me supradictum est: quicumque legeris hanc glosiolam, Deum pro me misero roges, ut animae meae apud patrem meum veniam in caelo merear qui nomine sum Fatosus.
>
> HERE ENDS THE COMMENTARY OF THE GRAMMARIAN IUNIUS FILARGIRIUS. God be with me in all things, I am in glory. This is the desire of my mind, as has been said before me above: whoever reads this little gathering of glosses, may you pray to God for wretched me that I, who am named Fatosus, may merit forgiveness for my soul before my father in heaven.

Behind Fatosus can be detected the Irish name 'Toicthech'.[78] It has not been shown, however, whether this Fatosus wrote the commentary, whether he was responsible only for this recension of the commentary, or whether he was simply a scribe.[79] Interestingly, the obvious first inference to make from the colophon, namely that Fatosus was the author of the commentary, was long hampered by the desire of many, Thilo and Hagen among them, to see the Irish scholar Adamnán of Iona as the author. This belief stemmed from a scholium on *Eclogue* 3.90, where Adamnán appears to be cited as a source for a note concerning two poets, Bavius and Maevius, contemporaries of Virgil: 'de Maevio nihil reperi, ut Adannanus dicit' ('I have found nothing about Maevius, as Adamnán [?]

75 Daintree, 'The Virgil commentary', especially 72.

76 The *Explanatio* is edited in Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammaticii*, 3, fasc. 2: 1–189; the Bern Scholia in Hagen, *Scholia*; and the *Brevis Expositio* in Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*, 3, fasc. 2: 191–320.

77 The *Explanatio* is headed 'In nomine Dei summi in Bucolica pauca ordinantur fona' in Rec. I, an opening redolent in the Irish 'symptoms' identified by Bischoff and which might have served as a better title than the *Iunii Philargyrii grammatici explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii* under which Hagen edited the text, which is based on but does not reproduce correctly the explicits in the manuscripts; the latter are themselves possibly simple corruptions of the original authorial colophon (see below); the name occurs as both Iunius Filargirius and Iunilius Flagrius; 'Philargyrius', a 'restored' version of the name which is nowhere attested, is common in the secondary literature.

78 Whitley Stokes, *The Academy* 45 (1894) 50 (unseen); resumé at *Revue celtique* 16 (1895) 123.

79 See Lambert, 'Les gloses', 88–9.

says').[80] As far back as 1852 Sauppe judged that the lack of agreement here between the *Explanatio* and a parallel passage in the Bern Scholia, where the citation is not to 'Adannanus' but to one 'Athenienses', pointed to a problem in the text.[81] Sauppe suggested that the name be emended to 'Haterianus', a known late-antique commentator on Virgil. This suggestion has been adopted by both Lambert and Herren, and the association of the text with Adamnán of Iona is today receding into distant memory. Even if this third-person citation of 'Adannanus' were retained, the passage would not mean that Adamnán wrote the commentary, but merely that his scholarship was known to the author.

The recent willingness of critics to delete Adamnán from the *Explanatio*, resting on the parallel evidence of the Bern Scholia, is interesting in light of the fact that the relationship of the *Explanatio* with the Bern Scholia itself has not been adequately explained, nor the relationship of both with the *Brevis Expositio*. The Bern Scholia comment on the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, the *Brevis Expositio* only on Books 1 and 2 of the *Georgics*. Both texts survive only in continental copies, the earliest from the ninth century. Hagen, the editor of our only complete edition of the Bern Scholia, accepted Mommsen's earlier opinion that the text had been assembled in Ireland.[82] This view rests mostly on the fact that it clearly shares so much material with the *Explanatio*, including multiple citations of Iunius Filargirius, and credibly appears to spring from the same milieu. In contrast to the wealth of Old Irish in the *Explanatio*, however, the Bern Scholia contain only one gloss in Old Irish, a record of an attempt to equate Virgil's 'pictos Gelonos' ('the painted Geloni') with the Picts of Northern Britain (at *Georgics* 2.115): 'PICTOS, quos alii dicunt "Cruithnecdiu" sed false' ('PICTS, whom others call the "Cruithin", though incorrectly').[83] This piece of Irish scholarship, therefore, is retained only to note, with perfect accuracy, that it is incorrect. The Bern Scholia are especially remarkable for their explicit attributions of certain notes to three otherwise shadowy ancient authorities, Gaudentius, Gallus and Leonimus. Gaudentius is cited also in the St Gall commentary on Priscian, and is mentioned again, alongside Leonimus and Filargirius, in the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Orosius.[84]

The *Explanatio* and the *Brevis Expositio* accompany one another in the manuscripts. Citing the manuscript context and the use of the diminutive *glosiola* to describe the work, Lambert has suggested that the *Brevis Expositio* was assembled by the same Fatosus who identifies himself in the colophon to the *Explanatio*.[85] Similar to the *Explanatio*, the *Brevis Expositio* preserves at least two glosses in Old Irish.[86] As for the relationship between the *Brevis Expositio* and the Bern Scholia, Hagen noticed that the texts were very closely related, but initially chose

80 The text of Recension I is reproduced, with the form 'Adannanus' restored from the *apparatus criticus*.

81 Sauppe, 'Ueber ein Epigram' (unseen); see discussion by Lambert, 'Les gloses', 88–90; and Herren, 'Literary', 57–9.

82 Hagen, *Scholia*, 27; Irish authorship has been subsequently most convincingly defended by Holtz, 'Les manuscrits', 159–63.

83 See Lambert, 'Les gloses', 87; here, as below, I reprint the lemmata in this edition in upper case type; see also below, 43–5.

84 Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 73, 310; 2: 341; Lehmann, 'Reste', 31–5; the commentary covering the first book of the *Historia* has been edited by Szerwiniack, 'Un commentaire'.

85 Lambert, 'Les gloses', 88.

86 At *Georgica* 1.171 and 361; see Lambert, 'Les gloses', 105.

not to collate the manuscripts of the former for his edition of the Bern Scholia, and edited the two works as separate texts. As an example of a significant difference between the two, the Bern Scholia lack the Old Irish glosses found in the *Brevis Expositio*.[87] In his recent edition of these texts, Luca Cadili presents the Bern Scholia to the *Georgics* alongside the *Brevis Expositio* in parallel columns, making the editorial decision to treat the texts as two recensions of the same collection. Cadili therefore makes no attempt to 'restore' a single original collection.[88] In this, Cadili shows the influence of the influential 1930 study of the texts by Gino Funaioli, but departs from Funaioli's proposed scheme to edit the texts. In Funaioli's view, the *Explanatio* and the *Brevis Expositio* together constitute one recension, the Bern Scholia a second recension, of what was originally a single collection of scholia on the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* compiled in an otherwise unattested fifth-century Italian school of Virgilian criticism.[89] According to Funaioli's analysis, Filargirius and Gallus take their place beside Servius as significant ancient commentators on Virgil; Funaioli considered material attributed to Gaudentius to be simply taken from Servius.[90] In this view, this corpus of non-Servian commentary on Virgil associated with the Irish should not be seen as an Irish collection as such, but a late-antique collection with an Irish transmission. Funaioli's projected edition aimed to separate the ancient commentary from its medieval accretions.

Herren, approving of Funaioli's theory of an original late-antique collection, suggests that the surviving recensions derive from a copy of the work that was edited in Ireland in the late seventh or early eighth century.[91] The Irish transmission is vouchsafed by the editor's many glosses in Old Irish. The editor shows himself also to be Christian and inserts material derived from Christian authorities popular in medieval Ireland such as Eusebius, Isidore and Orosius. This editor also shows obvious engagement with classical mythology, and comments on mythological lore in the collection by comparing it with material to be culled from his own sources. At least one of these additional sources is named, an otherwise unidentified collection of *glossemata*. The nature of this source, whether *glossae collectae* or a glossed manuscript, is impossible to determine. This activity leads Herren to suggest that the work of this editor may be considered 'the first stage of a Christian humanism that was to find firmer expression in the Carolingian age'.

Funaioli's belief in a single late-antique collection provides one possible way of making some sense of the mass of difficult material in these commentaries. Herren, for example, used the theory to throw light on the successive stages of modification that saw the presumed ancient citation 'Haterianus' transformed into 'Adannanus' in the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*. Herren saw

87 These, however, occur in the abbreviation of the Bern Scholia in Voss. Lat. F 79 (**V** of Cadili's 'recensio ΣBB'), not collated by Hagen, but discussed below in Chapter 2.

88 Cadili *et al*., *Scholia*.

89 Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 60–2 and *passim*; see the resumé of the argument by Daintree and Geymonat, 'Scholia non serviana'; for the evidence of the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Orosius for whether the Filargirian collection commented also upon the *Aeneid*, which hinges on the citation of Gaudentius in the St Gall Priscian commentary, see Lehman, 'Reste', 34; see also Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 2: 341–2, who counters Funaioli's attempt to dismiss the evidence.

90 Concerning the equation of Gaudentius with Servius, the claim goes back to Thilo, Mommsen and Barwick; see Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 50, 60.

91 Herren, 'Literary', 55–67, for this and the following paragraph.

the phrase 'de Maevio nihil repperi' in this scholium, 'I have found nothing concerning Maevius', as the Christian Irish editor introducing himself in the first person and commenting on his own editorial efforts. To my mind, however, it has not been definitively demonstrated that the Irishman was merely editing a collection of scholia already assembled in late antiquity. Reluctance to see the collection as assembled in Ireland itself has arisen from the perceived improbability that seventh-century Ireland could have had the collection's constituent sources, which, as noted in the texts themselves, include Filargirius, Gallus and Gaudentius.[92] The fact that there is no independent evidence for any of these sources outside of the corpus of Irish Virgilian commentary renders the problem only more difficult to solve. All we know about these sources is what can be deduced from the scholia themselves, and, most importantly, from the editorial comments in the surviving collections.

The colophon to the *Explanatio* on the *Eclogues*, identifying Iunius Filargirius as the source, was given above. The colophon to the section of the Bern Scholia commenting on the *Eclogues* is obviously related:

> Haec omnia de commentariis Romanorum congregaui, idest Titi Galli, et Gaudentii et maxime Iunilii Flagrii Mediolanensis.[93]
>
> I have assembled all this material from the commentaries of various Romans, that is, from Titus Gallus, and Gaudentius, and above all from Iunilius Flagrius (= Iunius Filargirius) of Milan.

This first-person note was removed by Hagen from the end of the *Eclogues* in his edition and printed as the beginning of the section on the *Georgics* instead. Daintree and Geymonat have argued that this passage and the colophon to the *Explanatio* are two versions of the same original colophon.[94] Accordingly, the commentary on the *Eclogues* which survives in the *Explanatio* was not originally attributed solely to Filargirius, but to these sources cited in the Bern Scholia also.[95] As for these sources, another editorial comment, this time at the conclusion to *Georgics* Book 1, attempts to define them more clearly:

> Titus Gallus de tribus commentariis Gaudentius haec fecit.

Drawing on the model of the earlier colophon Hagen plausibly reconstructed this as:

> Titus Gallus Gaudentius Iunilius Flagrius. De tribus commentariis haec feci.[96]
>
> Titus Gallus Gaudentius Iunilius Flagrius. I have constructed this from [their] three commentaries.

92 Herren, 'Literary', 58, n. 60.

93 Hagen, *Scholia*, 27, suggested we emend to: 'Haec omnia de tribus commentariis congregaui, id est Titi Galli et Gaudentii Romanorum et maxime Iunilii Flagrii Mediolanensis'; see the second colophon below.

94 Daintree, 'Virgil and Virgil scholia', 351–3; see also Daintree and Geymonat, 'Scholia non serviana', 717.

95 For the parallel evidence from the Bern Scholia that Gaudentius was a source for the *Explanatio*, compare, for example, the scholia on *Eclogue* 1.54/55; and see Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 84–7.

96 Hagen, *Scholia*, 27.

Herren noted that first-person editorial comments in these texts can be attributed to his seventh-century Irish editor, but he made an exception of these two colophons, which, following Funaioli, he would see as original to a presumed late-antique collection.[97] I am inclined to see these two first-person notes from the Bern Scholia as written by the same individual who contributed the more plainly Christian commentary in the rest of the collection. That is to say, I would see one collection, as the text says, from three Virgilian commentators at least, accomplished by the Christian who also supplied comments from his own Christian library. This opinion is not the result of a radical reappraisal of the evidence. It is simply the application of Occam's razor, which is not to multiply entities without necessity. I am not convinced of the necessity to posit two editorial voices contributing first-person comments where these can plausibly be explained as the same author; nor to posit a separate late-antique collection, for which there is no independent corroborating evidence, distinct from the one which we know existed in Ireland and was taken to the continent, replete with Christian content and glosses in Old Irish. For ease of reference, this presumed Irish composition, as well as, more loosely, the totality of the individual medieval texts in which it survives, are here called the Irish Filargirian collection. As it happens, the diction used in the colophon to the *Eclogues* in the Bern Scholia, including the verb *congrego* and the use of *Romani* to designate not natives of the *urbs Roma* but personages of Roman antiquity, are consonant with Irish scholarship.[98]

As for the problem whether there could have been several antique Virgilian commentaries in seventh-century Ireland, we cannot do better than to listen to the first-person commentator, who says that a commentary by Filargirius was the principal source. This was probably a major work and formed the spine of the Irish commentary.[99] We know nothing of the 'commentaries' by Titus Gallus and Gaudentius other than what the colophons and the citations in the scholia themselves tell us. These might have been minor works, perhaps already no more than abbreviations of earlier works by the time they arrived in Ireland, possibly already in the company of Filargirius.[100] As it happens, the St Gall glosses on Priscian at several points cite a *Virgilianus*, to be understood as 'a Virgil commentary', and mention at least once certain *Virgiliana tractanea*.[101] The content of such notes cannot always be simply identified with the Servian, Danieline and Filargirian commentaries, at least not in their surviving form. Moreover, in at least two of the cases from the Priscian commentary, the citation is to a gloss, not in Latin, but Irish.[102] One infers that the work cited was one which already had a long history in Ireland and had been adapted or modified by an Irish scholar. These notes in the St Gall Priscian, therefore, point to a fulness of Virgilian studies in

97 Herren, 'Literary', 59.

98 See Holtz, 'Les manuscrits', 161.

99 Daintree and Geymonat, 'Scholia non serviana', 717, nevertheless conclude that the material derived from Filargirius in this entire collection of texts has been exaggerated, and would include in this category only scholia in which he is explicitly cited.

100 See Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 2: 342, for one instance where Gaudentius cannot be identified with Servius, as Funaioli had claimed was the case.

101 Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 70–1; and 'Some new facts', 201, 207; note also the citation of *Virgiliani* in two mythological scholia from the Hiberno-Latin commentary on Orosius, Lehmann, 'Reste', 35.

102 Lambert, 'Les gloses', 116–17.

Ireland that even the Servian, Danieline and Filargirian commentaries, for all their extensiveness, did not exhaust.

Before concluding this discussion of Virgilian studies in early-medieval Ireland it is necessary to mention two figures who, though unlike the sober scholars who transmitted Virgilian commentary, are nevertheless characteristic of their time. In Herren's 'first Christian humanist' we find the commendable face of Irish learning, which is to say, a tone of respectful engagement with classical learning which substantially reflects our own. The other face of Irish classical learning would be the questionable achievement of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, or that satirized in the *Cosmographia* of pseudo-Jerome, attributed to Aethicus Ister.[103] Debate continues as to the relationship of these writers to Ireland, but their dependence on Irish scholarship is beyond doubt.[104] Both authors are indices, after their own fashion, to the eclectic character of Irish learning, and perhaps to its classical pretensions.

Virgilius was a grammarian of no small renown whose two works, the *Epitomae* and the *Epistolae*, circulated widely in the early Middle Ages, and were read by Aldhelm, among others. These works contain material of such odd character, however, that debate has raged whether his output should not be considered a simple parody of the *ars grammatica*. As concerns the grammarian's relationship with classical antiquity, Virgilius's cavalier attitude is most amusingly evident in his mining of classical sources for the names of his fantastic invented characters. Virgilius invokes, in addition to his own instructor Aeneas, a galaxy of contemporary and ancient personalities, including ostensibly earnest scholars with names like Gurgilius and Galbungus, in addition to three Virgils and three Vulcans.[105] Vivien Law does not wholly discount the parodic nature of Virgilius's works, but persuasively argues that Virgilius's writing can be read seriously in the context of the seventh century's fascination with the wisdom tradition.[106] Law's reevaluation of Virgilius may have far-reaching consequences if we accept Michael Herren's claim of a 'close dependency' between Virgilius and pseudo-Jerome, that they were contemporaries or members of a literary circle.[107] Pseudo-Jerome shows little concern for the authenticity of the classical learning he relates, and weaves into material derived from Orosius and other credible sources fantastic matter apparently of his own invention. We would be remiss not to note the similar freedom with classical myth taken in the Irish classical tales of the following centuries. We are limited, however, in what use we can make of this observation, as no one has hitherto made the case that the classical tales are parodic. I would argue pointedly that they are not. It makes more sense to claim that Virgilius and pseudo-Jerome parody the lofty pretensions of Irish classical scholarship of the seventh and eighth centuries. Their parodies are a very imperfect window on that scholarship's undoubted achievements.

103 Löfstedt, *Virgilius Maro Grammaticus*; Prinz, *Die Kosmographie*; Polara, *Virgilio Marone Grammatico*, with facing page translation, remains valuable.

104 See, most recently, Herren, 'The "Cosmography"'.

105 For the Irish source of many of the fanciful names in Virgilius, see Herren, 'Some new light', 55–6.

106 Law, *Wisdom*; see especially Law's discussion of the parodic hypothesis, 3–4 and 5–21; see also Herren, 'Wozu diente'.

107 Herren, 'Aethicus'.

Greek Learning in Ireland and Carolingian Evidence for Scholarship in Greek and Virgilian Studies

An Irish fascination with the *tres linguae sacrae*, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, obviously lies behind the two medieval Irish glossaries, the so-called 'O'Mulconry's Glossary', and *Sanas Cormaic*, 'Cormac's Glossary'.[108] The first is a work of the mid-eighth, perhaps mid-seventh century in its oldest parts, while *Sanas Cormaic* is associated with the tenth-century Munster king Cormac mac Cuilennáin. Greek learning is especially evident in the older stratum of 'O'Mulconry's Glossary'. This glossary gives etymologies for Irish words with reference to Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and displays some incidental knowledge of classical mythology. Herren suggests that the author may have derived this limited knowledge of classical myth from the unspecified *glossemata*, 'glossaries', cited as a source by the Christian editor of the Filargirian commentary on Virgil.[109] The suggestion receives support from evidence that the Irish glossaries most likely derive from continental Graeco-Latin glossaries, in addition to the predictable reliance on Isidore.[110] These continental glossaries already displayed the remarkable corruptions of Greek words which make unraveling the entries in the Irish glossaries so difficult. In this view, the Irish glossaries give little evidence that the authors were competent in Greek. On the contrary, they suggest the opposite, that they were either unable to recognize, or not confident enough to emend, manifestly incorrect Greek.[111]

At one time considered mostly from the romantic perspective of whether the Irish were competent in Classical Greek, the question of Greek learning in Dark Ages Ireland has been examined in recent scholarship within the frame of the Irish devotion to scriptural exegesis, and the languages of scripture especially. Walter Berschin judges that the Irish did not read any classical Greek authors, and that their knowledge of Greek was almost entirely derived from late-antique sources like Jerome and Isidore, or from late-antique glossaries.[112] However, their great interest in Greek is unparalleled among their contemporaries. Berschin cites the numerous instances of Latin text written in Greek letters, the frequency of Greek words in Hiberno-Latin compositions, and the salient Irish fascination with the *tres linguae sacrae*. Yet, citing the brevity of the Greek texts available, Berschin thinks it unlikely that any Irishman would have been able to translate Greek before John Scottus, who had access to Greek texts in continental libraries.

Although no new texts or inscriptions have come to light, all the available evidence has been recently reexamined by David Howlett, who argues that the existing evidence is adequate to prove that Insular authors had a command of

108 For the *tres linguae sacrae*, see Howlett, '*Tres linguae sacrae*'; Stokes, 'O'Mulconry's Glossary'; see Mac Neill, 'De origine', for linguistic strata in the glossary; for editions of *Sanas Cormaic*, corresponding to different manuscript versions, see Russell, 'The sounds'.

109 Herren, 'Literary', 65–7.

110 See Russell, '*Graece*', 408–11.

111 See Russel, '*Graece*', 408–10, for forms which show contemporary Byzantine pronunciation alongside forms which are more clearly simple errors; see also the discussion of spoken Greek in Ireland and England below.

112 Berschin, 'Griechisches'.

Greek well beyond what could be culled from Latin sources.[113] Howlett's methodology is to examine Irish and English evidence in tandem, an approach which places his findings outside the debate of the specific 'Irish miracle of learning' of the Dark Ages. This approach accepts the implications of the undeniable movement of students and teachers back and forth across the Irish Sea. Howlett draws attention to the note from the computus of Bangor which claims that Mo Sinu maccu Min (died 610), Columbanus's teacher, learned computus from 'Graeco quodam sapiente' ('a certain learned Greek'). Howlett suggests that this records a *viva voce* exchange, a Greek speaker from whom Mo Sinu received instruction, and from whom, although this is not stated, he could have learned some Greek.[114] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, however, believes that this instruction was written and in the form of a *littera formata*, that is, an authenticating document.[115] Yet the existence of contemporary oral instruction from native speakers of Greek can now be confidently corroborated by the publication of a set of biblical commentaries which can be traced back to the school of Theodore and Hadrian in Canterbury. The commentaries preserve instances of Greek words written according to Byzantine pronunciation, and assuredly learned *viva voce* from Theodore himself.[116] Furthermore, Herren has collected ample evidence for the characteristics of contemporary spoken Greek in many Latin manuscripts of the period.[117] In a remarkable example of this phenomenon in an Irish manuscript, the Greek text of the Lord's Prayer from the so-called Schaffhausen manuscript, written in Greek script by Dorbéne, bishop of Iona (died 713), exhibits the same orthographic slips typical of written Byzantine Greek of the sixth and seventh centuries. The necessary inference is that the text was not learned from ancient exemplars, but from a living tradition.[118] Likewise, Howlett notes that the Greek Lord's Prayer written in Latin script from the seventh-century Durham Gospels, written in Northumbria by a scribe trained in the Irish tradition, is not a transliteration of a Greek text of the New Testament, but an attempt to represent the pronunciation of a speaker of Byzantine Greek.[119]

Narrowly considered, the issue of whether the Irish possessed competence in Greek is of little relevance to the content of their classical tales and native saga. The principal Greek texts which they would have wanted to imitate, for example Homer's *Iliad*, were not available even if they could have been read. Berschin is correct in emphasizing that it is the Irish scholars' interest in Greek which is extraordinary, not their competence. In this regard it may be of interest that Servius Danielis is characterized by a very Irish-flavoured interest in Greek; this comes coupled with a cavalier attitude to Servius's Latin which we would hardly attribute to the influence of the Donatian substrate.[120] The enthusiasm for Greek there evinced is typical of Irish scholarship of the period, and has found a good home in the context of a very secular study of Virgil. Similarly, as shown above, Michael Herren has reviewed the remains of Irish classical studies in

113 Howlett, 'Hellenic'.
114 Howlett, 'Hellenic', 56.
115 Ó Cróinín, 'Mo Sinu'.
116 Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries*, 273, for examples.
117 Herren, 'Evidence'.
118 Berschin suggests Archbishop Theodore's legacy; see 'Griechisches', 509; see also Howlett, 'Hellenic', 66, 77–8.
119 Howlett, 'Hellenic', 58, 77–8.
120 See Murgia, 'The Servian', 312–13.

the Irish Filargirian commentary with an appreciation for the compiler's novel humanistic vision itself. While John Scottus's achievement in translating Greek Christian texts is universally acknowledged, Herren has extended his claim for an incipient Irish humanism with a consideration of John's attempt to provide interlinear glosses to verses by Homer. The Homeric verses are found in Priscian's *Institutiones*, in the copy written by the Irishman Dubthach in 838. This copy was annotated and corrected by i-I, the hand believed to be John's autograph or someone who worked closely with John.[121] In one instance, verses from Homer's *Odyssey*, omitted from Dubthach's text, have been copied from the corrector's exemplar by i-I into the lower margin and supplied with an interlinear, word-for-word gloss in Latin, with further marginal notes. The glosses represent a competent attempt to come to terms with the extremely corrupt text. Yet even more relevant than John's competence is, again, the labour he is willing to expend in wrestling with the pagan Greek author. The glossarial approach matches the word-for-word translation of a Greek verse from Lucian's *Alexander* which John attempts in the *Annotationes in Marcianum*, his commentary on Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*.[122] This latter text also preserves a quotation of a verse from Euripides's *Phoenician Women*, used to illustrate iambic metre.[123] John has not extracted the quotation from any metrical tract, but from Book 1 of Macrobius's *Saturnalia*, where the metre of the line is not explicitly identified.[124] This acute selection, therefore, reflects John's competence in Greek metrics, an accomplishment displayed also in his use of Greek in his own metrical poetry.[125]

We would like to know whether John's achievement in Greek was a result of his early education in Ireland, yet the question is notoriously vexed. Édouard Jeauneau has argued that the competence in Greek which allowed John to realize his translations of philosophical texts was largely the fruit of labours he undertook in Francia. His success there reflects the encouragement he received at the court of Charles the Bald to devote himself to that study.[126] We might expect to find a window on John's earlier activities in Ireland in the *Glossae Divinae Historiae*. This commentary is considered to be among John's earliest works and preserves glosses in Old Irish, in addition to some in Greek. While John Contreni and Pádraig Ó Néill find abundant evidence for the Irish character of John's early scholarship, they see the glosses as a product of his experience teaching in Francia in the 830s, and conservatively view Greek material in the *Glossae* as the result of study conducted on the continent.[127] Yet given the thoroughly Irish character of the glossarial activity, which recalls Hiberno-Latin exegesis of the seventh and eighth centuries and is so much in contradistinction to John's scholarship elsewhere, we are constrained to see the *Glossae* as an exceedingly odd amalgam. It is interesting to note that, unlike Sedulius Scottus and his circle, John shows comparatively little knowledge of classical Latin poets, with the

121 See Herren, 'The humanism'; see also Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 31–3.
122 Lutz, *Iohannis Scotti*, 24; see below, 81; see also the second version of the commentary in Jeauneau, 'Le commentaire', 133–4.
123 Jeauneau, 'Le commentaire', 142.
124 *Saturnalia* 1.17.46; see Herren, 'The humanism', 197.
125 See Herren, *Iohannis Scotti*, especially 47–50.
126 Jeauneau, 'Jean Scot Érigène'.
127 Contreni and Ó Néill, *Glossae*, especially 80–2; the authors acknowledge, however, that the details of John's biography before the 850s remain uncertain.

exception of Virgil, in whom he took a profound interest.[128] As seen above, this preoccupation with Virgil is, like the preoccupation with Greek letters, typical of Irish scholarship. John's interest in Virgil is characteristic of his early training in Ireland which, in contrast to Sedulius Scottus, he never saw fit to 'correct', in spite of the resources for classical studies available to him in Francia.

Recent scholarship has come to doubt that John wrote a full commentary on the *Aeneid*, but he was considered an authority on Virgil at least by the generation that followed him. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 363 is a manuscript of the late ninth century which contains one of our earliest copies of Servius's commentary, in addition to works of Horace, Ovid and Bede. The manuscript has been heavily annotated by the 'Bern master', who entered into the margins the names of scholars whose works were valuable for the explication of the text. John's name, occurring in the familiar abbreviation *ioh*, occurs 70 times in the margins to Servius's commentary, surpassed only by Sedulius Scottus, who is named over 200 times. The Bern master, presumably himself Irish, cites numerous other Irish masters, many of whom we cannot trace today.[129] We can take this manuscript as a contemporary acknowledgment of the contribution of eighth- and ninth-century Hiberno-Latin scholarship on classical authors to the Carolingian curriculum.

Irish expertise in Greek is further suggested by the works of the Irishman Martin of Laon (Martin Hibernensis), whose Greek–Latin glossary, copied in his own hand in Laon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 444, is one of the most famous surviving monuments to the prominence of Greek in Carolingian education.[130] The *Declinationes Graecorum*, a treatise on Greek grammar included by Martin in his Greek–Latin glossary, is also found copied in a late-ninth-century manuscript from Reichenau, the so-called 'Reichenauer Schulheft'.[131] As a source for four important poems in Old Irish, this student's working notebook is an invaluable window on the continuing Irish character of education in an Irish milieu on the continent, and its mingling with classical learning.[132] In addition to the *Declinationes*, the manuscript includes notes on Greek vocabulary and grammar, scholia on the *Aeneid*, and the *Vita Noricensis* of Virgil which has been linked to John Scottus.[133]

Macrobius's *Saturnalia* may turn out to be a crucial text for our understanding of Greek learning and humanism in Ireland. Unfortunately, we are as yet limited in what we can say about the text's history on the island. Evidence for medieval reading of the text comes earliest from Ireland, where an extract from Book 1 circulated under the title *Disputatio Cori et Praetextati*. This text was consulted by the author of the anonymous seventh-century computistical tract *De Ratione Computandi*, and was acquired later by Bede from the Irish.[134] A recent analysis of the *Disputatio*'s textual history posits an Irish copy as the archetype for all

128 See Herren, *Iohannis Scotti*, 42–6, 167–8.

129 See above, 27, for the same scribe's possible acquaintance with Donatus's commentary on Virgil.

130 See Dionisotti, 'Greek', 45–54.

131 Sankt Paul im Lavanttal (Kärnten), Stiftsbibliothek, 86b/1 (formerly 25.2.31); Dionisotti, 'Greek', 21–4; see Holder, *Die Reichenauer Handschriften*, 3: 124–7; and Oskamp, 'The Irish material'.

132 For the poems, see Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus*, 2: xxxii–iv, 293–5.

133 Frakes, 'Remigius', 242.

134 Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's Letter*; Jones, *Bedae Opera*, 108, 348; and Ó Cróinín, 'Bede's Irish computus'.

surviving versions.[135] As for whether the Irish were in possession of a complete copy of the *Saturnalia*, from which they themselves may have extracted the *Disputatio*, Jones at least thought the whole of the work was known in Ireland. Recent critics have been reluctant to claim that anything more than Book 1 was available on the island. Interestingly, it is from Book 1 that John extracts his quotation from Euripides's *Phoenician Women*. If nothing else, this suggests that even this piece of Greek learning could owe to his early Irish education, rather than to his later Carolingian period. Likewise, in the *Glossae Divinae Historiae*, John cites *Saturnalia* 1.21.3–6.[136] If John got his passages from Macrobius from a contemporary continental copy, it is interesting that he cites only Book 1, the very book he would have read in Ireland.

There are no extant early Insular copies of the *Saturnalia*, and all surviving witnesses descend from a single, now lost late-eighth- to early-ninth-century continental manuscript.[137] To my knowledge no suggestion of an Insular transmission for the text has been made. The question of the source for the Carolingian archetype, however, does not address whether a complete copy of a pre-archetypal text had earlier made it to Ireland, where it might have furnished the production of the *Disputatio*. As for possession of the full text, possible evidence in the form of quotations in Insular authors is complicated by the fact that Books 5 and 6 are composed mostly of extracts from Homer and Virgil. Familiarity with Virgil in Irish sources can always be considered to mark possession of the individual poems or commentary, and not Macrobius's extracts; of quotations from Homer, we have only the negative evidence that there are none which can be traced back to the *Saturnalia*. But as a text preoccupied with Virgil, the *Saturnalia* would have been of considerable interest to the Irish. The text would have served as at least one example of the humanistic reading which Herren has identified as typical of Irish scholarship. Replete with discussions of Homer's and Virgil's epic technique, the *Saturnalia* happens to be as close to an encyclopedia of the techniques of epic as antiquity or the Middle Ages ever knew. The discussion will return to the *Saturnalia* in the following chapters, especially in considerations of the sources for the Irish adaptor's epicizing technique in *Togail Troí*.

Post-Carolingian Evidence for Secular Latin Learning in Ireland

In contrast to materials surviving from Irish milieus on the continent, evidence from Ireland itself for the state of Latin learning from the ninth century onward is disappointing. The contrast with the evidence from the earlier period in Ireland is evident. The truth of this claim can be demonstrated by a perusal of Lapidge and Sharpe's *Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400–1200*. Restricting our attention to works written in Ireland, we find that only two out of twenty-two items listed under the rubric 'Scholastic texts' postdate 800, and two out of thirteen items under the rubric 'Theology'. This ostensible poverty of evidence can be contrasted with English and continental Latinity for the later period. Both regions, ironically, benefited from the very movement of scholars which left

135 Arweiler, 'Zu Text'.
136 Contreni and Ó Néill, *Glossae*, 155.
137 Reynolds, *Texts*, 233–5.

Ireland in decline. Yet the paucity of materials for the study of Latin contrasts with the wealth of evidence for vernacular composition in the monasteries. It is to the monasteries that we owe our earliest surviving vernacular codices, giving the impression that Latin learning may have been, to some extent, supplanted by a greater attention to native *senchas*, that is prose and poetry on Irish history. Of course, it was not an option for a functioning church to abandon Latin learning. Although there remains some disagreement as to details, it is evident that Latin hagiography, including revision of earlier Hiberno-Latin traditions, fared well in the later period.[138] The renewed primacy of Latin in the church was assured by the monastic reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These reforms were contemporary with the introduction of the continental orders into Ireland, which removed native *senchas* from its monastic cradle and gave it to secular, professional scribal families.[139]

In spite of the relative paucity of documents from the later period, enough evidence survives to demonstrate that Ireland could not remain untouched by the Latin learning on the continent which it had fostered centuries earlier. The composite manuscript London, British Library, MS Egerton 3323, preserves two parchment fragments from a school book written in the eleventh or twelfth century at the monastery of Glendalough.[140] The first fragment is of a short mathematical text, *De Abaco*, taken from the continental text *De Minutiis*, assembled in twelfth-century Rheims. The second fragment is a piece from the Irish *peregrinus* Clemens Scottus's *Ars Grammatica*. Ludwig Bieler and Bernhard Bischoff have taken these fragments as, in the case of the former, evidence for the existence of the teaching of *artes liberales* in monastic schools in Ireland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, studies corresponding to those available in contemporary English and continental schools; and in the case of the latter, evidence that Hiberno-Latin works of continental provenance could be brought back to Ireland.[141] Another composite Irish manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F.III.15, dated to the first half of the twelfth century by Bieler, contains Calcidius's tract on Plato's *Timaeus*, a tract on cosmography, an extract from John Scottus's *Periphyseon*, and an epitome of the same text made under the direction of William of Malmesbury sometime after 1125.[142] Francis John Byrne believed that the manuscript was copied in north-eastern Ireland, possibly in the Cistercian house at Newry. Ó Cróinín judges that the affinity of the manuscript's notational system with that of Egerton 3323, as well as the possible identification of one of the named scribes, Salmon (Solomon), with a scribe known to have been active in Glendalough, makes it likely that the manuscript was written at the latter foundation.[143] Ó Cróinín emphasizes the manuscript's witness to a close relationship between scholars in England and Ireland in this period, and argues for the clear affinity of learning at Glendalough with the system then current in England. Ó Néill, in contrast, sees Auct. F.III.15 as a personal collection by a

138 The reader is referred to Lapidge and Sharpe, *A Bibliography*, 101–30; and Sharpe, *Medieval*.
139 See Mac Cana, 'The rise'.
140 Bieler and Bischoff, 'Fragmente'.
141 Bieler and Bischoff, 'Fragmente', 220.
142 For the manuscript, see Ó Néill, 'An Irishman'; for the work of John in the manuscript, see Sheldon-Williams, *Iohannis Scotti*, 21–3; and 'An epitome'. For the excerpts from Bernard of Chartres's commentary on the *Timaeus* which have been written into the margins of Calcidius, see Dutton, *The Glosae*, especially 10–14.
143 Byrne, *A Thousand Years*, 14; Ó Cróinín, 'Na mainistreacha', 27.

peripatetic Irish monastic who was directing younger scribes and teaching the new learning he had acquired in French schools in the second quarter of the twelfth century.[144] The importance of English education to Irish scholarship, however, is illustrated more convincingly by the example of Patrick, bishop of Dublin from 1074 to 1084. Aubrey Gwynn doubted that classical verse could be composed in eleventh-century Ireland, and argued that Patrick's polished Latin verses reflect instruction received during his stay in the Benedictine house at Worcester, during the period when the archbishopric of Canterbury was preoccupied with bringing the Irish church under its authority.[145]

Given the renewed interest in classical authors on the continent in the Carolingian Revival, it is disappointing to find that direct evidence for classical study in contemporary Ireland is scarce. It has been stressed above that no manuscripts of classical authors survive from Ireland. The case for classical learning must then be made indirectly. We begin with the possibility that, given the evidence for the stability of monastic libraries, the classical learning of the earlier period may simply have continued, though leaving fewer traces of its Latin sources in the era of vernacular dominance. In illustration of this theory, Florence, Bibliotheca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Pluteus 78.19, copied at Glendalough in the twelfth century, preserves, in addition to a copy of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* replete with glosses in Irish, Lupus of Ferrières's treatise on Boethius's metres.[146] This version of Lupus's text shows a system of construe marks used to aid in teaching classical meter which is substantially the same as that in evidence in the ninth-century Irish manuscript of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*.[147] This manuscript, therefore, is evidence for continuity in the classroom practice of scanning classical meter. The continued study of Priscian's grammar itself in the later period is vouchsafed by the fragment of the text copied in twelfth-century Ireland, preserved today in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 229 (C.1.8).[148]

The continued reading of Virgilian commentary in later-medieval Ireland can be detected behind an interesting piece of secular learning attributed to the twelfth-century poet Flann Mainistreach. Writing of the kings of Ailech, that is, Clann Néill, and the earlier learned poet Eochaidh Ua Flainn, Flann begins his poem:

> Cía triallaid nech aisneis senchais Ailig eltaig
> d'éis Echdach áin, is gait a chlaidib a lláim Ercoil.[149]
>
> If one should attempt to give an account of Ailech, abounding-in-flocks, in the wake of illustrious Eochaid, it is like stealing the sword from Hercules's hand.

Flann's source for this aphorism was most likely Aelius Donatus's *Vita Vergilii*,

144 Ó Néill, 'An Irishman'; Ó Néill suggests that the first part of the manuscript, that copied by Salmon, may be a work of the Glendalough scriptorium *ca* 1100, with the remaining, later parts assembled by Tuilecnad and his students during travels in north-eastern Ireland.

145 Gwynn, *The Writings*, 1–12.

146 See Ó Néill, 'Irish glosses', for the history of scholarship on the manuscript.

147 Oskamp, 'A schoolteacher's hand'.

148 Bieler and Bischoff, 'Fragmente', 220, n. 1; see Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 39; Colker, *Trinity College*, 1: 428, dates the fragment to the tenth century.

149 Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, 100–7.

probably the form of the *Vita* copied into the beginning of the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii* attributed to Filargirius:

> Obtrectatores Virgilio numquam defuerunt . . . eo quod pleraque ab Homero sumpsit. Unde, cum quosdam versus ad verbum transtulissent, conpilator veterum diceretur. Sed hoc ipsum crimen sic defendere consuevit: Cur non illi quoque eadem furta temptarent? Verum intellecturos, *facilius esse clavam Herculi extorquere de manu, quam Homero versum subripere*. (my italics)[150]

> Virgil never lacked for critics . . . on the grounds that he took much from Homer. Because he translated certain verses word for word from Homer, it happened that he was called a 'pillager of the ancients'. But he was accustomed to defend that very crime by asking, why did they not also attempt those same thefts? They would learn that *it is easier to wrench the club from Hercules's hand than steal a verse from Homer*.

If Flann refers to this aphorism associated with Virgil, he neatly implies a comparison between Eochaid and Homer, the greatest poet of ancient Greece. Flann probably did not mind that, with this comparison, he additionally equated himself with Virgil, the greatest poet of ancient Rome.[151]

This aphorism interestingly recurs in a text much earlier than Flann, in a piece of biblical commentary from the golden age of Irish biblical exegesis of the seventh and eighth centuries. This is the eighth-century Hiberno-Latin compendium of biblical exegesis called *Das Bibelwerk* by Bischoff, generally referred to as the *Reference Bible* in English criticism.[152] The author, distressing of the task of condensing Augustine's books on the Psalms into a single work, writes it is 'ut quidam de Homero dicit: tale est de eius sensu aliquid subripere quale Ercolis de manu clavim [*sic*] tollere' ('as someone said of Homer: stealing an idea from him is like removing the club from Hercules's hand').[153] The exegete has copied the aphorism, indeed the entire passage in which it occurs, verbatim from the preface to Cassiodorus's *Expositio Psalmorum*.[154] Hiberno-Latin tradition was familiar with Cassiodorus's *Expositio*, so it is not impossible that Flann read the aphorism in that text.[155] In my opinion, however, Flann, with his interest in poets imitating poets, by accident points us to Cassiodorus's own secular source for the aphorism in his *Expositio*, which was most likely Donatus's *Vita Vergilii*

150 Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*, 3, fasc. 2: 8; the sentence which records that Virgil was branded a *conpilator* for reproducing Homer *ad verbum* has apparently been taken from the beginning of Jerome's *Liber Quaestionum Hebraicarum in Genesim*, where the aphorism itself recurs in a form slightly different from Donatus's version; Jerome is reproduced also in Isidore, *Etymologiae* 10.44, but the diction suggests that the Filargirian commentary derives the sentence from Jerome directly; see Ziolkowski and Putnam, *The Virgilian Tradition*, 201.

151 As for the fact that Donatus's club has become a sword in Flann's Irish, note that Middle Irish *claideb* could be pronounced either /clayəv/ or, in some areas, possibly /clav´əv/, making it a near phonetic match to Latin *clavam*, which was probably pronounced by Irish readers of Latin as /clavəv/ or, in the spelling *clavim*, /clav´əv/ (see the reading from the *Reference Bible* in the following note); for /ð/ > / v´/ in the modern language, see Ó hUiginn, 'Gaeilge Chonnacht', VII.2.32, with reference to the same feature in the older language at III.3.19 and IV.2.11.

152 See Ó Cróinín, 'Na mainistreacha', 23–4; an edition of the work's preface and sections pertaining to the Pentateuch has been published by MacGinty, *Pauca Problesmata*.

153 Quoted from McNamara, 'Psalter text', 298 (142 of 2000 reprint).

154 Adriaen, *Magni Aurelii Cassiodori*, praef.1.15–21.

155 See McNamara, 'Psalter text', for use of the *Expositio* in Ireland and Irish writing on the continent.

itself.[156] The form that the aphorism has taken in Flann's Irish does not exclude the possibility that Cassiodorus or a copy of the *Reference Bible* was his own immediate source. Yet the derivation from Donatus or Filargirius, texts which manifestly remained known in Ireland throughout the period in which Flann lived, is the readier explanation.

The continuity of Latin learning in Ireland from the eighth to the twelfth century and later is suggested amply by other texts from the exegetical tradition of Hiberno-Latin. As noted already, study of Hiberno-Latin texts from this post-Carolingian period has lagged behind that for the earlier period. For example, the collection of macaronic homilies in the Leabhar Breac, a manuscript of the early fifteenth century, has received the attention of only a few modern scholars.[157] Frederic Mac Donncha argued that these homilies represent what was originally a late-eleventh-century homiliarium, the work of a single man whom Mac Donncha wanted to identify with Máel Ísu Ó Brolcháin of Armagh (died 1086).[158] The identification with Ó Brolcháin, though fascinating, has not been proven. Of greater interest to the present discussion is how much of the Latin in this collection is in the native tradition of Hiberno-Latin biblical exegesis. Mac Donncha himself noted that the *Sermo ad Reges* from this collection was based primarily on the chapter on kingship from the *De Duodecim Abusivis Saeculi*, a very influential text from mid-seventh-century Ireland.[159] Jean Rittmueller demonstrated that the Leabhar Breac homily *In Cena Domini* drew on exegesis attributed to the seventh-century Irish exegete Manchanus.[160] Rittmueller demonstrated further that the Gospel commentary in the so-called Gospels of Máel Brigte, copied in 1138 at Armagh, drew on the same source.[161] Such continuity in exegesis has more recently been confirmed by the example of the late-eleventh- or twelfth-century fragmentary Psalter of St Caimín. Ó Néill shows that a marginal commentary in this psalter given over to the 'historical' interpretation of scripture reproduces two sources consistent with earlier Hiberno-Latin exegesis: the first, the Latin translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on the Psalms; and the second, a seventh-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on the Psalms which otherwise survives only in an abbreviated English copy.[162] Such evidence, while it may not demonstrate innovation in Latin learning in the period following the Golden Age of Hiberno-Latin, nevertheless points to continuity in the tradition in Ireland itself. Alternatively, this could mark an attempt to resume Latin learning at the point it had been broken off during the Viking era, which is a striving after continuity. In either case, the relationship of works in the exegetical tradition between the earlier and later periods provides an analogue

156 Although a version of the aphorism occurs also in Macrobius's *Saturnalia* 5.3.16, McNamara, following Adriaen, is incorrect in suggesting that this was Cassiodorus's source, as consideration of Macrobius's own version demonstrates: 'quid enim suavius quam duos praecipuos vates audire idem loquentes? quia cum tria haec ex aequo impossibilia putentur, vel Iovi fulmen vel Herculi clavam vel versum Homero subtrahere …'.

157 Atkinson, *The Passions*.

158 Mac Donncha, 'Medieval'; see also the analysis on a homily by homily basis in Mac Donncha, 'Seanmóireacht'.

159 Mac Donncha, 'Medieval', 67.

160 Rittmueller, 'The Hiberno-Latin background'.

161 Rittmueller, 'The Gospel commentary'.

162 Ó Néill, 'The glosses'.

for continued interest in the classics and their commentaries into the period of the classical tales.

Our best evidence for the reading of the Latin classics in the later period is the classical translations themselves. This needs to be stated plainly, as, without these vernacular adaptations, the remaining evidence for knowledge of the Latin classics in the later period would be even less conclusive than for the earlier. We have no Irish manuscripts of Virgil, Lucan, Statius or Dares Phrygius even in the later period. Yet the classical translations compel us to accept the existence of these works in Irish libraries. Less direct evidence for the reading of these authors is difficult to assess. For example, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, 'The Book of the Settlements of Ireland', and the *Lebor Bretnach*, the Irish version of Pseudo-Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, both preserve closely related accounts of the origin of the Picts of North Britain. The story occurs in passages added to the texts in the eleventh century.[163] This version of the story gives Thracia as the Picts' country of origin, tracing them to Hercules's son Gelonus; the texts add that the sons of Gelonus were also called 'Agathyrsi'. In these details, the Irish texts differ from the earlier version of the Pictish origin legend in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.[164]

The association of the Picts with Gelonus and their variant name Agathyrsi would appear to recall two collocations in Virgil: 'pictosque Gelonos', at *Georgics* 2.115, and 'picti Agathyrsi', at *Aeneid* 4.146.[165] For Virgil of course, *picti* was not 'Picts', the name of a people, but the adjective *pictus*, 'painted, tattooed'. The Irish origin legend of the Picts suggests that the legend's inventor creatively chose to read Virgil's verses as if they contained the ethnic name *Picti*/Picts. The originator of this interpretation, however, did not consult Virgil unaided, but knew the Filargirian commentary on Virgil associated with the Irish, in particular as preserved in the *Brevis Expositio* and the Bern Scholia. The former, in an aggregative scholium commenting on Virgil's 'pictosque Gelonos', records:

> PICTOSQVE GELONOS. Stigmata habentes populi Scythiae, ut 'pictique Agathyrsi'. Item GELONOS. Thraces sunt a Gelono, Herculis et Chaoniae nymphae filio, dicti; et ideo 'pictos', quia stigmata conpunctionum habent. (at *Georgics* 2.115)
>
> AND PAINTED GELONI: Peoples of Scythia who are marked, as in 'picti Agathyrsi'. Or GELONI: the Thracians were named from Gelonus, the son of Hercules and the nymph Chaonia; and they are 'picti' because they bear the marks of tattooing.[166]

It was from the first part of this scholium, drawn from Servius's own comment on *Georgics* 2.115, that an Irish reader got the cross reference to Virgil's *picti Agathyrsi*. We note that the cross reference is misleading, as Servius, at *Aeneid* 4.146, had specified precisely that *picti* of 'picti Agathyrsi' did not refer to tattooing,

163 Van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach*, 5–14, 21–4; Macalister, *Lebor Gabála*, 5: §§490–8 and poem XC. Van Hamel mistakenly attributed the poem *Cruithnig cid dosfarclam* to Máel Muru Othna (died 887), but it is attributed to Flann Mainistreach (died 1056) in the version in the *Lebor Gabála*, an attribution accepted by Mac Eoin, 'On the Irish legend', 139. I thank Nicholas Evans for sharing his expertise with the literature on the Picts.

164 Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, i.1.

165 MacNeill, 'The Pretanic background', 17.

166 Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*, 3, fasc. 2: 293.

but to simple beauty.[167] With the cross reference taking this form in the Filargirian commentary, however, an unwary reader would naturally identify the two peoples, Geloni and Agathyrsi. From the second part of the scholium came the inference that the Picts' original home was Thracia.[168]

Interestingly, although Bede preferred Servius's association of the 'Picts' with Scythia, and possibly knew only that, the Irish versions have opted for the Thracian origin as suggested in the scholium's second part. This preference is consistent with Irish scholarship, as this second part has been drawn directly from the ancient Filargirian material associated with the Irish of the seventh and eighth centuries. This is demonstrated by comparing the *Brevis Expositio* here with the same locus in the version of the Filargirian commentary from the Bern Scholia:

> PICTOS, quos alii dicunt 'Cruithnecdiu' sed false. PICTOSQVE GELONOS, qui stigma habent. Sunt autem Thraces a Gelono, Herculis et Chaoniae nymphae filio dicti.[169]
>
> PICTS whom others call 'Cruithin', though incorrectly. AND PAINTED [PICTI] GELONI, who have marks. The Thracians, moreover, were named from Gelonus, the son of Hercules and the nymph Chaonia.

Of special interest is the Bern Scholia's comment that the *picti Geloni* have been called 'Cruithnecdiu' by some. As *Cruithnecdiu* (accusative plural of *Cruithnech*) is the usual Irish word for the Picts, here correctly declined, it follows that the Bern Scholia preserve an echo of the original Irish attempt to equate Virgil's 'picti Geloni' with the Picts of North Britain. This can plausibly be dated to the early period of Irish involvement with the Filargirian commentary in the seventh and eighth centuries; the association was made early enough at least to have been 'corrected' in this version of the Bern Scholia from a ninth-century manuscript. Interestingly, Servius Danielis appears to have known the same tradition. Where Servius clarified that the *picti Agathyrsi* of *Aeneid* 4.146 were not tattooed, Servius Danielis drew the contrast with tattooing practiced by the *picti* of Britain. Roman type represents Servius's original text, while text in italics is the interpolated Danieline commentary: 'picti autem, non stigmata habentes, *sicut gens in Britannia*, sed pulchri' ('"picti/Picts", moreover, not bearing marks, *like the people in Britain*, but "beautiful"').[170] The Danieline addition appears to show knowledge of the erroneous identification of Virgil's *picti* with the Picts/Cruithin made in the Filargirian commentary, and partially redresses it. Alternatively, Servius Danielis's interest in tattooing on the island of Britain was independent of Irish interest in the same, which to me is improbable.[171] In any case, the association of the Picts of Britain with Virgil's Geloni and Agathyrsi, though

167 For such lexical cross referencing in Irish manuscripts, see Lambert, 'Les gloses', 115.

168 I am at a loss to account for this association of Gelonus with Thrace specifically, which, outside of Virgilian commentary, I find only in Uibius Sequester; readers of Isidore, *Etymologiae* 14.4.6, would know that the Thracians were named from Tiras, son of Japheth.

169 Hagen, *Scholia Bernensia*, 225–6.

170 This use of italics to distinguish Servius Danielis from Servius proper is borrowed from Thilo and Hagen's edition and is observed throughout this book.

171 If this reading is correct, it is slight further evidence for the association of Servius Danielis with Ireland, for which, see above, 26; the practice of tattooing among the British itself, of course, is mentioned in various classical authors.

preserved in Irish language sources earliest in the eleventh-century origin legend from the *Lebor Gabála* and the *Lebor Bretnach*, has clear roots in Irish Virgilian commentary of the seventh and eighth centuries.

The early-tenth-century text *Sanas Cormaic*, 'Cormac's Glossary', quotes *Eclogues* 1.34 to give a Latin derivation for Old Irish *cáise*, 'cheese':

> Caisi ab eo quod est caseus, ut Virgilius dicit: Pinguis [et] ingratae premeretur caseus urbi, .i. gruth ind sin.[172]
>
> *Caisi* from *caseus* ('cheese'), as Virgil says: 'And rich cheese was pressed for the ungrateful city', that is, *gruth* ('cheese').

The author of this entry would not have been able to extract this quotation from a stand-alone Virgilian commentary, neither Servian nor Filargirian, as Virgil is not quoted in complete verses in these commentaries, but is cited only by lemmata. We can infer that the author had access to a continuous text of *Eclogue* 1 at least. The question is whether this entry dates to the early tenth century, when Cormac mac Cuilennáin supposedly assembled this glossary, or is a recycled entry from an earlier glossary inherited by Cormac.[173] The latter possibility seems inherently more likely, as Cormac no where else shows any interest in combing through Virgil for verses to illustrate his etymologies. The source for the recycled entry could have been a text contemporary with the seventh- and eighth-century copies of Virgil copied in parallel columns alongside the Irish Filargirian commentary, in the format termed by Louis Holtz 'commentated editions'.[174] The derivation of an Irish word from a Latin exampled in this entry, however, while common in Cormac's Glossary, is not met in surviving Filargirian commentary.[175] Accordingly, this entry in Cormac's Glossary gives evidence for an interest in Virgil's Latin in Ireland which, though perhaps contemporary with the editing of the Filargirian commentary, nevertheless put the material to different use.

A different trace of Irish Virgilian commentary in Cormac's Glossary has been discussed by Pierre-Yves Lambert. Lambert cites one entry where Cormac refers to the difficulty of the *Eclogues* in particular:

> Elada .i. eccloga .i. gobarc[h]omrád; ego [αἶγα] graece, caper latine, logo[s] graece, sermo latine, ar a doirchi 7 ar a dot[h]uigsi, is umi aderar gobarc[h]omrad rie.[176]
>
> Art .i. *ecloga* .i. a conversation of goats; Greek *aiks*, Latin *caper*, Greek *logos*, *sermo* in Latin; on account of its darkness and its unintelligibility, that is why it is called a 'conversation of goats'.

Lambert pointed out that the etymology for *ecloga* in this passage occurs also in a series of notes on Virgil compiled on the continent in the mid-ninth century by the Irishman Martin of Laon.[177] We can infer that Cormac inherited this etymology,

172 Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §312; the entry occurs also in the shorter version from the other manuscripts, though without the final 'gruth ind sin'.

173 See Russell, 'The sounds', 28.

174 See above, 27.

175 Russell, 'The sounds', 20; the Bern Scholia do, in fact, preserve a fragment of an etymological gloss on Latin *caseus* at *Eclogue* 1.35: 'CASEUS casando dicitur'; Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 55, reports that the rest is not illegible, as claimed by Hagen, but the text continues with a new lemma, indicating that no association with Irish *cáise* was made in the Bern Scholia.

176 Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §561.

177 Lambert, 'Les gloses', 82–3; for Martin, see above.

similar to the preceding, from the body of Virgilian commentary that had a long presence in Ireland. Accordingly, Lambert sees this piece of Virgilian content in Cormac's Glossary as evidence, not that Cormac had read Virgil, but the inverse, that he had not read him. Lambert further judges that the second part of this entry, Cormac's comment that Virgil's Latin shows *doircbe*, 'darkness' or 'obscurity', reveals that he knew the text only in bits and pieces from commentary. This may overstate the case somewhat. The preceding example demonstrated that Cormac's source for Virgil's text had to be fuller than the lemmata preserved in the commentaries. As for the obscurity of the *Eclogues*, the Latin itself is comparatively easy, long making the text among the first works of study among beginning Latinists.[178] Accordingly, there is no necessary reason that Cormac here has in mind the difficulty of following Virgil only in extracted lemmata, nor the modest difficulty of the verse itself. I suspect that Cormac's *doircbe* refers to the overriding message of the Filargirian commentary to the *Eclogues*, that they are allegorical.[179] Study and judicious interpretation reveal that the *Eclogues*, though they are spoken by goatherds, are not about goatherds at all. We recall the prefatory letter to the *Faery Queene*, in which Spenser refered to the allegory in his own poem as a 'darke conceit'. Like the etymology of *ecloga* in the first part of the entry, Cormac's comment on the *doircbe* of the *Eclogues* shows familiarity with commentary, but hardly excludes the reading of the poetry itself. On the contrary, it merely displays a deeper understanding of the *Eclogues*, which only on a superficial level is a work merely for beginners.

The most tantalizingly elusive display of acquaintance with Virgil may come in *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin*, 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat'. Although the earliest copy is from the early twelfth century, the language suggests that the work may be dated to as early as the ninth.[180] The Irish *immram* is a story describing a sea-voyage, generally with a pronounced ecclesiastical character: the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, 'The Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot', is the example of the genre which became extremely popular throughout medieval Europe. It is unfortunate that consideration of whether *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* shows familiarity with classical poetry was early subsumed into the larger argument concerning classical influence on the *immram* genre as such.[181] *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* displays the ecclesiastical character typical of the genre, but, as it happens, allusions to the story of Aeneas's maritime voyage in the *Aeneid* can be identified. Heinrich Zimmer suggested, among other things, that the episode of the Island of the Queen, where Máel Dúin and his companions are welcomed onto an island ruled by a queen with seventeen daughters, had been influenced by the story of Dido and Aeneas from the *Aeneid*.[182] This suggestion was vigorously combatted by William Thrall, whose rejection of Virgilian

178 See above, n. 53.

179 The allegorical character of the *Eclogues* was demonstrated in Donatus's *Vita Virgilii*, whence it was incorporated into the introductions to both Servius and the Filargirian commentary; Donatus also notes how Virgil uses more figurative language than Theocritus, his model for the form, who wrote 'simply'. Compare Irish *forscáithe*, probably connected with *scáth*, 'shadow' and literally to be translated 'shadowy, obscure', used to mean 'allegorical, metaphorical' in *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise*; *dúaithnigud*, 'obscuring, concealing' is used in a similar way; see Poppe, 'Reconstructing', 45–6.

180 Oskamp, *The Voyage*, at 47–8 for the date.

181 See Wooding, *The Otherworld*, xvi, xix–xxviii, for criticism on the genre.

182 Zimmer, 'Keltische', esp. 325–31.

allusions in the work followed his rejection of the pagan character of the genre as a whole.[183] Thrall's argument was tacitly embraced by Oskamp, who described the episode of the Island of the Queen as derivative of the portrait of the 'Land of Women' in the earlier *Immram Brain*, 'The Voyage of Bran', but discussed no classical parallels.[184]

While much in Zimmer's original article has been superseded in later scholarship, my own feeling is that it is hardly contentious to suggest that the episode of the Island of the Queen alludes to Virgil's *Aeneid*. The Queen's role as a judge in *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* is unusual even among the exaggerated portraits of female authority which sprout up in Irish saga.[185] This judicial role, however, matches the activities of Dido in Carthage, where Virgil says of her: 'iura dabat, legesque uiris' ('she distributed justice and set laws for men') (*Aeneid* 1.507). The sinister character of the Queen and her daughters, who entice Máel Dúin and his men into their beds, but then use magic to keep them from leaving once the sailors have lost interest, shows an anxiety about female power alien to the themes of *Immram Brain*. Máel Dúin's uxorious attachment to the Queen and the resentment of his men, however, cannot help but recall Aeneas's disgrace as a kept man, and Dido's feigned resort to sorcery to keep him from leaving her. Cumulative parallels with Virgil argue that this episode at least alludes to antiquity's most famous story of the perils of shore-leave.[186]

The story of Aeneas's sojourn in Africa at Dido's court was probably the best known narrative from pagan literature in the Middle Ages, and was widely imitated already in antiquity. The episode of Jason and Hypsipyle from Statius's *Thebaid*, for example, is a transparent rewriting of Dido and Aeneas. In Statius's version, the island of Lemnos is populated exclusively by available women, like Dido, all widows (they had killed their husbands). Accordingly, all Jason's Argonauts are able to secure bed-companions.[187] In the *Immram*, with seventeen of the Queen's daughters on the island and, somewhat ominously, no men in sight, Máel Dúin and his fellow sailors enjoy the same questionable good luck. In the following chapters I argue that Statius's impact on medieval Irish literature was profound. Here we have an instance where it is clearly not profitable to try to disentangle a specifically Virgilian from a secondary Statian influence. Rejection of classical influence on the *immram* is premature so long as the voyage 'genre' in classical literature known in Ireland is not properly considered. But critical rejection of Virgilian allusions in the *Immram* is most surprising given that the work concludes with the words of the great poet himself. At the end of their voyage, when Máel Dúin and his companions recount to their countrymen in

183 Thrall, 'Vergil's *Aeneid*'; it is important to note that Zimmer, 'Keltische', 328, stressed that he believed much of the material in the episode of the Island of the Queen was 'irisches sagengut', and fully accepted a connection with *Immram Brain*.

184 Oskamp, *The Voyage*, 59–60.

185 See Kelly, *A Guide*, 68–9.

186 I note additionally the length of Máel Dúin's stay on the island, 'tri missa an gemridh' (156) ('the three months of winter') up to his first attempt to escape, which recalls Aeneas's time spent with Dido: 'nunc hiemem inter se luxu, quam longa, fouere' (*Aeneid* 4.193); and the exaggerated grief at the sailors' departure, understandable if the tragic consequences of Aeneas's departure from Carthage are recalled; see also Eldevik, 'A Vergilian Model', who argues for Virgilian influence on grounds unrelated to those given by Zimmer.

187 For the Irish translation of this episode of the Lemnian Women from the *Thebaid*, see below, 63.

Ireland their adventures, the author describes their narration with a famous quotation from the *Aeneid*:

> Adfiadatar iarom inna huile adhamra ro fhoillsighestar dia doib iar mbrethir inn fhatha asbeir *haec ollim meminisse iuuabit*. (my italics)[188]
>
> They related all the miracles which God had revealed to them according to the utterance of the prophet, who said: *one day we will rejoice to remember these things*.

The citation of Virgil as *in fáith*, 'the prophet', reflects the commonplace by which the poet is referred to as a *vates* in Latin sources.[189] The quotation is from *Aeneid* 1.203, where Aeneas, having brought his companions onto dry land in Africa, seeks to comfort them following their years of wandering on the Mediterranean Ocean. They have not reached Italy yet, but the Odyssean portion of their journey, with its fantastic perils and marvelous monsters, has reached its end. In terms of narrative order, however, Aeneas's exhortation to his countrymen looks ahead to the Odyssean narrative, which is told in flashback in the succeeding books. Where the phrase in Virgil thus precedes the narrative of the voyage proper and, with its prominent position in Book 1, serves as a virtual second opening to the poem, the quotation of the phrase in *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* is restored to the voyage's and the tale's conclusion. This is literary allusion with expert effect. Recasting all that precedes it in the rich colours of Virgil's poem, this resounding closing cadence is hardly likely to be accidental. Thrall's suggestion that this quotation could be an 'insertion by a transcriber' fails to convince.[190]

I end this discussion with consideration of two texts which, rich in classical content, may derive their information indirectly via the classical tales in Irish themselves. In his synchronic poem *A Rí richid reidig dam* (L 17726–8170), the eleventh-century poet Gilla in Chomdid Úa Cormaic displays abundant knowledge of events from classical antiquity.[191] The primary source for historic events is the synchronic world history in Eusebius/Jerome's *Chronica*. The question is whether Gilla in Chomdid also knew episodes from literary sources, and whether these can be identified. For example, Gilla in Chomdid refers the golden apple of Discordia, whose creation led, inexorably, to the destruction of Troy (L 17829–30). The story was well known, but the mention of an inscription on the apple is a rarity in early-medieval tellings of the story; the incident, with the inscription, is recounted, however, in *Togail Troí*, 'The Destruction of Troy', the Irish version of the *De Excidio Troiae Historia* attributed to Dares Phrygius.[192] In his enumeration of the Greek and Trojan dead, however, Gilla in Chomdid may get his numbers, not from *Togail Troí*, but directly from the *De Excidio*.[193] In other instances his sources are obscure. For example, he has a brief, eccentric version of the story of Ulysses and the sirens:

188 Oskamp, *The Voyage*, 176 (the manuscript has 'mei*m*ise'); Virgil, for his part, imitates the phrase from Homer's *Odyssey* 12.212, for which see Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.11.6–7.

189 See, for example, the instance in Macrobius quoted above, n. 156.

190 Thrall, 'Vergil's *Aeneid*', 458.

191 The poem awaits a critical edition; for the well-known stanzas where the poet discusses the corruption of genealogies, see Ó Cróinín, 'Ireland, 400–800', 184; an edition of Gilla in Chomdid's only other known work can be found in Smith, 'Aimirgein'.

192 See below, 84.

193 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 84.

Ulixes tuc céir na chlúais.
ra iarraid cu lléir lúathguais
rapa gné soraid co sert.
ras conaig tria chelgairecht. (L 17815–8)

Ulysses put wax in his ear, sought assiduously swift peril; her shape was pleasant . . . he overcame [?] her through deceit.

The story alluded to here goes back ultimately to Homer's *Odyssey*, which the Irish poet did not read. The episode of Ulysses and the sirens was a popular patristic theme, however, where it was interpreted as an allegory for resisting temptation; some commentators even explicitly saw Ulysses, tied to the mast of his ship, as a type for Christ on the cross.[194] The form the story takes here, where it is Ulysses, instead of his men, who stops his ears with wax to escape the enchantment of the siren's singing, is unusual. I have found this version otherwise only in Basil's letter *To Young Men, on How They Might Derive Benefit from Greek Literature*, where Basil advises young readers encountering Homer's depictions of lowly conduct: 'stop up your ears, as Odysseus is said to have fled past the song of the sirens'.[195] One presumes that Gilla in Chomdid knew a text in Latin which cited Basil's views, or another author who had independently portrayed the event in the same terms.[196]

Perhaps the best-known instance of interest in classical heroes among the Irish learned class comes in the twelfth-century poem *Clann ollaman uaisle Emna*. The poem is a history of the kings of Ulster, and preserves a remarkable series of verses in which the heroes of the Ulster cycle are likened to various protagonists of the Trojan War:

Comoirrdeirc Asia re hUlltaib *im écht, im allaid, im uaill;* *Priaim ainm Conchobair Codail* *borrfadaig im Thoraig thuaid*.	Asia is as famous as Ulster in deed, in fame and in pride; Priam is the name of Conchobhar of Codal who rages around northern Tory.
Coimfhedma Treóil is Cú Chulainn *im chomlonn, im ré is im rath;* *Fergus Énias re luad loingse* *glé-dias buan nar choimse i cath*.	Troilus and Cúchulainn are equal in battle, in lifespan and in fortune; Aeneas is Fergus in consideration of exile, a brilliant, constant pair, boundless in battle.
Alexandair Naíse nertmhar – *rena néim Troí ocus Táin;* *Echtair mar Chonall cert Cernach* *nert ro-garb re hernach n-áig*.	Powerful Naoise is Alexander – their beauty caused Troy and the *Táin*; Hector is like honest Conall Cearnach, a fierce strength against the iron of battle.
Cosmail gach áen-fher d'iath Emna *d'fhir ar Tróe muirnig na máer;* *ropo data a n-áirem uile*, *gach sáir-fher don chuire cháem*.	Each single man of Eamhain's land has a counterpart in spirited, lordly Troy; it would be pleasant to count them all, every hero of the fair company.[197]

The allusions in this poem are non-specific enough to suggest that *Togail Troí*, the Irish telling of the Trojan War, might itself have been the poet's source, and

194 Hillers, 'Ulysses', 199–200.
195 Quoted from MacDonald, *Christianizing*, 22.
196 The motif of the wax in the ears has been adopted also in the *Lebor Gabála*; see Hillers, '*In fer fiamach*', 30.
197 Byrne, '*Clann Ollaman*', 61–2; this translation appears already in Miles, '*Togail Troí*'.

not the classical sources on which *Togail Troí* drew. However, the verses are an unusually clear instance of a member of the privileged native literary elite seeing, in the heroic ancestors of Imperial Rome, an analogy with the heroic ancestors of a native Irish dynasty. The Irish characters in these verses, of course, are figures of Irish saga, as will be discussed below in conjuction with classical influences in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Such an interest in the heroes of the Trojan War among Ireland's bardic poets does not recur until much later, the next surviving examples being from the seventeenth century. In spite of the passage of time, however, these later instances may, as did *Clann ollaman uaisle Emna* so much earlier, draw on the classical tales in Irish themselves, and not on the classical sources which, by this period, were readily available in printed versions throughout western Europe.[198]

The preceding discussion is intended to summarize what recent scholarship has been able to say about classical studies in Ireland in the narrow sense, meaning not simply antique learning, but the scholarly engagement with specifically pagan authors and culture. Later tradition labels this engagement 'humanist'. It is clear that most of the research into this aspect of medieval Irish learning has been conducted by Latinists, and has reflected their concerns. It is proposed here that the interest in classical studies in medieval Ireland is a crucial witness to the interests, capabilities and, arguably, libraries of the Irish *literati* who were respsonsible for the classical tales. Judging from criteria such as style and language, the authors of the classical tales shared their basic literary training with the writers of native saga. The remainder of this study will explore the evidence for classical learning in vernacular prose. This will entail, first, the self-evident, though oddly ignored, display of the fruits of classical studies in the classical tales and *Togail Troí* especially, and second, the subtler evidence for the same in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.

198 See Ó Caithnia, *Apalóga*, items C15a–i.

2

THE IRISH CLASSICAL TALES: TEXTS AND SOURCES

'Classical tales' is a term of convenience I have adopted to designate an extremely diverse body of writings in Middle Irish.[1] By restricting the term to works in Middle Irish I exclude a few well known items in Early Modern Irish, such as the late-fifteenth-century *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* of Uilliam Mac an Legha, and the corpus of references to classical heroes in later Bardic poetry.[2] The contrast I draw here between Middle and Early Modern Irish, however, is not merely linguistic. Mac an Legha's work, for example, amply testifies that he was conscious of writing in a tradition which went back to the Middle Irish 'classical tales', and he successfully mimics their language in a few key passages.[3] Mac an Legha's evocation of the tradition in these passages, however, contrasts with the rest of his prose and demonstrates how conscious he was of the changed literary culture of his own day. One suspects that Mac an Legha recognized an unpolished quality in the classical tales palpably anterior to his own art. Later Bardic poets mined the classical tales for classical lore, apparently confident that contemporaries knew the tales better than the original Latin sources. It seems that the classical tales in Irish, for all their imperfections and occasional inelegant finish, had become 'classics' in their own right for the generation that wrote in Early Modern Irish, somewhat as had Ennius for the generation of Virgil.

Current opinions as to the date of the corpus of classical tales would place the earliest texts in the tenth or eleventh century, while the latest do not likely post-date the early thirteenth century. This range of dates substantially matches the lifespan of Middle Irish itself. The problem of origin and dating is considerably aggravated by the fact that the classical tales survive for the most part in manuscripts from the fourteenth-century revival and afterwards. The texts themselves contain next to no internal indications by which their date or provenance could be ascertained. Accordingly, we have to accept that we will not be always able to distinguish 'original' text from the work of late-medieval editors, whose efforts clearly extended beyond those of simple copyists. My suspicion is that late editorial work was often extensive and fundamental, and included necessary efforts to bring intelligibility to damaged texts. This feature in the textual tradition of the classical tales, however, has not been adequately investigated. In a case such as this one really has no choice but to assume that later alteration to a text of Middle Irish origins has been minimal unless there is clear evidence to the contrary.

1 For an overview of this corpus see, most recently, Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions'; Stanford, 'Towards a history', 30–42, although out of date, remains a valuable examination of the corpus from the point of view of a classicist.

2 For Mac an Legha's text, see Quinn, *Stair Ercuil*; and the essays in Murray, *Translations*; for the Bardic corpus, see Ó Caithnia, *Apalóga*.

3 Quin, *Stair Ercuil*, xxxiv.

Even if it is accepted that the classical tales are unlikely to be much later than 1200, we are still left with a literature spanning three centuries. With such a range of dates, we would be surprised if the corpus exhibited a uniform character. All the same, James Carney went so far as to suggest that the classical tales were interrelated 'as if the product of a single school'.[4] Yet beyond a certain stylistic consistency which is the common inheritance of much early Irish prose, the classical tales have little in common other than their Greco-Roman subject matter. The variety encountered in the corpus is a reflection of, among other things, the diverse character of the classical sources used in each case. The earliest texts took Latin historical writings on the Trojan War and the career of Alexander the Great as their base. The later tales, by contrast, are characterized by the painstaking reproduction of narratives from Latin epic. As for the question whether there was a 'school' of classical tales, one has to consider what the acceptance of that term might imply. Do we have to believe that a tenth-century author's interest in pagan antiquity was essentially identical with that of an author from that same 'school' writing in the early thirteenth? This might be putting too much faith in Irish conservatism. Nevertheless, one cannot fail to detect among the many anonymous authors an awareness that they worked in a recognized field. This consciousness of a tradition is verified by many instances of self-referentiality, in which one text is cited in another, or, indeed, quoted at length. In so far as we are able to deduce a chronology within this corpus, however, we are able to trace not the features of a static tradition, but the gradual emergence of a textual genre over time. In some sense, the thread of continuity that runs through this corpus can be best characterized not as literary, but scholastic. In the previous chapter I reviewed the evidence for a nascent field of 'classical studies' in medieval Ireland. I suggest the classical tales in Irish should be read foremost in the context of this tenacious field of Irish classical studies. Put another way, the school of classical tales is a tradition of scholarship as much as it is a tradition of *scélaigecht*.

The Classical Tales

The most popular of the classical tales was undoubtedly *Togail Troí*, 'The Destruction of Troy'. The text is an adaptation of the *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, 'The History of the Destruction of Troy', a fifth-century Latin history of the Trojan War attributed to a supposed eye-witness to the war, one Dares Phrygius.[5] This Irish vernacular version of the *De Excidio* is by no means anomalous in the context of medieval historiography. Dares's *De Excidio* was the principal source for Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Old French *Roman de Troie*, an account of the Trojan War in rhyming octosyllables completed by 1172. Benoît's *Roman* was, for its part, the source for Guido delle Colonne's Latin *Historia Destructionis Troiae* written in 1287. Guido's work was in turn the font for the medieval story of Troy in various subsequent Latin and vernacular versions.[6] Centuries before

4 Carney's view is summarized in Stanford, 'Towards a history', 33, n. 69, and *passim*.
5 See Chapter 3 for a fuller introduction to Dares.
6 For the vernacular tradition of Troy which drew on Benoît and Guido, see, most helpfully, Benson, *The History of Troy*; and Jung, *La légende*.

the French use of the *De Excidio*, Isidore had already distinguished Dares as the oldest historian 'among the pagans'.[7] The authority of the *De Excidio* in continental Europe was mirrored in medieval Ireland, if the success of the Irish adaptation is anything to judge by.

Togail Troí is by far the most developed text in the classical corpus, surviving in at least ten manuscripts, in addition to several fragments. *Togail Troí* also illustrates the fluid character of the Irish classical tale more clearly than any other text in the corpus. Although much work is still to be done, it is clear that we will not ever have the original Irish translation of Dares's *De Excidio*. What we will have, instead, is a small library of medieval editions of the Irish Dares. All work that has been done on *Togail Troí* over the last forty years has stood in the debt of Gearóid Mac Eoin's invaluable analysis of the text's language and recensional history. Mac Eoin divided the manuscript witnesses into three prose recensions, in addition to one poetic version, *Luid Iason ina luing lóir*, 'Jason went in his spacious ship'.[8] The earliest manuscript copy is the version of the second recension in the Book of Leinster (cited below as L); the scribal hand sets a *terminus ante quem* for this version in the third quarter of the twelfth century.[9] Mac Eoin deduced that this second recension was based on a version of the first, which, though preserved in manuscripts later than the Book of Leinster, he would date to the early eleventh century (this version is cited below as H).[10] The third recension is characterized by additional material not found in the other two recensions, and is therefore the latest, but has not been more precisely dated.[11] As for *Luid Iason*, Mac Eoin dates the poem to the first quarter of the twelfth century, but argues, interestingly, that it derives from a prose version of *Togail Troí* which was independent of the first recension.[12] Furthermore, Mac Eoin cites some spellings and linguistic forms typical of the mid-tenth century preserved in a late copy of the second recension, on the basis of which he judges the original translation of Dares's *De Excidio* to have been undertaken in the mid-tenth century.[13] Mac

7 Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.41.

8 Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', especially 76–7 for the division into recensions and 196–7 for the relationship between the recensions; and 'Dán', 19–27, 49–50.

9 Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1339 (H.2.18); I cite by line number from the diplomatic edition by Best *et al*., *The Book of Leinster*, 4: 1063–1117; see also Stokes, *Togail Troi*; for the date of the scribe who copied this text (T), see O'Sullivan, 'Notes', 26–8; this version breaks off after the death of Hector, so the second half of this recension must be consulted in the remaining manuscripts, principally Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 72.1.15 (formerly Advocates' Library, Gaelic MS XV), saec. xv; and Dublin, University College, Franciscan MS A 11 (formerly Killiney, Franciscan Library, MS A 11), saec. xv. I view the copy in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 12, saec. xv (the Book of Ballymote, hereafter B), which Mac Eoin assigned to the second recension, as anomalous enough that it could be classed as a separate recension, or a subrecension at least, showing material probably borrowed from the third recension.

10 Stokes, 'The Destruction', from Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319 (H.2.17), saec. xiv–xv; corrections at *Irische Texte* (ed. Windisch and Stokes) 3, part 1, 282, and Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', 77–9; a second, sixteenth-century paper copy preserved among modern leaves stored with the Book of Leinster is published by Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text'. The text is defective in both copies, each missing the tale's opening, and sharing a lacuna corresponding to most of Dares's chapters 19–20; the text published by Mac Eoin, moreover, breaks off at Dares 31.

11 The text is transcribed in two unpublished MA dissertations, cited below. Michael Clarke is preparing an edition.

12 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', edited at 30–43, dated at 24–5, 49–50.

13 Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', 201–2; Mac Eoin describes the passage as an excerpt from an older version of the first recension; these spellings in Franciscan A 11 are present also in NLS

Eoin judged the first recension to be eleventh-century, with respect to languge much earlier than Recension 2 of the *Táin*. Uáitéar Mac Gearailt has argued from comparison with texts in Lebor na hUidre that the version of the second recension in the Book of Leinster need not be considered any later than 1106 in origin.[14] This second recension of *Togail Troí*, therefore, is also earlier than Recension 2 of the *Táin* in the same manuscript.

Mac Eoin's division of the manuscript versions into three prose recensions alongside a fourth poetic version has been accepted as standard. However, it is fair to say that this fourfold scheme is ripe for reassessment. Mac Eoin noted that the version of the first recension used by the writer of the second differed from that preserved in the surviving copies. Mac Eoin declined to give a distinctive label to this non-extant version of the first recension, perhaps not wishing to give the impression that the differences between the variant versions were substantial. I explore below many cases where the differences must have been substantial and significant. Mac Eoin himself acknowledged the complexity of the manuscript evidence, and provided a thorough examination only of the relationship of *Luid Iason* with the prose versions.[15] The principal difficulty is that neither the second nor third recensions have received satisfactory critical editions.[16] Accordingly, disproportionate attention has been given to the idiosyncratic and, in many ways, unrepresentative version of the second recension from the Book of Leinster, which has long been available in print. I believe that Mac Eoin's view that the first recension was the base for the second needs to be modified, or at least restated with a different emphasis. Consideration of the unpublished manuscripts clarifies that the second recension in many cases preserves text substantially closer to the original Irish translation of Dares than the corresponding passage in the first recension. While Mac Eoin accounted for this by positing variant versions of the first recension, it may be just as correct to argue that the surviving first and second recensions are substantially independent revisions of a common source. This common source is linguistically best preserved in the first recension, but in terms of content and episodes is often more faithfully reflected in the second.[17]

72.1.15, and may be taken as typical of early forms sprinkled throughout this and the third recension (Mac Eoin notes that he had only the transcript of Franciscan A 11 to hand when constructing this part of his argument).

14 Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem', 202; Mac Gearailt, 'Zur literarischen', 113; see also Campion, '*Togail Troí*', 156–66, who dates the text conservatively to the period 1040x1140.

15 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 20.

16 Most of the texts were transcribed in a series of MA dissertations done at University College, Galway, in the forties and fifties, but the introductions and notes, where present, often represent only the bare critical analysis; see S. Breathnach (1952); M. Daltúin (19--?), including only two thirds of the text in Dublin, King's Inns Library, MS 12; S. Mac Fhlathaidh (1954), including translation; and S. Ó Maolmhuaidh (1953). I thank Michael Clarke for bringing these Galway dissertations to my attention and sharing his research. (I have not seen the transcription of Franciscan A 11 by Mac Giolla Mhártain, 1945, mentioned by Mac Eoin at 'Das Verbalsystem', 201.)

17 For instances where the second recension better preserves older forms, see Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 477–8. In speaking of a 'common source' for recensions 1 and 2, I mirror the terminology followed by Mac Gearailt, most notably in 'Change', especially 459–62, 476; see also Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 107–30. Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 466, sees the 'common source' as an early-eleventh-century text and reserves the term 'archetype' for the original tenth-century translation of Dares. As I am not yet convinced of the editorial usefulness of distinguishing a common source for recensions 1 and 2 that must be kept distinct from the imagined original tenth-century translation, the model I follow may disagree with Mac Gearailt, but the matter is of little

Less innovative as literature than the first recension, the second recension is often a clearer window on the scholarly character of the common source.

With its possible tenth-century date, *Togail Troí* has been generally accepted by critics as one of the two earliest of the classical tales. The other is *Scéla Alaxandair*, 'Tidings' or 'The History of Alexander'.[18] *Scéla Alaxandair* is extant in two versions, one preserved in the Book of Ballymote, and a slightly later version from the Leabhar Breac.[19] The two versions are closely related, and the general character of the archetype can be recovered with fair certainty. Although the Book of Ballymote clearly preserves an older text, Erik Peters shows that its version is often abbreviated, with the original text often better preserved in the younger version from the Leabhar Breac. Peters dates the archetype of the existing versions to the eleventh century, which would make it roughly contemporary with the first recension of *Togail Troí*. However, on the basis of verbal forms in the text and the age of the surviving Latin manuscripts from which the adaptation could have been made, Peters proposes that the text was originally put together in the tenth century.[20] If this date is accepted, then we could consider the original versions of *Scéla Alaxandair* and *Togail Troí* to have been roughly contemporary.

Among medieval histories of Alexander the Great, *Scéla Alaxandair* is, if not quite anomalous, then at least unusual, and for reason of its sources. Most medieval treatments derive from Latin versions of the Alexandrian prose romance by Pseudo-Callisthenes, the so-called *Historia Alexandri Magni*.[21] The most important translation was the mid-tenth century *Historia de Preliis* of Leo of Naples, in particular its various interpolated versions created in the eleventh century; an earlier translation, the *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis* of Julius Valerius (*ca* 320x330), was likewise widely known. *Scéla Alaxandair*, in contrast, is based primarily on three Latin narratives from a different tradition: the *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri VII*, 'The History against the Pagans (in Seven Books)', of Paulus Orosius, the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, 'Alexander's Letter to Aristotle', and the *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo Rege Bragmanorum*, 'Correspondence of Alexander with Dindimus, King of the Brahmans'.[22] These three sources are explicitly identified in the body of the text, as is the author's lesser reliance on Josephus, Eusebius and Priscian's *Periegesis*.[23]

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relevance here and can rest until work on critical editions of the second and third recensions is further advanced.

18 The text is untitled in the two manuscripts, but the *Scéla Alaxandair* mentioned in the so-called Saga List B was certainly this text; see Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 96. Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander', discusses *Scéla Alaxandair* under the title *Imthúsa Alexandair*, which designation, however, occurs only in a rubric entered into the Book of Ballymote by Tadhg Ó Flannagáin in 1784; see Mulchrone, *Catalogue* (no. 536), 1654–5.

19 The Book of Ballymote as above; and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 P 16, saec. xv in.; the earlier is edited in Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage'; the later in Meyer, 'Die Geschichte'; the portion of the *Scéla* transcribing the correspondence of Alexander and Dindimus also survives independently in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B. 512, where it is largely identical with the text in the Leabhar Breac; see Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 79.

20 Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 95.

21 I draw on Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, for the following discussion.

22 See the introduction to Peters's edition and Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander'; in time, versions of Alexander's *Epistola* and the *Collatio* were incorporated into the *Historia de Preliis* itself; see Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 14–17.

23 Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage, 72–3.

Most of these sources are named also in the introduction to *Scéla Alaxandair*, which survives in two forms in the Book of Ballymote. The first has been copied by the main scribe to precede the *Scéla* proper, but to follow a long historical prologue which situates Alexander's empire in the scheme of world empires derived from Eusebius-Jerome. The second survives as a long marginal gloss which, according to Peters's analysis, partially preserves text of the archetype lost in the copy by the principal scribe, which has been recovered, ostensibly, from a second copy.[24] This gloss is composed according to the stereotypical Irish formula of *log, aimsir, persa ocus tugaid n-airic*, 'place, time, person and reason for composition'. Peters does not identify this gloss as a variant version of the introduction, but the form marks it as, in origin, a formal *accessus* to the *Scéla*.[25] I suspect that this *accessus* preserves the author's original introduction more accurately than the curtailed version in the main body of the text. This gloss mentions a 'sdair Alaxandair' ('history of Alexander'), which Peters sees as a credible reference to Julius Valerius's *Res Gestae Alexandri Magni*.[26] In both versions of the introduction Orosius's *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri VII* is cited as '(a) lebraibh na scel' ('[from] the books of the stories'), where *scél* obviously is the simple translation of Latin *historia*. Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* is cited in the first introduction with the corrupt form 'a lebraibh natequitat*es*'; in the gloss this occurs in better Irish as 'a lebraib na n-arsanta' ('from the books of the antiquities').[27] The final source noted in the gloss is a certain 'bérla foruis', literally 'base language', by which, presumably, is meant 'the original Latin', referring to the sources as a whole.

Orosius's *Historia* and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* were also translated into Old English, and copies of the *Collatio* survive in later Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.[28] The overlap with the Old English translations highlights the fact that *Scéla Alaxandair* is a product of an insular tradition of Alexander not just separate from Leo's *Historia de Preliis*, but, in character, largely antecedent to it. This evidence for a group of sources shared with Anglo-Saxon England, in contrast with those which informed the later continental romance tradition, bolsters Peters's claim that *Scéla Alaxandair* could date to as early as the tenth-century. An early date is corroborated, somewhat more impressionistically, by the

[24] Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 102, n. 33, and 170, n. 89, 96; Peters, 80–3, also aims to show that the principal scribe abbreviated, and the glossator, whom we should here term a corrector, intended to restore text lost on that account. It is worth noting in passing that Ó Concheanainn, 'The Book of Ballymote', gives an account of the interaction of the scribes of the Book of Ballymote which conflicts with Peters's, 75–6, 80–3, the latter which, however, is not merely palaeographical but draws also on observable variation in practice and spelling.

[25] Peters transcribed from the facsimile by Atkinson, *The Book of Ballymote*, 488, and it appears that he was not able to read the exegetical formula, which is mostly illegible; more of the gloss is visible on the electronic facsimile on Irish Scripts On Screen, fo. 268v, which I have consulted, but damage to the edge of the page has still resulted in the loss of text: '*Co n*-agar di*diu* log <7> aims*ir* 7 p*er*sa 7 tugaid n-airic . . . sceol-sa Alax*andair*' and so forth; the orthography in this gloss, it can be noted, is modern; for the *accessus* and standardized medieval introductions to the *auctores*, see Minnis, *Medieval*, especially 13–28.

[26] Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 73. A 'sdair Alax*andair*' is also added in an interlinear gloss to the main text, apparently by a different hand than that which supplied the marginal gloss.

[27] Peters prints the first as 'a lebraibh na <a>*n*teq*ui*tat*us*', but the mark above the 'na' is not an n-stroke but an insertion mark refering to the marginal gloss; I suspect that the archetype on which the text and gloss independently drew had the hybrid form 'a lebraib na n-antiquitates', or, less likely, simple Latin 'a libris antiquitatum (Iosephi)'.

[28] See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, especially 116–39, for Alexander in Anglo-Saxon England.

further criterion of narrative sophistication. Hildegard Tristram has emphasized that the structure of *Scéla Alaxandair* is characteristic of a stage in the technique of historical writing that is aggregative. That is, the author created an extended narrative mostly by stitching together the three originally independent principal sources. In Tristram's view, this technique puts *Scéla Alaxandair* in the same group as early Irish historical tracts such as the *Sex Aetates Mundi*, as well as the Irish translation of the British compilation *Irish Historia Brittonum* attributed to Nennius, both works of the eleventh century.[29] Tristram's assignment of *Scéla Alaxandair* to the comparatively primative stage of technical competence shared with the *Sex Aetates Mundi* and the *Irish Historia Brittonum* accords with Peters's desire to assign the work an early date, though a date as early as the tenth century may still be questioned.[30]

The remaining classical tales appear to be for the most part later compositions than *Scéla Alaxandair* and *Togail Troí*. *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, 'The Adventures of Aeneas', and *In Cath Catharda*, 'The Civil War', are Irish translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Bellum Civile* respectively.[31] Literalism is not characteristic of medieval translation, and these versions of Virgil's and Lucan's epics are no exception. Yet both authors were highly competent readers of the Roman poets, and many of the changes wrought on their texts were meant to aid interpretation. Indeed, additions to the narrative are often characteristic of the information that a modern translator would put into an introduction or running commentary.[32] For example, *Imtheachta Aeniasa* does not begin *in medias res*, as does Virgil, but commences instead with a council of the Greeks in the immediate wake of their capture of Troy, and with an account of the forced flight of Aeneas and the Trojan refugees. This change to the opening is not merely aesthetic, but it supplies the reader with the narrative context without which Aeneas's ensuing adventures would be difficult to appreciate.[33] Moreover, true to the long tradition of Virgilian commentary in medieval Ireland, information from Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid* has been integrated into the text.[34] Similarly, the author of *In Cath Catharda* has provided commentary on Roman governance, history and mythology throughout his text. Some of this appears to have been drawn from the antique scholia to the *Bellum Civile* which, today, survive in the so-called *Commenta Bernensia* and the *Adnotationes super Lucanum*.[35] A

29 Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander', 137–40.

30 For example, Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical compositions', 1, n. 3, notes that the linguistic forms seen as evidence for a tenth century date by Peters remained current well past the eleventh century.

31 Calder, *Imtheachta Aeniasa*; Stokes, '*In Cath Catharda*'. The first text has been comparatively well studied; see the essays collected in Murray, *Translations*; Poppe, 'The classical epic' and '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*'. The language of the latter text has been analyzed by Sommerfelt, 'Le système'; otherwise, the text has been little studied; see Lambert, 'Style'; and Harris, *Adaptations*, 119–57.

32 This is not to deny that the authors also apply conventions of native Irish prose to their translations, a salient feature of the texts; see, especially, Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*' and 'The classical epic'.

33 Poppe, 'The classical epic', 7, notes that the author's restoration of natural narrative order at the beginning of the *Imtheachta* involves its own flashback, and hence is more complex than sometimes realized; as it happens, the restoration of natural narrative order is found also in the French *Roman d'Eneas*.

34 See Kobus, '*Imtheachta*', 79–81

35 See Meyer, 'The Middle-Irish version'; for the two Lucan commentaries, see Werner, *The Transmission*, 124–72; Werner doubts that the commentaries derive from continuous commentaries

thorough examination of the author's scholarly materials, however, is yet to be made. A striking feature of *In Cath Catharda* is how often the author reproduces Lucan's involved epic similes, a challenging task encountered much less frequently in the other classical tales.[36]

As for when these translations from the Latin epics were made, the general impression of the language of *Imtheachta Aeniasa* and *In Cath Catharda* leaves little doubt that both are later than the earliest strata in *Togail Troí*. Unfortunately, there is little that would help to assign a more exact date. Diego Poli sees a continuing reflection of the political aspirations of Brian Bóromha in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, and on that ground dates the text to the late eleventh century.[37] Poppe, more prudently, sees the tale as a product of the continuum of classical tales in Irish and declines to assign any date.[38] As for *In Cath Catharda*, Alf Sommerfelt proposed that the verbal system pointed to a text composed *ca* 1150, but even this may be revised in light of more recent approaches to linguistic dating.[39]

It might come as a surprise to modern readers that, of the Latin epic poets, Publius Papinius Statius enjoyed a popularity in medieval Ireland perhaps equal to Virgil's own. Statius was long held in disregard by the moderns as a mere imitator of Virgil, and has only comparatively recently been rehabilitated as an author worthy of serious study.[40] The Middle Ages, however, never saw imitation as equivalent to inferiority, and Statius was prized throughout medieval Europe.[41] At least three distinct versions of works by Statius survive in Irish from the Middle Ages. The most substantial of the three is *Togail na Tebe*, 'The Destruction of Thebes'.[42] This is a prose translation of Statius's *Thebaid*, an epic in twelve books of the Greek story of the Seven against Thebes; the Irish translates the poem essentially in its entirety.[43] While this text, again as in the case of *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, is not the line-by-line translation of modern expectation, it is marked by scholarly care and a facility with Statius's Latin that would be the envy of many a modern classicist. Of particular note is the translator's judicious effort to open up Statius's difficult mythological allusions with resort to the late-antique commentary on the poem by Lactantius Placidus, and, more surprisingly, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[44] The second Statian work, *Riss in Mundtuirc*, 'The Tale

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written in antiquity, or that they can even be considered separate works, but the whole question of the transmission of the scholia remains vexed.

36 For example, the classicist Glennon, 'The similes', detected only one 'classical' simile in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*; I review epic similes in *Togail Troí* in Chapter 3.

37 Poli, 'L'Eneide'.

38 Poppe, 'The classical epic', 33; Kobus, '*Imtheachta*', 79, conservatively dates the text to the first half of the twelfth century.

39 Sommerfelt, 'Le système', at *Revue celtique* 38, 35–9, where he dates the text to *ca* 1100, though he subsequently changes his mind in the correction at 36, n. 3; I follow Jackson, *Aislinge*, xxii, for this attempt to clarify Sommerfelt's dating.

40 See Coleman, 'Recent scholarship'.

41 The history of the medieval reception of Statius has not yet been written, but see Battles, *The Medieval Tradition*, especially the chapter 'Statius in the Middle Ages'.

42 Calder, *Togail* (cited below as *Togail na Tebe* by line number).

43 Arguments that the author omitted long segments of Statius's poem need to be reviewed following a reexamination of the integrity of the text; for example, I have noted at least two places, corresponding to passages in Book 2 and the transition from Book 2 to 3, where the Irish text has suffered from lost folia in the earliest manuscript's exemplar, a fact not understood by Calder; see Miles, '*Riss*', 76–8.

44 See Meyer, 'The Middle-Irish version'; no one has hitherto undertaken to explore whether the translator's source was a medieval commentary which accompanied the poem and which drew on

of the Necklace', is a history of the misfortunes visited upon the royal house of Thebes in consequence of its possession of a necklace made by the god Vulcan for Harmonia, the matriarch of the doomed Theban line.[45] The story derives from a mythological digression in the *Thebaid*, and much of the text consists of an epitome of the poem. However, like *Togail na Tebe*, *Riss in Mundtuirc* also draws on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The final quarter of the *Riss* in fact derives wholly from the fleeting account of Theban history from *Metamorphoses* 9. In this portion, the author recounts the parricides committed by the Argive Alcmaeon and his sons, the bloodstained conclusion to the history of the necklace which Statius had not included in his poem.

Statius left unfinished his *Achilleid*, a light-hearted account of the early life of Achilles, having completed only Book 1 and a mere 160-odd lines of Book 2. An Irish version of this *Achilleid* is the third Statian work in Irish. The relation of this Irish *Achilleid* to its classical source, however, is the most confused of all the classical tales. The Irish *Achilleid* survives in a prose and a poetic version, preserved independently of one another but brought together in the edition by Donncha Ó hAodha.[46] The prose version survives only as a digression incorporated into the third recension of *Togail Troí*; this version has been extracted and presented as an independent text by Ó hAodha. The poetic version survives independently in a single manuscript. Dating the extract from *Togail Troí* to *ca* 1150 x 1250 and the poem to *ca* 1150, Ó hAodha suggests that the two texts point to an adaptation of Statius's *Achilleid* made into Irish prose *ca* 1100, the original form of which is now lost.

The principal problem with the Irish *Achilleid* is not the relation of its two versions, but the uneven acquaintance both display with Statius's poem itself. Book 1 of the poem, which recounts the origin of the Trojan War and the young Achilles's residence on the island of Scyros, is fairly well represented in the Irish version. Some abbreviation in this section has doubtlessly resulted from the work's having been adapted to effect a better 'seam' in its new position in *Togail Troí*: a full reproduction of Statius's account of the origins of the Trojan War, for example, would have been intrusive in *Togail Troí*, where the story is already told. However, Book 2 of the Latin poem, recounting the young Achilles's martial training with the centaur Chiron, has been radically reinterpreted. In effect, this Irish *Achilleid* presents a 'boyhood deeds' of Achilles with only a few echoes of Statius's original remaining. The source for this Irish version of Achilles's youthful exploits, however, is not obvious. It does not, for example, resemble the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn or Finn from native tradition except in the most superficial way. The poem, preserved independently of *Togail Troí*, is devoted entirely to these boyhood deeds, and retains none of the material from Book 1 where adherence to Statius's original is most obvious.

The early-thirteenth-century *Merugud Uilixis meic Leirtis*, 'The Wandering of Ulysses son of Laertes', stands apart from the other classical tales for the odd quality of its sources.[47] Not surprisingly for a text from the medieval West, this

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Lactantius, and not the continuous antique commentary itself; for Statian commentary, see below. The material from Ovid has been noted by Harris, *Adaptations*, 71, but has not been otherwise examined.

45 Miles, '*Riss*'.

46 Ó hAodha, 'The Irish version'.

47 Meyer, *Merugud*.

account of Ulysses's ten-year journey home from Troy shows no direct knowledge of Homer's *Odyssey*. However, the *Merugud* shows no obvious knowledge of any Latin literary source either. Instead, the narrative seems to have been reconstructed from references to Ulysses in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, folklore and the conventions of the Irish *immram*.[48] In consequence of the character of these sources, this Irish version of the *Odyssey*, though one would expect it to be the most Greek of the classical tales, is, paradoxically, the most characteristically Irish.

The *Merugud* occurs in manuscripts alongside two other short texts of possibly slightly earlier date, *Sgél in Mínaduir*, 'The Story of the Minotaur', and *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*, 'The Kin-Murders of the Children of Tantalus'.[49] These texts, similar to *Merugud Uilixis*, are attempts to cull narratives from allusions and inset narratives in the epics. *Sgél in Mínaduir* recounts the stories of Minos and Pasiphae, Theseus's killing of the Minotaur, and the tragedy of Daedalus and his son Icarus. Barbara Hillers considers Virgil's brief telling of the story of Daedalus in *Aeneid* 6 to be the inspiration for the *Sgél*, but adds that the author relied more on Servius's commentary on this passage.[50] In the note to this passage Servius provides the mythological narrative to which Virgil, in the manner characteristic of epic, provided little better than an allusion. Although Hillers stresses the stylistic qualities shared with Irish saga, I think it is likely that the *Sgél* was written additionally for the interpretive ends which account also for its Servian source. That is, it was conceived as an aid to accompany the reading of Virgil, and as a piece of classical learning pure and simple.

A similar scholastic aim more clearly accounts for *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*. This text recounts a succession of kin-murders in the family descended from Tantalus, especially the killings in the house of Atreus traditionally considered a part of the narrative of the *nostoi*, the homecomings of the Greeks from the Trojan War. This text has been the least studied of all the classical tales, so comments must be considered tentative. A quick examination, however, shows that the general outlines of its many narratives, which include Tantalus's murder of his son Pelops, Atreus's murder of the children of his brother Thyestes, and Orestes's murder of his mother Clytemnestra, have been painstakingly culled from commentary to the Latin epics, especially Servius.[51] In this fashion, the text is a virtual mini-library of important background narrative to Virgil's poem. But this range of material, especially its version of the *nostoi*, makes *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail* necessary reading for the whole of the Trojan Cycle as well. The text may, therefore, be regarded as ancilliary to *Togail Troí*.

Finghala Chlainne Tanntail concludes with an account of the deadly love triangle between Orestes, his cousin Hermione and Pyrrhus which also features at the center of what is clearly the final text in the Trojan 'cycle' in Irish, *Don Tres Troí*, 'On the Third Troy'.[52] The author, or 'translator' as he would have it, gives

48 Hillers, 'Ulysses', 205, 216–17.

49 Hillers, *'Sgél in Mínaduir*'; Byrne, 'The Parricides'.

50 *Aeneid* 6.20–7; Hillers, '*Sgél*', 140–2.

51 The Irish author may have been drawing on several sources simultaneously, as versions of these narratives occur also in the commentaries to the *Thebaid* and the *Bellum Civile*; much in this text, for example the death of Agamemnon, is demonstrably not from Servius or commentaries I have consulted hitherto.

52 The text is headed 'Incipit don tres Troi .i. Troi Astinactes' in Dublin, King's Inns Library, MS 12, the only complete copy I have found hitherto; an edition is in preparation.

his name as Flannacán, an authorial self-identification unique among the classical tales. The text is final not just in terms of date of composition, but also in its subject matter. *Don Tres Troí* is a history of Troy and its inhabitants in the wake of the Greeks' destruction of the city. According to the most familiar version, Astyanax the son of Hector met his death when he was thrown by Ulysses from the walls of the conquered city. This incident is portrayed by Euripides in the *Trojan Women*; Flannacán states that he has acquired the story from Servius, which therefore places him at possibly only one remove from the Greek dramatist.[53] However, the author then contrasts an alternative version that Astyanax was not killed, but survived and returned in the company of two sons of Pyrrhus and Andromacha to build a third Troy, on the ruins of the second. Incorporated into this narrative is a memorable depiction of the Greeks' sacrifice of Polyxena to the ghost of Achilles following the city's fall, in addition to the above-mentioned account of Pyrrhus's death at the hands of Orestes. With these two episodes, the author has further incorporated into the Irish cycle of Troy persons and events famous especially from Euripides's *Trojan Women* and *Andromache*, but probably more immediately familiar from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*.

In the end, the Irish history of Troy brought to its conclusion by *Don Tres Troí* is incomparably richer than what had been inherited directly from Dares's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*. Arguably, in sheer range of mythological reference, though hardly in terms of elaboration, the Irish narrative of Troy is unsurpassed even by Virgil's *Aeneid*. Yet beyond the fact that *Don Tres Troí* concludes the Trojan cycle proper, the author's prime aim in writing the tale may be revealed by his decision to introduce later Roman history. Having portrayed the city's repopulation by returning Trojan refugees, Flannacán digresses with an episode from the Second Punic War, and then concludes with Troy's third and final destruction at the hands of the Roman general Fimbria. In this fashion, *Don Tres Troí* effectively connects the Trojan world of *Togail Troí* with the Roman world of *In Cath Catharda*. Such a connection was, of course, already available in the *Aeneid*, in the person of Aeneas and the Trojan refugees who found the Roman line. The connection effected between Trojan and Roman in *Don Tres Troí*, however, is the Irish author's own contribution to the historiography of the ancient world in the Middle Ages. The whole of antique history portrayed in the classical tales in Irish is thereby lent a single narrative arc.

Don Tres Troí fittingly closes with a list of the classical sources used:

> Conadh amlaid sin iarum ro toghladh fa dheoidh an Troí gur ro scailed an mur co solamh cen mothá uathadh bend 7 is aire ro fágbadh sidhe da fhoillsiugud conadh amhlaid sin ro bai an mur uile rena brisedh. Beidb immorro 7 Ferb 7 Oras 7 Sugastin 7 Barr is iad na hughdair o ro coimeccradh an scel-sa. Flannacán immorro ro thinnta a nGaidhilg. Finit. (King's Inns 12, fo. 41va)
>
> And thus was Troy destroyed at last and its walls swiftly toppled, all but a few prominences which were left to show what the walls had been before their destruction. Bede, Servius, Orosius, Augustine and Varro, these are the authors from whom this story has been put together. Flannacán translated it into Irish. Finit.

[53] The Irish author's immediate source is in fact Servius Danielis, at *Aeneid* 3.489; the variant story of Astyanax's survival suggests that the author referred again to Servius Danielis, at *Aeneid* 9.262; for Latin grammarians relying on Greek scholia for their information about Greek literature, which would place the Irish author at two removes from the dramatist, see Fraenkel's review of the Harvard Servius.

The Irish forms of the names in this list are not as transparent as one would wish. Thurneysen correctly saw Orosius behind *Oras*, but stumbled when he considered *Ferb* to be a corruption for Virgil.[54] There is hardly any doubt, however, that *Ferb* is Servius, whom Flannacán had already accurately cited in the body of the text, in tandem with *Uirghil*/Virgil, in his account of Astyanax's death.[55] James Carney suggested that *Beidb* was a corruption for *Obeid*, meaning Ovid.[56] The version of this citation in the body of the text, however, which is there written *Béid*, seems more likely to refer to an entry in Bede's *Chronica Maiora* from his *De Temporum Ratione* which claimed that Hector's children recaptured Troy.[57] As concerns *Sugaistin*, Thurneysen suggested that Justinus was meant, whose *Trogi Pompei Historiarum Philippicarum Epitoma* was a principal source for Orosius. However, *Sugaistin* here is clearly a miscopying of *Augaistin*, 'Augustine', whose *City of God* was manifestly the prime source for the description of the destructions of Spanish Saguntum and Troy portrayed in the text. The Servian source lends some credibility to the inclusion of the Roman polymath Marcus Varro Terentius in the list, as Servius cites Varro as an important source throughout his commentary, and once attributes to him a work *De Familiis Troianis*, 'On Trojan Families'.[58] The latter, if read in any form, would have mentioned Hector's son Astyanax. Augustine, however, cites Varro in Book 3 of the *City of God*, the same book from which was drawn the destructions of Saguntum and the third Troy. It seems to be the case, therefore, that in this instance at least, a scholarly citation itself has been borrowed. Presumably the author believed, erroneously, that Varro was Augustine's own source for the narratives. As for this author, who has given his name as simply Flannacán, Carney suggested that this may have been Flannacán mac Cellaig, king of Brega (died 896), who authored *Innid scél scailter n-airich*, a poem listing the deaths of Irish heroes according to the days of the week on which they died.[59] The general late impression of the language of *Don Tres Troí*, however, makes it highly unlikely that this literary-minded king is the Flannacán in question.[60]

Self-Referentiality in the Corpus

One of the features of the classical tales that becomes evident in the wake of a general survey is how conscious their authors were that they wrote in an established tradition. First, authors often refer to other texts in the corpus as sources

54 Thurneysen, 'Quellenangaben', 425; Thurneysen, incidentally, clearly stated that he did not have the manuscript to hand, but was constrained to work from a catalogue description, and therefore had not read the text.

55 See also Carney, in Stanford, 'Towards a history', 35, n. 78.

56 Stanford, 'Towards a history', 35, n. 78.

57 Jones, *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, 475 (year 2858); Bede's source was Eusebius-Jerome's *Chronica*; for these 'sons of Hector' see Miles, 'The Irish history of the "Third Troy" and medieval writing of history' (forthcoming).

58 At *Aeneid* 5.704; this work has been lost.

59 See Stanford, 'Towards a history', 33, n. 69; for the poem, see Mulchrone, 'Flannacán'.

60 I have omitted discussion of the text on the constellations entitled *Ranna an Aeir* in Anderson's edition. This late text obviously draws on scholastic sources shared with the classical tales, as well as on the tales themselves. However, the collection of material around an academic discussion in Isidore, rather than around history or episodes from Latin epic, to my mind sets this text apart from the 'school' of classical tales here under consideration.

for their own. For example, in a passage in *Togail na Tebe* where the author translates an oblique reference to the story of Nisus and Euryalus he refers the reader to the story of the 'great voyage of Aeneas', 'amal indister ar loinges Aenias' ('as it is told in the Voyage of Aeneas') (*Togail na Tebe* 4035–8; *Thebaid* 10.447–8). This may be a reference to *Imtheachta Aeniasa* under a variant name, though, of course, we cannot be certain that it is not the *Aeneid* itself which is meant. In another passage, however, the author unravels a potentially baffling allusion to a 'deadly banquet' and 'warring brothers' in Mycenae with reference to the story of Atreus's murder and culinary preparation of his nephew Thyestes, 'amal indister ar Fingail Claindi Tantail' ('as is told in *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*') (*Togail na Tebe* 1569–77; *Thebaid* 4.307–8). Here it is unquestionably the Irish text which is meant. The passage therefore provides a good example of the translator's reliance on the native tradition of classical scholarship in Irish to aid in the interpretation of difficult passages in his own source text.

The fact that so much classical epic was translated into Irish poses a problem in instances when an author is cited in place of the author's work itself. In the third recension of *Togail Troí*, Statius is given as the source for the episode of Jason and Hypsipyle which has been interpolated into the Irish text's original episode of Jason and the Argonauts:

> Conidh amlaidh sin indisis Sdait in fili socenelach do Franccaib cetimrum luingi Árgo le gasruduib glana Gréc co hinis leaburburccaigh Leimhin 7 ro fhaccaib Feirgil 7 Dariet Frigeta 7 Eitnir Gothach in scel sin ar iaraidh in croicind órda in reithi F*r*isicda i cinn sleibi uraird Isp*er* íarthair deisc*ir*t Afraicthi. (RIA D iv 2, fo. 27ra4–10)
>
> Thus does Statius, the noble poet of the Franks, recount the first voyage of the Argo with bright companies of Greeks to the long-keeled isle of Lemnos; and Virgil and Dares Phrygius and resounding *Eitnir* [of the Goths?] omitted that tale of the golden fleece of the ram of Phrixus on the very high mountain of Hesperus in the south-west of Africa.

The author's source for the story of Jason and Hypsipyle can in fact be located with fair precision, and it is not Statius. This episode has been extracted with only minimal alteration from *Togail na Tebe*, the Irish translation of Statius's *Thebaid*.[61] The title 'in fili sochenelech do Franccaib' ('the noble poet of the Franks'), has itself been borrowed from the *Togail*.[62] In a perfectly reasonable fashion, therefore, *Sdait*, 'Statius', has been used for the Irish prose translation of the poem. As for the remaining three authors named, it is quite correct that Virgil and Dares did not tell the tale of the golden fleece, and Dares even tells his readers that, if they are interested in the story of this voyage, they should go read it elsewhere.[63]

The question whether the author was correct in noting that *Eitnir Gothach* likewise did not tell the tale should not concern us overly much, given that the

61 *Togail na Tebe* 1873–2056; I thank Michael Clarke for drawing my attention to this borrowing.

62 *Togail na Tebe* 8–9: '[do] Stait don airdfilid Francgach sochinelach'; the epithet 'French' shows the common confusion of Publius Papinius Statius with Lucius Statius Ursulus, a rhetorician from Toulouse, which can be found in medieval *accessus* to the poet's works; see Clogan, *The Medieval Achilleid*, 9.

63 See below, 66.

identity of this *Eitnir* remains a mystery.[64] However, the oddity of the author's wish to note what classical authors were *not* sources for the story he just told has mislead several modern readers, including Kuno Meyer, who apparently read 'ro fhaccaib' to mean 'left an account of'. Reading what he thought was intended to be the author's claims for his own reading, Meyer harshly judged the author to have engaged in an academic 'swindle'.[65] Yet the author presumably merely wished to note that the episode of Jason and Hypsipyle which he had just inserted into his own version of *Togail Troí* had not featured in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dares's *De Excidio*. The author thereby indirectly, and correctly, acknowledged Virgil and Dares to have been the two main sources for the tradition of *Togail Troí* which preceded him, to which he himself was now adding new material.

We can infer that Eitnir Gothach was also held to be in some fashion a source for the older versions of *Togail Troí*. The name, however, does not clearly correspond to any classical author whose works can be shown to have been sources for the classical tales. Perhaps the author intended a work in Irish now lost, but known to contemporaries as a source of classical scholarship, similar to *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*. The name is not obviously Irish or Latin, and may be corrupt. If a Latin name in origin, there is no reason to doubt that authors writing in Irish could assume Latin pen names in accord with their classical interests.[66] *Togail Troí* itself affords possible examples of this practice. The second and third recensions include several references to an author 'Fergil' as the source for at least two remarkable non-classical episodes which, in spite of the source's name, are not related to anything written by the classical Virgilius Maro.[67] In one episode from the third recension, there is a fanciful account of how a young Hector gained possession of the 'Sigen Satuirn' ('Standard of Saturn'), a supernatural weapon which a prophecy had said would be borne only by a great Trojan champion.[68] This episode is prefaced by the note: 'IS amlaid seo indises Fergil in scel-so Echtair 7 na Sighni' ('thus does Fergil tell this story of Hector and the *Sigen*'). However, it is safe to say that this episode is not Virgilian.[69] The attribution to Fergil is not found in the shorter version of this episode in the Book of Leinster

64 Meyer, 'Über einige Quellenangaben', explains the name as an Irish version of the 'Aithinarit Gothorum philosophus' named in the *Cosmographia* of the Anonymous of Ravenna; the suggestion is brilliant, but the problem remains of identifying, in turn, this Aithinarit; see 359, n. 1, for Meyer's attempt to identify him with the Visigothic king Athanaricus; Dillemann, *La cosmographie*, 27, suggested that 'Aithinarit' could have begun as a misunderstanding of Theodoric's grandson Atalaricus.

65 Meyer, 'Über einige Quellenangaben'; see *DIL* s.v. *fo-ácaib*, 179.7, for this sense 'omits'; the fault may lie with the text, which is clearer when the phrases 'in scel sin' and 'ar iaraidh' are transposed: 'ro fhaccab . . . ar iaraidh in scel sin in croicind órda'; the copy of this passage in the later manuscript King's Inns 12, fo. 5v, omits both the 'ar iaraidh' and the grammatically awkward closing phrases: 'ro fhagaibh Feirghil 7 Dariet Frigeta 7 Etnir gothach an scel sin an c*roic**inn*** ordha m*ur* sin'. The original phrase from D iv 2 is translated correctly by Mac Fhlathaidh, 'Togail Traí', 126.

66 See below, 78.

67 Murphy, 'Vergilian', 381, n. 1, notes that the name 'Fergil' has no connection to the native Fergal.

68 D iv 2, fo. 37va41–b51 (the fragment breaks off here).

69 See Thurneysen, 'Die *Sigen Satuirn*'; this episode's account of how Electra sends her son Dardanus from Etruria to Asia Minor derives, ultimately, from Servius Danielis, at *Aeneid* 3.167; note also at *Aeneid* 7.207, where Servius Danielis adds: '*quod superius plenius dictum est*'; I do not know if motif of the *Sigen* itself was original to the Irish author; Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 473, notes formal features which separate this passage from the rest of the text and suggest a different provenance.

(L 31761). The latter, however, shares with other copies of the second recension as well as the third a further mention of this same Fergil, in accounts of the death of Hector where, again, the classical poet cannot have been intended. Dares's account of Hector's death, in which Hector wounds Achilles in the thigh but subsequently succumbs to the Greek's rage, is reproduced in these recensions. A second version of the hero's demise, however, is added; the version of the second recension from NLS 72.1.15 is as follows:

> Acht innistir son bérla [F]ergil conid tría cheilg ro marbad Echtoir .i. G*réi*c uile do thiachtain son cath 7 ro láiset a n-etaige uile ind oenduma 7 for fácbad Achil cona árm i foluch fónd etuch. Tangatar Tro*ianda* don leith ele. Tairlaicset G*réi*c teiched forru; ros lensat Tro*ianda* sechna hetaigib. Atracht Achil asind [f]olugh cen fis doib dara n-esi. Druim Echtoir ris and sin. ro gon Achil Echtoir ina druim am*laid* sein do réir Fheirgil, acht is fíriu stair oldás filidecht; is de is fíriu in slicht tuisech oldás in slicht-su. Daig is ar sochraide d'Ochtiphin Augaist ro innis Fergil, ár bá do shil Aeniasa do-side 7 do rigraid Roman olchena. (fo. 19r).
>
> But it is told in Fergil's Latin [?] that Hector was killed through deceit; the Greeks all entered the battle and cast all their clothing into a single mound, and left Achilles armed in hiding beneath the clothing. The Trojans advanced from the other side. The Greeks feigned flight; the Trojans pursued them past the clothing. Achilles rose from out of hiding behind them without their noticing it. Hector's back was to him. Thus did Achilles wound Hector in his back according to Fergil, but history is truer than poetry. For this reason the former passage is truer than the latter. For Fergil wrote for the sake of Octavius Augustus's friendship, as he and the princes of the Romans besides were descended from Aeneas.

Bérla in the phrase 'bérla [F]ergil' does not necessarily have to be translated 'Latin', as it can mean any language, with a notable connotation of jargon or language that is difficult. The parallel with the 'bérla foruis' ('original Latin'), from the introduction to *Scéla Alaxandair*, however, is clear. Yet the reference to Fergil's language may be a late change by an intervening copyist unacquainted with the original sources. The older copy of this recension in the Book of Leinster, while it shares the citation of Fergil here, notably omits any reference to the language in question.[70] The Book of Leinster also lacks the astute critical observation that Virgil wrote to please Augustus.[71] Accordingly, 72.1.15's identification of this Fergil with the classical poet of the same name who wrote in Latin may be a late addition to the text. The question then arises, who was the Fergil meant by the original author? Fergil's odd narrative of how Achilles hides beneath a pile of the Greeks' clothing is the sole version of Hector's death in the first recension (H 1178–98). The episode is related there in a language and style that mark it as older than the version in the second recension. The episode is also told in greater detail, with a considerable literary skill absent from the second recension, which has more the character of a scholarly note. One might conclude, therefore, that the second recension has drawn the episode from the first, and Fergil is none other than the author of the first recension. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether the first recension also had the story of the 'Sigen

70 L 32842: 'acht chena atbeir Fergil is trí cheilg ra marbad Hectair' ('but Fergil says that it was through deceit that Hector was killed').

71 This judgment probably derives ultimately from Servius, at *Aeneid* 1.praef: 'intentio Vergilii haec est . . . Augustum laudare a parentibus'.

Satuirn', as it has a long lacuna at this point.[72] It is possible, additionally, that both texts here draw on a common third source written in Irish, authored by this same Fergil, which I view as slightly more likely.

If such was the case, this Fergil was held in some regard. The author of the first recension clearly preferred Fergil's lively version of Hector's death to Dares's, which was most certainly in the original Irish translation, but which he omitted from his own version. Alternatively, as Mac Eoin argues, the original translation of Dares did have at least the first two versions of Hector's death.[73] If this is the case, then it follows that there was, already very early in the tradition of the classical tales, a text in Irish attributed to an author Fergil, which had the idiosyncratic account of Hector's death, from which it was borrowed into the archetype of *Togail Troí*. In the initial borrowing it was presumably recognized that this Fergil was an Irishman writing in Irish, hence the absence of any reference to a *berla foruis*, or the attempt to identify him with the classical Virgilius Maro as in 72.1.5. By the time that this latter copy was made, an independent memory of this Irish Fergil may have been forgotten, inevitably subsumed into the identity of the more illustrious Roman bearer of that name.[74]

Togail Troí *and the Eclecticism of Irish Classical Studies*

When one takes the time to compare Dares's *De Excidio* with *Togail Troí*, the outstanding feature of the latter is its additional narrative and mythological material. For example, Dares's original narration of the Argonautic expedition is extremely abbreviated. For the whole of Jason's adventures in Colchis, Dares has only the laconic note: 'Colchos profecti sunt, pellem abstulerunt, domum reversi sunt' ('they set out for Colchos, they took the fleece, they returned home') (2). To be fair, Dares does narrate the crew's hostile reception by Laomedon and Hercules's ensuing destruction of the city, the only episodes of relevance to the Trojan story proper. However, in naming the members of the Argonautic voyage, a matter of great interest and disagreement in antiquity, Dares lazily comments: 'demonstrare eos qui cum Iasone profecti sunt non videtur nostrum esse: sed qui volunt eos cognoscere, Argonautas legant' ('we do not view it our task to recount those who set out with Jason: but those who desire to know them, they should read the *Argonautae*') (2). We cannot know what specific work entitled *Argonautae* Dares intended, although we presume it was Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*, or the Greek *Argonautica* of Apollonius on which Valerius's poem was

[72] The lacuna, the beginning of which the scribe notes by writing 'esbaid so ar in leabar' ('there is a loss here in the book'), begins at a point corresponding to mid-Dares 19 and continues to the middle of Dares 21; if the common source had the episode of the *Sigen Satuirn*, it probably came at a point corresponding to mid-Dares 19, where it is found in the third recension; in the Book of Leinster version this has been moved to follow Panthus's and Cassandra's prophecies of doom for the Trojans at Dares 8, where it finds no parallel in the other versions.

[73] Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 23; the Book of Leinster adds even a third account of Hector's death, in which the hero has turned his back to Achilles because it was his custom never to strike a second blow.

[74] It may be relevant that antique commentators on Virgil are referred to in the St Gall Priscian glosses as *Virgiliani*, which is generally abbreviated to *Virgilia-*; one can see how commentators on Virgil might in this manner become identified with the poet himself; see Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian*, 1: 70.

based.[75] In any case, the Irish author is not content to follow Dares's evasion here, but begins his own *Argonautica* in Irish with a list of the Argonauts, precisely what Dares had ostentatiously avoided: 'tánic ám and Iasón. 7 Hercóil. Castor 7 Pollux. Nestor. 7 Ascolapius' ('now there came Jason and Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Nestor and Aesculapius') (L 30973). The form of this list, including especially the unusual inclusion of Aesculapius, suggests that the author's principal source was Eusebius-Jerome's list of the Argonauts in the *Chronica*: 'Ea quae de Sfinga et Oedipode et Argo et Argonautis dicuntur, in quibus fuerunt Hercules Asclepius Castor et Pollux' ('This is the time that occurred those events told of the Sphinx and Oedipus and the Argo and the Argonauts, among whom were Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor and Pollux').[76] The use of Eusebius-Jerome here, of course, is consistent with the profile of Irish scholarship assembled from other sources.[77] The inclusion of Nestor, however, not in Eusebius-Jerome, poses the first problem of the author's eclectic scholarly activity. Among the ancient and medieval texts I have consulted, Nestor's inclusion among the Argonauts is paralleled only in Valerius's *Argonautica* (1.380).[78]

In the first place, *Togail Troí*'s narrative of the Argonauts is the Irish author's response to Dares's evasive request that the story be read elsewhere. More than this, however, *Togail Troí* is extraordinary for the quality and completeness of its version of the story. Valerius and Ovid were, and remain, the primary sources by which the Greek tale was known to readers of Latin. Mac Eoin suggested in passing a reliance on both, but did not examine the possibility in any detail.[79] The possibility of Ovidian sources is discussed below. As for the likelihood that Valerius was a source, did the Irish author take Dares's cue and go off and read the poet's *Argonautica*? Arguments that the text was transmitted via copies in an Insular script are inconclusive.[80] Traces of the reading of Valerius in *Togail Troí*, similarly, are generally ambiguous. For example, the text records that Fama, identified only as 'in bandea ingen Terrae' ('the goddess, daughter of Terra') (L 31001), reports the fame of the Argonauts throughout the world.[81] This may reproduce the comparatively brief episode, recounted at *Argonautica* 5.82–3, where Fama reports the fame of the Argonauts among the denizens of the Underworld. Of course, the personification Fama is unforgettable from *Aeneid* 7. She became an indispensible prop to epic verse, to judge from her prominance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 12, where she spreads the news of the expedition against Troy, and her various appearances throughout Statius's *Thebaid*. *Togail Troí* could, therefore, simply reproduce Fama as a familiar personage from

75 Chapters 1–10 of the *De Excidio* do not derive from the original Greek text, but are the addition of the late-antique Latin translator/compiler, hence a reference to Valerius would be possible; see Frazer, *The Trojan War*, 12.

76 Fotheringham, *Eusebii Pamphili*, 89.

77 As it happens, Eusebius is correctly named as a source for the story of Phrixus and Helle in the third recension of *Togail Troí* (at D iv 2, fo. 25ra).

78 Lacking Nestor are, for example, Hyginus, *Fabulae* 14, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7. Benoît de Sainte-Maure mentions only Jason, Hercules 'and their other companions' (Constans, *Le Roman de Troie*, 1: 967–1002); Philoctetes ('Pilochtenes') is similarly identified as an Argonaut at L 32053, also in agreement with Valerius, as noted by Stokes, *Togail Troi*, xv.

79 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 22.

80 Dumville, 'The early medieval', 144, 147.

81 Her parentage and characteristics were earlier identified at L 30923–7: 'Fama ingen Terra . . . Brecscéla in betha is si Fáma fotera a ndolbiud'.

epic machinery. Similarly, Valerius's detailed account of the building of the Argo (*Argonautica* 1.120–48) may have been the inspiration for the extravagant depiction of the Greek laborours and artisans in the Irish (L 30939–60). The two passages, however, do not correspond in significant detail.

The unknowable in this discussion is whether the Irish author knew episodes and motifs from the *Argonautica* indirectly. In some cases the influence of scholastic commentary can be clearly felt. For example, the story of Hercules and Hylas, the first significant episode of the Argonautic voyage proper, is told with great elaboration by Valerius (*Argonautica* 3.459–597). A version of this story is prominent in *Togail Troí*. The three recensions differ only in subtle ways, but these differences reveal much of the original author's manipulation of his sources. The following is the version from the Book of Leinster, the earliest manuscript:

> O rancatar iarum in n-inber. Ra ḟersatar na milidi combaig n-imrama co rráemid ráma Hercoil. O ra siachtatar in port. ra chuirset a luiṅg i tír. & luid Hercoil issin fidbaid ra baí for brú in tsrotha do buain damnai rámai. Iss and sin rachúaid maccáem óc aítidech do śáeraib na Gréci. Hilas mac Teomnitis a ainm. Iarsinni trá na tárraid in mac óc a aite ria tocht issin fidbaid. ra baí for merfaill 7 merugud ic iarraid a aite. co torchair in mac baeth issin fairge úar nad baí nech ica imchomét. Iar tiachtain tra do Hercoil ónd uropair. etta fora iarraid sechnón na fidbaide. O ralá tra Hercoil 7 Iáson cor fora iarraid. 7 ó thallsat céill dia ḟagbáil i fid ł i fidbaid. for tír ł usci. Ra raidset ropdar bandee ran-ucsat. fobíthin narbo chomadas leo in mac rocháem roálaindsin do bith etir daínib. acht combad eturrosom fodessin no haltá. Is and sin tra ra cossecrad in t-inadsain do ídlaib 7 doratait idbarta móra and dona deib. Ba frithchoirb mór tra lasna miledu 7 la Hercoil don tṡainruth .i. in mac rocháem roálaind dodechaid for n-inchaib do díbdúd 7 tesbaid i n-inbiur srotha Cí. (L 31046–62)
>
> Now when they reached the rivermouth, the soldiers had a rowing competition and Hercules's oars broke. When they reached the shore they brought their boat to land and Hercules went into the wood that was on the river's bank to cut beams for new oars. A young, modest youth of the nobles of Greece, named Hylas, son of Theodamas, went there as well. When the young boy did not overtake his foster-father before he went into the wood, he went astray in confusion looking for his foster-father. The foolish boy fell into the sea because there was no-one watching him. After Hercules returned from his labour he went looking for him throughout the wood. When Hercules and Jason had looked everywhere for him and had lost all hope of finding him in wood or in forest, on land or water, they said that it was goddesses who had taken him. For they thought it unseemly that that most fair and beautiful boy should be among human beings, but that he should be raised among themselves. So that place was dedicated to idols and great offerings were made to the gods. The soldiers, and Hercules especially, thought it a great disgrace that the most fair and beautiful boy had perished right before them and disappeared in the mouth of the river Cí.

While the Middle Ages had Valerius as one source for this story of Hercules and Hylas, Virgil's allusion to the story in *Eclogue* 6 (43–4) afforded ancient scholiasts engaged in the *enarratio poetarum* a chance to give their own versions of the story. Valerius, of course, may well have been a source for the scholiasts themselves. In the case of *Togail Troí*, while the Irish author might have known Valerius, it is tolerably clear that commentary was the immediate source. A problem of identifying the specific commentary in question, however, neatly

demonstrates the difficulty posed for modern scholars in retracing the steps of their medieval predecessors. Upon first consideration, *Togail Troí*'s narrative of Hercules and Hylas could have been drawn from the most influential survival of the *enarratio poetarum* in the Middle Ages, Servius's commentary on Virgil, in this case its expanded form in Servius Danielis:

> *Hylas puer, Thiodamantis filius, ob speciem Herculi fuit carissimus, quem secutus navigantem cum Argonautis, in finibus Ioniis iuxta Moesiam apud fontem Calci amnis* [sic] *cum aquatum isset, a nymphis raptus est* . . . quod cum esset cognitum, quod perisset in fonte, ei statuta sunt sacra, in quibus mos fuerat, ut eius nomen clamaretur in montibus. (at *Eclogue* 6.43)
>
> *The boy Hylas, son of Theodamas, was very dear to Hercules on account of his good looks; when the latter was voyaging with the Argonauts, Hylas followed him and in the region of Ionia near Moesia, when he went to swim at the spring 'Calci amnis', he was seized by nymphs* . . . and when it was known that he had died in the spring, rites were established to him, in which it was the custom for his name to be called out in the mountains.

The text in Roman type is so-called Vulgate Servius, while the text in italics is the Danieline material interpolated into Servius's text, so-called Servius Danielis.[82] *Togail Troí*'s description of the rites established to Hylas, of which Valerius makes no mention, suggests that the author had this passage before him. Vulgate Servius, we can note, has no account of its own of the water nymphs' role in Hylas's disappearance, so the author knew the expanded text. The Irish 'sruth Cí' ('river Cí'), is clearly related to the form 'Calci amnis' (restored from the *apparatus criticus*). For this Thilo prints 'Caici amnis' ('river Caicus'), which is probably the correct ancient form.[83] Irish *sruth Cí* could derive from correct *Cai-ci* as well as Servius Danielis's slight corruption *Cal-ci*, but the latter seems more likely. The complexity of the Irish author's sourcing, however, is clear upon consideration of a parallel passage in the much less familiar nexus of Virgilian commentary associated with the name Filargirius. In this case, the text is preserved most amply in the so-called Bern Scholia, again in a scholium attached to *Eclogue* 6.43. I quote from Hagen's edition, with certain forms relevant to the discussion restored from the readings of Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 172, Hagen's base manuscript, printed in italics:

> Hercules cum Argonautis nauigans reficiendi remi causa in siluam processit, quem comitatus est Hylas, Theodamantis filius; sed dum Hercules optatam arborem quaerit, puer aquandi gratia ad fontem uenit *Celei* fluminis qui a nymphis adamatus et raptus est, uel sicut alii uolunt, in eodem fonte praeceps lapsus et necatus est . . . HYLAN comes Herculis et cum Argonautis nauigans naui excidens interiit. Quidam eum dicunt ad puteum Moesiae uel *Caiaei* uenisse atque ibi praecipitatum interisse. Quem fingunt esse a nymphis adamatum atque raptum.[84]

[82] This convention is borrowed from the edition by Hagen and Thilo; for Servius and Servius Danielis, see Chapter 1.

[83] Reported by Thilo as Vossius's emendation; I presume the latter had in mind Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.278.

[84] The italicized forms have been restored from Hagen's *apparatus criticus* and have been checked against microfilm copies of the manuscripts; for the latter, see Savage, 'The manuscripts', 96–105.

> Hercules, on his voyage with the Argonauts, entered a wood in order to repair his oars, and was accompanied by Hylas, son of Theodamas; but while Hercules was searching for the timber he needed, the boy came to the source of the river *Celeus* for a swim, and was greatly desired by nymphs and was stolen away; or, as others tell it, he fell headlong into that same pool and was killed . . . HYLAS Hercules's companion who, on the voyage of the Argonauts, died while getting out of the boat. Some say that he came to the pool of Moesia, that is of *Caiaeus*, and there fell in and drowned. They say he was greatly desired by nymphs and stolen away.

The Bern Scholia here have a version of the story that is much fuller than even the conflated narrative in Servius Danielis, and which manifestly reflects the Irish author's principal source much more closely. For example, the explanation that the Argonauts give for the boy's disappearance in the Irish, 'ra raidset ropdar bandee ran-ucsat' ('they said that it was goddesses who had taken him'), reflects the third-person narration of the incident in the Bern Scholia: 'they say he was greatly desired by nymphs and stolen away'. The lack of any mention of a cult to Hylas, however, ensures that the Bern Scholia were not the sole source. Most interesting, however, is the light thrown on Servius Danielis's 'Calci amnis'. Seeing a mention of two discrete places in the Bern Scholia, Hagen emended 'Celei fluminis' ('river Celeus') to 'Cetei fluminis', and '[puteum] Caiaei' ('pool of Caiaeus') to 'fontem Caici'. However, the two forms are surely corruptions of one and the same name, as this scholium is clearly aggregative; the passage in fact consists of two scholia giving competing versions of Hylas's death derived from two (or more) sources.[85] The ultimate source for the scholia doubtless put Hylas's death at a *Caici amnis*. The corruptions for the latter in Servius Danielis and in the two versions of Hylas's death from the Bern Scholia suggest that all three are drawing on a shared source, in which the name Caicus may have been already corrupted.

While the Book of Leinster's 'inber srutha Cí' ('mouth of the river Cí') shows a form closest to Servius Danielis's 'Calci amnis', a form more like those preserved in the Bern Scholia survives in other copies of the second recension, as well as in the third. The third resembles the Book of Leinster until near the end of the episode, where in place of the latter's simple explanation of Hylas's death, three possible explanations are given:

> Teit dono Ercail 7 lucht na luingi for iaraidh in mh*ei*c 7 ni fhuarutar 7 is s*ed* ro raidhsetar robtar bandéa ro fuccsat ar niba comadh*us* dó beith it*ir* dainib *no* is a sruth Calei ro baidhed *no* is it*ir* in luing 7 in tír dothuit 7 ro baighidh ic triall techt a ndiaigh a oidi fo thír 7 is s*ed* seicc is firiu an*n*. (D iv 2, fo. 27ra)[86]
>
> Hercules and the ship's crew went in search of the boy but did not find him, and what they said was that goddesses took him away because it wasn't fitting for him to remain among men; or he drowned in the river *Caleus*; or he fell between the

[85] The first scholium up to 'necatus est' comes from the right-hand column in Bern 172 (Hagen's **B**), the second scholium from 'HYLAN' to 'raptum' from the left-hand column; Bern 167, Hagen's second manuscript for this passage (his **C**), has only the second scholium and has *caiaei* in agreement with **B**; for evidence that **C** was not copied from **B**, see Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 15 (for a contrasting opinion concerning text accompanying the *Aeneid*, see Savage, 'The manuscripts', 105). It can be additionally noted that Hagen's 'puteum Moesiae' is 'ad puteu*m* es*s*e' in **B**, 'apud eu*m* es*s*e' in **C**, thereby explaining the absence of 'Moesia' from the Irish version.

[86] Cf. Edinburgh, NLS 72.1.15, fo. 4r: 'Dorochair iar sin in m*a*c bec isin fairge *no* isin sruth Caléi ar ni raba nech aca imcomet'.

> ship and the land and drowned as he was trying to follow his fosterfather onto the land. The latter is the most likely of the three.

On first consideration, one would assume that this version of the episode from the third recension represents a late text, left inconsistent and cluttered in consequence of half-hearted scribal additions. It is a minor revelation, therefore, that this passage's aggregative quality in fact preserves not just the character, but also the details of the Latin scholastic source. The latter, as reflected in the Bern Scholia, gave alternative versions of Hylas's death. As elsewhere in the third recension, the Irish author is not content merely to repeat conflicting explanations he finds in his ancient authorities, but excercises critical judgment in preferring one over the others. In this case, he thinks it most likely that Hylas drowned while trying to follow Hercules to land. As the supernatural machinery of classical epic is generally rationalized in *Togail Troí*, the author's preference here for the most factually plausible explanation is consistent with Irish practice throughout. However, the author then improvises a long account of the Argonauts' panic and fear of Hercules's temper when he should learn of his companion's loss, and Nestor's advice that they placate Hercules by telling him that the boy was abducted by goddesses. Thus, whereas in the Bern Scholia 'they', that is, poets and their scholiasts, say that Hylas was abducted by nymphs, in *Togail Troí* the 'they' has become the lying Argonauts themselves: 'is sed ro raidhsetar'. With this deft manipulation of his source, the author imaginatively harmonized at least two of the ancient authorities' three competing versions of Hylas's death, as these had been preserved in the Bern Scholia.

Interestingly, some features in the Irish description of Hercules's reaction to Hylas's loss are strongly reminiscent of Valerius's poem. For example, Nestor's suggestion in *Togail Troí* that Juno was behind Hylas's abduction cleverly recalls the poem, where the goddess, true to form, is the supernatural force who arranges Hylas's abduction. Faced with material in *Togail Troí* which suggests familiarity with Valerius, one must wonder, therefore, could there have been late-antique commentary material in medieval Ireland which epitomised Valerius more fully than the versions we have? In a sense, the question needs to be formulated with reference to the origins of Irish-transmitted ancient commentary on Virgil which *Togail Troí* certainly did draw on and which is extant.

I discussed above the commentary from which the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*, the Bern Scholia and the *Brevis Expositio* commonly descend, which I have throughout discussed as the 'Filargirian' commentary. The colophon to the portion of the commentary in the *Eclogues* in the Bern Scholia clearly says that the text had been 'assembled' from various sources.[87] As it is hard to imagine that the author's act of assembly did not involve a concommittant act of selection, the commentary we possess today does not likely represent the complete materials which the collector was able to read in the original sources. If the Filargirian collection was indeed assembled in Ireland, then these sources represent holdings of an early medieval Irish library. It is useful to return to the question of the Irish connection to the interpolated material in Servius Danielis. Most discussions of Servius Danielis repeat the claim that the additional material was taken from Aelius Donatus's variorum commentary on Virgil. In the above extracts concerning Hylas and the *Calci amnis*, however, one can see that Servius

[87] See above, 31.

Danielis has drawn from a source shared with the Bern Scholia.[88] As the content of the scholia collected in the latter is closely paralleled in the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*, we can assign these to the nexus of non-Servian commentary associated with the names Filargirius, Gaudentius, Gallus and Leonimus, that is the Filargirian collection. This is not to say that the collector responsible for the Filargirian collection could not have himself originally extracted this information in his own right from Donatus, and that Donatus, therefore, is, in effect, the common source. However, the argument for the survival of Donatus's commentary in Servius Danielis itself rests on inference and some wishful thinking, as discussed above in Chapter 1. The attribution of this material from the Filargirian collection to Donatus, therefore, can be no better than speculative. I suggest that it is of little relevance in the end whether Donatus's lost commentary was the source for Servius Danielis and the Filargirian collection in this episode. Instead, this material's presence in various versions of *Togail Troí*, and with varying details and emphases, argues that the sources and scholarship which underlay the Filargirian collection and the creation of Servius Danielis were also drawn on by *Togail Troí*. This is, in essence, equivalent to saying that the common source for the Filargirian collection, Servius Danielis and *Togail Troí* was a body of Irish or Irish-transmitted commentary on Virgil. To judge from its late appearance in *Togail Troí*, this commentary remained a living tradition in Ireland as late as the eleventh century at least.[89]

Jason and Medea

Following the disappearance of Hylas, *Togail Troí* continues with the emphasis shifted to the doomed romance of Jason and Medea. Valerius's *Argonautica* remains a shadowy presence behind this narrative, but, again, the text betrays the characteristic imprint of Irish expertise in Virgil and Virgilian commentary. An outline of the story was available, first, in Servius's note to *Georgics* 2.140, where Virgil had praised Italy as a place which never knew 'bulls breathing fire from their nostrils'. The reference is to the fire-breathing bulls at Colchos which Jason must yoke, one of the tasks set him by Aeetes before he can gain possession of the golden fleece. Servius refers to these tasks as the *condiciones*, 'conditions (in a contract), terms', for Jason's acquisition of the fleece. However, it is again a note derived from the Filargirian collection, in this case the *Brevis Expositio*, which most closely reflects the source employed by the author of *Togail Troí*:

> Iason Colchos profectus petiit pellem auream arietis. Aeeta, pater Medeae, rex Colchiae, hanc oblationem dedit, quod non posset eam accipere, nisi prius tauros,

[88] Note that Servius Danielis shows knowledge of this *fabula* concerning Hylas again, with similar wording, at *Aeneid* 1.619.

[89] I believe we can prefer this explanation to the only necessary alternative, which is that Servius Danielis and the Filargirian collection, if not assembled then at least known in eighth-century Ireland, were removed to the continent in the eighth century, and reimported to the island in the tenth or eleventh century in time to be used, belatedly, by the authors of *Togail Troí*; see the Introduction for the reopening of Irish bookvaults in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

> quod ei Vulcanus dono dederat ignem navibus spirantes, iungeret et dentes draconis, quem occiderat Cadmus [iaceret]. (at *Georgics* 2.140)[90]
>
> Jason set out for Colchos in search of the ram's golden fleece. Aeetes, Medea's father and king of Colchos, gave this as a present, although he said that he would not receive it if he did not first yoke the bulls which Vulcan had given him as a gift and which breathed fire from their nostrils, and [sow] the teeth of the dragon which Cadmus had slain.

The Book of Leinster's version of *Togail Troi* preserves a list of Jason's tasks that presents material in common with this copy of the Filargirian commentary, but also shows features present in none of the Latin sources considered hitherto:

> Iss ed ra ráid [Aeetes] bá saethar n-espa dóib tíchtain . . . nacora ícthar a gesse .i. encennach Mercúir. cumma imthéit muir 7 tír. & claideb Ulcáin letras iarn 7 cloich 7 cnáim. & cethardam Ulcain a fudomnaib iffirn cora airdis laa n-air ar belaib na cat*r*ach cora sílta d'ḟiaclaib dracon comtis fir fo sciatharmgaisciud re ṅdeo laí. Is iatsain a gessi. (L 31073–80)
>
> [Aeetes] said that their journey was in vain . . . unless he performed/suffered/solved his *gessi*, that is, the bird-covering of Mercury, which goes over both sea and land, and the sword of Vulcan, which cuts iron and stone and bone, and the four oxen of Vulcan from the depths of hell, that they might plow a day's plowing before the city in order to sow the dragon's teeth, so that they might become armed men until the end of the day. Those were his *gessi*.

I suspect that, however much the author's source for this passage resembled the Filargirian commentary, it shared Servius's designation of Jason's tasks as *condiciones* which he had to fulfil before acquiring the golden fleece; later in the same scholium in the *Brevis Expositio* Jason is in fact described as 'ad conditionem a Medea adiutus' ('aided by Medea in the fulfilment of his terms'). The Irish passage's use of the loaded cultural term *geis* (pl. *gessi*), therefore, 'taboo' or 'prohibition' in its most common meaning, may here be an attempt to convey the sense of *condicio*: the heavily sacral connotations of the Irish word, however, are in marked contrast to the legalistic character of the Latin.[91] As for the conditions themselves, the third and fourth manifestly follow a Latin text like the Filargirian commentary. As it happens, the detail that the fire-breathing oxen belong to Vulcan is absent from Servius, but there is no reason why Vulcan's original ownership of the bulls should have been obscure: it is mentioned, for example, in Valerius's *Argonautica* (6.433–45). Yet in commentary versions of this story, I have found Vulcan mentioned only in the First Vatican Mythographer (1.25).[92] The Mythographer otherwise borrows directly from Servius, and uses

[90] Thilo and Hagen, *Servii Grammatici*, 3, fasc. 2: 294. This scholium occurs also in the copy of the Bern Scholia in Leiden, University Library, Voss. Lat. F 79 (saec. ix); see Funaioli, *Esegesi*, 116, for a transcription; see also Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xiv, n. 35, and 133, n. 73; Voss. Lat. F 79 was originally one with Paris, Bibl. Nat. Lat. 1750, whence both are given the siglum **P** in the Harvard Servius; Hagen did not collate **P** for his edition of the Scholia, but he added extracts from that manuscript's version of the text in his edition, 22–6, and in the Epimetrum, 329–36; for the manuscript, which also contains an abbreviated version of Servius Danielis, see Savage, 'The manuscripts', 93–4.

[91] See *DIL* s.v. *geis*; this instance is cited in sense (b) 'positive injunction or demand', but this meaning is poorly attested in early texts; see further below, 74.

[92] See Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 133, n. 73, for the resemblance to the scholium to *Georgics* 2.140 in the Bern Scholia in Voss. Lat. F 79.

Servius's phrase *condiciones*, making his version close to that given in *Togail Troí* in these details.

Mac Eoin demonstrated that the Book of Leinster's version of *Togail Troí*, whatever its original Latin sources, drew on the poetic version *Luid Iason ina luing lóir* for this list of Jason's tasks.[93] The poem, however, of necessity got its material from the same Latin sources known to the authors of the prose *Togail Troí*. The problem of *Togail Troí*'s Latin sources, therefore, is rendered even more complex by the fact that the author in places may have been drawing directly on a Latin model, and in other places perhaps indirectly on the same Latin model via the poem. *Luid Iason*, however, lacks any mention of Vulcan's fire-breathing bulls, as in the prose.[94] More perplexing, however, are the first two of Jason's tasks, absent from all prose versions but the Book of Leinster, and shared with the poem:

> 'Tabhrad claidheabh Olcáin áin,
> teascas íarann, cloch is cnáimh,
> 'san aen-cheandach Mercúir mín
> imthigheas muir is mór-thír'.[95]
>
> 'Let them fetch the sword of noble Vulcan which cuts iron, stone, and bone, and the winged suit of gentle Mercury which travels on sea and dry land'. (Mac Eoin's translation)

Togail Troí's association of Vulcan with the fire-breathing oxen is, as seen above, inherited from commentary. The god's relation to the Underworld, expressed here in the assurance that his oxen are 'a fudomnaib iffirn' ('from the profundities of hell'), was familiar in the Middle Ages. The familiarity of the association, however, was in no little part due to Virgil's portrait of the god's infernal smithy beneath Mount Aetna, which he memorably termed 'Volcani domus et Volcania nomine tellus' ('the home of Vulcan and the land called by Vulcan's name') (*Aeneid* 8.416–38, at 422). *Togail Troí*, in the episode where Jason completes his tasks, invents names for Vulcan's oxen: 'Fúath 7 Fantais. Sod 7 Impod' ('Fear and Phantom, Turning and Returning') (L 31136). These fanciful personifications suggest that the Irish author recalled Virgil's description of Vulcan's smithy, which is worked by the Cyclopes, whose sonorous Greek names Virgil weaves into an extraordinary verse: 'Brontesque Steropesque et nudus membra Pyragmon' ('Thunder and Lightning and bare-limbed Fire-Anvil') (*Aeneid* 8.425). Here Servius comes to the aid of the medieval reader, noting that the names of Vulcan's labourers are personifications, and translating the Greek into Latin. The figure, as highlighted and explained by the grammarian, may have inspired the Irish author to invent the comparable personified names for Vulcan's oxen for his own text. Meanwhile, in both the poem and the prose text, the second of Jason's tasks is the capture of the *claideb Ulcáin*, 'the sword of

93 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 25–7; see also 46, where a verse is quoted in the third recension and in the Book of Ballymote, and the author cited as 'int Eolach' ('the learned one').

94 Unfortunately, there is a corruption in verse 11 where Jason's labours are introduced, so it is impossible to know if even the prose version's use of *gessi* to describe Jason's tasks derives from the poem; the corrupt form *con dheisse* happens to contain a phonetic equivalence to *[a] ghessi*, 'his tasks'; Mac Eoin's suggested emendation to *co festae* removes the echo of any *geis*, yet I can offer no alternative way to restore the passage to sense.

95 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 32, translation on 50.

Vulcan'. If Virgil's description of Vulcan's cave was recalled by the Irish author, it follows that here he also knew that the cave resounded to the hissing of the 'stricturae Chalybum' ('the (iron) bars of the Chalybes') (*Aeneid* 8.421). The allusion made in *claideb Ulcáin* to the *stricturae Chalybum* of Vulcan's cave can be detected only on recognizing the pun in the Latin, which rests on the metonymic use of *chalybs* as 'iron sword'.[96]

The first of Jason's tasks, the recovering of the *encennach Mercúir*, 'the bird-covering of Mercury', like the *claideb Ulcáin* is preserved only in the Book of Leinster and in *Luid Iason*. Questioning the obvious identification of the *encennach Mercúir* with the *talaria*, 'winged sandals', of the classical Mercury, Stokes suggested that this *encennach* represented a topos derived from medieval storytelling.[97] Stokes pointed to the parallel of the *fjaðrhamr*, 'feather-coat', of Norse tales; one might add the *encennach* worn by Conaire's supernatural father Nemglan in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel'.[98] The latter would seem to point unmistakably to the likelihood that *Togail Troí* here incorporates a motif imitated from native Irish storytelling. A native source, however, cannot be taken for granted. For example, *Togail Troí*'s association of an *encennach*, native or not, with Jason could owe to a recollection of a verse from Valerius, where Jason wishes he possessed the 'winged sandals' of Perseus: 'nunc aerii plantaria vellet / Perseos' (*Argonautica* 1.67–8).[99] Yet it is specifically Virgil's description of the *talaria* of Mercury which is most enlightening:

> et primum pedibus talaria nectit
> aurea, quae sublimem alis siue aequora supra
> seu terram rapido pariter cum flamine portant. (*Aeneid* 4.239–41)
>
> . . . and firstly he binds onto his feet the golden talaria, which, as swift as the wind carry him aloft on wings, be it over sea or land.

Virgil's phrase 'siue aequora supra seu terram' ('be it over sea or land') is unmistakably echoed in the phrase which describes the *encennach* in *Togail Troí*, that is, 'cumma imthéit muir 7 tír' ('which goes indifferently over sea and land'). This phrasing is borrowed for the translation of Virgil's original verses in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*: 'dochuaid iarsin Mercuir . . . 7 rogab a enceandaigh uime, 7 is cuma roimluaidhedh-se muir 7 tir' ('Mercury went . . . and put on his bird-costume, with which he would go indifferently over sea and land') (765–7).[100]

The appearance of *tír*, 'land', in *Luid Iason* as *mór-thír*, a compound transparently provided for the sake of the metre, would suggest that the poem, like

96 The usage is explained at Servius, *Georgics* 1.58: 'Chalybes populi sunt, apud quos nascitur ferrum, unde abusive dicitur chalybs ipsa materies'; the same scholium quotes the verse at *Aeneid* 8.425 just mentioned; MS **V** of Servius Danielis, incidentally, includes a further note on the Chalybes found also in the Bern Scholia, at the same locus, attributed to Iunilius.

97 Stokes, '*Togail Troi*', iv.

98 Knott, *Togail Bruidne*, lines 92, 142; for the *fjaðrhamr*, see Boberg, *Motif-Index*, A 171.2. It may be of interest that the earliest manuscript fragment of Servius Danielis has the Old English gloss *fetherhaman*, cognate with *fjaðrhamr*, written above *talaria* at *Aeneid* 4.240; see above, 25, n. 63.

99 As it happens, Perseus is explicitly associated with both the *enchennach Mercuir* and the *claideb Ulcáin* in *Ranna an Aeir*, where they are additional defenses Perseus employs in his encounter with the Gorgons; see Anderson, '*Ranna an Aeir*', 408; see also *Togail na Tebe*, 1200f.

100 Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 27, n. 19, notes other instances of this phrase, which, however, I would see as derivative of *Togail Troí*.

Imtheachta Aeniasa, here had the prose *Togail Troí* as a model, and not the inverse. In this context, there is no difficulty in seeing the more sophisticated classical reference behind even the *encennach* of Nemglan from *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, although, to my knowledge, this connection has not been suggested hitherto.[101] Nemglan's bird-form, which is more encompassing than the simple winged sandals of Mercury, as it happens is prefigured in the same passage in the *Aeneid*, where Mercury's form is described in more exaggerated terms: 'toto praeceps se corpore ad undas / misit aui similis' ('he hurled himself headlong with his full body, in the likeness of a bird') (*Aeneid* 4.253–5).

Conclusion to the Story of Jason and Medea

When the author's eclectic method of constructing this narrative of Jason and Medea is considered, even ostensibly fanciful embellishments are seen to reflect literary sources. Examples of this are met in the passages describing Jason's abandonment of Medea and their subsequent deaths (L 31145–88). After Medea murders her own children, Jason, urged on by the disapproving Argonauts, abandons her even before they have left Colchis. In revenge for being left behind, Medea later locates Jason as he is hunting on his own lands in Greece and throws two poisonous serpents through his body, killing him. It is then related that Jason's mother took revenge on Medea, killing her and her father Aeetes by having them lifted into the air by taloned gryffons and dropped into the sea.

No competing version of the story, ancient or otherwise, has Jason abandon Medea at Colchis. The Irish version may show the influence of *Heroides* 12, where Ovid portrays a disconsolate Medea years following her flight from Colchis, after Jason has abandoned her for a new wife. Abandonment is the salient theme in Ovid's account, and has become central to the Irish version as well. The entire passage in *Togail Troí*, in fact, displays a remarkable telescoping of events from the classical narrative. In Euripides's *Medea*, Jason and Medea have fled Colchis and sought protection in Corinth, where Jason, meaning to stabilize his position in his new city, forsakes Medea in favour of the daughter of Corinth's king. Enraged at this rejection, Medea kills first Jason's new wife, then her own two children by Jason. Ovid told this story in the *Metamorphoses* as his dénouement to the story of Jason and Medea proper:

> Sed postquam Colchis arsit noua nupta uenenis
> flagrantemque domum regis mare uidit utrumque,
> sanguine natorum perfunditur impius ensis
> ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma. (*Metamorphoses* 7.394–7)
>
> But after the new bride burned with the Colchian's poisons and the twin sea saw the king's palace in flames, her wicked sword is stained in the blood of her children, and, a mother horribly avenged, she flees Jason's violence.

We may have here the source of the Irish author's story that Medea murdered her own children. In *Togail Troí*, however, this act is the reason for which she is

[101] The iconographic resemblance to the angel in Mary's annunciation from Luke is perhaps the more obvious learned allusion, if one were sought; see Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 25, n. 19, for later occurrences of the *encennach* in Irish, mostly from the classical tales.

abandoned immediately in Colchis; as such children could not have been sired by Jason during the hero's few days' visit, the author claims that these were Medea's children by one 'Oruilt, king of the Cuni from the south of Africa' (L 31155).[102] The murderous deed, therefore, was probably learned from Ovid, but transposed to the Colchian part of the story, and an African father invented to account for the children's existence.

It is not certain that an Irish reader would have been able to follow in every detail the conclusion to the story of Jason and Medea in the *Metamorphoses*. No modern reader who was not familiar with Euripides's *Medea* or the modern mythographers who draw on him would be able to follow Ovid's version of the story. The curious introduction of Jason's mother in *Togail Troí* suggests that the author noted the obscurity of Ovid's verses, set aside the problem of their correct translation, and chose instead the path of creative exegesis. There is no counterpart to Jason's revengeful mother in any other version of this story. Did the Irish author read Ovid's verse 'ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma', extract only 'ultaque se male mater Iasonis' and understand: 'and Jason's mother horribly avenged herself'? Here one sees how the author could have imaginatively abstracted from Ovid a 'surprise' conclusion to the saga of Jason, and a death for Medea which is not at all Ovidian. The likelihood that the *Metamorphoses* was the Irish author's source is confirmed by the earlier incorporation into *Togail Troí* of the episode with which Ovid actually does conclude his Medean narrative. This is her later marriage to Aegeus at Athens, where she attempts to poison the young Theseus (*Metamorphoses* 7.402–24). This final episode in Medea's bewitching career is refreshingly clear, as is the concise, correct version of the same in *Togail Troí* (L 31165–8). The real interest of this episode of Medea and Aegeus in *Togail Troí* is how rare it is in competing mythographic traditions in the Middle Ages. Ovid is the only classical Latin author whose account survives. Among early-medieval mythographers, I find the episode only in the First Vatican Mythographer (1.48), whose source the editor cannot identify.[103]

A reader will search in frustration through Ovid or the medieval mythographers to find anything to compare with the strange death of Jason and Medea in *Togail Troí*. In D iv 2, paralleled by the Book of Ballymote, this material has been prefaced by a scholarly note which sets the narrative of the characters' deaths apart from the conclusion to the quest for the golden fleece proper:

> Deridh sceoil fail don sceol sin in c*r*oicinn órda. Is é seo a reidhiughadh am*ail* isbert sdair Mhuir 7 sdair Endia; is e ro c*er*taigh in scel sin in croicind órdha. Ce ro fiarfaig 7 ro laa cesta Iasoin; caidhe a aidhidh 7 cia ro marb 7 cia baile i torcair 7 cia digail in ro marb*ad* 7 cia hainm a m*athar* 7 caidhe a aighidh Media 7 Eta? is e seo *immorro* a certernidh. (D iv 2, fo. 28rb9–16)[104]
>
> This is the conclusion to the story of the golden fleece. This is its resolution as the history of *Muir* and the history of *Endia* relate; it was he who corrected that

[102] The name of the king and the people varies slightly in all the manuscripts.

[103] Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 32, n. 143 ('Fabula Thesei et Pirithoi et Herculis').

[104] The capitalization of the manuscript has been altered, and I have emended manuscript 'ce ro fiarfaig*e*d rola', which, I suggest, arose from the miscopying of an Irish ampersand; the error is found also in the Book of Ballymote (fo. 232rb). *Togail Troí* describes how Medea helps Jason to answer *cesta*, 'questions' set him by Aeetes, a motif which may show a recollection of Oedipus before the Sphinx, or may show a textual confusion with *césta*, pl. of *césad*, 'torment', perhaps originally used of the tasks the hero is made to perform.

> story of the golden fleece. Who inquired and posed the questions set before Jason? What was the nature of his death, and who killed him, and where did he fall, and in revenge for what was he killed, and what was the name of his mother, and what was the nature of the deaths of Medea and Aeetes? This is their correct solution.

As this note is in neither the Book of Leinster nor in 72.1.15, the manuscripts which give the clearest picture of the original second recension, one could deduce that it is a later, early-modern addition. The difficulty with this view is that the information itself which the author here attributes to *Muir* and *Endia* does occur in all versions. Moreover, this material set off from the rest of the Argonaut narrative is, indeed, of a distinctive character, most obviously the oddity of Medea's murder at the hands of Jason's mother. The form of the note, in which information necessary for the exegesis of a text is framed as a series of questions with their answers, is typically Irish, and related to the form of the *accessus* discussed above in the introduction to *Scéla Alaxandair*.[105] I suspect that a version of this scholastic note was in the common source for the three surviving recensions, was deleted early in the transmission and restored, somewhat clumsily, by a later editor of the text. Alternatively, the note is the original production of a late editor who saw, correctly, that the end of the story of Jason and Medea drew on sources distinct from the rest of the text, which he believed he could identify.

The question remains, who are *Muir* and *Endia*? The names are hardly even a veiled reference to Ovid. Kuno Meyer saw *Endia* as the Roman poet Ennius, and suggested one Moiris, an otherwise obscure Greek scholiast to Apollonius's *Argonautica*, as the historical person behind *Muir*.[106] Thurneysen, on the other hand, suggested that this *Muir* was the classical Virgilius Maro.[107] Alternatively, *Muir* may be simply Servius, whose name in later manuscripts is given sometimes as Maurus Servius Honoratus, at other times Marius.[108] Virgil, however, wrote nothing of Jason and Medea, nor does the material attributed to *Muir* and *Endia* bear resemblance to anything in Servius; nor, unsurprisingly for that matter, is there resemblance to anything that survives from Ennius. One wonders if this *Muir*, if 'Maro', is one and the same with the Fergil 'Virgil' discussed above, whose account of the death of Hector was early absorbed into *Togail Troí*. In *Endia* do we have another version of the name which, at the conclusion to the story of Jason and Hypsipyle, was given as *Etnir*? For that matter, can we suggest that behind *Endia* may lurk an author who, among his Latin-educated contemporaries, answered to 'Aeneas'?[109] One can conjecture whether such dinstinguished classical names could have been adopted among the members of a small scholarly circle.[110] Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, the idiosyncratic seventh-century grammarian whose works are closely associated with Irish scholarship,

105 For the catechistic format and stereotyped questions which Bischoff termed *Punktfragen*, see Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte', 221, 219; and Ó Néill, 'The Old Irish', 150–2, for the early adoption of the format in the vernacular; a question-answer passage in *Scéla Alaxandair* similar to this in *Togail Troí* in fact continues the introduction which contained the list of the author's sources; see Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 103 (lines 38–47); see also above, 11.

106 Meyer, 'Über einige Quellenangaben', 359.

107 Thurneysen, 'Quellenangaben'.

108 See Kaster, *Guardians*, 356–9.

109 Irish orthography would treat *Endia*, *Ennia* and even *Aennia* as interchangeable, so the disimilarity between the forms is more apparent than real; it is worth noting that in this portion of D iv 2, *u* is often written for *a*, and the exemplar could have read *Mair* just as easily as *Muir*.

110 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 86, presumably has this in mind when she suggests that one

named one Aeneas as his beloved instructor, and, in addition, counted among his colleagues no fewer than three Virgils, and three Vulcans.[111]

Hercules and Troy

It may be significant that the material in the preceding passage attributed to *Muir* and *Endia* consists of the concluding episodes to the story of Jason and Medea which are absent from the *Argonautica*, which Valerius left unfinished upon his death. The presence of Ovid behind this material suggests that, if the *Muir* and *Endia* were authors writing in Irish, then they divided their time between wide reading in Latin epic and creative exegesis in the same. The interpretive value of texts such as *Togail Troí* has never been given its due, held in low regard as a meaner intellectual achievement than that of a late-antique teacher of Latin such as Servius. Yet the Irish author's activity was not utterly unlike the grammarian's *enarratio poetarum*, 'interpretation of the poets'. The interpretive activity of the Irish scholar is demonstrated in *Togail Troí*'s description of the building and destruction of the first Troy. According to Dares, the Argonauts are denied permission to make port at Troy by King Laomedon, an insult which prompts Hercules to attack the city and kill Laomedon after the completion of his adventure in Colchis (2–3). Servius and Servius Danielis record the orthodox tradition whereby Hercules toppled the walls of Troy when Laomedon refused to reward him for saving his daughter Hesione from a sea monster.[112] The Irish author incorporates the narratives of both Dares and Servius/Servius Danielis. Dares's narrative is translated in sequence in *Togail Troí*, as part of the text which translates the *De Excidio* more or less directly. The orthodox, non-Darean tradition as recounted in the Servian commentary is introduced in the genealogical opening passage:

> Iss e ra ḟell for Neptuin 7 for Appaill im lóg cumtaig na Troi. Co tuc Apaill teidm galair forro. 7 cora thrascair Neptuin a múir na Troí. Is é ra ḟell for trénmilid fer talman .i. for Hercoil im lóg anacail a ingine .i. Ésiona arin ṁbledmil muride tarmairt bádud 7 slucud na luṅgi i rabi Esiona. 7 i rrabatar .l. ingen di ingenaib na Troiana. Is and saide daruacht Hercoil ina churach dochum in tṡrotha. 7 dorochtatar na Troiana don leith aile. 7 ra gellsat a cethri cutrumma fein. do .i. a cutrumma do ór 7 do argut. 7 a cutrumma do umu. 7 a cutrumma do iurn. (L 30849–57)
>
> It is he [Laomedon] who betrayed Neptune and Apollo concerning payment for the building of Troy, so that Apollo visited a pestilence upon them, and Neptune toppled Troy's walls. It is he who betrayed the mighty hero of the men of the earth, Hercules, concerning payment for rescuing his daughter Hesione from the sea monster as it made to drown and swallow the boat which carried her and fifty maidens of the Trojans. That was when the warrior Hercules came in his boat towards the river, and the Trojans came from the other side, and they promised him his four weights equal to himself, that is, his equal weight in gold and silver, his equal weight in bronze, and his equal weight in iron.

'Dariet', whose death the Annals of the Four Masters records in 948, may have been the original translator of the *De Excidio* into Irish; Mac Eoin, 'Verbalsystem', 202, n. 1, is more circumspect.

111 For the Irish source of many of the fanciful names in Virgilius, see Herren, 'Some new light', 55–6; for Virgilius Maro Grammaticus, see above, 33.

112 Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 3.3 and 8.157; Servius at *Aeneid* 1.550.

The construction of Troy's walls had been conveniently combined with the details of Hercules's rescue of Hesione by Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 3.3. It would be premature, however, to conclude that the Irish author simply followed this source. It is, of course, difficult to identify sources when one is comparing texts in different languages. The sources for the First Vatican Mythographer, by contrast, can often be identified with a fair degree of certainty in consequence of the fact that he generally reproduces the source-text's Latin with fidelity. As it happens, the Mythographer (2.34) has an account of this episode that significantly parallels *Togail Troí*, especially the mention of the plague sent by Apollo. The Mythographer's source for this, however, while it bore some resemblance to Servius in consequence of shared subject matter, cannot be identified.[113]

Given the rarity of the mention of a plague in this story, it is possible that *Togail Troí* and the Mythographer knew the same source. The Irish text, unlike the Mythographer, relates additionally how Neptune topples Troy's walls: this may have been borrowed directly from *Aeneid* 2.610–12. Yet the most interesting feature of the Irish text is the payment which Hercules is to receive for rescuing Hesiona, that is, 'a cethri cutrumma fein' ('his four weights equal to himself') in gold, silver, bronze and iron. The author here doubtless consulted Servius (at *Aeneid* 8.291), who recorded that Hercules's payment for rescuing Hesiona was to be: 'negatos sibi a Laomedonte equos divino semine procreatos' ('the horses, begotten from divine seed, refused him by Laomedon'). Servius's record of the promised award correctly reproduces the version accepted in antiquity. The Irish author has not misunderstood Servius, but, for *equos*, 'horses', he read *aequos*, 'equal'. Understood with *sibi* the resulting phrase was taken to mean '(things in the plural begotten from divine seed) equal to himself'. The pun follows the regular orthographic interchangability of *e* and *ae*, so there is no need to speculate that the Irish author read a text that was corrupt. The discrepancy between what Servius wrote and what the Irish author read is not textual, but interpretive. As for the four metals, which barely recall Servius's 'divino semine procreatos', these probably display Irish biblical scholarship and allude to *Daniel* 2.31–35, King Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a statue of himself composed of gold, silver, bronze and iron (with the addition of the famous feet of clay).

The interpretive leap from Hercules's horses to Nebuchadnezzar's metals may have been encouraged by a connection that could be made to a puzzling passage from Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*. According to Martianus, the god Apollo has four vessels 'diuersa specie metallisque formatae' ('of diverse appearance and constructed of metals'), namely iron, silver, lead and glass.[114] These vessels belong to Vulcan, Jupiter, Saturn and Juno respectively. The vessels 'singulae . . . rerum quaedam semina elementaque gestabant' ('contained individually certain seeds of matter and elements'). These *semina* and *elementa*, taken with their corresponding deities, may have afforded the imaginative and lexical connection with Servius's 'divino semine procreatos' that would have associated the two texts in the mind of an attentive reader. Apollo's vessels provide an example of metallic elements not identical with the traditional four

113 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 77, n. 399 (note that the passage connecting the *fabula*'s two parts derives from Servius at *Aeneid* 1.619, not 1.550).

114 Willis, *Martianus*, 1.16–19.

elements. This precedent recalls, in turn, the four metals of Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

This association of Hercules's payment with Martianus's *semina* and *elementa* is, admittedly, tenuous. Martianus's account of how Apollo creates pestilence from the matter in his four vessels, however, may be the ultimate source for the claim, shared with the Mythographer, that Apollo devastated Troy with a plague. Martianus quotes a Greek verse from Lucian's *Alexander* linking Apollo to plagues: Φοῖβος ἀκερσεκόμης λοιμοῦ νεφέλην ἀπερύκει ('Unshorn Phoebus repells the cloud of pestilence'). This verse, as it happens, was translated by John Scottus in his commentary on the *De Nuptiis*.[115] John comments that Apollo both repelled and brought pestilence. Given Irish scholarship's familiarity with Martianus and the further availability of this verse in the scholastic tradition represented by John, we can infer that the author of *Togail Troí*, in considering Apollo's relationship to pestilence, may indirectly witness his knowledge of a scholastic tradition going back to this Greek verse.[116]

Hercules's Labours

In contrast to the relatively limited number of texts which tell the story of Jason and Medea and the early history of Troy, there is a wealth of extant antique and medieval *loci* for Hercules's labours. This abundance of material exacerbates the difficulty of identifying the scholarship behind the list of Hercules's labours in *Togail Troí*. The list survives in differing versions in the various recensions of *Togail Troí*.[117] Restricting our attention to the first recension and the earliest manuscript of the second, the labours are as follows:

	TCD 1339 (H 38–64)	L (31198–288)
1.	Geryon	snakes sent by Juno
2.	columns of Hercules	Geryon
3.	Cacus	Cacus
4.	Busiris	Antaeus (as *Athchum mac Terrae*)
5.	Nemean Lion	Busiris
6.	Hydra	Eryx
7.	Antaeus (*Antheum mac Terrae*)	Nemean Lion
8.	Amazons' armour	Cretan bull
9.	'innumerable other deeds'	Hydra
10.	golden fleece	Antaeus (as *Anterum mac Teróe*)
11.		Amazons' armour

115 Lutz, *Iohannis Scotti Annotationes*, 24; John knew the verse as: ΦΟΙΒΟΣ ΧΡΥΣΟΚΟΜΗΣ ΛΟΙΜΟΥ ΝΕΦΕΛΗΝ ΑΠΟΡΡΕΙ; the translation is substantially the same.

116 Hyginus, *fabula* 89, showing knowledge of the same ancient tradition, referred to the depredations of the sea monster sent by Neptune as a *pestilentia*; this wording may also, in a garbled form, have influenced the source read by the Irish author and the Mythographer; Martianus, incidentally, attibutes his Greek verse to one 'Maeonius poeta caecus' ('the Maeonian blind poet'), a title which one would be inclined to understand as Homer, although John himself does not appear to be entirely confident of the attribution; see Lutz, *Iohannis Scotti Annotationes*, 24, and 6: 'MEONIUS sicut et Euagrius antiquissimus poetarum fuit'.

117 A short version of the list, moreover, has been abbreviated from the first recension and incorporated into the introduction to *Scéla Alaxandair*; see Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 101.

12.	Typhoeus (*Tipium*)
13.	Cerberus
14.	Eurytus (as *Euristeum ríg Eucholia*)
15.	columns of Hercules

Leslie Diane Myrick identified Geryon – Cacus – Busiris – Nemean Lion – Hydra – Antaeus – Amazons as the underlying sequence common to both lists, which presumably stood in the original translation.[118] Even once this has been recognized, however, the relationship of the two versions is still to be explicated. It has not been hitherto remarked that, although the second list appears on first examination to be a later, more developed version of the first, it is in fact the first recension which is garbled. In the first recension, the story of the columns of Hercules has been inserted between the feats of the killing of Geryon and Cacus, while in the second the columns are at the conclusion of the list. Yet the second recension correctly reproduces the sequence from *Aeneid* 8, where Virgil depicts Hercules's encounter with Cacus as the adventure which befell him as he was leading back to Italy the cattle he had rescued from Geryon. The original sequence is preserved in the second recension, which, therefore, better preserves the original author's direct engagement with Virgil's text.

Togail Troí's extravagant interest in Hercules's labours is most likely a reflection of *Aeneid* 8, which contains an extended digression on the cult of Hercules in Italy. This stretch of the poem includes a long account of Hercules's killing of Cacus, which is Virgil's most obvious imitation of the Homeric inset narrative. The Irish version of Hercules's encounter with Cacus, though abbreviated in the first recension, clearly follows Virgil directly in the fuller version of the second. I believe that the inclusion itself of a list of Hercules's labours in *Togail Troí* has drawn on Virgil's example. In the episode of *Aeneid* 8 where Aeneas visits Evander's city Pallanteum, Virgil has his own list of the famous labours, put into the mouths of a chorus of cultic worshippers:

> Tum Salii ad cantus incensa altaria circum
> populeis adsunt euincti tempora ramis,
> hic iuuenum chorus, ille senum, qui carmine laudes
> Herculeas et facta ferunt. (*Aeneid* 8.285–8)
>
> Then the Salii come to sing around the burning altars, their brows encircled with poplar boughs, one a troop of young men, the other of elders, who relate in song the praises of Hercules and his deeds.

Though *Togail Troí* may have taken its cue from Virgil, it has not simply reproduced the labours which the chorus of Salii subsequently enumerates. Virgil, who could trust that his Roman audience knew the details of Hercules's labours, is characteristically allusive here, and quite impenetrable to a reader unacquainted with Hercules's cult. The burden of identifying the labours alluded to by the chorus, fortunately, has been removed for later readers by Servius. The grammarian's *enarratio poetarum* here pauses on each item in the list and helpfully narrates the individual encounters. Servius was therefore an invaluable source of information on the hero's biography for later Christian mythographers. The First Vatican Mythographer often follows Servius in a substantial batch of *fabulae*

[118] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 124–5.

devoted to Hercules.[119] Yet comparison of Servius with *Togail Troí* shows that the Irish author's version of the labours in no way is a simple crib from this convenient source. In fact, each individual labour described in *Togail Troí* must be analyzed separately. For example, the second recension has two versions of Hercules's encounter with Antaeus. The second of these two versions, number 10 above, says simply: 'Is é ra thrascair Anterum mac Teróe a nirt gascid' ('it was he who overcame Anterus [*sic*] son of Terra in the strength of battle'). This is effectively identical with the version from the first recension. The first version from the second recension, however, number 4 above, is fuller: 'Is é ro marb in córaid ra boí i lLilia .i. Athchum mac Terrae no marbad a aigedu tri imrascar; ra marb Hercoil é tri nert 7 tri chalmacht' ('it was he who killed the hero who lived in Libya, Athchum [*sic*] son of Terra, who used to kill his guests wrestling with them; Hercules killed him through his strength and bravery').

One suspects that an editor saw fit to correct the relative incompleteness of the short version with recourse to a fuller version, perhaps supplied from a second copy of the text. I have discussed elsewhere how this list of Hercules's labours may have been revised and corrected over time, representing either the efforts of editors in possession of better copies, or perhaps revisors drawing on new mythographic materials freshly acquired by the Irish. In one instance, the Book of Leinster's version of Hercules's encounter with the Hydra was replaced in later copies with a version that shared details with a Latin account of the same incident in an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon revision of Remigius's commentary on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.[120] It has not hitherto been possible to demonstrate whether this revised version of the Hydra episode has been adapted from the Remigian commentary itself, or whether the English and Irish authors drew on common sources. As it happens, the second, better version of Hercules's encounter with Antaeus shares details in its own right with Remigius's original commentary, including the location of the episode in Libya and the emphasis on wrestling as Antaeus's mode of battle.[121] In this case, however, the fuller version from the second recension may have been generated from a fresh reading of Lucan's detailed narration of the meeting between Hercules and Antaeus in *Bellum Civile* 4. Lucan's digression here was itself obviously modeled on Virgil's inset narrative devoted to Hercules and Cacus in *Aeneid* 8; it also bears every sign of being the ultimate source for Remigius and the revisors of his commentary on the *Consolation*. Moreover, Lucan's narrative of Hercules and Antaeus was closely translated into Irish in *In Cath Catharda*. The simultaneous availability of Lucan's poem, an Irish translation of the same, and the commentary tradition represented by Remigius and his revisers make the question of identifying the sources for *Togail Troí* here all the more challenging.

Numerous Latin texts recounting information about the Amazons were known to the Irish, but the story presented in the second recension faithfully follows

119 See Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 33–42, for *fabulae* 1.49–68.

120 Miles, 'Irish evidence', 135–9; I note that, in addition to the material discussed in this article, *Togail Troí*, in its account of Hercules's self-immolation (L 31561–8) shares with the Anglo-Saxon revision of Remigius (K) the placename *sléb Cóeti*, a form identical with the reviser's *monte Coeta*, a corruption of *monte Oeta* from Sevius, at *Aeneid* 3.402; less significantly, K also spells Vulcan *Ulcanus*, the usual Irish spelling; see Bolton, 'The study', 76, 78; see 38–40 for an explanation of the different recensions.

121 Bolton, 'The study', 75; *Togail Troí*'s claim that Antaeus killed his guests was probably repeated from the preceding story of Busiris.

Orosius's account of Hercules and the Amazons from the *Historia*.[122] As for the remaining labours, those in the second recension not shared with the first are a fascinating comment on the author's engagement with Virgil's original text. The episodes of Juno's serpents, the Cretan bull, Typhoeus, Cerberus and Eurytus all derive from the list of Hercules's deeds sung by the chorus of Salii at *Aeneid* 8. 288–305, with details supplied by Servius.[123] Of the labours enumerated in the song of the Salii, *Togail Troí* omits only the *nubigenae bimembres*, 'cloud-born bi-limbed ones'. Servius explains that this is an epithet for the Centaurs. The Irish author curiously ignored this episode, and went instead back to *Aeneid* 5.412, for Hercules's wrestling match with Eryx, an early king of Sicily.[124] With this final addition, the author recovers the last story about Hercules which Virgil and the *enarratio poetarum* could still offer.[125]

Togail Troí*, Commentary and Homer*

Dares's *De Excidio* has an extremely abbreviated account of the famous Judgment of Paris, the fateful beauty contest in which Paris/Alexander ill-advisedly offends Juno and Minerva, and thereby precipitates the Trojan War. The version of the Judgment in *Togail Troí* fundamentally expands the episode, recounting, among other things, the event's beginning at the marriage celebration of Peleus and Thetis, to which all the gods were invited except Discordia. The goddess's exclusion from the celebration provokes her to contrive a means to set the gods against one another. The first recension records:

> INtan íarum ros-gab failte mór ina n-óltigh dochóid Discordía co lubgort na nE[s]-perda co tuc uball óir ass 7 co roscrib inscribend ind .i. hoc est donum pulcerrimae deae, co rotheilg úadi dar seinistir in tige 'na fiadnaisi uile. (H 352–5)[126]
>
> While they were enjoying themselves in their drinking house, Discordia went to the Garden of the Hesperides and took from there a golden apple and wrote on it the inscription: 'this is a gift for the most beautiful goddess'. She then threw it through the window of the house before them.

This apple is, of course, the prize over which Juno, Minerva and Venus enter into their contest, to be judged unwisely by Alexander. The Judgment is retold in several ancient texts, most of which, however, differ significantly from *Togail Troí*. For example, there is no mention in the versions of Hyginus and Fulgentius of any inscription on Discordia's apple, nor are the gods in attendance at the

122 Oros. 1.15.1–10; see Ford, 'Amazon', for further Amazon-lore in Irish texts.

123 The author gives Eurytus of Oechalia incorrectly as 'Euristeum ríg Eucholia' in the second recension in consequence of the fact that he has conflated Servius's note on Eurytus (at *Aeneid* 8.291) with that on Eurysteus which immediately follows.

124 He relied also on Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 1.570.

125 Interestingly, the full list of Hercules's feats found in Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 8.299, which seems to represent a tradition at some remove from the *Aeneid* itself, was evidently not consulted by the Irish author; for Geryon in this Danieline note, see Miles, 'Irish evidence', 143.

126 In the manuscript 'pulcerrimae' is written 'pul serri mae', a phonetic spelling which is not unparalleled in Latin citations in later Irish manuscripts; see Breatnach, 'The pronunciation', 68. In the parallel from the second recension at L 31690, the conventional Latin orthography is retained.

marriage feast named.[127] The version of the episode in *Togail Troí*, however, is significantly paralleled by the First Vatican Mythographer (3.5 'De nuptiis Pelei et Thetidis'). In addition to the orderly narrative in which the episode is told, the Mythographer shares with *Togail Troí* a nearly identical wording in the inscription on the apple: 'pulcherrimae deae donum'.

Zoretti cannot identify the source for the Mythographer's version of the Judgment, but suspects it was some form of Virgilian commentary, now lost.[128] As it happens, there is a close parallel to the Mythographer's account preserved in the copy of Servius Danielis in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Lat. 1750 (= **P**).[129] The text in **P**, while it it is clearly not the Mythographer's immediate source, does preserve a near identical wording for the inscription: 'hoc est donum deae pulcherrime' (at *Aeneid* 1.27).[130] This manuscript preserves also an abbreviated version of the Bern Scholia, including the scholium pertaining to Jason's tasks quoted above. The fact that this version of Servius Danielis preserves a form of the inscription identical with that in *Togail Troí* is further evidence that its version of the commentary is similar to what was read in medieval Ireland by the author and revisers of *Togail Troí*. The version of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis in this copy of Servius Danielis in **P** is itself too brief to have been the source for *Togail Troí*, but the two texts have manifestly drawn on the same source.

While Zorzetti cannot identify the Virgilian commentary he suspects lies behind the Mythographer's Judgment of Paris, he notes that the anonymous *Excidium Troiae*, a text of probably early-medieval composition, provides a close parallel.[131] For example, the *Excidium Troiae* has the inscription on the golden apple, but records this as: 'pulchriori dee donum' ('for the more beautiful [= most beautiful] goddess').[132] The *Excidium Troiae*'s version of the details of Alexander's judgment, however, differs significantly from the version shared by *Togail Troí*, Servius Danielis in **P** and the Mythographer. Yet for the account of the marriage-feast of Peleus and Thetis itself the first recension of *Togail Troí* is surprisingly close to the *Excidium Troiae*. Shared details include the naming of Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo and Mercury as present at the marriage, and Jupiter's evasive instruction to the goddesses to go to Alexander for a judgment, related in direct discourse in both texts.[133] There is further coincidence

127 Hyginus, *fabula* 92; Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 3.7; see Ehrhart, *The Judgment*, 10–13, 23–7; the motif of the inscription, translated into French, does occur in the version of this episode in the *Roman de Troie* (Constans, 1: 198, vv. 3863–8), but this version otherwise does not depart significantly from Dares.

128 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xxxiv, and 146, n. 641.

129 For **P**, see the comments in Stocker and Travis, *Servianorum in Vergilii*, ix; see also above, n. 90.

130 The scholium is included only in the *apparatus criticus* in Thilo's edition, but has been accepted as Danieline in the Harvard Servius and included in the text.

131 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xxxiv, and 146, n. 641.

132 Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, 3, 58; the editors, at xv, 60, suggest that this substitution of the comparative for the superlative, one Romance idiom among many in the text, reveals that author was probably French.

133 Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, 3: 'Merito cena deorum appellata est; in qua cena fuerunt Iupiter, Neptunus, Apollo musarum deus, et Mercurius; necnon et tres dee, id est Iuno, Minerva, et Venus . . . "Ergo inter vos iudex esse non possum; sed dabo vobis iudicem qui inter vos iudicet . . . Ite ad Ideum montem qui super Troia est, et ibi habebitis Paridem pastorem; solus inter vos poterit iudicare, quia iudex iustus est"'.

in style which suggests that the *Excidium Troiae* and *Togail Troí* are generically related. Both rewrite inherited commentary in a more linear and narrative form, with frequent resort to direct discourse. More interestingly, the *Excidium Troiae* at several points employs a question-answer format which reproduces the classroom exchanges between instructor and student, and which recalls the catechistic format typical of Hiberno-Latin exegesis borrowed into vernacular exegesis and narrative.[134] Beyond this question of form, the content shared at this point between the *Excidium Troiae* and *Togail Troí*, and apparently available to the Mythographer as well as Servius Danielis, reminds us of the wealth of Virgilian commentary which may have been known in the early Middle Ages, but is now lost.[135]

Among the most interesting 'interpolated' material in *Togail Troí* is that which corresponds to the Trojan history told by Homer. Homer, of course, was the very poet whom the *De Excidio Troiae Historia* was intended to refute. Accordingly, the insertion of this material into the *De Excidio*'s narrative frame is striking. Most obvious among these 'Homeric' additions are *Togail Troí*'s accounts of the capture of Briseis and Chryseis by the Greeks (L 32681–92), and the capture of the horses of the Thracian king Rhesus (L 32693–703). Both these episodes are absent from the first recension, but present in the second and third. The story of Achilles's capture of Briseis and Chryseis following his raid on the Trojan towns Thebes and Lyrnessos manifestly draws on a source shared with the First Vatican Mythographer (3.6–7: 'Fabula de Achille et Agamemnone et mortis Hectoris').[136] Both texts recount how the Greeks are beset with plague following the capture of the girls, in consequence of which Chryseis is returned to her father Chryses and Agamemnon demands Briseis of Achilles, inciting the hero to withdraw from the war. Zorzetti suspects that the Mythographer's source was that from which he also drew his account of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis which is shared with the *Excidium Troiae*.[137] The capture of Briseis and Chryseis has been integrated into the Irish tale in one of the repetitive truces provided by Dares's narrative frame (Dares 22). As the episode could be considered simply a doublet to Dares's own pecular version of the same motif, in which it is on account of the Trojan princess Polyxena that Achilles withdraws from the war (Dares 27, 30), the introduction of this Homeric incident into Dares's history does not introduce any significant contradiction in the Irish text.

The contradiction which results from the inclusion of the episode of the Thracian Rhesus, however, created problems. Virgil told how the episode of Rhesus's horses had been depicted in the history of the Trojan War in the temple of Juno, as read tearfully by Aeneas:

134 See, for example, the account of the origin of the Nereids at Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, 3; for the Irish catechistic format, see above, n. 105; and compare the second recension of *Togail Troí* at L 30921–5.

135 For the *Excidium*'s sources and vernacular analogues, which I argue parallel those of *Togail Troí*, see Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, xi–xviii, lxiii.

136 For example, *Togail Troí* shares with the Mythographer the form *Gressida* for 'Chryseida', and has *Herisi sacairt Apaill* for the Mythographer's *Heresi sacerdoti Apollinis*, a shared corruption for 'Chryses', the girl's father: 'Ra baí issin brait da ingin rochaema Herisi sacairt Apaill. Brésida 7 Gressida a n-anmand' (L 32684–6).

137 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 117, n. 645.

> nec procul hinc Rhesi niueis tentoria uelis
> agnoscit lacrimans, primo quae prodita somno
> Tydides multa uastabat caede cruentus,
> ardentisque auertit equos in castra prius quam
> pabula gustassent Troiae Xanthumque bibissent. (*Aeneid* 1.469–73)
>
> Not far away he sees through his tears the snowy-canvassed tents of Rhesus, which, betrayed in their first evening's sleep, the blood-stained son of Tydeus laid waste with great slaughter, and turned the fiery steeds away to the camp, before they should taste Trojan pasture or drink of the Xanthus.

The importance of Rhesus's horses to the Greeks was that it had been prophesied that should they eat the grass around the city or drink the waters of the Xanthus, Troy would not fall. *Togail Troí* relates how Rhesus arrives at Troy's defence late at night after the city's gates have been shut, and therefore makes camp outside the gates:

> In tan daruacht immorro ro mairned do Diomid 7 do Ulix a bith i lloṅgphort. 7 ra faídsetsaide Dolón fer do Grécaib d'ḟégad 7 do thascélad ḟorru. 7 ó thanicside. 7 fiss scél in loṅgphuirt leis. Rachuaid Diomíd 7 Ulix da n-innaigid 7 daberat fúabairt loṅgphuirt forru. 7 focerddat a n-ár 7 marbait in rig .i. Résius. 7 daberat a dá ech carpait leo dochum na scor. (L 32697–703)
>
> When he arrived, however, it was revealed to Diomedes and Ulysses that he had encamped, and they sent Dolon, a Greek, to spy and to reconnoitre them. When he returned with intelligence of the encampment Diomede and Ulysses marched against them and stormed their camp, and slaughtered them and slew the king, Rhesus, and carried away his two chariot-horses back to their camp.

The point of interest in this passage is its curious transformation of its immediate source, Servius, probably read in the expanded Danieline version:

> Rhesus rex Thraciae fuit . . . qui cum ad Troiae venisset auxilia clausisque iam portis tentoria locavisset in litore, Dolone prodente Troiano, qui missus fuerat speculator, a Diomede et Vlixe est interfectus, qui et ipsi speculatum venerant; abductique sunt equi, quibus pendebant fata Troiana, *ut, si pabulo Troiano usi essent vel de Xantho Troiae fluvio bibissent, Troia perire non posset*. (at *Aeneid* 1.469)
>
> Rhesus was the king of Thracia . . . who, when he had brought his troops and, finding the gates of the camp shut, dressed his tents on the shore, by the betrayal of the Trojan Dolon, who had been sent as a spy, was killed by Diomedes and Ulysses, who had themselves come to spy; and the horses on which the fate of Troy depended were taken away, *that is, if they ate Trojan fodder or drank from the Trojan river Xanthus, Troy could not fall*.

The idiosyncratic rendering of this passage in Irish hinges on the figure of Dolon. Vulgate Servius in this note recalled Book 10 of the *Iliad*, where Dolon was sent by the Trojans to spy on the Greeks, but was subsequently intercepted by Diomedes and Ulysses. To save his life he treacherously gave them information on Rhesus's camp, but was slain all the same. Dares tells a conflicting account in which Dolon is intercepted while on a bonafide embassy from Priam, but is not slain, and later in the war is one of the Trojans who betray the city by opening its gates to the Greeks (22, 39–40). The Irish author reproduced none of the ancient versions exactly, but apparently understood Servius's 'qui missus fuerat speculator a Diomede et Vlixe' to be one clause, and translated: 'ra faídsetsaide Dolón fer do Grécaib d'ḟégad' ('they [i.e. Diomedes and Ulysses] sent Dolon,

a Greek, to spy'). Reading a Latin ablative of agent with *a* and interpreting Dolon to be a spy sent by Diomedes and Ulysses, the Irish author decided that Dolon should be a Greek. The Irish author almost certainly read a text of the commentary which omitted the crucial word 'Troiano' by which Dolon had been originally identified as Trojan. As it happens, this ommission is encountered in **P**, the manuscript of Servius Danielis which preserves other material closely echoed in *Togail Troí*, for example the inscription on Discordia's apple discussed above. The Irish author's knowledge of the prophecy of Rhesus's horses, absent from Servius proper, further suggests that it was the Danieline version he read.[138] The omission of 'Troiano' is met also in the Mythographer (2.101), who, however, here reproduces Vulgate Servius, a version also without 'Troiano' as in **P**, nearly verbatim. The Irish author nevertheless saw that Rhesus met his death at the hands of the two Greek heroes, so he cannot be said to have miscontrued Servius's 'a Diomede et Vlixe est interfectus' entirely.

The change of Dolon's nationality, however, results in a contradiction with his later appearance in Dares, where he is one of the Trojan conspirators. The obvious answer to the problem has been adopted: the Irish author omits Dolon from his translation of the chapters which describe the conspiracy. The author's faith in his Virgilian commentary at this point has led him even to delete the earlier occurrence of Dolon from Dares 22. Here, describing a night-time embassy by Diomedes and Ulysses from the Greeks, Dares explains that 'occurrit illis ex Troianis Dolon' ('they met Dolon as he was coming from the Trojans'): the latter is likewise on an embassy, from Priam. The Irish author evasively translates: 'Tan, trá, dochúatar na techta isin chathraig rochomraicset fri hócu do Throiannaib' (H 1054–5) ('When the envoys entered the city they met some Trojan warriors'). It is interesting that this Irish deletion of Dolon occurs already in the first recension, from which I here quote. This is surprising given that the episode of Rhesus's horses which turns Dolon into a Greek in the first place does not occur in the first recension, but survives only in the second and third recensions. This proves that the episode of Rhesus's horses, as, doubtless, the capture of Briseis and Chryseis to which it is joined, were present already in the common source of the first and the second recensions. The episodes were edited out of the text we call the first recension, and were replaced with a long rhetorical set piece in praise of Hector (H 1067–102), which does not occur in the second recension. Yet the differences between the first and second recension here demonstrate how the first recension text, while in a sense the oldest of the versions, cannot be considered in any simple way the basis for the later versions.

The principal relevance of the episodes of Briseis and Chryseis and the capture of Rhesus's horses lies in the fact that they are Virgilian, derived from both the *Aeneid* and the commentary along side which the poem was read. We cannot be sure that the Irish author knew them to have been ultimately derived from Homer, but we can see that he certainly judged them to be superior to Dares. The author's cavalier attitude to Dares's text does not suggest poor understanding, but quite the contrary. The Irish author's consistent preference for Virgil's poetic

138 L 32694–6: 'Iss ed ra baí i tarṅgeri accusum da ṅgeltaitis eich Réis fér na Troi 7 co n-ebtaís usce srotha Chaint ná ragtha arin Troí'; less likely, the author simply recalled *Aeneid* 1.473, which Servius Danielis obviously paraphrases; for the conditions for Troy's fall, see also below, 130; interestingly, the Irish author does not show knowledge of Servius Danielis's fuller version of the Dolon episode at *Aeneid* 12.347.

version of the Trojan War over Dares's prosaic version precisely anticipates the critical judgment of these two traditions that has become standard since the Renaissance. The medieval Irish scholar, like scholars today, favoured the better writer. Considering the extent of the author's efforts to recreate Virgil and Homer in *Togail Troí*, it is a distortion to speak of this material as 'interpolated' into a translation of the *De Excidio*. It is just as accurate to say that the *De Excidio* has been mined by a clever scholar to provide a frame for an ambitious recreation of the Troy glimpsed in Virgil, clarified by Servius, but drawn ultimately from Homer.

The 'interpolated' material in *Togail Troí* discussed in this chapter has all been of a frankly scholarly character. That is, it has represented the eclectic gathering and critical weighing of disparate ancient texts on classical mythology and history. I have characterized this as a nascent medieval Irish 'classical studies'. The question can be raised at this juncture whether *Togail Troí* provides evidence for what happened to Irish scholarship following the flight of scholars to the continent, during the period that the Irish are acknowledged to have contributed to the Carolingian revival, but which is commonly judged to have seen the eclipse of classical studies on the island itself.

Text and Commentary

The abundance of Virgilian commentary available to the Irish makes it difficult to prove in certain instances that the Irish scholar who authored *Togail Troí* alludes to Virgil directly, and not to the Servian, Danieline and Filargirian corpus. Hofman argues that the copy of Servius used in Ireland by the glossator of Priscian was one in which the commentary had been preserved alongside Virgil's text, like the Bern manuscripts of the Filargirian commentaries copied on the continent.[139] Hofman draws on suggestions made by Holtz, who views this format, where the poetic text is copied alongside its commentary in parallel columns on the same page, as an Irish innovation.[140] If Holtz is correct and this is the kind of manuscript which was used later by the adaptors of the classics into Irish, the hope to draw a clear-cut distinction between the influence of scholarly commentary and that of the poetry itself is misguided. Such a distinction would need be based on the competing antique tradition, reasserted on the continent in the Carolingian Revival and continuing today, which transmitted commentary and text independently, as separate works.

The question of whether Carolingian mythological handbooks like that of the First Vatican Mythographer, or commentaries such as that of Remigius, were consulted for *Togail Troí* bears on the question of the fullness of Ireland's libraries in the obscure period from the ninth century onwards. If agreements between *Togail Troí* and the Mythographer are due to shared sources and not to direct borrowing, it is reasonable to assume that these sources sat in Irish libraries throughout the period, lost or worn out only subsequent to the writing of the vernacular adaptations. The most recent editor of *Thebaid* 9 has argued from at least one passage in *Togail na Tebe* that the Irish possessed a copy of the *Thebaid*

139 Hofman, 'Some new facts', 211.
140 Holtz, 'Les manuscrits'.

which was independent of the tradition represented by the lone Carolingian manuscript (**P**), and closer to the antique text.[141] The argument is made on the evidence of a passage in the Irish which appears to translate a correct antique reading which is, according to Dewar's suggestion, corrupt in the surviving tradition. The evidence is hardly certain, as Dewar concedes, but it raises the question whether the Irish scholar responsible for the eventual translation of the poem in the twelfth century could have read a text that had been inherited directly from antiquity, without the intermediary of the Carolingian edition.

Given the Irish transmission of many of the sources drawn on by the First Vatican Mythographer, including the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii* attributed to Filargirius, the Bern Scholia and the *Brevis Expositio*, and given the Irish affinities of the Remigian commentaries also consulted by the Mythographer, it is not improbable that some of the Mythographer's other sources, such as Lactantius Placidus's commentary on the *Thebaid*, could also have had an Irish transmission. The Irish adaptor of the *Thebaid* drew on this commentary, which the editor of the commentary argues was transmitted, in the Irish manner and like the commentary attributed to Filargirius, in the margins of manuscripts of the *Thebaid*; this was reconstituted as a continuous commentary in the Carolingian period.[142] It is suggestive that **P**, the Carolingian copy of the *Thebaid*, includes in its ancestry a copy written in Insular letters, and that the hyparchetype of Lactantius Placidus's commentary was in the same script.[143] The Irish adaptor of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* used antique scholia shared with the two surviving Carolingian commentaries to the poem, and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*'s reliance on Servius is unsurprising.[144] Given Hofman's argument that an Irish-style 'commentated edition' lies behind the Virgilian glosses to Priscian, we can infer a similar format and provenance for the copy of the *Aeneid* read by the author of *Togail Troí*. That is, a text with parallel commentary, and possibly pre-Carolingian in provenance.

Contrary to our initial assumption that the authors of the classical tales were indebted to the Carolingian Revival, it is possible that their efforts drew primarily on Irish scholarship of the preceding centuries. There are, however, limits to the claims that can be made for the continuity of classical studies in Ireland, as much of the argument, it can be admitted, rests on inference. In addition, the question of the sources for the learned passages in *Togail Troí* is by no means settled in every instance. So, for example, in the case of Hercules's rescue of Hesione, *Togail Troí* and the First Vatican Mythographer appear to draw independently on different passages in Servius and Servius Danielis. The mention of a plague sent by Apollo, however, suggests a shared source, now lost. This possible non-extant source, which obviously had a Servian character but was not identical to any surviving passage of Servius's commentary, draws into question the reliability of the assumption made in all other cases that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, Servius and Servius Danielis have been consulted directly.

The First Vatican Mythographer's unidentified sources include lost scholia

141 Dewar, 'A note'; see also Dewar, *Statius*, 81–2 (this **P** is to be distinguished from the manuscript of Servius Danielis discussed above).

142 See Meyer, 'The Middle-Irish version', ix; and Sweeney, *Prolegomena*, 84.

143 Reynolds, *Texts*, 394–9; Sweeney, *Lactantii Placidi Commentum*, x; however, for the error of inferring an Insular transmission based solely on the presence of Insular script, see Dumville, 'The early medieval', 133–44.

144 See above, 57.

to Ovid, additional scholia to the *Aeneid*, and material related to the *Excidium Troiae*.[145] We can speculate whether these sources, like the identified ones, have any Irish connection. The Mythographer's Trojan chapters (3.4–11), which include the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and Achilles's capture of Briseis and Chryseis, are from unidentified sources, but have been shown to have parallels in *Togail Troí* and the *Excidium Troiae*. The earliest manuscript of the *Excidium Troiae*, though Italian probably from the ninth century, was copied from an exemplar in Insular script; there is evidence that the manuscript's collection of texts itself was made in an Insular center, perhaps Péronne.[146] The sole copy of the First Vatican Mythographer likewise betrays in its orthography a phase of transmission in Insular script.[147]

As for the Mythographer's interest in Ovidiana, Zorzetti half-heartedly proposes that material has been learned from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but points with more confidence to the use of the *Narrationes Fabularum Ovidianarum*.[148] The *Narrationes* are a prose paraphrase of the *Metamorphoses* which accompanies the poem in one branch of the manuscript tradition.[149] Here again, the availability of commentary obscures whether the classical poem itself has been read. It is probably significant that one of the *fabulae* which Zorzetti thinks may have been learned directly from Ovid, namely the story of Medea's marriage to Aegeus and her attempt to murder her stepson Theseus, is found nowhere else among early Latin authors, but completes the story of Medea in the second recension of *Togail Troí*.[150] In this instance, given the rarity of the story, the evidence suggests a shared scholastic source, if Ovid was not consulted directly. Yet Ovid was not unavailable in Insular centers. A fragment of the *Ars Amatoria* survives in a manuscript copied in a Welsh scriptorium in the ninth century, and Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 363, written in the late ninth century in an Irish center on the continent, preserves excerpts from the *Metamorphoses*.[151] There is little reason to doubt that *Togail na Tebe* and *Riss in Mundtuirc* at least show close reading of the *Metamorphoses* in medieval Ireland, as noted above. These texts, unfortunately, postdate *Togail Troí*, and in consequence offer no direct evidence of the reading available to the first translator of Dares's *De Excidio* into Irish. As for the late-antique study of the poets, examples of which we have seen survived into early-medieval Ireland, there is no evidence that Ovid was studied as such in antiquity, as there is no body of ancient commentary that would put him in the company of Virgil or Statius. Yet the poet's poems are well evidenced as medieval school texts from at least the late eleventh century, when we find

145 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xxxiv.

146 Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, lxxvii–lxxviii.

147 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xlviii; Zorzetti's brief discussion does not consider whether Insular features could evidence the transmission of the text's sources, for example, the Insular transmission of Servius, whom the Mythographer quotes extensively; for the view that the First Vatican Mythographer was himself Irish, a theory that has been forgotten in most recent discussions, see Elliott and Elder, 'A critical edition', 198–9; and Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, 1: 162–8.

148 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xix, xxxiv, n. 120, and notes to the individual *fabulae*.

149 See Reynolds, *Texts*, 278.

150 See above, 77.

151 See Hunt, *Saint Dunstan's*; for the Bern manuscript, see above, 37. Ovid's poems appear to have been transmitted independently of one another, and the presence of the *Ars* this early in the islands need not imply the existence of any other work; see Reynolds, *Texts*, 257–84.

glossed copies of the *Metamorphoses*.[152] Commentary written as glosses, as well as appended texts such as *accessus*, become common by the twelfth century for most of Ovid's works.[153]

The material surveyed in this and the preceding chapters has demonsrated that medieval Irish scholarship was characterized by a passionate interest in classical mythology. What is missing from the Irish record is a discrete collection of classical mythology such as it is certain a scholar with access to Irish texts could easily have assembled. Instead, credit for this undertaking goes earliest to the First Vatican Mythographer. The Mythographer had the benefit of Irish-transmitted materials, but there is no evidence that he was himself Irish. I know of just one piece of evidence that the Mythographer may have had an Irish contemporary, if not forerunner. Bern 363's copy of Servius's commentary on Virgil is remarkable for its extensive marginal notations naming numerous Irish scholars of the ninth century.[154] In a passage indirectly following a discussion of the mythological narrative of Castor and Pollux at *Aeneid* 6.121–6, Servius's text has been expanded with the short note: 'lege hic libr*um* fabular*um* robartaich' (fo. 128r).[155] The latter is certainly the Irish name Robartach, and we can probably understand: 'here read the book of *fabulae* of Robartach'. Here we have evidence for a work of Irish mythography, probably in Latin, to be dated no later than the third quarter of the ninth century, now lost. Unfortunately, there are problems with the evidence which go beyond the odd Latinity of the passage. The note does not follow Servius's discussion of Castor and Pollux directly, but in fact follows an intervening syntactical scholium on Virgil's phrase 'arasque tenebat' (*Aeneid* 6.124). Moreover, the formula *lege hic* generally occurs in marginal notation in this codex.[156] Hagen proposed that the passage was meant originally to refer to Castor and Pollux, but that the scribe misplaced the note in transcription. However, it is an odd coincidence that the note, even if by accident, happens to draw the reader to a discussion of precisely this phrase 'arasque tenebat', not in a lost work of Irish mythography, but in Macrobius's *Saturnalia* (3.2.7–9). Macrobius in fact does elucidate what Servius left unclear. If it was a damaged text which led a marginal notation to be incorporated into the text at the wrong point, is it possible that the form 'robartaich' might have begun as '(mac) rob*ii*'? Against this, Macrobius is not cited elsewhere in this codex, and no one familiar with the work of this scribe in particular would think him capable of such a mistake. Moreover, the *Saturnalia* would hardly be termed a *liber fabularum* by any except the most reductive critics. But enough doubt can be cast on the existence of a *liber fabularum* by an Irish Robartach that the tantalizing note must be judged a dead-end.

Leslie Diane Myrick suggested that the classical texts translated into Irish were chosen for their ready generic affinities with native Irish narrative.[157] Myrick herself sees some of the obvious problems in this view, and notes that the criteria for selection must also, of necessity, have included availability. At this

152 See Coulson, *The Vulgate*, 2–6.
153 For a discussion of a select group of commentaries on poems other than the *Metamorphoses*, see Hexter, *Ovid*.
154 See above, 37.
155 See Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus*, 2: 235.
156 See Hagen, *Codex*, xxxix–xl.
157 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 73–80.

juncture we face a circular argument, as the classical tales themselves provide almost the entire evidence for what classical narrative was available in Ireland's libraries in the Middle Ages. That is to say, we cannot know if other texts, for example, Perseus or Terence, were available but were not chosen to be translated. The best we can do is look to the translations themselves to see what common denomintor they share, beyond availability which must be taken as a given. Centrality to the mainstream of early-medieval education and scholarship is one obvious factor which these texts have in common. The educational value of these texts is located in part, then as today, in their valuable model for elegant Latinity. But for the early Middle Ages especially, these works' educational value must have seemed to reside also in the fact that they had been the subjects of late-antique grammatical instruction, and the *enarratio poetarum* above all else. In Louis Holtz's opinion, the Irish were the first to put these two invaluable entities of early-medieval reading, text and commentary, together on the same page. Ovid alone of the great epic poets did not have an antique tradition of commentary that we know of. It may be no coincidence that Irish acquaintance with his work is manifested only in the latest period of the Irish classical tales, after a tradition of commentary on his poems has taken hold in Europe. Otherwise, the literary appreciation of the classics displayed in the Irish classical tales is overwhelmingly an appreciation borne out of scholarly exegesis of a decidedly early-medieval or Carolingian character. Dares's *De Excidio Troiae Historia* was, like Virgil and Statius, in the mainstream of medieval education, but strictly speaking was hardly an object of study in itself, and certainly not for its Latinity. *Togail Troí*, however, amply demonstrates the value of Dares for the medieval reader of the classics. This was that it provided a narrative frame in which Virgil's account of Rome's Trojan foundation could be read, and into which could be assembled a wealth of classical mythology culled from both the poem and the commentary tradition.

Conclusion

The First Vatican Mythographer is an invaluable witness to what a medieval scholar could collect of classical mythology from the allusive accounts of Virgil, Statius and Ovid, and from the antique commentaries to the same. Zorzetti stresses that the Mythographer drew on no antique encyclopedia. The sporadic resemblances to Hyginus's *Fabulae* owe to shared sources, with the medieval author independently replicating the achievement of the late antique.[158] There is no good reason to deny the Irish author of *Togail Troí* a comparable feat. However, the genres in which the respective authors wrote were wholly different. Unlike the Mythographer's text, which is preoccupied with the genealogies of the gods and shares features with the moralizing tradition of Fulgentius's *Mitologiae*, the Irish author's text is wholly narrative in intent. The Irish text is a creative response, not to the moralizing school of Fulgentius, but to the epic poetic tradition, which had been fused with the philological and historical tradition of antique commentary. Even more clearly, *Togail Troí* is a literary artist's response to the antique novel itself as represented by Dares's *De Excidio*. In this

158 Zorzetti, *Le premier*, xxxv.

case, the term 'interpolated material', regularly used by modern critics for the Irish author's additions, carries an unfortunate connotation, as it suggests that the material is secondary to *Togail Troí*. In fact, this material belongs to the creative origin of a text which was never meant to be a translation of Dares. *Togail Troí* was clearly intended to be something much more significant, a virtual restoration in prose of the Troy of the *poetae* of Greece and Rome.

It is hoped that this relatively incomplete treatment of the antique material used to enrich *Togail Troí* dispels any doubt that scholastic sources have been exploited not only to display the author's reading, but also to convey a humanist's enthusiasm for ancient tradition. The Irish author time and again evinces his literary appreciation through the wit and creativity of the transformation of his models, a technique known to ancient educators as *imitatio*. In the following chapters I explore how such imitation was a technique of the classicism of the school of Irish classical tales, and, by extension, a characteristic of contemporary Irish saga.

3

CLASSICISM AND *TOGAIL TROÍ*

Narrative Genre and Tale-Types

In his influential 'Towards a history of classical influences in Ireland', William Stanford did much to popularize the view that the classical tales in Irish were attempts to construct typical Irish *scéla* out of material inherited from classical antiquity. The argument rests on the conviction that the classical tales were intended as entertainment for a class whose aesthetic tastes are already exampled for us in the native prose literature of Middle Irish. While some adaptation to Irish convention is unmistakable in this corpus, the argument for gaelicization has been refined in recent criticism by the assertion that the classical tales, for all their affinity with the native *scél*, belong properly to the field of medieval Irish historiography. Leslie Diane Myrick has argued that the drive to translate Latin epic in Ireland was conditioned by the belief that the poems of Virgil and Statius were, like the Alexander and Troy texts, works of history.[1] Poppe has even suggested that the occurrence of several of the tales together in the Book of Ballymote is evidence that the classical tales were thought of as a distinct group, even an historical cycle in agreement with the French model.[2]

A strict division between history and literary fiction, however, is, as Poppe reminds us, hardly valid for medieval texts. For example, Poppe has demonstrated how medieval Irish audiences might have had an expectation for the presence of allegory, even in native texts ostensibly given over to a plain narration of events from Irish history.[3] At the most basic level, *scéla* could be received as moral exempla, a common expectation of literary texts across medieval Europe. Given the ubiquity of the exemplum in the Middle Ages, there is no need to doubt that the genre would have been familiar to the authors of the classical tales.[4] There is little in the classical tales, however, which recalls the characteristics of the exemplum. Overt Christian moralizing is absent, and the authors nowhere take advantage of the pre-Christian context even to consider the vicissitudes of Fortune. Regarding the connection of the classical tales to historiography specifically, the tradition of historical writing in medieval Ireland was unusually rich and varied. There is strong evidence that texts such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, for all their fantastic content, were viewed by their authors as works of history.[5] Instances of

1 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 70–1.
2 Poppe, 'The classical epic', 9–15; there are complications to this view, however, as Poppe notes that the notion of a 'cycle' was slow to form in France; the idea of the tales as historiography is refined by Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles'.
3 Poppe, 'Reconstructing'.
4 See Ní Uallacháin, *Exempla Gaeilge*, for the existence of the genre in Irish.
5 See Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle'.

vocabulary and imagery from saga literature such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge* shared with classical tales such as *Togail Troí* lead us to infer that the authors recognized some affinity between these two kinds of texts. As for historiography in Irish which did not deal with native material exclusively, synchronic world history, based on the *Chronica* of Eusebius-Jerome, was a remarkable preoccupation of the Irish intelligentsia from at least the ninth century.[6] As *Scéla Alaxandair* and the third recension of *Togail Troí* both commence with synchronisms drawn from the corpus of synchronic history, a connection in the minds of the authors between this learned genre and the classical tales can be accepted as certain.[7]

Myrick proposes that the adaptability of a given Latin text to a pre-existing Irish narrative genre might have encouraged the initial effort to turn the Latin text into Irish in the first place.[8] So, for example, the authors of *Imtheachta Aeniasa* saw the potential to produce a text conforming to the expectations of the native Irish *immram*, 'voyage tale'. This understanding of the classical tales, however, fails to convince, in part due to the ill-fit that they in reality make with native tales with which they were supposedly meant to be grouped.[9] Moreover, the idea is somewhat contradicted by the evidence of the so-called Tale List of Middle Irish, the very texts on which the theory of pre-existing tale-types is based. The Tale List, dated to the tenth century in its original form by Proinsias Mac Cana, is preserved in two versions, and lists the narratives which, so the text tells us, the medieval Irish *fili* knew by heart and was ready to recite as part of his professional qualifications.[10] In both versions, a *fili*'s repertoire is inventoried according to tale-types. For example, *tána*, 'cattle raids', are listed as a group, represented by examples such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Táin Bó Regamain*; *catha*, 'battle tales', include *Cath Maige Tured* and *Cath Maige Mucrime*. What is most interesting in the Tale Lists as regards the classical tales is that one version, Mac Cana's List B, includes *Togail Troí* and *Scéla Alaxandair*.[11]

In Mac Cana's view, the taxonomy of tale-types displayed in the Tale List reflects oral tradition especially.[12] If the tale-types did serve as mnemonic categories for the preservation of traditional Irish narrative in an oral context, the anomalous occurrance of *Togail Troí* and *Scéla Alaxandair*, tales manifestly originating from outside the traditional oral sphere of Irish narrative, requires special comment. However, hopes that the position of *Togail Troí* and *Scéla Alaxandair* in the Tale List would throw light on the generic expectations which the authors brought to these texts are disappointed. *Scéla Alaxandair* has been added in a tenth-century addition to the beginning of the original list, in a miscellaneous collection described by the author as *gnáthscéla*, 'ordinary, familiar tales'.[13] *Scél*

6 See, most conveniently, Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend*; and Ó Cróinín, *The Irish Sex Aetates*.

7 See also the synchronisms in *Togail Troí* at L 31502–13; and Gilla in Chomdid's *A Rí richid reidig dam*, for which, see above, 48.

8 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 73–80.

9 As Myrick herself acknowledges, *From the De Excidio*, 75–7.

10 See Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, 84, for an overview of the development of the lists.

11 List B is preserved in the tenth-century prose tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise*, 'The Strategem of Urard mac Coise'; Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, 33–7, accepts the *Airec* as the authentic work of Urard mac Coise (died 990); the Tale List, incidentally, is the only place where the title *Scéla Alaxandair* has been preserved.

12 Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, 20–32.

13 Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, 72, 87–91.

does not otherwise occur as a tale-type in the list, and the nonce category *gnáth-scéla* appears to confirm that the *scél* was not a distinct type.[14] The word *scéla* in *Scéla Alaxandair*, moreover, probably does not reflect native Irish taxonomy so much as the principal Latin source, Orosius's *Historiarum adversum Paganos Libri VII*. The Irish called this *lebuir na scél*, 'the books of the stories', where *scél* obviously is the simple translation of *historia* in the Latin title.[15] *Togail Troí* is mentioned only in the same tenth-century revised version, and is predictably added to the list of *togla*, 'destructions'. The *togail* of the title, however, likewise derives directly from *excidium*, 'destruction', in the title of the primary Latin source, Dares Phrygius's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*. Interestingly, both versions of the Tale List include tales from the learned synchronic pseudo-history of Ireland drawn, ultimately, from Latin sources such as Eusebius/Jerome, under the tale-type *tochomlud*, 'a setting forth'. The tales named, however, deal only with the legendary settlement of Ireland itself, with the addition of the settlement of the Picts in Northern Britain. Analogous learned texts pertaining to synchronic world history and drawing on the same traditions, such as the *Sex Aetates Mundi*, are not mentioned. The remaining classical tales probably post-date the Tale Lists altogether.

Ancient Literary Theory

Though medieval Ireland produced treatises on poetic art and discussions of the functions of the poet in law texts, metacritical examinations by prose authors of the literature from the period are scarce.[16] With native commentary on literary theory in short supply, it is worthwhile considering what the Irish knew of late-antique theories common in contemporary Christian Europe. Concerning the relationship between history and literary fiction, Cicero in the *De Inventione*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian all record a scheme that distinguishes narratives strictly according to the verisimilitude of the events described.[17] The content of this ancient scheme, with added Christian commentary, is reproduced in Irish in at least one place, in a note from a fifteenth-century miscellany, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B. 512. The note has become muddled in transmission; I present an emended text:

> Foillsighter na focail ar tri coraib .i. scel 7 arramainte 7 stair. In scel imorro ni firinne e, 7 ni cosmail re firinne; 7 do dicuir in feallsamlacht e do reir mar adeir Macrobius 7 do dichuir in diacht amail adeir Pol ad Timotheum: inaines fablus deuita .i. sechain na sceoil dimmainecha. An arrmainti imorro innisidh na neche do fetfaidhe do denam gen go dernadh iat; 7 ni diultann fellsamlacht na diacht in cinel sin. An stair imorro foillsiugad na nethedh do reir firinne do-rinnedh; et in stair imorro ata diacht 7 feallsamlacht le 7cetera.[18]

[14] For *scél* in the three-fold classification *senchas*, *filidecht* and *scéla*, where *scéla*, 'historical and mythological lore cast in the form of separate narratives', especially overlaps with *senchas*, 'traditional knowledge', see Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, 23–4.

[15] See above, 56.

[16] Sims-Williams and Poppe, 'Medieval Irish'; and Poppe, 'Reconstructing'.

[17] Cic. *Inv*. 19; *Rhet. ad Her*. 1.8.13; and Quin. *Inst*. 2.4.2.

[18] Adapted from Ó Cuív, 'Scél'; several letters lost when the manuscript page was trimmed have been silently restored; on the emendation 'is ni is cosmail' to 'ni cosmail', compare the *Rhetorica*

> ni cosmail] is ni is cosmail; do reir . . . Macrobius] transposed from preceding sentence
>
> Narrations are set out in three ways: *fabula*, *argumentum* and *historia*. A *fabula* is not the truth and does not resemble the truth; and philosophy has rejected it, as Macrobius says, and theology has rejected it, as Paul says to Timothy: *inanes fabulas deuita*, that is, avoid idle tales. An *argumentum* relates things which could be done even though they have not; and neither philosophy nor theology rejects that kind. A *historia*, however, is the exposition of things according to how they were in truth done; and both theology and philosophy accept *historia*.

As the Irish terms in this note are intended to reproduce a well-known piece of Latin literary theory, I translate *scél*, *arramainte* and *stair* with the Latin terms which certainly stood in the original: *fabula*, *argumentum* and *historia*.[19] *Arramainte* and *stair* are loan words from Latin *argumentum* and *historia* respectively. Their choice by the translator, therefore, was likely mechanical. *Scél*, on the other hand, is the generic native word for 'story', already encountered above in the phrase *gnáth-scéla* from Tale List B. Its use here to translate *fabula* seems forced. *Scél* used in this sense disturbed a copyist enough that 'does not resemble the truth' was altered to 'resembles the truth' in order to bring the passage in line with the word's more familiar usage: 'in scel imorro . . . is ni is cosmail re firinne'. Indirectly, this may tell us more about the normal semantic range of *scél* than the Latin-oriented author of the original note had intended.[20] The original author knew the Latin learning familiar also to the author of the colophon to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the Book of Leinster. The colophon's author, similarly, may have shown hesitation in the Latin technical vocabulary he uses to describe the text he has just copied, designating it a 'historiam aut uerius fabulam' ('a *historia* or, rather, a *fabula*').[21] Of the remaining content of the *Táin*, the colophon additionally notes: 'quaedam similia uero, quaedam non' ('certain things resemble the truth, certain things do not'). The author presumably recalled the *argumenta* and *fabulae* of the ancient scheme.

What has been absent from discussion of the classical tales hitherto is any thorough consideration of literary features which reflect, not the imprint of contemporary Irish historiography and storytelling, but the wholly different classical aesthetic of the Latin literary sources which underlie them. It is easy to overlook how utterly alien the language and world of the *Aeneid*, for example, would have been to a Christian who had not expended considerable time and labour on the poem. But study of Latin classics was precisely what medieval education offered. The preceding chapter surveyed the sources for this study

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ad Herennium: 'fabula est, quae neque veras neque veri similes continet res'; for philosophy's rejection of the *fabula*, see Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.2.7–21.

19 The scheme was obviously well known: it recurs in Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.44.5, with a variant in Sedulius Scottus, *In Donati Artem Maiorem*, 80 (ed. Löfstedt), and a four-fold variant in Martianus Capella ('De rhetorica', §550); the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian provide the nearest match to the Irish.

20 As Macrobius does not follow the three-fold scheme which is the origin of the Irish note, I believe that the manuscript's 'is ni is cosmail re firinne' resembles Macrobius's *narratio fabulosa*, which he distinguishes from the *fabula* as such, by accident; yet as Macrobius can be read as a competing model, it is possible that the Irish text was doctored with recollection of the *narratio fabulosa*, resulting in loss of clarity.

21 See Introduction.

as it must have been practiced in Ireland, at the fairly basic level of content. At this level, much of the study probably accompanied the acquisition of the language in the classroom. However, if the effort of copying and studying such demanding works as the *Aeneid* has no greater aim than teaching the language and collecting odd features of historical interest, it is not an education that has much to commend it. Literary study, in general, aims higher than this. In the case of the classical tales, we can be confident that the authors were, for the most part, those readers of Latin whose time spent with the classics had gone beyond the phase devoted to mere language acquisition. Intellectual investment in ancient history is demonstrated by the labour demanded in the very composition of the texts themselves. Whether the Irish appreciated the aesthetic qualities of some of the Latin texts they chose to turn into Irish has, oddly, been hardly explored. It is ironic that, while the question of classical influences in native tales like *Táin Bó Cúailnge* has been discussed repeatedly in the critical literature, discussions of the classical tales have been preoccupied with the contrary trend towards gaelicization. Yet interest among the Irish in the aesthetic of classical literature is to be found in the classical tales if it is to be found anywhere.

In view of the reluctance among critics to concede that the Irish possessed even the rudiments of classical studies, it is not surprising that the case for Irish writers attempting to reproduce a classical aesthetic in Ireland has yet to be articulated. The key to identifying a medieval Irish classicism is not to look to the scant remains of medieval Irish literary theory, but to reevaluate, with a fresh eye, the remains of Irish literary practice. For example, Dares Phrygius's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, the text on which *Togail Troí* is based, corresponds to the *historia* of the ancient categorization known to Quintilian and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. However, the most remarkable feature of *Togail Troí* is that, in spite of its Latin source, the text has moved well beyond the sober character alloted the *historia*, and has been meticulously developed in the direction of the *fabula*. I suspect that *Togail Troí* may have owed its popularity especially to the fact that it combined the typically Irish interest in historical writing with efforts to reflect the artistic qualities of ancient epic. I am sure that contemporary readers recognized that, in spite of the undistinguished history by Dares Phrygius which served as the point of departure, *Togail Troí* is a remarkable attempt to recreate the Troy of Virgil. It is, in fact, more successfully Virgilian than even *Imtheachta Aeniasa*. The development of a *stair* into a *scél* need not arise only in the context of nativization and a tradition of oral storytelling. It can be a practice which grows also out of academic interest in antiquity and a tradition of reading the classics with admiration for their unquestionable artistic successes.

Medieval Sources for Classical Literary Technique

As seen in the previous chapter, we can detect only residual traces of Roman rhetorical education in medieval Ireland. This may have survived in the form of the liberal arts education of late antiquity, for the existence of which in Ireland there is some slight evidence.[22] The eighth-century legal text *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* happens to preserve a short quotation from the *Rhetorica ad Heren-*

[22] See above, 18.

nium attributed to Cicero, in a passage on the theoretical divisions of sound and voice ('Do dlighedh gotha').[23] It is not impossible, however, that this one quotation, in a discussion that belongs to grammar as much as to rhetoric, came to the Irish tract via an unidentified intermediary text, one most likely in the grammatical tradition.[24] The sole well-evidenced survival of rhetorical education specifically was the study of figures and tropes which, in antiquity, were taught at the basic level of instruction under a *grammaticus*. The survival of this stream of rhetorical instruction into medieval Europe has been termed the tradition of 'grammatical rhetoric' by Gabriele Knappe.[25] The most important source for the teaching on figures and tropes was the third book of Aelius Donatus's *Ars Maior*, 'De barbarismo et ceteris uitiis' ('On barbarism and other defects'). The aim of Donatus's instruction, however, was not the production of rhetorically informed texts. On the contrary, in grammatical rhetoric, the aim of instruction is correct Latinity, specifically the very avoidance of poetic figures in speech, where they are *vitia*, that is, faults of diction. Grammatical rhetoric was absorbed early into the field of scriptural exegesis; this development may have drawn on the established importance of rhetorical learning for the interpretation of the poets, the *poetarum enarratio*, under a *grammaticus*. The outstanding example of grammatical rhetoric employed in Christian exegesis is probably Bede's *Liber de Schematibus et Tropis*.[26] This treatise is based on Donatus's 'De barbarismo', but illustrations for each of the figures and tropes have been drawn from the Bible, and Donatus's own examples from pagan poets quietly put to one side. Evidence for Irish interest in Donatus's 'De barbarismo' includes Sedulius Scottus's expansive commentary on the work in his *In Donati Artem Maiorem*.[27] Sedulius's commentary may, of course, reflect his continental resources in addition to his Irish education. The employment of grammatical rhetoric for Christian exegesis in Ireland, however, is corroborated by its occurrence in the Old Irish *Treatise on the Psalter*.[28]

While there is little evidence that 'grammatical rhetoric' provided stylistic models for medieval authors, Knappe draws attention to the *Progymnasmata* of the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes as a notable early-medieval survival of classical rhetorical instruction aimed specifically at the production of texts.[29] The *Progymnasmata* describes twelve stereotyped compositional exercises designed to practice the student's command of vivid, persuasive language. The adoption of this lone handbook of rhetorical exercises into medieval grammatical education was facilitated by the fact that it was known in the West in the Latin translation by the famed grammarian Priscian, under the title *Praeexercitamina*.

23 Gwynn, 'An Old-Irish tract', 36: 'Até teora ranna gotha .i. med, sonairte, 7 maoithe, ut dixit Cicero. Figura vocis in tres partes diui[di]tur, in magnitudinem, in firmitatem, et in mollitudinem'; see *Rhet. ad Her*. 3.11.19–20; part of this passage is translated by Carey, 'Vernacular Irish learning'; for the tract, see Breatnach, *Companion*, 185–8; and Binchy, *Corpus*, 1111–32.

24 The discussion in *Do dlighedh gotha* does not obviously correspond to anything in the *Rhetorica*, and has the appearance of an interpolation. However, Tranter, '*Ut dixit Cicero*', argues that the passage as a whole does exhibit familiarity with discussions of voice in ancient grammar.

25 Knappe, *Traditionen*, especially 43–109 for 'grammatical rhetoric' in the Insular context; see also the author's review of the material in 'Classical rhetoric'.

26 Kendall, *Libri II de Arte Metrica*.

27 Löfstedt, *Sedulius Scottus*, 317–90.

28 Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, the reference to synecdoche, line 133.

29 See above, 20.

Documentary evidence for the knowledge of the *Praeexercitamina* in Ireland is lacking. However, Knappe argues that the *Hisperica Famina* betray the use of the exercises, especially the tenth exercise, *descriptio*, 'description' (Greek 'ekphrasis').[30] In Knappe's reading, the twelve descriptive essays which conclude the *famina* correspond in subject matter to hints for themes in Priscian's outline of the *descriptio*. The twelve essays which conclude the *famina*, therefore, are all examples of Priscian's tenth exercise. To date, no one has uncovered any other traces of the *Praeexercitamina* in medieval Ireland, and the theory of the text's availability on the island must rest on this single, seventh-century example.

The reemergence of rhetorical instruction with the aim of literary composition is generally regarded to have occured with the new genre of the *artes poetriae*, 'arts of poetry and prose'.[31] The *artes* reflect the development of literary instruction in the schools and universities of France from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century. The *artes* of the twelfth-century are too late to have exerted influence on the early development of Middle Irish prose, let alone Old Irish. Rhetorical instruction represented in the *artes*, however, grew out of a long-standing continental tradition of reading and commenting on works of rhetoric from antiquity, including Horace's *Ars Poetica*, Cicero's *De Inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* attributed to Cicero.[32] Edmond Faral especially accredited the rediscovery of the latter in the eleventh century, alongside the model rhetorical pieces of the fifth-century Gaulish rhetor Sidonius Apollinaris, with the development of the *artes*.[33]

Dorothy Dilts Swartz argued for the employment of figures of rhetoric like those of the *artes* in Recension 2 of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.[34] Although the bulk of her analysis dealt with Recension 2, Swartz argued that interest in classical models of rhetoric, which in twelfth-century France led to the *artes poetriae*, also occurred in Ireland early enough to leave its mark in the refined prose of Recension 1.[35] As this latter text is generally dated to the mid-eleventh century at the latest, Swartz's analysis according to figures from the later *artes* is often forced and fails to convince. The most persuasive feature of Swartz's argument was borrowed from the earlier study by Eleanor McLoughlin, who argued that ekphrases of persons in early Irish show familiarity with the practices of fifth-century Gaulish schools of rhetoric.[36] These are exampled by the surviving rhetorical works of Sidonius Apollinaris especially. McLoughlin suggested that practices of Gaulish rhetors who came to Ireland in the fifth century were preserved in oral tradition, whence they reappeared in the rhetorical descriptions of early Irish saga.[37] Swartz took the more common-sense view that late-antique rhetoric was familiar via written texts held in Irish monastic libraries.

Outside the field of early vernacular Irish specifically, there has been a recent growing recognition of the imitation of model authors in Insular literary practice.

30 Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 147.
31 The best introduction is Kelly, *The Arts*, whose inclusive translation of *poetria* as 'poetry and prose' I adopt; most of the texts are edited in Faral, *Les arts*.
32 Kelly, *The Arts*, 47–9, with references.
33 Faral, *Les arts*, 99–103.
34 Swartz, 'Stylistic'.
35 See Swartz, 'Stylistic', 233–45, for an overview of the rhetorical figures; and resumé of the same in 'The problem', 109–13.
36 Swartz, 'Stylistic', 125–31; McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical', especially 152–61, 180–5.
37 For the theory of fifth-century Gaulish rhetors going to Ireland, see Meyer, *Learning in Ireland*.

It has been acknowledged that the *Hisperica Famina* provide ample evidence that rhetorical, or at the simpler level, grammatical exercises were accomplished through imitation of memorable passages of Virgil.[38] The place of paraphrase, especially the prose paraphrasing of hexameter poetry, was likewise a feature of Insular education, and paraphrase implies a degree of imitation.[39] Dennis R. MacDonald has recently drawn attention to the little-acknowledged but pervasive presence of *imitatio* in early Christian literature, most fascinatingly the imitation of pagan authors in texts at the heart of the Christian canon.[40] Christian authors were not innovators in this regard, as *imitatio* was a staple of rhetorical education in antiquity, and is a technique implicit in the Greek handbooks of progymnasmata.[41] In the *Saturnalia*, Macrobius exhaustively analyses Virgil's art in terms of his *imitatio* of Homer. Were the *Saturnalia* not available in medieval Ireland, a monastic reader would find Lucan's and Statius's imitations of Virgil an obvious instance of the technique in practice.[42] The place of *imitatio* in the classical *ars rhetorica* as such is, arguably, irrelevant to whether medieval authors were conscious of its operation. Traces of *imitatio* in Irish saga, especially the imitation of classical epic, are a logical outcome of an educational culture which regarded imitation and paraphrase as fundamental to the acquisition of Latinity. The extension of these techniques to vernacular literacy was probably inevitable.

Togail Troí *and the Techniques of Irish Classicism*

The *De Excidio Troiae Historia* belongs to a genre of Hellenistic historical writings which grew up in reaction to the supernatural account of the Trojan War in Homer's *Iliad*.[43] This so-called 'anti-Homeric' school presumed to give the true history of the war, a *historia*, without the poet's fanciful distortions. The original work was in Greek, yet it is the fifth-century Latin translation which survives. The author of the *De Excidio* affects the voice of an eyewitness to the war who gives his name as Dares Phrygius. Isidore gives Dares the distinction of being the 'first among the gentiles to write a history of the Greeks and Trojans', where he preceded even Herodotus.[44] The author's language is bereft of Late Latin elegence and deficient even in simple Latinity. This may have been a device to reinforce the verisimilitude of the narrative voice, a soldier's diary from the manly age before soldiers cared to write elegantly. In this regard, the text fully earned the success it had in the Middle Ages. But with this odd rhetoric at work,

38 See above, 21; and below, 115.

39 Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*', 122; for the value of paraphrase in antiquity, see Quin. *Inst*. 10.5.4–8; see also Roberts, *Biblical Epic*.

40 MacDonald, *Christianizing*; and more recently *Does the New Testament*.

41 See Lausberg, *Handbook*, §§1097, 1140–4; and Quin. *Inst*. 10.2.1–28; see also Finkelpearl, 'Pagan traditions'.

42 For allusion and imitation in the Latin epic tradition, see Hardie, *The Epic Successors*; and Hinds, *Allusion*.

43 The current edition remains Meister, *Daretis*, here cited by chapter number; the short introduction to the English translation by Frazer, *The Trojan War*, can be supplemented by the fuller introduction in Merkle, 'The truth', where the text is discussed under the alternative title *Acta diurna belli Troiani*.

44 Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.42.

the *De Excidio* cannot be held as a source for conventional late-antique aesthetic, nor for classical literary technique.

I suggested above that the classicizing aesthetic which permeates *Togail Troí* has been understated in critical discussions. The key to seeing the author's own classical aesthetic is to acknowledge how few of the prized features of classical writing he found in Dares's original. In consequence of being anti-Homeric, the *De Excidio* lacks the qualities which one could identify with classical epic. Rejecting the genre-conventions he meets in Dares, the Irish author executes a stylistic transformation of the text, leaving it an entertaining showpiece which is easily recognized as imaginative literature. This is the transformation of *historia* in the direction of *fabula*. Probability argues that the author's principal model for his literary transformation of Dares's text would have been not native Irish sagas, but known and competing antique literary narratives of Troy.

The principal technique employed by the Irish author in the transformation of the *De Excidio* is paralleled in Latin sources, where it is given the name *amplificatio*. The term has a long history in Latin literary theory. *Amplificatio* as practiced in ancient forensic rhetoric was, in Lausberg's definition, 'a graded enhancement of the basic given facts by artistic means, in the interest of the party'.[45] *Amplificatio* came to be a central principle of the *ars poetriae* of the twelfth century, where it had come to mean 'allonger, développer un sujet'.[46] In this use *amplificatio* included under its aegis a variety of techniques, including *periphrasis, comparatio, apostrophe*, and, especially, *descriptio*, 'description, ekphrasis'. The twelfth-century understanding of *amplificatio* in the *artes poetriae* accurately reflects the technique's gradual development over time: techniques of forensic rhetoric which could be imitated by later Latin stylists had long been reinterpreted and employed for the production of homiletic and literary texts. It was in this environment that techniques of *amplificatio* had become familiar. Michael Winterbottom, whose translation of *amplificatio* as 'expansion' is adopted here, considers the technique to be the principle behind Aldhelm's idiosyncratic Latin prose style.[47] The principle is realized, for example, in the restatement of a single idea in the piling up of synonyms, accomplished in very simple sentence structures extended to a great length, and frequent resort to ekphrasis. In the case of Aldhelm there need have been no direct influence of surviving Roman rhetorical education, as Winterbottom sees this style as an imitation of Christian 'Attic' writers such as Cyprian, Tertullian and Apuleius.

It is argued here that expansion is the principal compositional strategy evident in *Togail Troí*. As in the case of Aldhelm, it is a technique of literary composition. Expansion, of course, does not belong necessarily to literary activity, and can be assumed to be a technique employed by oral storytellers as well. However, the literary environment of *Togail Troí* cannot be explained away, and follows inarguably from the fact that it is a translation of a Latin text. Moreover, the *De Excidio* is not only a text which invites expansion, but, in a school environment, it is virtually a textbook for the practice of *amplificatio* as a rhetorical exercise. This view of the *De Excidio* can be inferred from *Togail Troí* itself. The author consistently picks up on brief cues in Dares and expands them to 'epic' propor-

45 Lausberg, *Handbook*, §259.
46 Faral, *Les arts*, 61–85.
47 Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's prose'.

tions, in imitation, it is argued here, of the epic poets. The value of the *De Excidio* especially, as opposed to any other Latin text told with a comparably bare style, is that the desired goal of such rhetorical exertions, nobility of language, was exampled already in the competing Troy narrative from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The case of Aldhelm, whose models include the Church Fathers, shows that antique compositional techniques need not be classicizing as such, at least not in the sense of classic as 'pagan'. However, it is a non-Christian constellation of texts, including the *De Excidio*, the *Aeneid* and Statius's *Achilleid*, which lie behind most of the important expanded passages which give *Togail Troí* its character. The *Praeexercitamina*, a rare instance of classical Greek rhetorical education surviving to late antiquity, may have been a secondary stimulus to the composition of passages of heightened rhetoric in imitation of epic models. As such, expansion in *Togail Troí* is here viewed mostly as a symptom of the author's classicizing intent.

Amplificatio in *Togail Troí* is accomplished by two principal means: the employment of elaborate ekphrastic set pieces, and expansion at the level of the prose itself. This description of *amplificatio*, perhaps less sophisticated than that proposed in the twelfth-century *artes poetriae*, is chosen to reflect the practice detected in *Togail Troí*. By expansion at the level of the prose is meant a variety of techniques, such as the employment of heroic similes, which, although sharing much with the techniques of oral storytelling, will be shown to be indebted to the program of classical *imitatio*. As the ekphrastic set piece is in many ways the key to classicism in *Togail Troí*, it will be discussed first.

Ekphrasis in Togail Troí

The composition of detailed descriptions in language is discussed as an exercise in its own right in classical Greek handbooks of rhetoric.[48] The term for the exercise, 'ekphrasis', means literally 'speaking out', and could variously include among its objects of description persons, places, situations and objects. Ekphrasis mostly goes by the names *descriptio*, *evidentia* or *enargeia* in Latin sources. Latin rhetoricians do not discuss the device as an exercise in its own right, nor do the encyclopedists treat ekphrasis except in passing.[49] A distinctive place for ekphrasis in rhetorical instruction was preserved for the Latin Middle Ages only in Priscian's *Praeexercitamina*, where, as seen above, Priscian translates Hermongenes's 'ekphrasis' as *descriptio*. The trend of much contemporary scholarship has been to use the term ekphrasis in a restricted sense to mean descriptions in language of works of art. John Hollander coined the term 'notional ekphrasis' to denote these elaborate descriptions of works of art, which include, most famously, the description of Achilles's shield from the *Iliad*. Notional ekphrasis is familiar in Latin from instances such as Virgil's description of the murals in Dido's temple, or the portrayal of Roman history on Aeneas's shield.[50] Yet Virgil

48 See Becker, *The Shield of Achilles*, 23–40, for the four collections of exercises from antique Greece and their account of ekphrasis; see also Lausberg, *Handbook*, §§ 810, 1133.

49 See Knappe, 'On rhetoric', 147; and Lausberg, *Handbook*, §810, for *evidentia* and *enargeia* in Quintilian and Isidore.

50 Hollander, *The Gazer's Spirit*, 7–23; for the notional ekphrases of the *Aeneid*, see Putnam, *Virgil's Epic*.

has also ekphrases of landscapes, persons and animals.[51] Ekphrasis is used in this study with its original scope to signify passages of vivid description which do not fit the specialized criteria of notional ekphrasis. It is hoped that it will be clear that the distinctive Irish practice of ekphrasis has been learned directly from the epic poets, perhaps encouraged by the *Praeexercitamina*. This Irish practice of ekphrasis is comparatively weak in notional ekphrasis, but strong in vivid descriptions of persons and events, and represents, not an anomaly, but a stage in the medieval development of the device. This stage of development, evident in *Togail Troí*, places the Irish usage in a continuum with the later practice in which notional ekphrasis comes to dominate, the practice favoured in the *artes poetriae*.

Instances of notional ekphrasis in *Togail Troí* are few, but significant. An interesting example is encountered in the depiction of the destruction of the city, the so-called *togail* of the title. Book 2 of the *Aeneid* describes the Greeks' long-awaited invasion of the city and ensuing bloody rampage. In Chapter 41 of the *De Excidio* Dares had described the same events in a much abbreviated form, with minimal literary embellishment. Although it has mostly followed Dares up to this point, for its depiction of the destruction of the city, *Togail Troí* departs from Dares's text and follows, instead, Virgil. The author's preference for Virgil's depiction of the infamous night is noted first in the description of the entry of Pyrrhus, also called Neoptolemus, into Priam's palace. Dares recounts simply: 'Neoptolemus in regiam inruptionem facit' ('Neoptolemus bursts into the palace') (41). In Virgil's account, Pyrrhus first tries to tear away the gates to the palace, then simply smashes a hole in them. There is one interesting element in the Irish version which the author found in neither Dares nor Virgil. According to Virgil, the gates to Priam's palace were *aerati*, 'bronze':

> ipse inter primos correpta dura bipenni
> limina perrumpit postisque a cardine uellit
> aeratos. (*Aeneid* 2.479–81)
>
> In the forefront, he [Pyrrhus], grasping a two-headed axe, breaks through the harsh entrance-way and makes to tear the bronze posts from their hinges.

The Irish author, though taking his cue from Virgil, decides to pause on details of the gates' extravagant appearance:

> tárrasair Pirr mac Achíl in cathmilid i ndorus denna Príaim, 7 túag dé[ḟ]áebrach 'na láimh, 7 rogab dono dorus as cáinemh 7 is áillem robói isin bith do rindaigecht écsamail cacha tíre co n-imdénum di ór 7 argut 7 líig lóghmair. (H 1856–60)
>
> Then Pyrrhus the son of Achilles, the battle soldier, was in the entrance-way of Priam's stronghold, with a two-edged axe in his hand; and he seized [in his hands] a gate which was the fairest and most beautiful in the world on account of the varied carving of every land, with ornament of gold and silver and precious stone.

The author's decision to abandon Dares and follow, instead, Virgil, is perfectly reasonable when you consider how renowned Virgil's description of this event was in antiquity and the Middle Ages. The Irish author's decision to halt the action, however, and pause on the appearance of the Trojan gates is, on first consideration, baffling. We can understand the passage if we recognize, as did the Irish adaptor, that presence before the entrance to a fine palace or temple

[51] Putnam, *Virgil's Epic*, 1.

was an occasion in Latin epic for the practice of ekphrasis. Indeed, the author may have known the first two books of the *Aeneid* well enough to have picked up on verbal echoes between the passage describing Pyrrhus's efforts to enter Priam's palace and a famous sequence from Book 1 detailing Aeneas's entry into Dido's city Carthage. The Irish author read the *limina*, 'entrance', and *postis aeratos*, 'bronze posts', which Pyrrhus tears *a cardine*, 'from off their hinges', and recalled Virgil's description of the ornate entrance-way to the temple of Juno in Carthage:

> hic templum Iunoni ingens Sidonia Dido
> condebat, donis opulentum et numine diuae,
> *aerea* cui gradibus surgebant *limina* nexaeque
> *aere* trabes, foribus *cardo* stridebat *aënis*. (*Aeneid* 1.446–9; my italics)
>
> Here Sidonian Dido was erecting to Juno a great temple, rich with offerings and the presence of the goddess, over the steps of which towered a *bronze entrance-way* and timbers fastened with *bronze*, the *hinges* [of which] creaked in the *bronze* doors.

It is in this temple that Virgil places the first of his memorable ekphrases of works of art, the images of the Trojan War which move Aeneas to tears. These images happen to anticipate Book 2's tragic scenes in Priam's palace, the very event which the Irish author chose to embellish with his improvised picture of the king's opulent palace entrance. Although it is not said that the images in Juno's temple are located in the entrance itself, such might be inferred from the parallel with the more explicit ekphrasis from *Aeneid* 6.20–31, which describes the images from Cretan legend carved by Daedalus onto the gates of the temple in the Sibyl's grove. The same could be inferred, perhaps, from Ovid's ekphrasis of Vulcan's carved gates to the temple of the Sun from *Metamorphoses* 2.5–18. Even if the ekphrases of the Trojan War were not thought to be in the entrance-way to Juno's temple, the temporal sequence ensures that they are correctly associated with Aeneas's passing through the temple gates.

The Irish description of the entrance-way to Priam's palace is a reference to Virgil's and, perhaps, Ovid's ekphrases of carved gates: the incongruity of stalling the narrative at this moment is explained if we recognize that the author responded to the verbal cues *aes*, *limen* and *cardo*, and that he recognized the importance of notional ekphrasis in Virgil's epic style. Perhaps owing to the undesirability of pausing the narrative at this point, the ekphrasis of the gates is, in effect, only suggested, and amounts to little more than an allusion to the classical instances of the technique.[52] However, the Irish author shows that he is capable of reproducing the technique of notional ekphrasis with more confidence in another passage, in this case an ekphrasis of the shield which Achilles carries in battle:

> Cromscíath caladgér for a chlíu, i tallfad torc trebliadan no lanamain i cosair. Bá lán [immorro] o or co hor de delbaib dracon ndodeilb 7 *do delbaib bíast 7 bledmíl n-ingantach in betha* [1], do *ildelbaib torothor[th]aib in talman* [2]. Robói dano

[52] The description of the gates in *Togail Troí* can, in fact, be compared to stereotyped descriptions of dwellings in native saga, which the author doubtless knew; see, for example, Ailill and Medb's abode in Meid, *Táin Bó Fraích*, §§7–8.

> béos i n-indscribiund in scéith *delb nime 7 talman 7 iffirn* [3], mara 7 aeóir 7 etheoír, *gréne 7 ésca 7 na rend archena* [4] *rethit i n-ethéor* [5]. (H 1001–7; my italics)
>
> A hard, sharp curved shield on his left side, on which would fit a three-year boar or a couple in bed. It was full from edge to edge with the shapes of unshapely dragons and of *shapes of water-beasts and wondrous sea-creatures of the world* [1], of the *many portentous shapes of the earth* [2]. There was in addition in the inscribing of the shield an *image of heaven and earth and hell* [3], of sea and air and ether, of *sun and moon and the planets besides* [4] that *hasten in ether* [5].

Dares 21 had provided a bare list of warriors slain in a single battle by, in order, first Hector, then Aeneas, Achilles and Diomedes. Taking this list as its point of departure, *Togail Troí* has here created a sequence of detailed single combats, climaxing in a description of Achilles's arms and this shield-ekphrasis. One might judge that the single combats, replete with battlefield taunting and grim humour, are mere commonplaces of descriptions of battle, and only accidentally resemble analogous scenes in classical epic. It is inescapable, however, that the rationale for the Irish author's venture into ekphrasis at this point is to reproduce the most famous antique *locus* for the technique, the ekphrasis of Achilles's shield from Homer's *Iliad*. In this, his mentor is Virgil, whose own ekphrasis of Aeneas's shield from *Aeneid* 8, with its prophetic vision of Roman history, is based on Homer's example. Virgil's is an imitation only of the Homeric topos, however, not the details of Homer's actual description.[53] Likewise, while the shield-ekphrasis in *Togail Troí* owes ultimately to the model of Homer and Virgil, the details point us more immediately to an intermediary. Myrick compared Achilles's shield from *Togail Troí* with that in the first-century CE Latin translation of Homer's *Iliad* attributed to Baebius Italicus, the so-called *Ilias Latina*.[54] The Latin author has reproduced the topos of Homer's shield-ekphrasis, but the details of the description have been wholly altered:

> Illic Ignipotens mundi caelaverat arcem
> sideraque et liquidis redimitas undique nymphis
> Oceani terras et cinctum Nerea circum
> astrorumque vices dimensaque tempora noctis,
> *quattuor et mundi partes* [3], quantum Arctos ab Austro
> et *quantum occasus roseo distaret ab ortu,*
> *Lucifer unde suis, unde Hesperus unus uterque*
> *exoreretur equis, et quantum in orbe mearet*
> *Luna cava* [4] et *nitida lustraret lampade caelum* [5];
> addideratque fretis sua numina: *Nerea magnum*
> *Oceanumque senem nec eundem Protea semper,*
> *Tritonasque feros et amantem Dorida fluctus;*
> *fecerat et liquidas mira Nereidas arte* [1].
> *Terra* gerit silvas *horrendaque monstra ferarum* [2]
> fluminaque et montes cumque altis oppida muris.
>
> (*Ilias Latina* 862–76; my italics)[55]

[53] Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.8.11–12, compares Homer's and Virgil's account of the presentation of the divine arms to their respective heroes, but the actual shield ekphrases rightly are not compared; see Putnam, *Virgil's Epic*, 167–88.

[54] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 147–8.

[55] Scaffai, *Baebii Italici Ilias Latina*; for an introduction to the poem and translation, see Kennedy, *The Latin Iliad*; Baebius's own model was Ovid's ekphrasis of the carved doors on the temple

> Then, Vulcan engraved the citadel of the heavens and the stars, and the lands of the Ocean wreathed round about with watery nymphs, and Nereus girt round about, and the turnings of the stars, and the measured hours of night, also the *four regions of the earth* [3], as far as the North lay distant from the South and *the sun's setting from its rosy ascent, where Lucifer, where Hesperus both rise on their steeds, and as far as Luna moves in her hollow orb* [4] and *traverses the sky with her bright light* [5]; and he added the water's deities: *mighty Nereus, old Oceanus and ever-changing Proteus, the wild sons of Neptune and wave-loving Doris; he had also made with wondrous skill the watery Nereids* [1]. The earth bears forests and *terrible, portentous beasts* [2], and rivers and mountains and towns with towering walls.

If the Irish ekphrasis of Achilles's shield has drawn on the *Ilias Latina*, it is paraphrase rather than translation. This paraphrase, however, is by no means haphazard. On first reading, it would seem that the opening lines of the Latin, mentioning the heavens, the earth, sea nymphs and the marine god Nereus, have supplied the imagery for the entire Irish version, all loosely recast. I suggest that we can get closer to the original model by recognizing that images from the entire ekphrasis have been recalled in the Irish, but that their order has been altered. Thus, for the 'delbaib bíast 7 bledmíl n-ingantach in betha' [1] ('shapes of water-beasts and wondrous sea-creatures of the world'), though early in the Irish text, the author had cast his eye forward to the litany of Roman deities of the sea, including Nereus, Oceanus, Proteus, the sons of Neptune, Doris and the Nereids, which opens the second half of the Latin passage [1]; the repetition of Nereus ('Nerea circum . . . Nerea magnum') might have suggested the leap.[56] The Latin text's 'horrenda monstra ferarum' ('terrible, portentous beasts') (literally 'terrible portents of beasts'), meanwhile, have more clearly been rendered as the 'many portentous shapes of the earth' [2]. The transformation of the Roman marine deities to 'water-beasts and wondrous sea-creatures' illustrates the second feature of note in the Irish version, namely the author's decision to recast imagery from the pagan text in terms according with his own Christian conceptual world. Where this is done, it is, in effect, an act of interpretation. We can detect the habit of someone familiar at least with Irish biblical exegesis, if not necessarily with the analogous Filargirian and Servian allegorical interpretations of Virgil. This interpretive impulse is seen more clearly in how 'quattuor mundi partes' [3] ('the four regions of the earth') have been reinterpreted as 'delb nime 7 talman 7 iffirn' [3], an image of the Christian heaven, earth and hell; depending on how we punctuate, we may judge that 'mara' ('of the sea') which immediately follows was originally intended to represent the expected fourth region in this list. The 'gréne 7 ésca 7 na rend archena' [4] ('sun and moon and the planets besides') correspond somewhat more plainly to 'Hesperus', 'Luna' and the sun, the latter not named but understood behind 'ortus roseus' [4]; all these 'rethit i n-ethéor' [5] ('hasten in ether'), generalizing the Latin text's formulaic description of the moon specifically, that it 'nitida lustraret lampade caelum' [5] ('traverses the sky with her bright light').

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of the Sun, *Metamorphoses* 2.5–18, as well as Virgil's ekphrastic technique in the description of Aeneas's shield; see Kennedy, *The Latin Iliad*, 13.

56 For a suggestion that the image of the boar in the opening of the Irish passage does, in fact, correspond to an image in the opening to the Latin, see below, 205.

What may be the most interesting feature of the Irish ekphrasis is not the unremarkable fact that the Irish adaptor has understood the content of his model. Rather, it is interesting that he has played with the notion that these entities are claimed to be images in a plastic medium. He uses *delb*, 'image, shape', three times, and has twice punned on the conceit, using *il-delb*, 'many-shaped', and, more clearly, *do-deilb*, 'misshaped', 'unshapeable'; the latter hints that he understands that all these images, in their fantastic complexity, are not real images on an actual shield. That is to say, he conveys that his model was, to use Hollander's phrase, a notional ekphrasis. The reader is to accept the literary artifice for what it is: the images are even termed an *indscribind*, 'inscription'.[57] Equally revealing is the freedom of the imitation, which shows that the author has met the challenge, not merely of imitating, but of interpreting his model, while remaining true to the conventional aesthetic of epic which informs the model in the first place. It may be of interest that Baebius's own immediate model for his ekphrasis of Achilles's shield, Ovid's ekphrasis of the doors of the temple of the Sun from *Metamorphoses* 2.5–18, happens to be preserved among the earliest surviving manuscript evidence for the poem, as one of the series of extracts in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 363.[58] This famous ninth-century manuscript includes a collection of classical texts, among which is Servius's commentary on Virgil, and is the work of an Irishman on the continent, demonstrably working in an Irish milieu.[59] The coincidence of Ovid's ekphrasis in this collection, presumably extracted because of some unusual interest it held for the Irish scribe or the community for which he laboured, suggests that the Irish had an interest in notional ekphrasis which well predated the eleventh-century *Togail Troí*. One wonders if Ovid's passage was extracted precisely because it had been recognized as a model for literary imitation already in the *Ilias*?

Given the correspondence between Achilles's shields from the *Ilias Latina* and *Togail Troí*, it is interesting that Myrick, although recognizing the Latin poem as a possible source, suggests that this Homeric motif could nevertheless have come via Servius.[60] The question of the source cannot reasonably be separated from the account of Vulcan's creation of Achilles's arms, and the famed death of Patroclus, which concludes the ekphrasis in *Togail Troí*:

> Ní raba isin domon catherriud catha no comhraic no comlaind amal in n-erriudsa Achíl. Fóbíth is hé Ulcáin goba Iffirn doróni in n-armgaisced sin Aichíl, íar mbrith a airm féin do Phathrocail reime do chomhrac fri Echtoir, co ros-marb Hectoir ir-riucht Achíl, 7 co ros-fodbaig im étach Aichíl, conid íarsin doróni Ulcáin in n-arm nemnechsa do Achíl artí gona Hechtoir. (H 1007–13)
>
> In the world there was no battle-dress of battle or conflict or combat like Achilles's dress. For it was Vulcan, the smith of hell, who made those arms of Achilles, after he gave his own arms to Patroclus, before fighting Hector; with the result that Hector slew him in the guise of Achilles, and stripped him of Achilles's clothing, so that afterwards Vulcan made that venomous armour for Achilles to slay Hector.

57 For the type of low-relief, probably geometric engraving the author would have known from contemporary Irish shield decoration, beside which the intricacy of Achilles's shield would have seemed quite fantastic, see Best, 'Cuchulainn's shield' (translated in Dillon, 'Stories', 54–5); and Russel, 'Notes' ('Lúathrinde'); I thank Jenifer Ní Ghradaigh for these references.

58 Fo. 188r; see Reynolds, *Texts*, 277.

59 See above, 37.

60 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 147–8.

Myrick would trace the information in this passage to Servius or to a comparable handbook of mythology.[61] Yet the full Homeric account of Vulcan's arms, the shield-ekphrasis and Patroclus's death are available in the *Ilias Latina* itself. This literary source preserves not just Homer's narrative, but much of his poem's epic character. Myrick's hesitation to accept the *Ilias Latina* as a source is probably a reflection of the general reluctance to acknowledge classical literary texts as an influence on Irish authors. There is no evidence for an Irish transmission of the *Ilias*, yet the poem travelled in the early Middle Ages alongside Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis in the manuscripts.[62] We can infer that the Irish author might have found a copy of the *Ilias* in the same manuscript from which was made the translation of Dares. Aside from this ekphrasis, however, I find no evidence that *Togail Troí* has drawn on the poem.[63] Accordingly, it is by no means impossible that the author knew the ekphrasis from the *Ilias* as an extract, perhaps in a collection not unlike Bern 363, with its tantalizing fragments of Ovid.

If models for classical ekphrasis were required, the medieval Irish reader needed no rhetorical training or ancient literary criticism to draw his attention to the ekphrastic aesthetic that permeates Virgil's *Aeneid*. Virgil's constant appeals to his listeners to let his poetry speak to their faculty of vision constitute an unmistakable metacriticism running throughout his poem. The author of *Togail Troí* has already witnessed his preference for Virgil's visual technique by choosing to abandon Dares and follow the poet's account of Troy's fall from *Aeneid* 2. This incident had been narrated by Aeneas as it presented itself to his eyes:

> tum uero omne mihi uisum considere in ignis
> Ilium et ex imo uerti Neptunia Troia. (*Aeneid* 2.624–5)
>
> Then, indeed, all Ilium appeared to me to sink into flames and Neptune's Troy to be toppled from beneath.

The passive of *uideo*, 'to see', especially signals Virgil's desire to convey to his audience how the events which he relates would present themselves to the eyes of the poem's protagonists. We can consider Virgil's technique especially in the ekphrastic center-piece of the poem, Aeneas's shield on which Vulcan has inscribed the unfolding of Roman history. Unlike the Homeric model, where it is the poet who narrates for us the scenes related on Achilles's shield, Virgil's technique is to narrate the episodes on Aeneas's shield as if through the hero's own eyes. The long passage begins 'oculos per singula uoluit / miraturque' (*Aeneid* 8.618–19) ('he casts his eyes across the single [items] and gazes with admiration'); the verses may be taken to refer to the admiration of the entire set of divine arms, or to the pictures on the shield in particular; the passage continues with the repetition of 'miratur' (8.730). Through the poet's artifice Aeneas's vision of the shield becomes the reader's own: 'aspiceres' ('you would behold') (8.650),

61 Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 148; as for this suggestion, although Servius Danielis mentions the Homeric instance of the topos of the ekphrasis at *Aeneid* 8.625, no images from Homer's ekphrasis are reproduced; the story of Patroclus's death and Vulcan's making of Achilles's arms is related by Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 1.483 and 2.275, but there is no mention there of any shield specifically.

62 Reynolds, *Texts*, 191–4; the first evidence for the poem in the British Isles is not until a copy was reported to be at Whitby in the twelfth century.

63 However, see below, 193.

'uideres' ('you would see') (8.676), 'credas' ('you would believe [that you saw]') (8.691); Macrobius, incidentally, identifies 'uideres' and the identically employed 'cernas' ('you would see') from *Aeneid* 4.401 with Homer's characteristic ἴδοις 'you might see' (*Saturnalia* 5.14.9–10). The poet even goes so far as to draw attention further to *cerno* by employing it in a striking Greek construction:

> in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella
> cernere erat . . . (*Aeneid* 8.675–6)
>
> In the middle [of the shield], it was possible to see the bronze fleets, the battle of Actium . . . [64]

Virgil further emphasizes his appeal to the listener's vision by using, as in the description of the fall of Troy, verbs of vision in the passive, such as 'uidebatur' (8.707) ('appeared'). The passive voice is striking in the brief ekphrasis of the arrival of Aeneas's fleet to relieve the besieged Trojan camp in *Aeneid* 10. On this occasion, the incident is narrated through the eyes of Turnus and his soldiers:

> at Rutulo regi ducibusque ea mira uideri
> Ausoniis, donec uersas ad litora puppis
> respiciunt totumque adlabi classibus aequor. (*Aeneid* 10.267–9)
>
> But those miraculous things suddenly were seen by the Rutulian king and the Ausonian leaders, until they observed the vessels poured onto the shore and the whole sea rolling in with ships.

The subjective reaction of the viewers to what they see is well conveyed in the tortuous figure of the last phrase, and is conspicuous in the Latin due to the employment of the passive infinitive *uideri* in the place of a finite form of the verb.

Although the remarkable artistry of the last example especially would seem to have nothing in common with Dares's plain *De Excidio*, the latter is not without the odd cue which would suggest opportunities for ekphrasis to those who have taken an interest in Virgil's technique. For example, there is an instance of the Irish author's efforts to weave an epic aesthetic into a short passage from the *De Excidio* which, as in Virgil's description of Aeneas's ships quoted above, concerns the arrival of a fleet. The passage in *Togail Troí* is an expansion on a single phrase which Dares uses to introduce his own catalogue of the ships of the Greeks upon their arrival at the harbour at Athens: 'ornati cum classe Graeci Athenas convenerunt' ('outfitted with a fleet, the Greeks gathered at Athens') (14). 'Ornati', here 'outfitted with', has been interpreted in *Togail Troí* as if it bore the secondary sense 'adorned, decorated'. This willingness to see the shadow of a literary effect in Dares inspires a fine ekphrastic performance from the Irish adaptor:

> Robói, trá, tinól morśluáigh do phurt na n-Athanénsta. Mór mbuiden 7 cuitechta tancatar and . . . Is cuit péne na herracht andsin inn Eoraip uile cona slúagaib, cona rigaibh, cona tuathaib, cona chenélaib. Mad nech *atchised* muir Toirrén, cruth robrecad do longaib 7 lestraib 7 libarnaib, robad *áebind a décsin*. Ba lór d'erfidibh in talman don lucht robátar for telchaib 7 trachtaib na nAthanenste *forchomét* na coblach 7 na slóg 7 na mbuidean do muir 7 do thír .i. *aicsin* cech ríghdomna 7 cech

[64] For the construction, see Williams, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1–6*, at 6.596.

> ríg 7 cach tóisig, inna toichim ríghda, *aicsin* cech miledh 7 cech trénfir fó armaib, ocus ic *déchain* in leith ón muir na rámha icond imrum 7 séol n-ildathach cecha tíre. (H 635–48; my italics)
>
> There was a gathering of a great host to the harbour of the Athenians. Many troops and companies came there . . . Nearly the whole of Europe rose with its hosts, with its kings, with its tribes, with its peoples. If one should *behold* the Tyrrhenian Sea, how it was speckled with ships and vessels and galleys, *pleasant were his view*. It was enough of the earth's delights to those who were on the hills and shores of the Athenians *to gaze* on the fleet and the hosts and the troops from sea and land, that is, *to see* each crown prince and each king and each chieftain in their regal march, *to see* each soldier and each champion with their arms, and *to behold* on the sea the rowing of the oars and the multi-coloured sails of each country.

The words printed in italics force home the ekphrastic aim of the passage and correspond to Virgil's use of interpretive cues like 'uideres', 'cernas', 'cernere est' and so forth. It is from Virgil's example that the Irish author likely imitated the technique.

The readiness of the Irish to identify ekphrasis as a distinctive feature of classical aesthetic would have been increased if they knew the device as a part of their own rhetorical education. The discussion of ekphrasis/*descriptio* in Priscian's *Praeexercitamina* is invaluable for its expression of the scope of the device in the early Middle Ages:

> Descriptio est oratio colligens et praesentans oculis quod demonstrat. Fiunt autem descriptiones tam personarum quam rerum et temporum et status et locorum et multorum aliorum; personarum quidem, ut apud Virgilium
>
> virginis os habitumque gerens et virginis arma
> Spartanae,
>
> rerum vero, ut pedestris proelii vel navalis pugnae descriptio, temporum autem, ut veris aestatis, status, ut pacis vel belli, locorum, ut litoris campi montium urbium.[65]
>
> *Descriptio* is a narration which brings together and presents before one's eyes what it portrays. *Descriptiones* are made of persons, as well as events, times, situations, places and many other things; a *descriptio* of a person might be like Virgil's 'having the face of a maiden and bearing the dress and arms of a maid of Sparta'; a *descriptio* of an event might be of a battle on foot, or a naval battle; one of a time might be of spring or summer; of a situation, of peace or of war; of a place, of a seashore, a meadow, mountains, or cities.

Priscian's account would ensure that a medieval reader would not hesitate to see ekphrasis/*descriptio* in various forms, especially the extent of the technique's presence in Virgil. Virgil's examples of ekphrasis would include the description of Venus from *Aeneid* 1 which Priscian quotes, descriptions of warriors and their readiness for the state of war, as well as more obvious notional ekphrases such as Aeneas's shield.

I am persuaded by Knappe's argument that the *Hisperica Famina* show the use of Priscian's *Praeexercitamina* in Ireland, or at least in the Insular centers where the hisperic idiom was coined.[66] I would argue that Virgil's ekphrastic technique caught the eye of his Irish imitators because of the early role of *descriptio* in their

65 Passalacqua, *Prisciani Caesariensis*, 46.
66 See above, 101.

Latin education. Furthermore, the odd hint of ekphrasis in the *De Excidio* would have been all the more easily detected by a reader whose sense of ekphrasis had been already developed by a familiarity with Priscian. For example, there is little obvious suggestion of ekphrasis in Dares's somewhat evasive comment on the story of the Argonauts:

> demonstrare eos qui cum Iasone profecti sunt non videtur nostrum esse: sed qui volunt eos cognoscere, Argonautas legant. (2)
>
> We do not view it our task to recount (literally 'demonstrate') who set out with Jason: but whoever desires to know who they were, they should read the *Argonautae*.

Demonstrare in this sentence is unremarkable, except that it is the word used by Priscian in his explanation of a *descriptio*, that is, an 'oratio colligens et praesentans oculis quod demonstrat'. In the story of Jason and the Argonauts which survives in the second recension of *Togail Troí*, the author does, indeed, introduce *descriptio*, most memorably a vivid portrayal of the Argonauts at sea:

> Ras leicset co borb ara ṁbelaib. Rosláset ind ḟairend dara n-aiss co anfóill. ri nertmairi inn imrama. Conerracht in muir [1] ard uathmar Ellispontide ina *immairib* anfoille immarda [2]. 7 ina *colbaib* gorma gleglassa [3]. co *ménscaíled* [4] in fecht aile ina ettrigib anfóilli [5] 7 ina hallaib uathmara imdomni [6]. Corba réill éicni áilli ochorbrecca. 7 torothair iṅgnathcha anachinti for *murgrían in mara* [7].
>
> (L 31010–16; my italics)
>
> They hurled themselves fiercely forward. The crew cast themselves backwards mightily with the power of the rowing. The deep frightful Hellispontic sea rose [1] in great towering *ridges* [2] and in blue shining-green *hills* [3], so that at one moment [the sea] *gaped wide* [4] to become massive furrows [5], and [at the next] to become vast, very high cliffs [6], so that there were visible beautiful, speckle-sided salmon and wondrous, strange monsters on the *sand of the sea* [7].

We do not know what work Dares intended by the name *Argonautae* in the *De Excidio*, but the Irish translator might have known that Valerius's *Argonautica* has a vivid description of the Argonauts tossed by a fierce storm on their maiden voyage (*Argonautica* 1.618–24). The Irish author's version of the Argonauts' struggle, however, has no certain verbal echoes with that given by Valerius. Yet there is a rough resemblance to a different version of the identical incident, this time Statius's description of the Argonauts' maiden voyage in the *Thebaid*. Statius puts this vivid ekphrasis into the mouth of Hypsipyle, who had observed the Argonauts' arrival at her island of Lemnos and recounts the incident after the fact to an audience of Argive visitors. Hypsipyle notes especially the Argonauts' ineffectual efforts to keep control of the oars:

> nec robora prosunt
> semideum heroum, puppemque insana flagellat
> arbor et instabili procumbens pondere curvas
> raptat aquas, remique cadunt in pectus inanes. (*Thebaid* 5.372–5)
>
> The strength of the demigod heroes is of no avail, and the frenzied mast thrashes the stern and with its unstable weight falls forward to snatch up the surging waves, and the oars fall back empty onto the rowers' chests.

The similarity between Statius's and the Irish version of the incident is restricted

to the mention of the difficulty of the rowing in the opening phrases in the Irish passage. At this point it is relevant whether the medieval Irish reader could have conjectured that Statius's version of this storm, as indeed for the entire episode of Jason and Hypsipyle, shows the influence of Virgil's *Aeneid*. It is impossible to believe that Statius himself did not recall Virgil's famous description of the storm at sea which tosses the Trojan fleet on their approach to Dido's Carthage. The Irish author at any rate had the Trojan ordeal firmly in mind:

> talia iactanti stridens Aquilone procella
> uelum aduersa ferit, fluctusque ad sidera tollit [1].
> franguntur remi, tum prora auertit et undis
> dat latus, insequitur *cumulo* [2] praeruptus aquae *mons* [3].
> hi summo in fluctu pendent [6]; his unda *dehiscens* [4]
> terram inter fluctus aperit [5], furit aestus *harenis* [7].
>
> (*Aeneid* 1.102–7; my italics)

> As he [Aeneas] cried thus, the storm roaring before them with the north wind batters the sails and raises the billows up to the stars [1]. The oars break, then the prow turns around and the ship is broadside against the waves, there follows in a *heap* [2] a precipitous *mountain* of water [3]. Some hang in the summits of the waves [6]; to some others the *gaping* [4] waves lay bare the earth among the flood [5], the surge rages among the *sands* [7].

The phrases numbered [1] through [7] in the description of the storm in *Togail Troí* by no means translate Virgil's ekphrasis literally, but correspond to the visual impression created in the Latin text; visual impressions follow nearly the same order, with only the image of the wave summits [6] having been delayed in the Irish version. The pattern of how the Irish text responds to verbal cues in Virgil is made clear when presented in parallel columns:

Togail Troí	*Aeneid*
conerracht in muir [1]	fluctus ad sidera tollit [1]
'the sea rose'	'(and) raises the billows up to the stars'
ina *immairib* anfoille immarda [2]	insequitur *cumulo* [2]
'in great towering *ridges*'	'there follows in a *heap*' ('hill'?)
ina *colbaib* gorma gleglassa [3]	praeruptus aquae *mons* [3]
'in blue shining-green *hills*'	'a precipitous *mountain* of water'
co *ménscaíled* [4]	unda *dehiscens* [4]
'[the sea] *gaped wide*'	'the *gaping* waves'
ina ettrigib anfóilli [5]	terram inter fluctus aperit [5]
'to become massive furrows'	'lay bare the earth among the flood'
ina hallaib uathmara imdomni [6][67]	summo in fluctu pendent [6]
'to become vast, very high cliffs'	'some hang in the summits of the waves'
murgrían in mara [7]	furit aestus *harenis* [7]
'on the *sand of the sea*'	'the surge rages among the *sands*'

Italics have here been employed more conservatively than in previous examples, used only to indicate the words which translate the Latin with some fidelity. These verbal echoes across the languages ensure that Virgil's verses specifically were remembered. The Irish author alters the image of the men tossed on the

[67] *Im-domain*, normally 'very deep', can be translated 'high', showing the semantic range of Latin *altus*, 'deep, lofty'. *Domain* in this sense is rare; see *DIL* s.v., col. 334.56; cf. *ard* in the sense 'deep' below, 232.

rising and falling waves [4–6] and continues to employ the topographic imagery already started with 'mons' ('mountain'). The picture conveyed, however, is patently similar; 'terram' ('(exposed) earth') encourages 'ettrigib' ('furrows') [5] in any case. Furthermore, 'cumulo' ('mass') [2] may have been read, or perhaps interpreted, as 'tumulo' ('hill'), an additional topographic sense readily reconciled with the Irish 'immairib' ('ridges'). Neil Wright has shown that 'tumulus' was what the faminators read in their copy of *Aeneid* 1 and reproduced in their own imitation of this very episode in the B-text of the *Hisperica Famina*. Here the language of Virgil's storm at sea has been employed to describe Moses's parting of the Red Sea:

> Isrelitica roboreum induxit agmina per pontum;
> preruptusque tithici mormoris pendebat utroque latere tumulus.[68]
>
> He led the masses of the Israelites through the Red Sea and on each side hung a jagged hill of sea water. (Wright's translation)[69]

Wright further demonstrates that the B-text here also follows a passage from Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*, a passage where the British author himself makes a pointed allusion to Virgil's storm.[70] The latter, like *Togail Troí*, is an example of the imitation of Virgil in prose.

A later description of a storm at sea from the B-text, in Wright's words, 'naturally contains Virgilian echoes and vocabulary', although a specific recollection of the storm from *Aeneid* 1 is not obvious.[71] This hisperic *descriptio* of a boat wracked by a storm, however, is further evidence for the practiced composition of such set passages in Irish education. The ultimate Virgilian inspiration for the topos cannot be denied.[72] The *imitatio* of Virgil's storm at sea from *Togail Troí*, therefore, is one of a series of such passages which almost certainly have arisen due to the use of Virgil in medieval education as a model author. The practice is evident already as early as Valerius's own depiction of the storm which besets the Argonauts, and probably featured at some point in the education of the young Gildas.[73] Indeed, a marked familiarity with Virgil's storm at sea specifically, to the near exclusion of other passages which an educated reader in the Middle Ages could have known, can be detected in Gregory of Tours.[74]

The clearest *imitatio* of Virgilian ekphrasis in *Togail Troí* is the description of all Greece rising to arms in preparation for the war against Troy. The passage corresponds to nothing in Dares's *De Excidio*, but replaces Dares's Portrait Catalogue of chapters 12–13, and immediately precedes the ekphrasis of the assembly of the Greek fleet discussed above.[75] In the interests of representing

68 Jenkinson, *The Hisperica Famina*, B 143–4.
69 Wright, 'The *Hisperica*', 64.
70 Winterbottom, *Gildas*, §11; and Wright, 'The *Hisperica*', 65–6.
71 Wright, 'The *Hisperica*', 69–70.
72 The direct model for B 181–9 is in fact Caelius Sedulius, who knew Virgil well.
73 Consider, for example, the borrowing of Virgil's *unda dehiscens* at *Argonautica* 1.623–4: 'antemnaque laevo / prona dehiscentem cornu cum sustulit undam'; *dehisco* occurs also in the B-text's ekphrasis of the storm (B 188); Irish *mén-scaílid* ([4] in the passage quoted above) is likely a loose calque on Virgil's *dehiscens*, 'gaping', where the second element of the compound, *hisco/hio*, 'to open the mouth', has inspired the coining of a compound on *mén*, poetic for 'mouth'.
74 For Virgilian *loci* in Gregory coming from the storm at sea, see Wright, 'Gildas's prose', 32, n. 14; and Bonnet, *Le latin de Grégoire*, 50–2.
75 For the Portrait Catalogue, see below, 187.

the author's ekphrastic technique and obvious literary ambition, the passage is quoted at some length:

> O roscáil, trá, in scélsa [1] fón Gréic .i. Elend do brith ar athed [2], dofúasnad mór fón Éuraip uile [3] óthá tíre na Meótacda co hinber srotha Réin. Rofích a nGrécaib uile [4] in scél sin, fó bíth bá mebul lá cech túaith 7 la cech cenél innti amal bad fríu fadeisin dognethe [5]. Robatar, trá, dála mence in-cech tuaith [6], 7 dochótar aithesca cáich có chéle día fis cuin bad mithig dóib techta for conair, 7 roherlaimigit dóib aidmi na conaire [7], etir longu 7 siúla 7 refeda, etir biad 7 étuch 7 indili. Roglésaiset na Tesáldai a n-eochu 7 [a] ngraighe [8] dia mbreith co hor in mara. Roglantá [9] luirecha 7 cathba[i]rr na Mirmedóndai dia meirg 7 salchur [10]. Roarmthá a ngái comtís géra frí fogail námat 7 echdrann [11]. Roslipthá a claidib 7 imorchoraigit a scéith ría ndul for conair. Roerlaimigit timthaige 7 erredai 7 étaige na nAthnénsta. R[o]bói, trá, óengáir arfut na Gréce uile [12] fóbíth roraindset íat fadéin [13]. *Drem díb* a cailtib ic búain na fidbad [14] coná cluined nech guth a cheile díb la himed na sáer 7 lochta ind fognuma ic tescad 7 ic timdibe 7 ic snaide na crand. *Drem aile dib* i cerdchaib ic dénum arm 7 íarnaig [15] .i. ic dénum chlaideb 7 lúirech 7 scíath, ic slibad 7 ic slaide a n-arm [16]. Ní rabi, tra, isin Gréic ule nech cen monar fon innassin [17]. Robdar lána do dunadaib 7 do longphortaib óthá in corthar airtherach Rétiae anairdes co íarthar tíre Tracíae for Erphoint sairthúaidh. Robátar ann na hA[th]nensta i ndúnad. Robátar Pilipénsta 7 Mecenda 7 Lacdemónda i n-óinbale. Robatar Argai 7 Danai [7] Pilasci. Robatar and áes Tráciae 7 Arcadiae 7 Tesáliae 7 Achaiae 7 Boetiae . . . (H 584–609; my italics)
>
> When these tidings spread [1] across Greece, namely that Helen had been carried off in elopement [2], there was a great commotion throughout Europe [3] from the land of the Maeotici to the mouth of the river Rhine. The news boiled up [4] in all of Greece, for each nation and each people felt the disgrace as if it had been done to them [5]. There were frequent assemblies in each nation [6], and each sent messages to the others to ascertain when would be best to be on their way, and implements for the way were gotten ready [7], ships and sails and ropes, food and clothing and cattle. The Thessalians got ready their steeds and their horses [8] to bring them to the sea's edge. The breastplates and helmets of the Myrmidons were cleaned [9] of their rust and filth [10]. Their spears were armed so that they were sharp [11] for the despoiling of foes and foreigners. Their swords were polished and their shields adjusted in readiness for the journey. The Athenians' cloaks and dress and clothing were gotten ready. There was, then, one cry throughout all of Greece [12], for they divided themselves [13]. *One group of them* in forests cutting trees [14], so that one could not hear another's voice on account of the abundance of craftsmen and serving-men cutting and hewing and chipping trees. *Another group of them* in smithies making arms and iron implements [15], that is, making swords and breastplates and shields, sharpening and hammering their arms [16]. There was not, then, any in all of Greece without employment of that kind [17]. They were full of encampments and camps from the eastern bound of Rhaetia in the southeast to the land of Thrace on the Propontis in the northeast. There were the Athenians encamped. The Phillipians [?] and Mycenaeans and Lacedaemonians were in one place. The Argives and Danai and Pelasgi were there. There were the people of Thrace and Arcadia and Thessaly and Achaia and Boeotia . . .

The quotation amounts to only a little over half the full passage, which continues with the enumeration of further Greek principalities, and the author's own close is an exhausted '7c' ('etc').

Myrick judges the latter part of this passage to belong to the learned geographical tradition represented by the fifth-century historian Orosius and the ninth-

century Irish geographer Dicuil.[76] Yet it is questionable whether the passage was conceived as a geographical digression at all. The passage's imitation of epic convention has not been hitherto considered. The epic model for the preparations and geographic enumeration can be identified, and it is Virgil's description of the muster of the Italian forces to meet Aeneas's Trojans in *Aeneid* 7:

> ardet inexcita Ausonia atque immobilis ante;
> *pars* pedes ire parat campis [7], *pars* arduus altis
> puluerulentus equis furit [8]; omnes arma requirunt.
> *pars* leuis clipeos et spicula lucida tergent [9]
> aruina pingui [10] subiguntque in cote securis [11];
> signaque ferre iuuat sonitusque audire tubarum [12].
> quinque [13] adeo magnae positis incudibus urbes
> tela nouant, Atina potens Tiburque superbum,
> Ardea Crustumerique et turrigerae Antemnae. (*Aeneid* 7.623–31; my italics)
>
> Ausonia burns, unmoved and untroubled before; *some* prepare to go on foot to the battlefields [7], *some* high atop their mighty horses tear madly through the dust [8]; all seek arms.[77] *Some* wipe their shields smooth and clean their spears [9] with thick fat [10], and sharpen their axes on whetstones [11]; they delight to bear standards and listen to the cry of trumpets [12]. Indeed, five [13] mighty cities make new weapons, the anvils in place, mighty Atina and proud Tibur, Ardea and Crustumerium and turreted Antemnae.

Cumulative parallels leave little doubt that the Irish author imitates Virgil. The series beginning with the preparations for the journey to the battlefields [7], the horses of the Thessalians [8], followed by the cleaning of shields and weapons [9, 10], then the sharpening of spears [11] and the 'cry' of the Greeks [12] patently reproduces Virgil's sequence of images. As in the episode of the storm at sea, the imitation sometimes shows the principle of word association rather than translation, but the correspondences are generally easy to follow. In 'cuin bad mithig dóib techta for conair, 7 roherlaimigit dóib aidmi na conaire' [7] ('when would be best to be on their way, and implements for the way were gotten ready'), *conar* connotes a physical 'path' or 'track' and recalls Virgil's *campus* when taken together with *pedes*; the identity of 'parat' ('they prepare') and 'roherlaimigit' ('were gotten ready = prepared') guarantees the imitation. On the other hand, from 'iuuat . . . sonitus audire' [12] ('they delight . . . to listen to the cry (of trumpets)') to 'r[o]bói, trá, óengáir arfut na Gréce uile óengáir' ('there was one cry throughout all of Greece') is a short leap. The scholarly ambition of the Irish adapter is clearest, however, is his remarkable success expanding the Virgilian passage with resort to a further *imitatio* of a second epic source. This is Statius's ekphrasis of the muster of the Greek armies in preparation for the expedition against Priam's Troy from *Achilleid* 1. Statius's ekphrasis is lengthy, so only verses clearly recalled by the Irish author are quoted, in the order of their occurrence in the *Achilleid*:

> Interea meritos ultrix Europa dolores [3]
> dulcibus armorum furiis et supplice regum
> conquestu flammata [4] movet; quippe ambit Atrides

[76] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 101–5.

[77] For the syntax of these lines, see Williams's edition of *Aeneid* 7–12, 212, n. 624; Williams's notes have been consulted throughout this passage.

> ille magis, cui nupta domi, facinusque relatu [1]
> asperat Iliacum: captam sine Marte, sine armis
> progeniem caeli Spartaeque potentis alumnam [2],
> iura, fidem, superos una calcata rapina . . .
> quid maneat populos, ubi tanta iniuria primos
> degrassata duces [5]? coeunt gens omnis et aetas [6] . . .
> nulla immunis humus [17] . . .
> iam natat omne nemus; caeduntur robora classi [14],
> silva minor remis. ferrum lassatur in usus
> innumeros [15], quod rostra liget, quod muniat arma [16] (*Achilleid* 1.397–430)
>
> Meanwhile, avenging Europe sets in motion righteous wrath [3], inflamed [4] with the sweet fury of arms and the suppliant complaint of kings; for Atreus's son, he all the more whose wife remains at home, canvasses for help, and worsens Ilium's crime in the telling of it [1]: that taken without warfare, without arms was the progeny of heaven and foster-daughter of mighty Sparta [2], laws, faith and the High Ones trampled in a single act of plunder . . . what awaited the people when so great an injury had descended on their leaders [5]? All peoples, all ages assemble [6] . . . no land is exempt [17] . . . now every forest is afloat; oaks are felled for fleets [14], lesser trees for oars. Iron is wearied into countless uses [15], to rivet prows, to protect arms [16].

In this passage Statius describes the identical historical event as that portrayed in *Togail Troí*, the preparations for the Greek expedition to recover Helen from the Trojans. This being the case, the pasage was an obvious potential model for the Irish adapter. In a full quotation it would be clear that Statius's own model was the very muster of the Italians from *Aeneid* 7 already seen to have been the primary model for the Irish author as well. Statius's imitation of Virgil can be detected in the opening verses quoted here, where 'Europa . . . flammata movet' responds to Virgil's opening 'ardet inexcita Ausonia atque immobilis ante'. Though taking Virgil's muster of the Italians as his primary model, the Irish author wisely chooses not to imitate Virgil's inimitable opening line. Instead, he substitutes a reworking of Statius's version [1–6]. The images have been reordered, but the *imitatio* can be reconstructed with little difficulty:

Togail Troí	*Aeneid*
O roscáil, trá, in scélsa [1] 'When these tidings spread'	relatu [1] 'in the telling of it'
Elend do brith ar athed [2] 'that Helen had been carried off in elopement'	captam sine armis / progeniem caeli Spartaeque potentis alumnam [2], 'that taken without warfare, without arms was the progeny of heaven and foster-daughter of mighty Sparta'
dofúasnad mór fón Éuraip uile [3] 'there was a great commotion throughout Europe' (literally 'there was set in motion')	ultrix Europa dolores (movet) [3] 'avenging Europe sets in motion righteous wrath'
Rofích a nGrécaib uile [4] 'The news boiled up in Greece'	flammata [4] 'enflamed (Europe)'
bá mebul lá cech túaith 7 la cech cenél innti amal bad fríu fadeisin dognethe [5] 'for each nation and each people felt the disgrace as if it had been done to them'	quid maneat populos, ubi tanta iniuria primos / degrassata duces [5]? 'what awaited the people when so great an injury had descended on their leaders?'

Robatar, trá, dála mence in cech tuaith [6] 'There were frequent assemblies in each nation'	coeunt gens omnis et aetas [6] 'All peoples, all ages assemble'

The principle of word association, rather than literal translation, continues to hold in this passage. As demonstrated above, [7–13] follow Virgil's verbal picture of Greece in ferment up to the point where the poet enumerates the individual activities of 'quinque urbes' ('five cities'). This suggested a division to the Irish author: 'roraindset íat fadéin' [13] 'they divided themselves'. At this point the author of course omits mention of Virgil's five Italian states, and instead decides to imitate in [14–17] the poet's distinctive 'pars . . . pars' device, 'some . . . some others', which he had ignored in his imitation of [7–9]. Perhaps as the content of Virgil's original *pars*-framing device in [7–9; in italics] had already been employed, the author substituted, again, images from Statius's ekphrasis of the preparations of the Greeks:

Togail Troí	*Aeneid*
Drem díb a cailtib ic búain na fidbad [14] '*One group of them* in forests cutting trees'	caeduntur robora classi [14] 'oaks are felled for fleets'
Drem aile dib i cerdchaib ic dénum arm 7 íarnaig [15] '*Another group of them* in smithies making arms and iron implements'	ferrum lassatur in usus / innumeros [15] 'iron is wearied into countless uses'
ic slibad 7 ic slaide a n-arm [16] 'sharpening and hammering their arms'	quod rostra liget, quod muniat arma [16] 'to rivet prows, to protect arms'
Ní rabi, tra, isin Gréic ule nech cen monar fon innassin [17] 'There was not, then, any in all of Greece without employment of that kind'	nulla immunis humus [17] 'no land is exempt'

Throughout the images imitated from Statius the Irish author reorders the poet's original sequence, but the poet's order is preserved in clusters: [3–4, 1–2, 5–6, 17, 14–15–16]. Only 'nulla immunis humus' [17] has been radically displaced, moved to the very end of the Irish *imitatio*, where it provides the rhetorical climax.

Virgil's ekphrasis of the arising of Italy is the introduction to his celebrated catalogue of the Italian troops, and Statius has partially imitated that catalogue with an analogous enumeration of Greek territorial names in his own text (not quoted above). In this light, the naming of the territories of the world who gather to Greece with which the Irish author closes his ekphrasis in *Togail Troí*, in spite of its appearance of academic pedantry, is not simply a list in the learned geographical tradition. In this context it is, on the contrary, an epic topos. This geographical survey has been joined, as in the models provided by Virgil and Statius, to a preceding general ekphrasis which first gives an overview of the picture. The technique, one presumes, was intended precisely to elevate the list of territories above simple pedantry. Whatever the demerits of the Irish author's grasp of the geography of the ancient world, the epic frame into which he has sought to incorporate his geographical learning, a frame ambitiously imitated from two model ekphrases from Virgil and Statius, has been brilliantly realized.

One episode from *Togail Troí* which occurs in the context of ekphrasis high-

lights the difficulty of distinguishing *imitatio* from the impersonal topoi of story-telling and Christian preaching. Following a Greek delegation to Priam which fails to extract an offer of surrender from the Trojans, the ambassadors return to the Greek camp at Tenedos and relate their experience: 'legati in castra Tenedum revertuntur renuntiantes responsum' ('the ambassadors return to the camp on Tenedos and relay a response') (17). The Irish author is more interested than Dares in what the ambassadors relate:

> 'Cía nobetís émh', ar íat, 'secht tengtha i cind cech áin acanne, ní fétfaimís aisnís cech neich atchondcammar. Ar rucsat na Tróianda do dáinib domhain uile ar cruth 7 deilb 7 deichelt. Mairg noda-maindéra, mairg do neuch mairfit, mairg do neoch nos-mairfe 7 bas coscrach diib, 7 dos-béra frí lár!' (H 774–9)
>
> 'Even if there were', they said, 'seven tongues in the head of each one of us, we would not be able to recount each thing we saw. For the Trojans surpassed the men of the world in shape and form and clothing. Woe to him who shall destroy them, woe to him they shall slay, woe to him who shall slay them and be victorious over them and who shall lay them low!'

The 'seven tongues' formula used by the ambassadors is a variation on a phrase from *Aeneid* 6, spoken by the Sibyl of her inability to recount all the terrors which she has seen in Tartarus:

> non, mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum,
> ferrea uox, omnis scelerum comprendere formas,
> omnia poenarum percurrere nomina possim. (*Aeneid* 6.625–7)
>
> Not if I had a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths, an iron voice, would I be able to include all the shapes of crimes, recount all the names of punishments.

The 'hundred tongues' formula was widely imitated in antiquity, for example, by Apuleius, Virgil again at *Georgics* 2.43–4, Ovid and Persius, the latter who clearly parodies it.[78] Though by the Middle Ages the figure was probably associated with Virgil more than any other single classical author, Macrobius, through the character in his dialogue named Eustathius, explained Virgil got it from Homer, who used it to introduce the Catalogue of Ships from the *Iliad*:

> πληθὺν δ'οὐχ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω
> οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν
> φωνὴ δ'ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη.
> (*Saturnalia* 5.7.16; *Iliad* 2.488–90)
>
> But the multitude I could not tell nor name, not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, an unbreakable voice and a heart of bronze.

At *Saturnalia* 6.3.6, however, Macrobius, now through the proxy of the speaker Furius, revealed that Virgil might have acquired the Homeric topos indirectly through an earlier imitation in Latin by Hostius. The literary origin of the topos is not lost on the scholiast whose note to *Georgics* 2.43–4 is preserved in the *Brevis Expositio*:

> LINGVAE Homericus sensus Graeci poetae, sicut et Ennius: Non si lingua loqui saperet et ora decem . . .

[78] See Hinds, *Allusion*, 34–47.

> TONGUES the idea is from the Greek poet Homer; so, too, Ennius: Not if I had ten mouths to speak with . . .

Ellen Finkelpearl judges that the reccurrence of the formula in Latin poets is not a mere impersonal topos, but marks a 'fraternity of writers' involved in the practice of *imitatio*.[79] This distinction between impersonal topos and *imitatio* becomes crucial in a consideration of the medieval instances. Charles Wright has traced the spread of the formula from its occurrence in the *Visio Sancti Pauli* to its extensive employment in Irish and Old English homiletic texts.[80] The *Visio Sancti Pauli* may further be credited with being a model for the vivid ekphrastic style exemplified in texts such as the Irish *Fís Adomnáin*.[81] Accordingly, we may not be able in every case to separate the ostensibly classical ekphrastic aesthetic of a text such as *Togail Troí* from the ekphrastic conventions of the Christian *visio*. However, Wright finds that the Anglo-Saxon homilist responsible for Vercelli IX, in spite of the fact that his primary source is a recension of the *Visio Sancti Pauli*, adapts the motif after the direct example of *Aeneid* 6.625–7.[82] Thus, we have both classical and medieval evidence for the functioning of literary *imitatio*, in addition to the impersonal employment of a topos in some of the homiletic occurrences.

The instance of the 'seven tongues' formula from *Togail Troí* shows preference for the number seven in common with the homiletic instances which share a literary environment with the *Visio Sancti Pauli*. Contrary to the homiletic texts which are concerned with the terrors of Hell, examples from Sedulius Scottus, *Félire Oengusso* and *Acallam na Senórach* apply to the inexpressibility of positive phenomena such as the joys of heaven, or a woman's excellence.[83] The obscure doom-laden phrases which finish the topos in *Togail Troí*, 'woe to him' and so forth, may partake of either the homiletic examples, or the instance from the *Aeneid* where the phrase is the rhetorical climax to the Sibyl's eye-witness description of the torments of Tartarus. Both traditions, the Virgilian as well as the homiletic, witness the visual import of the topos which *Togail Troí* particularly borrows, but which is not shared, for example, with Homer. The dual epic/homiletic source for the inexpressibility-theme in *Togail Troí* reflects in miniature the problem of the ekphrastic techniques used throughout the text. That is, are these inspired predominantly by the example of Homer, Virgil and their imitators, or do they equally reflect other traditions, such as the vivid narrative style of the homiletic examples?

In *Togail Troí*, the gathering of the fleet at Athens immediately follows the ekphrasis of the preparations for the Greek expedition.[84] Both of these passages are the Irish author's additions to Dares's narrative, and, as it has been shown, are significant instances of his classicizing program. In the case of the Greeks' preparations, it is not a cue in Dares's text which has occasioned the expansion, so much as the challenge of replacing the prosaic Portrait Catalogue with something that reflects the epic aesthetic for which the Irish author yearns. The

79 Finkelpearl, 'Pagan', 87–90.
80 Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, 145–56.
81 See Dumville, 'Towards'.
82 Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, 145.
83 Wright, *The Irish Tradition*, 151–5.
84 See above, 111, 116.

preparations of the Greeks from the *Achilleid*, as well as Virgil's descripton of the preparations of the Italian forces which was Statius's own model, both encouraged the substitution and provided the technique. Pains have been taken here to reveal the care given by the Irish author to create classically derived ekphrases throughout *Togail Troí*. There should be no need to argue that there is any native Irish tradition behind the passages examined. Yet it would have been clear to the Irish that the ekphrases imitated were not merely Virgilian and Statian, but epic in the broadest sense. Of one of Virgil's memorable phrases where the technique of ekphrasis is spelled out, Servius comments: 'CERNERE ERAT Graeca figura est' ('IT WAS POSSIBLE TO SEE – this is a Greek figure') (at *Aeneid* 8.676). Servius, of course, refers to the grammatical construction, but a willing reader may detect a secondary allusion to the ekphrastic device conveyed in the verse itself. As was demonstrated, the Homeric origin of the inexpressibility topos of 'multiple tongues', used in conjunction with ekphrasis, is stated clearly in the *Brevis Expositio*. Given the Irish fascination for things Greek, can we infer that the Irish author's extreme pains to reproduce Virgilian ekphrasis is also an indirect nod to Homer? The towering reputation of Homer in antiquity as the model for all things epic was familiar from Servius at least, if not also from Macrobius and elsewhere, and the effort John Scottus thought fit to expend translating the poet's verses has already been noted.

Expansion, Imitatio *and an Emerging Middle Irish Prose*

The preceding discussion demonstrated that the ekphrastic set piece is one of the most distinctive techniques used by the Irish author to expand Dares's terse narrative. Ekphrasis is so central to the author's technique that it will continue to feature in the following discussion of the author's prose style. However, this examination of the prose technique of *Togail Troí* is intended to shift focus from ekphrasis *per se* onto a variety of techniques which expand Dares's narrative. Some of these, when first considered, would seem to reflect a native tradition of oral storytelling. Certain techniques, such as the 'alliterating run', have long been considered characteristic of an especially Middle Irish prose.[85] When examined in common, these techniques are revealed to continue a close engagement with Dares's text, and, to varying degrees, to continue the author's program of *imitatio* of classical epic.

After an initial effort to represent individual martial encounters on the first days of the battle between the Greeks and the Trojans, Dares settles into stark abbreviation:

> Achilles postera die cum Diomede exercitum educit. contra Hector et Aeneas. fit magna caedes: Hector Orcomeneum Ialmenum Epistrophum Schedium Elephenorem Dioren Polyxenum duces occidit, Aeneas Amphimachum et Nireum. (21)
>
> The following day Achilles, with Diomedes, leads out his troops. On the other side, Hector and Aeneas. There is made a great slaughter: Hector kills Orcomeneus Ialmenus Epistrophus Schedius Elephenor Diores Polyxenus, Aeneas Amphimachus Nireus.

[85] See Chapter 5, *passim*.

The Book of Leinster text appears to follow the original plain translation of Dares's text, though many of the names have probably become corrupted with transmission:

> Darochratar tra leis chetus na rigmilidsea .i. Argoménus. 7 Palemón 7 na cóic rigthúsechusa .i. Epithropus 7 Scéithius da ríg Poliádi. Defenor 7 Dórius 7 Poliuxinus ríg Salmána. Ra marb dano Aenias da rígmílid. Inúi. rí do rígaib Salmána. 7 Uenerius a [S]ímia. (L 32641–4)
>
> There fell by him [sc. Hector] these royal soldiers, that is, Orcomeneus and Palemon and the five royal chiefs, that is Epistrophus and Schedius, two kings of Phocis, Elephenor and Diores and Polyxenus, kings of Salamina. Aeneas, meanwhile, killed two kings: Amphimachus [?], one of the kings of Salamina, and Nireus from Syme.[86]

With this replication of both the content of Dares's text as well as the absence of any narrative style, we catch a glimpse of the original simple translation which was probably the common source for Recensions I and II. The first recension, however, has greatly expanded on the common source, constructing a full epic sequence of credibly portrayed contests on the field of battle. We can cite as an example the sequence Schedius-Elephenor-Diores:

> Dochuaid dano Scedíus arcind Hectoir do chuinchid a erdarcusa. Derb leis ropab lán in domun día anmum día tochrad dó Hectoir do thuitim leis. Tánic immorro Hectoir cohuathmar áigthidi araamus conos-fargaib cen anmain. Tánic Cliofinor do chomrac fris co ngáirside gairm nemnech [nduabais] fair. 'Fer', ar sé, 'théte ardochind innose not-mairbfe 7 etarscarfaid t'anmain frit chorp. Bíat fáilid in dithrubhaig 7 ethate ind aéuir dit'. 'Frit fein impaifes sin uile', ar Hectoir, la tócbáil in gai bái ina laim, co tabairt forgaba for Cliophinor, co rabi 'na crois triit, co torchair dochum thalman. Reithid Hectoir chucai co ruc a fodb 7 a chend leis. Don-ánic fáisin Dorcus. 'Ní béra cen debaid', ar sé, 'ind fadbsin. Ní ba hinund duit 7 na láich rofersat gléo frit cos'tráthsa'. 'Bád íarum nomáide', ar Echtoir. 'Día fis tiagmait', ol se. Cotrecat íarum. Dorochair Dorcus annsin la Hechtoir íarná chrechtnugud coádbhal. (H 972–86)
>
> Then Schedius went before Hector to seek his renown. He was sure that the world would be full of his name if he should succeed in defeating Hector. Hector came against him terribly, fearfully, and left him lifeless. Elephenor came to fight against Hector and cried a venomous, hateful cry at him. 'The man', he said, 'who faces you now, he will slay you and separate your soul from your body. The beasts of the desert and the birds of the air will be glad of you'. 'Against yourself shall all that turn', said Hector, raising the spear that was in his hand, and thrusting at Elephenor in such a way that it passed through him into his gullet, and he fell to the ground. Hector runs to him and carried off his arms and his head. Then came Diores against him: 'You shall not', he said, 'bear away those arms without a contest. You will not find me the same as the heroes who have given you battle hitherto'. 'Be it afterwards that you boast', said Hector. 'We come to know it', he said. Then they fight. Diores fell there by Hector after being greatly wounded.

The author reimagines Dares's bare list of the dead as a dramatic sequence on the battlefield, complete with boasts and contests over fallen warriors. Schedius's

[86] I normalize the names according to the forms in Meister's edition with reference to the textual variants; for the forms that personal names take in *Togail Troí*, see Poppe, 'Personal', who sees evidence that variant versions of the *De Excidio* circulated in medieval Ireland and Wales.

ill-conceived hope for glory and his summary dispatch at Hector's hand, a rare moment of Virgilian pathos in *Togail Troí*, may have been encouraged especially by Virgil's pathetic depiction of Pallas's doomed stand against Turnus. For Schedius's desire for fame, compare Pallas's similar hope:

> aut spoliis ego iam raptis laudabor opimis
> aut leto insigni. (*Aeneid* 10.449–50)
>
> I shall have fame, either for the seizing of a commander's spoils, or for a glorious death.

For the detail that Hector leaves Schedius without a *ainimm*, 'life/soul', compare the description of Pallas's expiration, expressed as the parting of his *animus*, 'life/soul', from his body:

> una eademque uia sanguīs animusque sequuntur. (*Aeneid* 10.487)
>
> The blood and the life leave [his body] by the same exit.

This same example may have encouraged Elephenor's boast from the above passage: 'etarscarfaid t'anmain frit chorp' ('[I will] separate your soul from your body'). However, although this exchange between Pallas and Turnus preserves among the best of Virgil's examples of epic banter in battle, verbal parallels from this banter itself with the exchanges from *Togail Troí* 972–86 are lacking. Of course, once the notion of having warriors pause in the heat of battle to speak to one another has been accepted as a literary convention, different authors at different times could independently arrive at similar exchanges. But sequences of dramatic encounters such as Hector's chatty wading through the ranks of the Greeks are rare in native Irish saga: Cú Chulainn's exchanges with lone warriors in the *Táin*, for example, unquestionably the closest parallel to the battle-exchanges in *Togail Troí*, are quite distinct in tone and pacing. Even in terms of content, although we would expect exchanges between warriors to be thoroughly formulaic, nothing in the *Táin* resembles Elephenor's boast, that he will leave his opponent to the birds of prey, anywhere near as closely as Virgil's own version of the boast: 'istic nunc, metuende, iace . . . alitibus linquere feris' ('lie there now, you who thought you were to be feared . . . you will be left for the wild birds of prey') (*Aeneid* 10.557–9).

Aeneid 10 and 12 are a mine of examples of how a clash between two armies can be portrayed as a series of smaller contests, punctuated with epic banter. We cannot assume that the technique is naturally possessed by anyone who picks up pen and parchment: it is notably absent, for example, from the final battle from *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. More common than Virgilian series of contests, in both *Togail Troí* and native sagas, are more generalized ekphrases of large battles. These make full use of formulaic language, and, in comparison with Virgil's technique, can seem relatively impersonalized.[87] Noting that such general descriptions of large battles are absent from tales dating from the Old Irish period, Uáitéar Mac Gearailt suggests that the *Aeneid* is the ultimate source, first for the elaborate battle-descriptions in the second recension of *Togail Troí* and, from thence, to descriptions of battle in Middle Irish *catha*, or 'tales of battles'.[88]

[87] See Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 485–6.
[88] Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 485–8; and Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild'.

The fact that the battle-descriptions of the first recension of *Togail Troí* are less obviously constructed around stereotyped formulae than those of the second recension led Mac Gearailt to give them little attention in his discussion of the language of battle in Middle Irish. However, one's view of the Middle Irish battle-ekphrasis is modified upon consideration of passages from the first recension which do significantly anticipate the style of the later *catha*. A clear example is the passage which precedes the Virgilian battle-scene quoted above. The passage has been built up from a typically laconic cue in Dares: '(est) magna caedes' (21). The first few lines which begin the expansion give an adequate sense of the fuller passage:

> Acher, trá, in gres roláset. Robúirset cotnúthach isin cathsin damrad rochalma Asía 7 Éorpa. Dochótar ann na mílid rotréna darcend cumaing inn-agaid a námat. Grandi na hárdi robátar ann .i. laindrech na claideb 7 a n-áeblig oc túarcain na scíath, findnéll na cailce, comtuarcain na claideb . . . Robrecad in t-áer úasa cind do dibraicthib na n-arm n-écsamail. (H 930–9)
>
> Bitter, in truth, was the attack which they delivered. Furiously in that battle bellowed the valiant stags of Asia and Europe. Then the mightiest heroes went according to their power against their enemies. Horrible were the signs that were there, namely, the shining of the swords and their sparks cleaving the shields, the bright cloud from the whitened bucklers, the smiting together of the swords . . . The air above them was speckled with the casts of the diverse weapons.

As Dares's phrase *magna caedes* would encourage, specific actions of the protagonists are not related in this description. The technique is paralleled in a general way throughout Virgil's *Aeneid*, although with nowhere near the same elaboration as in the Irish examples. Consider, for example:

> discurrunt alii ad portas primosque trucidant,
> ferrum alii torquent et obumbrant aethera telis. (*Aeneid* 12.577–8)
>
> Some run to the gates and cut down those in front, others hurl spears and darken the air with missiles.

or:

> sternitur omne solum telis, tum scuta cauaeque
> dant sonitum flictu galeae, pugna aspera surgit. (*Aeneid* 9.666–7)
>
> The whole earth is strewn with missiles, then shields and hollow helmets resound in collision, a fierce battle arises.

Given the lack of precise parallels from the *Aeneid*, Mac Gearailt's argument that Middle Irish battle-scenes have resulted from general reminiscences of Virgil is sensible.[89] All the same, the elaborate battle-scene constitutes one of the techniques of expansion, and can be considered an expression of the interest in ekphrasis which, as has been shown, otherwise relies on close attention to classical models. We can recall that this interest in ekphrasis well anticipated the composition of the Book of Leinster text of *Togail Troí*. Furthermore, Priscian's exercise to teach ekphrasis includes 'pedestris proelii vel navalis pugnae descriptio' ('a

[89] Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild', 126; see also 'Change', 486, for a list of parallels between *Aeneid* 12 and battle-scenes from the Book of Leinster text.

descriptio . . . of a battle on foot, or a naval battle').[90] This prescription, if known in Ireland, would have been familiar even to the first Irish translator of the *De Excidio* in the tenth century, long before the observable development of the overwrought battle-ekphrasis of the native *cath*.

One notable marker of the classicizing program in *Togail Troí* unrelated with ekphrasis is the author's occassional attempts to reproduce features of Latin rhetorical prose. A clear example is found in a passage translating an incident from the *De Excidio* where Dares describes the negotiations for a truce between the two armies:

> Agamemnon ut vidit multa milia cotidie occidi neque sufficere mortuos sine intermissione funerari, misit legatos Ulixen et Diomedem ad Priamum. (22)
>
> Agamemnon, when he saw many thousands daily being slain and that there was not enough time for the dead to be buried without an intermission, sent Ulysses and Diomedes as legates to Priam.

The expansion typically has ekphrastic features, but additionally shows an interest in more conventionally rhetorical flourishes (Stokes's punctuation has been altered slightly):

> Amal atchonnairc immorro Agmemnón ilmíli do thuitim día muintir cech lái, 7 o'tchonnairc in fordingi móir dorat Hectoir forru, 7 amal atchonnairc na maige lána dona collaib 7 dona hapaigib 7 dona cnámhaib, co nábo inimthechta in magh mór ótha múru na Trói corici scuru na nGréc, la himbed na coland 7 lá slaimred na fola – mad ind Assia bec immorro nir'bó inatrebtha ule óthá tairr mara Point atuáid corici Eifis fades, la drochthuth na fola 7 na coland ic lobad 7 la dethaig na n-apaige 'cá loscud isna híltentib, co rogaib ág 7 accais 7 aingces in tir uile de, co rocuired an ár do doinibh 7 cethraib 7 biastaib [7 énaib] – amal atchonnairc íarum Agmemnón na huile sea, rofóidi dá tóisech dia muinntir fri techtairecht co Troiannu .i. Ulíx 7 Díomid, do chuinchid ossaid teóra ṁbliadan. (H 1041–54)
>
> When Agamemnon saw many thousands of his people fall each day, and when he saw the great overthrow which Hector made of them, and when he saw the field full of bodies and entrails and bones, so that the great plain could not be crossed from Troy's walls to the Greeks' camp on account of the abundance of bodies and the clots of blood – as for Asia, it was not inhabitable from the bight of the Pontic Sea in the north to Ephesus in the south with the evil smell of blood and bodies decaying and the steam of entrails burning in many fires, so that fear and enmity and vexation seized the whole country from it, so that a great slaughter of men and cattle and beasts and birds came from it – when Agamemnon saw all these things, he sent two chieftains from his people on an embassy to the Trojans, that is Ulysses and Diomedes, to ask for a truce of three years.

The Irish passage follows Dares closely enough at the beginning, exactly reproducing the opening temporal clause describing Agamemnon's survey of the fallen. Yet this opening clause is expanded to such a length, with such an intrusion of additional subordinate clauses in the Irish, that one suspects the author was striving to reproduce the weightiness of a Latin period. However, unlike good examples of periodic structure in Latin, the subordination in the Irish is in fact exceedingly simple, barely breaking out of the simple temporal clause which Dares had provided: a single result clause, 'co nábo inimthechta in magh

[90] Passalacqua, *Prisciani Caesariensis*, 46

mór' ('so that the great plain could not be crossed') is the only effort to add something structurally new to the passage. The phenomenon is paralleled by Hiberno-Latin writers who, though writing in Latin, often only approximate a full command of all the subordinating structures which give the Ciceronian period its elegance. For example, Columbanus, whose periodic style is quite accomplished, nevertheless relies heavily on parenthesis.[91] Columbanus's parenthetic technique is echoed in this passage, in the digression which describes the devastation of Asia, which has not been incorporated grammatically into the syntactic frame. Interestingly, parenthesis is also a prominent feature of Virgil's epic style.[92] The repetition of the frame of the opening temporal clause after the parenthesis, that is 'amal atchonnairc íarum Agmemnón na huile sea' ('when Agamemnon saw . . .'), before the principal clause 'rofóidi dá tóisech' ('he sent two chieftains') shows that the parenthesis is not the result of merely mechanical expansion. The repetition of a subject in long passages, as a substitution for the syntactic organization otherwise possible in periodic writing, is met also in Muirchú.[93]

The continuation of the Irish is noteworthy for its reproduction of the jarring parataxis in Dares's Latin:

> . . . ut indutias in triennium peterent, ut suos funerarent, vulneratos curarent, naves reficerent, exercitum compararent, commeatum conueherent. (22)
> . . . atfíadat a scéla .i. a tíachtain do chuinchid osaid ó Grécaib, fri cóiniud a coem 7 a carat 7 fri hádnacul a marb, fri híc a n-othrach, fri daingnigud a long, fri tercomrac a slúag, fri lessugud na longphort. (H 1057–60)
>
> . . . they related their message, that is, that they came to request a truce from the Greeks, for the mourning of their companions and friends and for the burying of their dead, for the healing of their wounded, for the fortifying of their ships, for the gathering of their troops, for the repairing of their camps.

Curiously, the parataxis sounds more artful in the Irish than in the Latin; such paratactic multiplication of parallel clauses became associated with high-prestige rhetorical prose in later Middle Irish. Yet while preserving Dares's characteristically paratactic structure in this passage, the Irish author nevertheless tightens Dares's prosaic narration in the passage's continuation:

> *Tamen* dorat a himpide ríg na Tróianda, ar robo maith leosíde daingnigud na múr, ádhnacul a carat. (H 1064–6)
>
> *Nevertheless* he [Hector] granted it at the request of the king of the Trojans, for they desired the fortifying of the walls, the burying of their friends.

The insertion of Latin 'tamen' ('nevertheless') shows that the author has in mind the structure of a Latin period, and that he consciously works his translation along periodic lines rather than following Dares's model. Yet the closing genitive phrases 'daingnigud na múr, ádhnacul a carat' ('the fortifying of the walls, the burying of their friends') continue to preserve the paractactic style of the passage they translate:

91 Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistolae*', 49–50.
92 See O'Hara, 'Virgil's style', 247.
93 Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 20.

> interim Troiani moenia renovant, suos quisque saucios curant, mortuos cum ingenti honore sepeliunt. (22)
>
> Meanwhile the Trojans rebuild the fortifications, they see to their wounded, they bury their dead with great honour.[94]

The phrase 'cum ingenti honore' is omitted from the Irish version, perhaps to avoid spoiling the rhythm provided by the genitive phrases, verbal noun + article and noun, and their echoing effect with the identical construction of a few phrases previous, that is, 'cóiniud a coem 7 a carat' and so forth. Although it is difficult to demonstrate, these discrete two-beat phrases, with the pause between them guaranteed by the parataxis, are likely an Irish equivalent to the rhythmic cadences of Latin prose, examples of which can be identified throughout Hiberno-Latin.[95]

We can trace the development of the author's style in a later passage, a generalized ekphrasis of battle which is also a model of the technique I have described as expansion at the level of the prose. The passage translates Dares 29: 'fit maxima caedes, uterque exercitus inter se pugnat acriter. multos duces Argivorum Troilus interficit' ('there is made a very great slaughter, both armies fight one another fiercely. Troilus kills many leaders of the Greeks') (the punctuation is altered from Stokes's text):

> Ferthar gléo fuilech, fergach, níthach, neimhnech, nualghubach ann di cech in dá irgal. Rolaadh, tra, ár dermar di cechtar in dá leithe. Robriste and láith gaile Éorpa 7 Assiae. Conácbad and cath ródha cumnart créchtnaighthech and. Roptar imdha srotha fola dar cnesaib m[o]ethóclách ic techt i ngábudh darcend cumaing. Roba imda láech 'na ligu iarna lúathletrad 7 íarna lúathtimdíbé do bágaid bidbad. Robo imda scíath íarna dlugha ó or co hur. Robo imda claideb íarna chathim corici a dornchur 'conn-imbualad. Robo imda gái 7 foga íarna [m]brisiud sechnón na láthrech. Robtar imda fadba cen oógud. Robtar lána, thrá, glenda 7 állta 7 inbera ind ármaighe in laasin dona srothaib fola robátar ann oc snighe a corpaib láech lánchalma. Cen co turmide, trá, do gnimaib ind lathise acht cech a torchair do láim Troil ósair chlainne Príaim – sinsir immorro fer ṅdomhain o turcbáil co funed arái n-enigh 7 engnama 7 gaiscid – cen co turmidhe dino acht sin, ba léor do scélaib gaiscid 7 d'esbaidh día naimtib. Ar cen co fagbaitís Gréic do imniudh in tslúaghaidhsin acht cech a torchair dia tóisechaib trenaib in laa-sin la Troil, ba mór dh'ulc, cenmóthá a forlaig din tslúagh olchena, is lía turim són. (H 1362–81)
>
> There is fought a bloody, angry, warlike, venomous, howling fight from each company. A great slaughter was inflicted on each of the two sides. The warriors of Europe and Asia were broken there. A cruel, mighty, wounding battle was there had. Many were the streams of blood over the skins of tender youths who went in peril in spite of their strength. Many were the heroes lying hacked and cut down in the fighting of foes. Many were the shields split from edge to edge. Many were the swords worn down to their hilts in the mutual striking. Many were the spears and javelins shattered throughout the battlefield. Many were the spoils ripped off [?]. Full, then, were the glens and rocky heights and watercourses [?] of the battlefield on that day from the streams of blood that were there, flowing from the bodies of valorous warriors. Though none of the deeds of that day should be counted except every one that fell by the hand of Troilus, Priam's youngest son – yet the eldest

94 The Irish author knew a text of Dares which omitted *curant mortuos*, as does the Leiden manuscript (**L**): 'suos quisque saucios cum ingenti honore sepeliunt'; see Meister's edition *ad loc.*; additionally, *saucios* has been read as *socios*, 'companions'.

95 See Howlett, 'Insular'; and Picard, 'The metrical prose'.

> of the men of the world from sunrise to sunset in respect of honour and might and valour – though none but those should be counted, it was enough of the tidings of valour and of the loss of his enemies. For though the Greeks should not find a sorrowing of that host except what fell of their strong leaders that day by Troilus, it was a great misfortune, besides what he laid low of the rest of the host, more was that than can be reckoned.

The style in this passage represents the author's response to the challenge of translating another in the long succession of Dares's dull *caedes*, while conveying the intensification implicit in *maxima*, and without any flagging of the creativity that he has shown hitherto. The opening phrases from 'ferthar' to 'nualghubach' and then 'cath' to 'créchtnaighthech' show the fondness for alliterating strings of nouns and adjectives which is mostly associated with the second recension and texts such as the Book of Leinster *Táin*.[96] The style is occassionally witnessed in the first recension, but generally in short passages such as this, where, I argue, it marks a special effort of the author to vary and surpass the techniques of *amplificatio* which he has already displayed. We can deduce from the meagre scope of alliterating runs in the remainder of this passage that alliteration is not a figure of oral storytelling here applied mechanically. Instead, the techniques of expansion are varied and, whether by accident or design, again recall the techniques of Latin composition. For example, anaphora on 'robtar imdha' ('many were') binds the phrases which translate 'pugnat acriter'; 'robtar' elegantly varies with 'robo' in a figure akin to Latin polyptoton. Within this anaphoric frame there is a kind of *tricolon abundans* between the four phrases with one subject ('srotha', 'láech', 'scíath', 'claideb'), followed by a phrase with two subjects ('gái' and 'foga'), leading up to the closing phrase with three ('glenda', 'állta', 'inbera ind ármaighe'). In this final clause of the *tricolon abundans* the subject is expanded through being turned into a genitival phrase ('watercourses [?] of the battlefield'), and a relative clause additionally extends the sentence to a length roughly double those which precede it, reinforcing the characteristic symmetry of the *tricolon*. Dares's 'multos duces Argivorum Troilus interficit' is elegantly reinterpreted as an unreal condition ('though none of the deeds of that day should be counted' and so forth); the scope of the construction is expanded by the repetition of the protasis 'cen co turmide' ('though none of the deeds of that day should be counted'), into which has been inserted, again, a parenthesis in imitation of a Latin period. A second condition then echoes the first with the semantic equivalence of the two apodoses ('ba léor'/'ba mór', 'was great'), which we may choose to regard as another example of anaphora. The parenthesis of the earlier phrase is not repeated, but a heightened effect is instead created by the asyndeton of the closing phrase 'is lía turim són' ('more was that than can be reckoned').[97] In this phrase, again as in the case of 'daingnigud na múr, ádhnacul a carat' above, the pause in pronunciation which the the asyndetic sentence-close necessitates suggests a conscious prose cadence.

[96] See Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 108–10, 125–6.

[97] The closing phrases verge on anacolouthon, and Stokes, 'The Destruction', 112, punctuates the text and his translation differently in the struggle to make sense of the passage.

Imitatio*, Formulae of Praise and Heroic Similes*

A full consideration of prose expansion in *Togail Troí* entails the challenge of distinguishing figures and similes that respond to classical models from those which might represent techniques of medieval oral storytelling. The attempt to distinguish between the two probably cannot be made for the text as a whole, but may be attempted in the odd case. For example, the frequency of unreal conditions in the praise of warriors in *Togail Troí* may represent imitations of Latin models. Passages showing extensive expansion are characterized by phrases such as: 'derb leis ropad lán in domun día anmum día tochrad dó Hector do thuitem leis' ('he was certain that the world would be full of his praise if Hector were to fall by his hand') (H 973); and 'mad a ndoróni Hechtair frisin ré sin do deggaisciud bá lóor d'airscélaib do feraib in betha día festa colléir' ('as for the valiant deeds which Hector performed at that time, if they were fully known there would be enough of noble tales for the men of the world') (H 1038–40). The construction is used to great effect in an encomium of Troilus which closes his final victorious appearance in battle:

> Asbert cách uadhib fria chéle, díambád lán a *fiche bliadan* nomairbhfed in slógh ule 7 ní rised fer innisi scéoil diib úad co tír na Gréci forcúlu. (H 1497–9; my italics)
>
> Each of them said to one another that if his [Troilus's] *twenty years* were to be complete he would slay the entire host, and no man of them would survive to bear tidings back to Greece.

A second conditional sentence, in this instance with the apodosis 'if he were in the prime of age', immediately follows and is an obvious variation on the first, and yet a third closes the passage.

This formula of praise, absent in Dares, almost certainly derives from a Latin source shared with the First Vatican Mythographer 3.8 (De Troili casu):

> . . . cui dictum erat quod, si ad *annos uiginti* peruenisset, Troia euerti non potuisset. (my italics)
>
> . . . of whom [Troilus] it was said that, if he had reached *twenty years*, it would not have been possible to overthrow Troy.

The Mythographer's immediate source here is unidentified. What is most interesting about this formulaic use of the unreal condition is that, in the source shared with the Mythographer, the condition does not refer to Troilus's prowess. The condition is merely one of the historical prophecies which featured in the antique story of Troy. Oracles had said that the city would not fall if certain conditions were met. Servius records some of these prophecies, but is not full enough to have been the Latin source for *Togail Troí* and the Mythographer:

> FATISQUE REPULSI oraculis . . . secundum Plautum tribus, vita scilicet Troili, palladii conservatione, integro sepulcro Laomedontis. (at *Aeneid* 2.13)
>
> HELD BACK BY FATE in oracles . . . according to Plautus there were three, that is, the life of Troilus, the preservation of the palladium, the unharmed sepulchre of Laomedon.

In the Latin source shared by the Mythographer and *Togail Troí*, the unreal condition of Troilus's 'twenty years' therefore pertained to content, not rhetoric.

The original oracular importance of Troilus's attaining to adulthood was clearly ignored in *Togail Troí*, and the prophecy made instead into a stylistic formula of praise. The two variations on this formula of praise which ensue reveal that the author learned to employ the construction as a technique of expansion. We can infer, moreover, that, given the Latin source, the technique may have been felt to be classicizing. The first author to use this unreal condition as a simple figure of praise probably knew Virgil's own employment of the figure, here in Diomedes's expression of praise for Hector and Aeneas:

> si duo praeterea talis Idaea tulisset
> terra uiros, ultro Inachias uenisset ad urbes
> Dardanus, et uersis lugeret Graecia fatis. (*Aeneid* 11.285–7)
>
> If Ida's land had borne two other such men, the Trojan would have crossed to the cities of Inachus, and Greece would be lamenting, their fates reversed.

The latter phrase describing the potential geographical reach of Trojan power was apparently recalled by the Irish author in the close to his encomium of Troilus, the third and final conditional sentence in this passage:

> Día sirtha fair combad tríchtach a ríghe na Troiandae nofȯllomnaigfedh for ḟiru talman, othá crícha Iuenes co hinnsi na mBretan fri domun aníarthúaid. Robad óenrí, thrá, fó chetheora árda an domhuin. (H 1503–6)
>
> If his life were lengthened till he were thirty years old and in kingship over the Trojans, he would rule from the lands of the *Iuenes* to the isles of Britain in the northwest of the world. Then he would be the sole ruler over the four quarters of the world.

As similes in *Togail Troí* do not derive from Dares, but without exception are the Irish author's own additions, they are here discussed as one of the techniques of prose expansion. As in the preceding discussion, the difficulty rests in distinguishing comparison which may have been formulaic in native storytelling from comparison which carried a special classicizing effect. When, in the Book of Leinster version of *Togail Troí*, the author says of Hector that he was a 'trethan tunni thimsaiges, bruth mara' ('a storm of a gathering wave, fury of a sea') (L 32368–9), we do not suspect that the author here recalled anything said about Hector in Virgil. The comparison is not Virgilian, nor especially classical, neither in content nor in form: the form in fact recalls comparison in native saga.[98] In contrast, the comparison of Achilles to a river in spate in the following passage is of a wholly different character:

> Tanic co díumsach dásachtach *amal* tic banni dían dílend a hucht airṡlébi co trascrand feda 7 fidbada remi cona scailend i fánaib 7 i fánglentaib na ferand. *Is amlaidsein* ra essairg Achíl tromṡluagu na Tróianna immi di cach aird.
>
> (L 32776–9; my italics)
>
> He came, vainglorious and violent, *as* comes the furious rush of the flood from the breast of the hill, levelling tree and tree-slope before it until it scatters them into the depressions and hollows of the earth. *Thus* did Achilles smite the hosts of the Trojans on all sides.

[98] See Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 150 for examples of native comparison in *Togail Troí*.

Mac Gearailt has credibly argued that this passage is one instance where the author probably imitated a Latin epic simile, Virgil's description of Turnus and Aeneas meeting in battle:[99]

> ac *uelut* inmissi diuersis partibus ignes
> arentem in siluam et uirgulta sonantia lauro,
> aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
> dant sonitum spumosi amnes et in aequora currunt
> quisque suum populatus iter: *non segnius* ambo
> Aeneas Turnusque ruunt per proelia. (*Aeneid* 12.521–6; my italics)
>
> And *as* fires sent from different sides upon a parched wood and rustling thickets of laurel, or when in rapid descent from lofty mountains foaming rivers crash and flow to the sea, each carving out its own course: *with no less vehemence* do Aeneas and Turnus both rush through the battle.

This example of the comparison of a hero to a flooding river demonstrates the classic problem of distinguishing a literary commonplace from literary imitation. Ideally, literary imitation would imply that a specific passage has been recalled and reproduced. The problem, however, is that the better the comparison, the less likely it will remain unique. Virgil himself has a variant of the same simile of the river in spate at *Aeneid* 2.304–8. Restricting our attention to Insular literature, these river-similes are not only imitated by Gildas, but are the source for a description of battling rhetors from the *Hisperica Famina*, and are furthermore imitated in the vernacular law text *Miadlechta*.[100] Macrobius demonstrates that Virgil's own model for the river-simile was in fact Homer.[101] The Irish version of this simile therefore belongs to a long tradition of learned *imitatio*, one which the author would know to connect even to Homer if he had read Macrobius.

The issue of imitation versus commonplace, however, cannot be easily set aside. Though the continuing availability of Virgil throughout the Middle Ages meant that direct borrowing of comparisons from actual *loci* in Virgil's poetry remains possible, it is precisely imagery from so popular a poet that we would expect to become commonplace, even cliché. In this instance from *Togail Troí*, however, it is not the content of the simile that leads one to see a classical inspiration, so much as the form. Antique literary theory never defined what, exactly, made an epic simile. However, readers find little difficulty in identifying at least two distinctive features. The first, put simply, is that epic similes are generally extended to several clauses: these examples from the *Aeneid* and *Togail Troí* illustrate this feature.[102] A second feature, again not obligatory but common, is that this extension is enhanced through a parallel, echoed structure. The comparison opens with an adverb conjunction of comparison, for example *uelut*, 'just as', 'like'; this is the part of the comparison which generally describes some natural phenomenon. The subject of the comparison, meanwhile, is identified in the clause headed by a resumptive adverb conjunction along the lines of *sic*, *haud secus*, 'just so', 'not otherwise'. This is the Latin version of Homer's *hós* . . .

99 Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 487.

100 *HF*-A 87–115, and pages 41–2; see also Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 31–6.

101 *Saturnalia* 5.13.12–13; *Iliad* 5.87, 11.155.

102 Glennon, 'The similes', identifies the extension of the second term of a simile as the criterion whether it can be considered 'Homeric', but finds only one example from the *Táin*; see below, 225.

hós. Among Roman writers, to my knowledge, the feature was largely undefined, and practice shows that it was flexible. In the preceding quotations the adverb conjunctions typical of the epic simile have been italicized. The comparison from *Togail Troí* demonstrates what this feature typically looks like when imitated in Irish: *amail . . . is amlaidsein*. What is most interesting about this feature in Irish is how seldom it occurs. You meet it with fair frequency in the Irish translation of Statius's *Thebaid*, which often follows Statius with great fidelity. However, you meet it hardly at all in the translation of the *Aeneid*. We can note that there is no reason in the world why this feature *should* be common, or sound natural, in Irish or in any other language. For example, the structure is grammatically possible in English. However, when done in English outside the genre of translation from the classics, the result is generally comic, sounding mock heroic rather than strictly classical, and is avoided in serious writing for that reason.

The tension between commonplace comparison and specifically Latinate learned comparison can be detected in the following comparison of a hero in battle to fierce animals:

> ra ḟuapair fan slúag. amal tarb ṅdásachtach. da tabar drochbulli. ł amal leoman londchrechtnaigthi ara n-éla a bidba. (L 32550–1)
>
> He [Hector] attacks the host like a wild bull which has been given a grievous blow, or like a fierce-wounded lion from which its enemies have escaped.

As far as content is concerned, the comparison of a hero to a bull and then a lion is about as commonplace as one can get. One would be surprised to find a literary tradition which did not have something of this sort. On first consideration, therefore, there is no obvious classical quality to this comparison; though the two individual comparisons are somewhat extended, they hardly compare to the full-blown epic similes discussed in the preceding paragraph. Yet though the simile on first consideration appears to be formulaic, the possibility of specific Latin models cannot be put aside before two texts, basic to medieval Latin education and therefore almost certainly familiar to the Irish author, are considered. The first concerns the first part of the comparison, that is the bull 'which has been given a grievous blow'. In 'De barbarismo et ceteris uitiis', the third book of Aelius Donatus's *Ars Maior*, Donatus gave an illustration of the figure *parabole* drawn from Virgil's description of the death cries of the Trojan priest Laocoon:

> qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram
> taurus. (*Aeneid* 2.223–4)[103]
>
> . . . such bellowing as when, wounded, a bull flees from the altar.

Similarity between the Irish simile and Donatus's illustration of *parabole* is restricted to the detail that the bull described has been wounded. From the fuller Virgilian simile Donatus quoted only these lines, so there is acutally nothing to be learned about epic similes as such from this example other than the simple image of a wounded bull. Yet this simple image is all that is said of the bull in the Irish simile.

[103] Holtz, *Donat*, 674; the full comparison, not quoted by Donatus, runs: 'clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit, / qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram / taurus et incertam excussit cervice securim' (*Aeneid* 2.222–4).

The principal feature of the Irish simile, however, is the coupling of two comparisons, lion and bull, together. Again, as formulaic as the constituents of this doubled simile appear, it is worth comparing a second Latin parallel. This occurs in the definition of a simile in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a popular Latin treatise on forensic rhetoric. The *Rhetorica* defines simile, Latin *imago*, and illustrates the figure with a doubled simile like that in *Togail Troí*:

> Imago est formae cum forma cum quadam similitudine conlatio . . . Laudis causa, sic: 'Inibat in proelium, corpore tauri validissimi, impetu leonis acerrimi simili'. (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.49.62)[104]
>
> Simile is the comparison of one figure with another to which it bears a certain resemblance . . . For praise, as follows: 'He entered the battle in body like the strongest bull, in force like the fiercest lion'.

It was demonstrated above how a quotation from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* in the Old Irish legal text *Bretha Nemed Dédenach* could be evidence that the text was known early in medieval Ireland. The *Rhetorica* is a work on rhetoric, not poetry, and this double simile of the bull and the lion is hardly epic, much less Virgilian. However, it is one of the Middle Ages' textbook examples, as it were, of a simile. Recalling the 'wounded bull', there is no question that Donatus's 'De barbarismo et ceteris uitiis' was known in Ireland, where it was one of the most influential texts in the development of 'rhetorical grammar' and a principal source for the *Hisperica Famina*.[105] As far as the problem of imitation versus literary commonplace, it is hard to imagine a more commonsense source for a literary commonplace than two widely read textbooks. However, because these two popular works can be presumed to have been potential points of origin for literary commonplaces, we are forced to consider the possibility the Irish author did not remember these texts specifically, but merely the literary commonplace which they spawned. Paradoxically, the wide availability of potential source texts can be considered an argument for their not having been sources.

A variation on this same simile from the first recension of *Togail Troí* puts the question of the author's sources in a fresh light. Verbal parallels with the text from the Book of Leinster demonstrate the formulaic quality of the comparison, here used of Achilles in place of Hector:

> Tanic íarsin fó ślúag na Moesiánda *amal leoman londcrechtaig íarna thocrád fo chuilenaib*, no amal tarb ndasachtach día tabar drochbéim. (H 727–9; my italics)
>
> Then he [Achilles] went throughout the host of the Moesians *like a fierce-wounded lion which has been provoked on account of its cubs*, or like a wild bull which has been given a heavy blow.

For all that Latin epic is populated with lions and lionesses, there are not as many lion cubs as one might expect. In the *Georgics*, Virgil makes one reference to a lion that ignores her cubs when in heat; otherwise, one cannot speak of a commonplace. Interestingly, the comparison of a warrior to a lion which defends her cubs does occur in Homer, in *Iliad* 17, of Ajax protecting the body of the slain Patroclus. The Irish simile of the lion and its cubs cannot owe its inspira-

104 Caplan, *Cicero. I. Ad C. Herennium*.
105 See above, 100.

tion directly to Homer. However, Statius, at one place in the *Thebaid*, imitated Homer's simile quite closely:

> *ut lea*, quam saevo fetam pressere cubili
> venantes Numidae, *natos erecta superstat*,
> mente sub incerta torvum ac miserabile frendens;
> illa quidem turbare globos et frangere morsu
> tela queat, sed *prolis amor crudelia vincit*
> *pectora, et a media catulos circumspicit ira*. (*Thebaid* 10.414–19; my italics)[106]
>
> *Like a lioness that has just whelped*, pressed by Numidean hunters in her savage den, *stands over her young* with doubtful mind, gnashing her teeth in fierce and pitiable manner; she could disrupt the groups and break their weapons in her bite, but *love for her offspring constrains her cruel heart, and in the midst of her fury she looks round at her cubs*.

The Latin here employs no less than three separate words for the lion's young, including *catulus*, the technical term. Statius's Latin is characteristically more involved than anything that would occur in Irish, and it is hardly a translation of this simile that we find in *Togail Troí*. On the contrary, the Irish simile, as comparison with the Book of Leinster demonstrates, is likely an adaptation of something that was already conventional in Irish. The variation involving the lion's cubs, however, in my opinion does recall Statius. That, I believe, is the point of the variation. Somewhat later than *Togail Troí* Statius's *Thebaid* was translated into Irish, as *Togail na Tebe*. We can compare how the translator, for his part, rendered Statius's simile specifically into Irish, and note how closely that text's translation of Statius's Latin simile reproduces the vocabulary of the version from *Togail Troí*:

> . . . 7 doimpo fan samla sin risna sluagaibh *amal leoman lanfhergach* risna gabaid gaisgedaig *arna chrad 'ma chuilenaib*, conid cuma leis bas 7 betha d'fagbail. (*Togail na Tebe* 4017–19; my italics)
>
> . . . and he turned in that wise upon the hosts *like a full-angry lion* which men bearing arms do not face, *vexed on account of his cubs*, so that he cares not whether he lives or dies.

Were it not for chronological difficulties, one could easily believe that *Togail Troí* has acquired a Statian simile, not from the *Thebaid* directly, but indirectly from *Togail na Tebe*.

A third example of Latinate comparison involves, again, consideration of content alongside form. In this instance a curious doubled image is employed to evoke the devastation left by Hector after a day's battle, from the first recension of *Togail Troí*:

> IMthá samlaid *connach lía* punnand chorcai i fogomor d'éis mórmethle, *no* bomand ega fó chosaib grega rigraide i n-áth etir díb cocríchaib, *andáit* cind 7 chossa 7 cholla 7 medóin íarná timdíbe d'fáibur a chlaidib do rinn gái. (H 1161–5; my italics)
>
> It is even so that *not more numerous* are sheaves of oats in autumn after a great party's reaping, *nor* fragments of ice under the feet of a royal herd in a ford between

[106] See *Iliad* 17.132 ff.; for Statius's frequent adoption of Homeric similes in these passages, see Dewar, *Statius*, 80.

> two territories, *than* are the heads and feet and bodies and waists cut by the edge of his [Hector's] sword, the point of his spear.

Imthá samlaid from *Togail Troí* may be identical with the familiar *is amlaid* which can introduce any emphatic statement in Irish. The form, therefore, is not necessarily a variant of *amal* equivalent to *uelut*, as in verifiably Latinate imitations. However, this simile became formulaic in Irish prose, where it is always put into a first-person speech.[107] Unlike most of the native examples, the passage from *Togail Troí* occurs in the third-person narration which characterizes classical similes.[108] I translate 'bomand ega' as 'fragments of ice' to bring out the ambiguity of the phrase, which can mean hailstones, but which in other occurrences seems to mean icicles. In an article on *Togail Troí* from 1924, Georges Dottin commented that this simile appeared to be classical, though he could not identify a source.[109] I suggest that the form is classically derived, and the content partially so. It is the form especially which points to one memorable simile by Virgil in which he compares the encounter between two swarms of bees to a storm of hailstones:

> concurritur, aethere in alto
> fit sonitus, magnum mixtae glomerantur in orbem
> praecipitesque cadunt; *non densior* aëre grando,
> *nec* de concussa tantum pluit ilice glandis. (*Georgics* 4.78–81; my italics)
>
> They rush together, there is a crash in the lofty air, they are gathered together into a great sphere and precipitously fall; *not thicker* does hail rain from the air, *nor* in such quantity mast from an oak that has been shaken.

Virgil portrays the bees as two armies led into battle by rival kings (*reges*). The content shared between Virgil's comparison and the Irish is the single feature of the hailstones. The key to the imitation, however, is the form: the Irish and the Latin comparisons share the structure 'not more numerous are [first item] nor [second item] than [described phenomenon of battle].

Again, in this case, we can consider whether this comparison has been composed with Virgil in mind, or is a commonplace. The structure is unusual in Virgil – it is the only instance I have noted. However, any memorable passage in Virgil may very well have its echoes in later tradition. If the Irish simile was written with Virgil in mind, the author has, at the very least, substituted his own image, 'sheaves of oats', for Virgil's 'mast from an oak tree'; he has retained Virgil's 'hailstones'. Statius has done much the same in the *Thebaid*. Statius's version of the simile describes not swarms of bees, but the application of flails in a chariot race:

> densis insibilat aër
> verberibus; gelida *non crebrior* exsilit Arcto
> *grando*, *nec* Oleniis manant tot cornibus imbres. (*Thebaid* 6.421–3; my italics)

[107] See Gray, *Cath*, note to §119, for analogous comparisons from native saga, especially those using *bommand ega*.

[108] For a variation on the simile in the third person in the *Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemni*, see Kimpton, *The Death*, 20–1: 'comtar lir . . . bommand ega . . . 7 fér fo chossaib grega i lló samraid a lleithchind' and so forth.

[109] Dottin, 'La légende', 179.

> The air hisses with frequent lashes; *not thicker* leaps hail from the icy north, *nor* flow so many rains from Olenian horns.

Here, the luxury of comparing Latin with Latin affords us fair certainty that Statius imitates Virgil consciously, with the substitution of, in this case, rain for Virgil's mast from oak trees. Here Statius demonstrates the principle of imitation with variation which shows us, by analogy, how the Irish comparison, with sheaves of oats in place of mast from oak trees, probably took form.

Virgil's use of bees in similes affords another opportunity to consider how an image becomes a literary commonplace. Virgil is somewhat remarkable for the literary profile he gave bees in his poems. Nearly the whole of Book 4 of the *Georgics* is dedicated to the rearing of honey bees; it is from this book that the description of the warring swarms of bees just considered has been extracted. Virgil's famous simile from *Aeneid* 1 which likens the citizens of Carthage to bees (*Aeneid* 1.430–6) is one of the most distinctive images from antiquity. It is with reference to bees and the language of battle that a baffling passage from *Táin Bó Cúailnge* can be considered. This is near the finish of the text, where, in anticipation of the long-avoided clash with the Ulstermen, Fergus boasts:

> 'Má no bith ém mo c[h]laideb acom-sa', ol Fergus, 'beitis lir leam-sa cendae fer for óeib scíath andáte *bommann ega* hi ngrellig donnicc echrad ríg ó ro roietar i tír . . . Doruchtfaid a méderad na háeru feib dodrimsired *beach* i lló áinle'.
>
> (TBC-1, 4006–16; my italics)

> 'If I had my own sword', said Fergus, 'men's heads cut off by me would be as numerous on their shields as *hailstones* in a swamp to which the king's horses come when they have travelled swiftly into the land . . . Their headless necks would sound in the air (?) *like a bee* flying to and fro on a day of fine weather'.
>
> (O'Rahilly's translation)

In view of the fact that it is O'Rahilly's emended text which is reproduced, her translation is given. We can note the difficult language of *retoiric*, which, in O'Rahilly's view, has been aggravated by textual corruption. The point of interest, of course, is the imagery from Fergus's boast which is shared with Virgil's depiction of the warring swarms of bees from the *Georgics*, to be exact the comparison with 'hailstones'. The language and imagery of Fergus's boast is shared further with the imitation of Virgil's bees in the doubled comparison of 'hailstones' plus 'sheaves of oats' from *Togail Troí*. *Togail Troí* had lost the original Virgilian reference to bees; here in Fergus's boast, oddly, it recurs. As for the second part of Fergus's boast, if O'Rahilly's translation of 'doruchtfaid' ('would sound') is correct, the Irish simile reproduces Virgil's attention to the aural impact of the apian battle expressed in the phrase 'fit sonitus' ('there is a crash'); Virgil's 'aethere in alto', meanwhile, 'in the lofty air', provides a verbal echo with the Irish 'na háeru' ('[in] the air').[110] It is possible that the passage is subtly corrupt, but the presence of the term *méderad*, which otherwise occurs only in *retoirics*, suggests that some obscurity may be intentional. We can

[110] See *DIL* s.v. 2 *rucht*, 'a noise of some kind, cry', and O'Rahilly's note on *doruchtfaid*, where she speculates the word may be formed on *drocht*, 'dark', and bear the meaning 'darken, obscure'; the argument here encourages the more obvious derivation from *rucht*; for a variant on this simile which appears to be derivative of this instance from Recension 1, see Knott, *Togail*, 1169.

compare instances of the imitation of Virgilian apian imagery in the A-text of the *Hisperica Famina*, for example:

> sonoreusque certantium fra<n>gor militum
> mellisono antecedit apium strepitu. (*HF*-A 112–13)
>
> [As much as] the crashing din of fighting soldiers exceeds the sweet humming of bees. (Herren's translation)

We can recall that subtle obscurity may have been the author's aim in this text. The *Hisperica Famina*, then, here provide an analogy to the obscure apian imagery in Fergus's boast from the *Táin*.[111]

It is intriguing how many of the similes of *Togail Troí* are used of warriors in the battle-frenzy shared by Cú Chulainn, Turnus, Troilus and Achilles, or follow the characteristically Irish impersonal constructions such as *dáistir imm*, 'he is enraged', which connote this frenzy. It is said of Troilus in one passage that he is 'amal léoman léir lán luind letarthaigh reithes do thruchu torcraide' ('like a stern lion full of lacerating fury which runs to destroy a herd of boars') (H 1477–8). It is a variant on this simile which is used of Cú Chulainn in the *ríastrad* from the *Breslech Mór*: 'mar leómain ic techta fó mathgamnaib' ('like a lion besetting bears') (TBC-1, 2265).[112] The simile of the fighting animals need not necessarily owe to any classical simile, but Virgil has at least one significant model:

> utque leo, specula cum uidit ab alta
> stare procul campis meditantem in proelia taurum,
> aduolat, haud alia est Turni uenientis imago. (*Aeneid* 10.454–6)
>
> Like a lion when, from a lofty point of vantage he has seen from afar a bull readying for battle, he speeds towards him, in no otherwise is the picture of Turnus as he comes for battle.

The classicizing quality in the Irish simile of the lion and the herd of boars is further suggested by the variant preserved in the second recension: 'amal bís mathgamain etir banbraid mbic co tabair scaíliud 7 scandred forru cach leth. Is amlaidsein re immir Achíl for slóg na Troianna' ('as is a bear among a small herd of young pigs, so that it scatters and disperses them in all directions, just so did Achilles ply upon the Trojan host') (L 32650–2). The construction *amal . . . is amlaidsein* encourages us to see a classicizing intent. However, the claim is encouraged by the recensional context, as this simile stands in the place where the first recension has the classical ekphrasis of Achilles's shield. We can infer that the common source had a text at this point which the authors of the first and second recension respectively wanted to emphasize, though with varying techniques, as classical and epic.

It is noted of Troilus in the first battle in which he is dominant: 'dorat toranngles forru, 7 ros-timmairg remi dochum na scor, amal timairces séigh mintu' ('he delivered a thunderfeat upon them, and drove them together before him to the camp as a hawk drives little birds') (H 1355–6). It appears to be a variant of this simile which occurs later: 'dásthir imbi íarum, 7 rodn-imbeir forru amal fóelaid etir cháircha, coros-timairc remi corici na scura' ('he is enraged, and he plies upon the host like a wolf among sheep, until he drives them to the camps')

111 Herren does not identify this specific passage as Virgilian, but see *HF*-A 41–2, and page 130.
112 For the *ríastrad*, see Chapter 5.

(H 1432–4).[113] The presence of such heroic similes used of Troilus already before the composition of the first recension is vouchsafed by a heroic simile from *Luid Iason* which, unusually, continues over two quatrains:

> Samail chuileain milchon mín
> leaccair fo tredaibh a tir,
> ros-bruid, ros-leadair go leath,
> do-fág curaidh cró-lindeach.
> Samail Treolais gan tár . . . (quatrains 94–5)
>
> Like the whelp of a fine hunting dog that is loosed on the flocks in a land, he pressed them, he cut them in two, and left the warriors in pools of blood. Such was the likeness of faultless Troilus . . . (Mac Eoin's translation)

Mac Eoin compares the simile in quatrain 75 ('amal . . . samhail'), and suggests that the poet, here in quatrains 94–5, may originally have written: 'amal chuileain . . . samail Treolais'.[114] If correct, this latter construction would imitate the *ut* . . . *sic* construction of Latin with the same clarity as in the preceding examples. The simile would therefore further suggest the Latinate character of the poet's source.

As for the simile of the hawk and the small birds itself, exampled in the first variant quoted above, the terms of the simile echo a phrase used by Cú Chulainn of himself in the second recension of the *Táin*: 'Ras lécub fort feib ras léic séig far mintu' ('I will attack you as a hawk attacks the small birds') (TBC-2, 4803–4). Myrick considers this simile of the hero as a hawk, along with the instances of the hero as a lion and a bull discussed above, as examples of native similes which have been borrowed as nativizing features when they occur in *Togail Troí*.[115] In view of the doubt cast on the examples discussed above, the claim for the simile of the hawk can be reexamined. The simile is first of all an expansion of the bare picture in Dares 29, 'Argivos in castra fugat', to which the adaptor characteristically applies his vivid style to enhance Dares's 'fugat' ('chases'). Analogues of the simile occur in Homer, the most interesting for purposes of comparison with *Togail Troí* being the account of how the Greeks are driven in retreat to their ships before Hector and Aeneas:

> τῶν δ'ὥς τε ψαρῶν νέφος ἔρχεται ἠὲ κολοιῶν,
> οὖλον κεκλήγοντες, ὅτε προΐδωσιν ἰόντα
> κίρκον, ὅ τε σμικρῇσι φόνον φέρει ὀρνίθεσσιν,
> ὣς ἄρ' ὑπ' Αἰείνᾳ τε καὶ Ἕκτορι κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν
> οὖλον κεκλήγοντες ἴσαν, λήθοντο δὲ χάρμης. (*Iliad* 17.755–9)
>
> But, as goes a cloud of starlings or of daws incessantly screaming, when they see approaching a hawk [or 'falcon'], who brings murder to the small birds, so then the young men of the Achaians from fear of Aeneas and Hector went incessantly crying, forgetting the joy of battle.

In Dares's version, it is Troilus who is the most formidable warrior of the Trojans. The application of a simile originally used of Hector to Troilus, therefore, used here again of the Greeks being driven back to their ships, is curiously apt. There

[113] The comparison of a warrior to a wolf attacking sheep may also, though not of necessity, be considered Virgilian; see *Aeneid* 9.59–66.

[114] Mac Eoin, 'Dán', 48, n. 94a.

[115] Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, 149; see also 92.

is, moreover, a surprising echo of Homer's diction in the Irish simile. Irish *mintu*, understood as 'small birds', is presumably formed on the adjective *min*, 'small'; Stokes suggested it was originally Latin *minuta*, 'the small [ones]'.[116] In either case, *mintu*, whether formed on a native or a borrowed adjective, resembles Homer's adjectival σμικρῇσι, 'the small [ones]', which is separated through hyperbaton from its noun ὀρνίθεσσιν, 'birds' and, on first reading, would appear to be a substantive form, like *mintu*.

In spite of the apparent allusion to Homer in this passage, no Latin imitation of Homer's simile has been located which could have mediated between the *Iliad* and *Togail Troí*.[117] All the same, we can wonder whether the simile from *Togail Troí* with the characteristic *amal*, 'as', is an adapted form of the native simile, preserved in the *Táin* which uses *feib*, 'as', or whether, on the contrary, the version from the *Táin* represents an effort to clothe the ancient epic simile in a less plainly classical dress. In the image of the hailstones discussed above, the author of *Togail Troí* introduces the simile with *imthá samlaid*, while the variant of this simile which ends Fergus's boast is expressed with *feib*. Given the archaizing quality of the latter passage and the presence of vocabulary of the *retoiric*, we could deduce, if only from this small corpus of examples, that *feib* was felt as an archaizing, perhaps 'native' equivalent to classicizing *amal*/*imthá samlaid*. It may be significant that both the 'native' occurrences of the simile are in boasts made in the first person, while the third-person narration of the simile from *Togail Troí* reflects the conventions of epic narration. In these similes from *Togail Troí* especially, the author may, as was argued for features of his prose style, rely on the hearer's/reader's recognition of a classical technique for a full appreciation of the artistry of his descriptions. In this view, the combined tradition of *Togail Troí* and the *Táin* surveyed in the preceding examples may have permanently obscured the extent to which it was the native tradition which was the initial beneficiary of the Latinate comparison modeled in the classical tales.

Aristeiai *and Classicizing Set Pieces*

The banter on the field of battle in the passage quoted above, beginning with Hector's encounter with Schedius, represents one technique of giving colour and a sense of narrative progression to Dares's featureless battles. Further techniques with which the author pursues this end are varied throughout *Togail Troí*. The technique employed in the chapters in which Troilus is the principal protagonist is to portray his martial prowess in elaborate descriptive set pieces, examples of which include the passage discussed above which begins 'ferthar gléo fuilech', as well as several passages from which have been extracted the heroic similes examined in the preceding discussion. The culmination of these set pieces occurs in the last battle in which Troilus is dominant before Achilles reenters the battle, in which Troilus is described as undergoing a transformation like that of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. Following this *ríastrad* Troilus visits on the Greeks a slaughter which has close parallels with Cú Chulainn's *breslech* from

116 Stokes, *Togail Troi*, 171.

117 For a passage where Virgil imitates one of Homer's variations on this simile, see *Aeneid* 11.721–2, and the model at *Iliad* 22.139–42; see also Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 11*, 394.

the *Táin*. These parallels are discussed in Chapter 5, but here it is enough to note the employment of these descriptive set pieces, present in Dares only in slight phrases such as 'magna caedes', as a key element in the transformation of the *De Excidio* into *Togail Troí*.

The deeds performed by a warrior to win glory on the battlefield were termed that hero's *aristeia* by the Greeks. Individual books of Homer's *Iliad* were known in antiquity by the hero whose deeds the book recounted; for example, Book 5 was termed the *aristeia* of Diomedes. I find no evidence that the *aristeia* was ever practiced as a rhetorical exercise, but Virgil and Statius, both imitators of Homer, construct their battle-scenes around *aristeiai* according to the Homeric model. The effect is not unlike a succession of set pieces, when read by a person of literary ambition looking for the key to epic technique. It is probably these models of *aristeiai* from Virgil and Statius which have given the Irish author this, one of his principal techniques to give a sense of narrative progression to Dares's tedious series of battles in the middle chapters of the *De Excidio*. Such apparent *aristeiai* in *Togail Troí* invariably respond to some cue in Dares, as is demonstrated by the expansion on 'multos duces Troilus interficit' from the passage quoted above ('ferthair gléo fuilech . . .'); in terms of language and style, these Irish *aristeiai* resemble the impersonal battle-ekphrases which likewise respond to cues in Dares, and in the development of which *Togail Troí* played a key role. Keeping this in mind, we can accept the *aristeia* as a technique of expansion in *Togail Troí*.

The preceding discussion has shown that the set pieces of *Togail Troí* are interesting not just as structural devices, but for their style. Mac Gearailt argues that the so-called 'rhetorical' style evident in the second recension of *Togail Troí* had roots in native storytelling and was adopted into the prose of the classical text in the eleventh century.[118] The style has no obvious affinities with the classicism of a Cicero or a Virgil. Nonetheless, I have chosen to regard early traces of this style in the first recension of *Togail Troí* as among the author's various techniques of expansion. It must be recalled that it is expansion itself which defines the Irish classicizing style more than any other single feature. In this view, we do not need to consider the rhetorical style as a record of traditional saga-norms. On the contrary, it is possible to posit the style as one characteristic, perhaps secondary but logically following from the interest in techniques of expansion, of the early 'school' of classical translations. Mac Gearailt himself points in this direction when he notes that the prose of the first recension of *Togail Troí* is on the whole much more rhythmic than that found in the first recension of the *Táin*; he notes that the text 'marked a departure in prose composition and style'.[119] As the most popular text from the school of classical translations, *Togail Troí* was significant for just this fact that it was the departure that modeled a new style. If we assume that style may be associated with content, it is reasonable to propose that the style found in nascent form in *Togail Troí*, even when transfered to native saga and significantly developed, would have had an association which we could call 'classical'.

It is an interesting feature of the Book of Leinster version of *Togail Troí* that, although a prime example of the rhetorical style which is so often consid-

118 Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 490–3.
119 Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 489, n. 166.

ered a mark of native norms, it shows no less interest in reproducing Virgilian similes than the earlier recension – in fact, this text preserves some of the clearest examples of the technique. On the other hand, the exaggerated emphasis on alliterative congeries of nouns and adjectives which characterizes the rhetorical style may reflect disenchantment with the effort of syntax required to mimic Latin periods in Irish prose. Formulaicly employed alliterating dyads and triads are a much more straightforward manner of producing expansion, and can be employed with considerable effect in the creation of ekphrases of persons and battles. Poppe points out that, in addition to its employment in literary works such as *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, this alliterative style occurs also in historical and propagandistic works such as *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*, 'The War of the Irish with the Foreigners'.[120] The indebtedness of this text to *Togail Troí* has long been noted.[121] However, the classicizing quality of the *Cogad's* allusions to *Togail Troí* is especially relevant, and brings together many of the issues discussed in this chapter. For example, the panegyric on Murchadh mac Briain from Chapter 107 calls Murchadh the 'Ectoir intamlaigtech na Erend' ('the metaphorical Hector of Ireland'), according to *intamlugud intliuchta*, 'intellectual metaphor'; Murchadh is additionally compared to Hercules and Samson.[122] The description of Murchadh's battle-prowess which follows contains many familiar comparisons in praise of the Irish leader:

> Ocus ruc taichim tren, tricc, tairbtech, tinnesnach . . . amail dam dian, denmnetach, dasachtach ar na drochgabail, no amail leomon lond, letartach, luthmar, lanchalma, toduscithir, ocus cratir ima culenaibh, no mar borbruathur dian bunni dilend, brisseas ocus brecas cach ni cos a ricc. (187–8)
>
> And he made an active, brave, vigorous, sudden rush . . . like a fierce, impetuous, furious ox that has been grievously assailed, or like a fierce, tearing, swift, full-valiant lion that is roused and provoked on account of her cubs, or like the harsh, swift rush of a deluging torrent which smashes and splatters everything it meets.

This series of comparisons is followed by another image familiar from the preceding discussion:

> Ocus ris do samailset sin daini Atha Cliath, batar fors na scemlib, icca fegad, conar ba lia leo serrthlaigi eturuuas o mor methil ic buain goirt corci, cid da cath no tri do greistea fai, oldas folt os gaith uathib, ar na letrad do thuagaib troma taidlechaib, ocus do claidbib lainnerda lasanna. (190)
>
> And so did it seem to the people of Dublin, who were watching them from their ramparts, that not more numerous would be sheaves suspended overhead from a great company reaping a field of oats, even though two or three battalions were urged to it, than the hair flying on the wind from them, cut away by the heavy, gleaming axes and by bright, flaming swords.

There is little question that all these images, all gathered into one compact stretch of *Cogad Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, were employed by an author who had freshly consulted a copy of the first recension of *Togail Troí*. The passages are very much in the late, bombastic style of the later Middle Irish *catha*, but the scholastic

120 Poppe, 'The classical epic', 20.
121 See Ní Mhaonaigh, '*Cogad Gáedel*', 355.
122 Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel*, 186.

context, which plainly describes Murchadh according to 'intellectual metaphor', assures that a learned, if not, indeed, classical quality remains detectable in the similes.

Conclusion

The ekphrastic passages discussed above are obvious instances of self-contained set pieces in *Togail Troí*. The structure of the rhetorical set piece is also present, though in a less obvious fashion, in many passages of prose expansion, of which the classicizing similes considered above can be considered short, but significant, examples. The preceding argument has aimed to demonstrate that, in spite of the vernacular storytelling tradition, the techniques of expansion encountered in these set pieces are mostly literary in execution. Quintilian records that schooling in rhetorical technique was conducted *scribendo*, 'through the exercise of writing', alongside *legendo*, 'reading', and *dicendo*, 'speaking'.[123] Exercises pursued *scribendo* included translation, paraphrase and varying treatments of the same theme, and the exercise involved *imitatio* when the texts and models drawn on were literary. These techniques are all encountered in *Togail Troí*. They may be wholly independent of antique teaching, or they may have developed with just the example of Priscian's *Praeexercitamina*. Priscian's exercises, though different from the program described by Quintilian, are clear enough that rhetoric and composition are learned through the written imitation of models. These techniques are encountered in the Irish literary world as early as the seventh century in the *Hisperica Famina*. Whether initially practiced in independent exercises or not, the techniques on display in *Togail Troí* have been employed in the production of a sophisticated piece of literature, which is surely the ultimate aim of literary study.

The tales held to be the earliest survivals of Old Irish saga are outstanding for their brevity and avoidance of expansion. The assumption of an early, but unrecorded oral tradition of rhetorical prose resembling that of the written eleventh-century tales remains impossible to demonstrate. Although literate expansion as seen throughout *Togail Troí* may have been influenced by oral techniques, the subject material itself, the unambiguous scholastic, even humanist tradition in which the adaptation of the text was made, the text's reflection of centuries of Irish preoccupation with composition in Latin and centuries of fascination with Greek learning, argue that the practice of expansion accomplished in this text is probably largely independent of the techniques of popular storytelling.

One may ask, if Virgil was so important, why was the *Aeneid* not the first of the classical adaptations? The answer must lie in the contrast between the *Aeneid* and the *De Excidio* in terms of opportunities they provide for rhetorical exercises. The *Aeneid*, the model of classical perfection already in antiquity, is a poor template on which to practice techniques of composition and expansion. The text admits of little alteration, and therefore the ambitious *littérateur* has little scope to display ingenuity. However, the *Aeneid* is a model in its own right of the techniques of *amplificatio*, and a medieval reader of Macrobius, or even of Servius, would know that the text was also a model of *imitatio*. The adapta-

[123] Quin. *Inst*. 10.1.1; see the discussion of the *exercitatio* in Lausberg, *Handbook*, §§1093–150.

tion of the *Aeneid* which is eventually produced in Ireland, that is, *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, represents the 'school' of classical translations at an advanced stage, after the features which would characterize a classical tale in the vernacular, for example, stereoytyped descriptions of battle, had largely taken form and acquired a life of their own.

As for the literary accomplishment of this early 'school' of classical translations, a humanist's erudition and a literary artist's sensitivity to technique have turned Dares's anti-Homeric *De Excidio Troiae Historia* on its head. The place of imitation in classical epic, and the imitation of Homer especially, has been shown to be expressed throughout late-antique commentary known to the Irish, but is nowhere stated with greater clarity than in the beginning of Servius's commentary to the *Aeneid*, in the *accessus*: 'intentio Vergilii haec est, Homerum imitari' ('this is Virgil's intent, to imitate Homer') (at *Aeneid* 1.praef.). The author of *Togail Troí* may have seen his *imitatio* of Virgil and Statius as an indirect emulation of their own teacher, and *Togail Troí* as an appropriate receptacle of a partially restored *Iliad*. However, ancient criticism recognized the undesirability of an *imitatio* that was overly obvious. Speaking approvingly of Virgil's occassional reaching into the *penetralia* of Greek tradition, Macrobius notes:

> . . . fuit enim hic poeta ut scrupulose et anxie, ita dissimulanter et quasi clanculo doctus, ut multa transtulerit quae unde translata sint difficile sit cognitu.
>
> (*Saturnalia* 5.18.1)

> . . . for our poet was thorough and painstaking, and so well-disguised and, so to say, covert was his learning, that it is hard to recognize the sources for many of his borrowings.[124]

The challenge for critics in detecting *imitatio* of classical epic in Irish texts may be that, as in antiquity, the intention was to vary the imitation enough for the source not to be obvious without the exercise of the reader's/hearer's erudition. As Macrobius comments in the same discussion of Virgil's technique:

> . . . interdum sic auctorem suum dissimulanter imitatur, ut loci inde descripti solam dispositionem mutet et faciat velut aliud videri. (*Saturnalia* 5.16.12)

> . . . sometimes he conceals his imitation of his model author, and changes only the arrangement of the copied passage, to make it seem like something else.

Already in antiquity, imitation can aim to surpass the model, an ambition known as *aemulatio*. *Aemulatio* is revealed to lie behind the whole of Virgil's work according to Macrobius. *Aemulatio* is clearly not the best term to describe the relationship between the *Aeneid* and *Togail Troí*. As for Dares's *De Excidio* and *Togail Troí*, the whole of the preceding discussion suggests that the effort required to surpass Dares, considered as such, was not especially great. My argument that the *De Excidio* was employed as a template suggests that *aemulatio* in the true sense of contention was not the aim. But *aemulatio* with *Togail Troí* itself may account for some of the notable classical features of the *Táin*, a theory which is the subject of the following chapters.

[124] See Hinds, *Allusion*, 21–5.

4

TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE AND LATIN EPIC

Epic, 'External Elements' and Literary Imitatio

Táin Bó Cúailnge, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge', describes how the men of the combined provinces of Connacht, Leinster and Munster, together termed 'the men of Ireland', conduct a *táin bó*, 'cattle-raid', into the province of Ulster. Commanded by Medb, queen of Connacht, the men of Ireland aim to take from Ulster the Donn Cúailnge, 'Brown Bull of Cúailnge'. The Ulaid 'men of Ulster' are stricken with an annual debility which leaves them unable to repell their attackers. The defence of the province falls to a single fighter, Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn keeps the attackers at bay during the months of the Irish winter, from November through January, at which point the warriors of Ulster recover, rally to arms and overcome the men of Ireland in battle. The Donn Cúailnge, meanwhile, has engaged in battle with Findbennach, 'the White-Horned Bull' of Connacht, dismembers its opponent, and then itself succumbs to its injuries at the tale's conclusion.

This strange story, a sober depiction of early Irish seasonal warfare infused with fantastic mythological elements, was arguably the central text in the canon of heroic literature from medieval Ireland. It certainly seemed to be so in the minds of those people who wrote that literature. In view of the number of surviving manuscript copies, distributed over at least three separate recensions, the *Táin* was more popular than any other text from the Ulster Cycle of heroic tales. This popularity reflects the interest that the medieval Irish took in their own pre-medieval past. The characters portrayed in the *Táin* are pagan, and the events belong to the period we consider pre-historic. Irish annals contemporary with the writing of the text, however, reveal that the war was accepted by readers as historical and was synchronized with events from Christian history. Cú Chulainn's death was placed in CE 2, and Conchobar, the king of the Ulaid who died in CE 33, was held to be the first man in Ireland to believe in Christ.[1]

The *Táin*'s success in medieval Ireland should not, however, distract us from the principal reason that modern critics have devoted arguably disproportionate attention to the text. One hint as to what makes the text especially attractive today is the ease with which the *Táin* has come to be regarded as Ireland's medieval 'epic'. Appeal to the generic term epic is generally restricted to this text, and, to my knowledge, has never been seriously questioned. Yet why is this text especially epic? Certainly it is the longest in the Ulster Cycle, yet in length it is surpassed by *Acallam na Senórach* from the Fenian Cycle. It is probably more important that the *Táin* is among the earliest heroic narratives in Irish we possess.

[1] Kelleher, 'The *Táin*'; 'The Death of Conchobar' in Meyer, *Death Tales*, 2–21.

It is, so to speak, 'primary' Irish literature, in contrast to many other tales in the cycle of demonstrably later linguistic expression, which are 'secondary'. In this, the *Táin* has a natural affinity with the text from antiquity which, more than any other, is the standard by which epic is measured, Homer's *Iliad*. Similar to medieval Ireland's relationship with the *Táin*, classical Greece found in Homer's *Iliad* its own heroic age as well as the beginnings of its own literature. The centrality of Homer to Greek identity in antiquity highlights an additional feature of epic, the feeling that epic is national. Modern nationalist movements were well acquainted with the ancient Greek model of national epic, as well as its Roman and, later, Renaissance European imitators. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Irish nationalism, the learned and creative classes participating in this movement at any rate, needed an epic on which to pin its aspirations. From the time of Lady Gregory's astonishing translation of the *Táin*, to which she appended a near complete rendering of the best of the remaining Ulster Cycle tales, modern Ireland had found its medieval prose epic.

The influence of the Homeric epic analogy was not limited to *littérateurs* of the Irish Renaissance, but left its mark in the academic world of medieval Irish studies. Myles Dillon boldly claimed that the descriptive catalogue of Ulster heroes in the episode *Toichim na mBuiden* was 'borrowed' from the *teichoskopia* of *Iliad* 3.[2] Gerard Murphy, arguing for the independent survival of primitive Indo-European beliefs in the *Táin*, made his claim by pointing to the same features in the *Iliad*: luminescence around the heads of warriors (Cú Chulainn's *lúan láith* and divine lights around the heads of Achilles and Diomedes), the rising of a river to protect a territory against invaders (the river Cronn to protect Cúailnge and the Skamander to protect Troy), and the intervention of gods in human affairs.[3] Kenneth Jackson likewise drew general comparisons with the *Iliad*, pointing to the common heroic ethos and sensitivity to honour in the two texts.[4] Jackson invoked these comparanda to Homer in order to press home his thesis that the *Táin* is a remarkably conservative portrait of pre-Christian Irish society: though not contemporary with Homer, the *Táin* took shape in Irish pre-history, between the second century BCE and the fourth century CE. Murphy and Jackson illustrate that the connection made between the *Táin* and Homer in Irish criticism is rarely simple literary comparison. The comparison generally carries an implicit defense of the conservatism of Irish tradition.[5]

The critics' choice of Homer as the natural comparandum for Irish heroic literature is revealing. Homer's poems were 'primary epic'. That is to say, the written poem undeniably was rooted in the techniques of a pre-literate, oral tradition. Citation of the *Iliad*, therefore, buttresses the claim that the *Táin*, likewise, is a written record of what was still experienced as a preponderantly oral tradition by contemporaries.[6] It is interesting how the perceived character of the *Táin* transforms when we change the comparandum from Homer's *Iliad* to antiquity's second greatest epic, Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid*, a thoroughly literary work with little direct attention to oral forms, is 'secondary' epic.[7] Rudolf Thurneysen chose

2 Dillon, *Early Irish*, 11, n. 20.
3 Murphy, *Saga*, 26, 29–30.
4 Jackson, *The Oldest*, 2, 11–15, 27; see also below, 151.
5 More recent discussions along these lines include Ford, 'The Ulaid'; and Sayers, 'Homeric'.
6 For the allure of primary epic in discussions of medieval heroic literature, see Clarke, 'Achilles'.
7 Subjectivity in the distinction between primary and secondary is well illustrated by Hardie, *The*

just this second comparison, and judged that the success of the *Táin* was due, not to its accidental resemblance to the *Iliad*, but to its very deliberate resemblance to the *Aeneid*.[8] Whereas echoes of Homer could only be explained in terms of non-literate transmission, Virgil was a widely read author in the Middle Ages. The poet, therefore, could have been read by the author of the *Táin*. It may be typical of Murphy's conservative approach that his own valuable discussion of knowledge of Virgil among the Irish seems to have been written pointedly to impress that, though read by *peregrini* on the continent, Virgil was not known in Ireland itself.[9]

Thurneysen himself did not seem to have considered his claim for a Virgilian model particularly contentious. His claims for classical 'reminiscences' in the *Táin*, moreover, were rather modest: the identification of the Morrígan, an Irish war-goddess, with the Fury Allecto from *Aeneid* 7; and the past-tense narration of Cú Chulainn's *Macgnímrada*, 'Boyhood Deeds', which he ventured was modelled on Aeneas's narration of his adventures at sea from *Aeneid* 2.[10] Thurneysen also noted resemblances to the story of Troy, including the attention to omens at the muster of the men of Ireland which recalls the assembly of the Greeks at Aulis, and the rising of the river Cronn which recalls the Skamander. Thurneysen's key insight, however, was to see that the very form of the *Táin* – short, heroic saga narratives woven together into a satisfying, long narrative – was in imitation of Virgil's epic technique, and was thoroughly literate in origin.

In spite of the quality of Thurneysen's insights, the brevity of his arguments suggests that his principal interest was not literary as such. Thurneysen drew attention to classical models mostly as a means of assigning a date for the text: in his model, familiarity with the *Aeneid* was a precondition for the *Táin's* composition. This could, therefore, be restricted to the Golden Age of Irish learning of the seventh and eighth centuries. In contrast to Thurneysen, James Carney showed the more conventional enthusiasms of a literary critic. It was noted above how Carney chose to present his observations on the *Táin* in what he described as a rejection of the school of interpretation he termed 'nativist'. At the heart of Carney's argument was his insight that much of saga-tradition was an 'imaginative reconstruction of the remote pagan Irish past in form and terms that belong to the mixed culture of early Christian Ireland'.[11] This 'mixed culture' was the result of the arrival of Christianity, which brought Latin culture to the island without ever fully replacing the vernacular in learned circles. Thurneysen's influence is hard to miss when Carney asserts that many traits of the *Táin* especially are 'due to imitation of the classics or of Christian developments of them' which the mixed culture made available.

The most remarkable feature of Carney's criticism, however, was that he undermined his own common-sense appeal to the 'mixed culture' of early Ireland, not only by ignoring the *Aeneid*, but by unnecessarily retaining Homer's *Iliad* as his favorite term of comparison. Moreover, some Latin intermediaries through which the *Iliad* could have exerted this influence were identified but not adequately

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Epic Successors, 91–8, for whom, in the terms of his discussion of Latin epic, Virgil is primary, and poets from Ovid onwards secondary.

8 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 96.

9 Murphy, 'Vergilian'.

10 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 96.

11 Carney, *Studies*, 321–2 for this and the following quotation.

examined. One has the feeling that Carney could not admit to what he wanted to believe, namely that the Irish did read the *Iliad*. In a publication of 1983, Carney came very close to expressing just this view: 'the resemblances between the *Iliad* and the *Táin* are, in some cases, so close that we must assume in seventh- or eighth-century Ireland either a direct or an excellent indirect knowledge of the Greek epic'.[12] Among imitations of classical literature Carney included the careful drawing of character, the dramatic opening episode in Recension 1, the 'watchman device', and the past-tense narration of Cú Chulainn's 'Boyhood Deeds'.[13] To these, Carney later added the rising of the river Cronn modeled on the Skamander, and the dragging of Etarcomal's corpse behind Fergus's chariot, modeled on Achilles's treatment of Hector.[14]

Discussions of 'classical influences' in early Irish literature have tended to be colored by the terms of reference established by Thurneysen and Carney. For example, Thurneysen's most convincing contribution was his claim that Recension 1 of the *Táin* explicitly names the classical Fury Allecto, in the spelling 'Allechtu'. The passage in question runs:

> Céin bátár didiu in tslóig oc tochim Maige Breg, forrumai Allechtu colléic, noch is í in Mórrígan són i ndeilb eúin co mboí forsin chorthi hi Temair Cúalṅgi 7 asbert frisin tarb:
> r. In fitir in dub duśáim . . . cluiph Cualgni coigde día bás mórmacni iar féic muintire do écaib. (TBC-1, 954–62)
>
> While the hosts were advancing over Mag mBreg, Allechtu betook herself for a while, that is the Morrígan in the shape of a bird, and settled on the pillar-stone in Temair Cúailnge and said to the bull:
> r. 'Does the restless Black One know . . . destruction to a great progeny, after † . . . † of its adherents to death'.[15]

The Morrígan, an Irish goddess associated with battle, is a figure of frequent occurrence in Irish saga. Following the text strictly, however, the character is an otherwise unattested 'Allechtu'; 'Morrígan' is added as if an explanatory gloss. Thurneysen saw in this passage evidence of the author's knowledge of *Aeneid* 7, in which Allecto instigates war between the Trojans and the Italians; in the passage in question, Allecto even travels, as does this Allechtu, in the shape of a bird.[16] In a classic articulation of what Carney would call the 'nativist' position, Gerard Murphy argued that there was no allusion to the poem. Murphy thought that the name Allechtu had simply been drawn from a glossary, one which could have had an entry resembling, for example, a Middle Irish gloss to a phrase in *Amra Coluim Cille*:

> Nó sech riaga .i. sech ingena Oircc, tres filiae Orcci, quae [uocantur] diuersis nominibus in caelo et in terra et in inferno. In caelo quidem .i. Stenna. Euriale. Medussa. IN terra .i. Clothos . Lacessis. Antropus. IN inferno. Allecto. Micera. Tessifone.[17]

12 Carney, 'Early Irish', 128.
13 Carney, *Studies*, 322.
14 Carney, 'Early Irish', 128–30.
15 Corthals, 'Early Irish', 23–4, for translation of the *retoiric* (the abbreviation is my own).
16 Thurneysen, 'Zur *Táin*', 208; *Die irische Helden*, 96; *Aeneid* 7.476–8.
17 Stokes, 'The Bodleian *Amra*', at *Revue celtique* 20, 414–17; Murphy's review of Carney's *Studies*, 157, n. 4; for the formulaic quality of this list, obviously common in scholastic literature,

> *Or 'sech riaga', that is to say*, *the daughters of Orcus*, the three daughters of Orcus, who are called by different names in heaven and on earth and in hell. In heaven, Stheno, Euryale and Medusa; on earth, Clothos, Lachesis and Atropos; in hell, Allecto, Megaera and Tisiphone.

The existence of such lists of ancient demons in medieval commentary, however, says nothing about whether or not early readers with access to such lists also read Virgil. Murphy's argument is a clever retort, but adds little to the question of Allechtu in the *Táin*. Murphy's objection to Thurneysen's suggestion rests on his own belief that Virgil's poems were not available in early-medieval Ireland. Following Ó Cuív's and Hofman's reassessment of the question, Murphy's objections are no longer tenable.[18]

The case in favour of an allusion was recently taken up again by Johan Corthals in a discussion of the *retoiric* which Allechtu addresses to the Donn. Corthals suggests that the *retoiric*'s obscure *coigde* is a borrowing from Latin *Cocytia*, which would have been known to the Irish author from Virgil's description of Allecto as the *Cocytia uirgo*, 'the maiden from the Cocytus' (*Aeneid* 7.479). Understanding a lost suspension stroke over *cluiph*, Corthals translates the phrase *cluiph Cualngi coigde día* as 'the goddess from the Cocytus will overturn Cúailnge'.[19] Dennis R. MacDonald has proposed several criteria according to which literary *imitatio* can be detected where its operation would be unexpected.[20] One of these criteria is distinctive traits which 'flag' a model. The commonest tool to flag hypertextual imitation of Homer in ancient novels, both Greek and Latin, is Homeric proper names.[21] Here we can speak of a Virgilian proper name functioning in the same way. In view of the unambiguous flag to Allecto in the Irish 'Allechtu', continuation of the allusion to the Fury in the phrase *coigde día* has some credibility. However, this claim hinges on a late, literary derivation of *coigde* from *Cocytia* which is not without difficulties. Corthals's explanation of *coigde* is appealing but inconclusive, and would have hardly any force at all except that the derivation is invited on the strength of Allecto having been named in the previous lines. The argument for a classical allusion here, therefore, is derivative of Thurneysen's argument, rather than additional to or supportive of it in a strict sense. Jacqueline Borsje proposed that the author of Recension 1 observed coincidental similiarities between the traditional Irish Morrígan and the Furies of the *Aeneid* and was led to borrow the name Allechtu and the epithet *coigde* to draw attention to the parallels.[22] There is an allusion, therefore, but outside this single instance parallels are coincidental. These two examples demonstrate that Thurneysen's identification of Allechtu with Allecto, even when accepted, has not led to any furthering or diminishing of his claims for classical allusion in the *Táin*. For the most part, Thurneysen's and

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cf. Servius Danielis at *Aeneid* 1.82 (MS **P**); Bern Scholia at *Eclogue* 4.47 (MS **C**); and HYG. *fab*.praef.1–3.

18 See above, 22.

19 Corthals, 'Early Irish', 23–4; for the sake of brevity I omit discussion of the further allusion which Corthals finds in the metrical verses embedded in this *retoiric*.

20 See MacDonald, *Christianizing*, esp. 301–16; and *Does the New Testament*, 2–6, for an overview of the criteria, which MacDonald himself treats with some flexibility (I follow the description of the criteria in the latter).

21 MacDonald, *Christianizing*, 310–14.

22 Borsje, 'Omens', 245–6.

Carney's discussions have led critics to assemble arguments either for or against. This has left these two innovative thinkers points of reference to return to, rather than points of departure from which to argue something new.

The present chapter revisits many of the features noted by Thurneysen and Carney, but is intended to demonstrate approaches that break free from the terms of reference they established. In his 1983 paper, Carney explained that his arguments of 1955 were a response to what he called the 'oppressive' orthodoxy of the nativists; since that orthodoxy had been thoroughly shaken, he was ready to modify the tone of his earlier argument.[23] One of the lingering effects of the 1955 publication, however, is the challenge offered by the term 'external elements'. Carney adopted the phrase to describe features of saga-texts which he believed were borrowed from outside Irish tradition, that is, 'external to whatever type of oral material that existed in Ireland in pre-literate times'.[24] Yet the term 'external element' had a lingering effect probably not anticipated by Carney. Material in a text can still be divided into that which is present by right of tradition, and that which is present by the accident of scholarly, or, expressed less sympathetically, scribal interference. More damningly, 'external' is only one step from the more baldly emotive 'foreign'. The present discussion aims to show that the categorization of content as 'borrowed' or 'external' is not meaningful where original literary creation has been achieved according to techniques of *imitatio*.

Prophecy and Heroic Typology

The *Táin* is notable for the division it makes between episodes which serve to begin the narrative, which in Recension 1 may be termed the *titulrad*, 'introductory material', and the story of the cattle-raid proper, the *scél iar n-urd*, 'story in due order' (TBC-1, 134). In Recension 1 this introductory material is brief, but preserves one of the finest pieces of writing in the text. This is the encounter between Medb and Fedelm, a *banfáith*, 'female prophet', who ominously appears before Medb's assembled army just before she is to lead them forward on their invasion of Ulster:

> 'Cia do chomainm-siu?' ol Medb frisin n-ingin.
> 'Fedelm banḟili do Chonnachtaib mo ainm-sea', or ind ingen.
> 'Can dothéig?' or Medb.
> 'A hAlbain, iar foglaim filidechta', or ind ingen.
> 'In fil imbass forosna lat?' or Medb.
> 'Fil écin', or ind ingen.
> 'Décai dam-sa didiu co bbia mo ḟechtas'.
> Dosnécce ind ingen íarum. Is and asbert Medb:
> 'A Ḟeidelm banfáith, co acci in slúag?'
> Frisgart Fedelm co n-epert:
> 'Atchíu forderg, atchíu rúad'. (TBC-1, 40–50)
>
> 'What is your name?' Medb asked the girl.
> 'Fedelm, poetess of the Connachta, is my name' said the girl.

[23] Carney, 'Early Irish', 127.

[24] Carney, *Studies*, 279; the term is retained, for example, by Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 35–41, in an argument sympathetic to Carney's thesis.

> 'Where have you come from?' asked Medb.
> 'From Alban, after learning the art of *filidecht*' said the girl.
> 'Do you possess "the great knowledge which illuminates"?' asked Medb.
> 'I do indeed' said the girl.
> 'Look for me then, how will be my hosting?'
> The girl looked. It was then that Medb asked:
> 'Fedelm, prophetess, how do you see the host?'
> Fedelm answered: 'I see it crimson, I see it red'.

Medb repeats her question a further three times, each time boasting of the excellence of her army and her certainty of success. Each time she receives the unwelcome answer: 'I see it crimson, I see it red'.

This episode in the introductory material establishes the prominence that prophecy will have throughout the *Táin*. Prophetic visions of coming disaster, expressed both in poetic form and in *rosc/retoiric*, recur throughout Recension I.[25] The efficacy of prophecy to create suspense is so obvious that we might consider that we have here a universal topos of epic technique. Jackson had some such notion in mind when he compared Fedelm's 'I see it crimson, I see it red' to the episode from the *Odyssey*, Book 20, in which the seer Theoklymenos has a vision of the walls of Odysseus's hall bleeding prior to the murder of the suitors.[26] The aim of Jackson's comparison here is to demonstrate a specific characteristic of the pre-medieval heroic tradition preserved independently in Homer and Irish saga. If, however, we wish to explore whether prophecies throughout the *Táin* show direct familiarity with classical epic, we are faced with the problem that Latin epic is in fact saturated with prophecy. The prominance of prophecy in Latin epic could be one argument in favour of the view that it is a narrative commonplace. Yet in Latin epic, prophecy is not quite a universal topos, but owes greatly to the immediate example of Virgil. The poet used prophecy throughout the *Aeneid* as a structural *leitmotiv* emphasizing that Aeneas's misfortunes were part of a divinely preordained scheme that would see, indeed already had 'seen', Troy reestablished in Italy as Rome. This scheme was revealed in prophetic speeches by Mercury, Helenus, the Sibyl and in the pageant of souls waiting to return to earth as Roman heroes from *Aeneid* 6; the scheme was visually foretold in the images worked by Vulcan onto Aeneas's shield. The *Aeneid*, therefore, is in a sense about prophecy. Given this Virgilian model, it is not surprising that prophecy became a fixture in the Latin epic repertoire. Its ubiquity in the tradition leaves it a marker of the epic genre and, paradoxically, a prime potential object of specifically literary *imitatio*.

It can be justifiably inquired, therefore, whether prophecy in Irish epic represents a universal motif present already in Irish pre-literate tradition, or the fruit of monastic reading. No one is going to believe that prophecy occurs in Irish saga solely in imitation of classical models, so the argument will not be made. For this reason we need to consider prophecy in the *Táin* in light of the special literary quality of the motif in Latin epic. Following Fedelm's fourth repetition of 'I see it crimson, I see it red', she continues her prophecy with the syllabic poem

[25] Most prominent are three ecstatic visions experienced by the Ulster exile Dubthach; the distinction between prophetic visions and speeches spoken out of ecstatic trances is blurred especially towards the end of the text, but is not of consequence for this discussion.

[26] Jackson, *The Oldest Irish*, 27.

Atchíu fer find firfes cles ('I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats').[27] The poem is a description of the appearance and behaviour of a warrior whom Fedelm sees in a vision. Though not personally known to Fedelm and therefore not unambiguously identified, the man is manifestly Cú Chulainn. The first and fourth stanzas fairly represent the character of Fedelm's vision:

> 'Atchíu fer find firfes cles
> co lín créchta fora chnes
> lúan láith i n-airthiur a chind
> óenach mbúada a thulchind . . .
>
> 'Cosmail innas a gaile
> fri Coin Culaind Murtheimne
> nocon ḟetar cúich in Cú
> C[h]ulaind asa caini clú
> acht rofetur-sa amne
> is forderg in slúag sa de'. (TBC-1, 67–84)
>
> 'I see a fair man who will perform weapon-feats, with many a wound on his flesh. A hero's light is on his brow. His forehead is the meeting place of virtues . . . The manner of his valour is like to Cú Chulainn of Murthemne; I do not know who is this Cú Chulainn whose fame is fair, but this I do know, that this host will be blood-red from him'.

The most striking feature of this vision is how Fedelm creates fear, not by saying she sees Cú Chulainn, but by saying she sees someone who resembles a warrior Cú Chulainn whom she has heard of. In the second half of the poem Fedelm identifies the hero more confidently, but this first part of the poem is more revealing. Cú Chulainn's reputation has already been earned. The implication is that the slaughter the Men of Ireland are moving towards ought to be obvious even to one without second vision. The fact that the Connacht army has not given prior thought to Cú Chulainn's defence must be accepted as a narrative necessity. The reader, at any rate, has no difficulty feeling the impending doom.

Imbas forosnai, translated above literally as 'the great knowledge which illuminates', was a divinatory rite of actual pre-Christian practice, and is described in the ninth-century antiquarian text *Sanas Cormaic*.[28] Fedelm says she has been learning *filidecht*, 'the art of the *fili*'. *Fili* is the normal word in Irish for the higher grade of poet, and it is widely thought that this professional class retained the rights to some activities of their pre-Christian predecessors of the same name. Accordingly, the rite may have survived into the period when the *Táin* was written and we have to be careful not to overweigh the comparative importance of literary models to the episode between Fedelm and Medb. However, as for surviving literary descriptions of *imbas forosnai*, or even prophetic episodes in Irish, to my knowledge Fedelm's doom-laden prophecy is not convincingly paralleled outside of the *Táin*. James Carney argued that the encounter between Fedelm and Medb showed a narrative technique that belongs to the 'external' literary sphere, not the folkloric. The literary character is felt particularly in how

[27] The poem is written in Lebor na hUidre over a rasura by the H-reviser. As it is not my aim in this chapter to reconstruct the text of Recension 1 prior to H's revisions, I have not found it necessary to incorporate this textual problem into the following discussion.

[28] Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §756.

the encounter succeeds in portraying Medb's character and her relentless struggle against fate.[29]

Hard evidence for Carney's view would need to identify a single, obvious written model for the episode. Such a single model has not and probably will not be found. The most profitable way to examine the many Latin parallels is to begin with an episode of paradigmatic importance in Latin epic tradition, the encounter between Aeneas and the Sibyl in *Aeneid* 6. In this episode, Aeneas has come to the Sibyl at Cumae in hope of receiving a prophecy of the success of his expedition to Italy, where he means to settle his Trojan followers. The Sibyl replies to Aeneas's request with a vision of war and a terrifying enemy:

> '. . . in regna Lauini
> Dardanidae uenient (mitte hanc de pectore curam),
> sed non et uenisse uolent. bella, horrida bella,
> et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno.
> non Simois tibi nec Xanthus nec Dorica castra
> defuerint; alius Latio iam partus Achilles . . .
> causa mali tanti coniunx iterum hospita Teucris
> externique iterum thalami'. (*Aeneid* 6.84–94)
>
> '. . . the Dardans will come into Lavinium's realm (no need to worry about this), but they will wish indeed that they had not. I see war, horrible war, and the Tiber seething with quantities of blood. You will lack neither a Simois, nor a Xanthus, nor a Greek camp; for there has been born in Latium another Achilles . . . the cause of so great evil to the Trojans will be, again, an alien wife and, again, a foreign marriage'.

As a formalized divinatory ritual, the meeting between Aeneas and the Sibyl has a certain affinity with the meeting of Medb and Fedelm. Points where the two episodes contrast can be acknowledged. The Sibyl's prophecy is frightening, yet the ultimate success of Aeneas against the evils the Sibyl foresees, especially this 'alius Achilles' ('second Achilles'), by which is meant the Rutulian prince Turnus, is not seriously in doubt. By contrast, the success of Medb against the warrior Fedelm sees, this one 'like Cú Chulainn', is greatly in question. It is only Virgil's readers, however, who know that Aeneas will prevail. The encounter with the Sibyl achieves its dramatic effect, shared with the Fedelm episode, by virtue of the fact that the hero could ill afford to be complacent: bloodshed is promised for his men.

This impressionistic comparison of the two texts can be grounded with a more formal comparison of features the two episodes are less likely to share by accident. The Sibyl's vision of the Tiber red with blood, and notably the emphatic placement of 'cerno' ('I see') at the end of the verse, is a clue that this prophecy may have been in the mind of the author who wrote 'atchíu forderg, atchíu ruad' ('I see it crimson, I see it red'). The repetition in 'atchíu . . . atchíu' may, further, recall Virgil's chillingly effective use of repetition in the Sibyl's 'bella, horrida bella' ('war, horrible war'). A more revealing argument in favour of literary *imitatio*, however, is the fact that the Irish may have recognized that this passage had been accepted as a model for prophetic encounters already in epic tradition. Their evidence was the *imitatio* of this passage in Statius's *Thebaid*. In Book 4,

[29] Carney, *Studies*, 68–9.

the Theban king Eteocles consults the oracle Tiresias to determine whether he will be successful in the coming encounter with the invading Argive army led by Polynices. Tiresias calls the dead to gather before him, among whose number come a band of fifty warriors earlier slaughtered single-handed by Tydeus, Polynices's companion and one of the Seven against Thebes. In Tiresias's address to the recently dead, Statius obviously recalls the language of Virgil's Sibyl:

> 'ne saevite, duces, nihil hic mortalibus ausum,
> credite, consiliis: hos ferrea neverat annos
> Atropos. existis casus: *bella horrida nobis,*
> *atque iterum Tydeus*.' (*Thebaid* 4.599–602; my italics)
>
> 'Be not angry, captains, here is no audacity of mortal devising, believe it. Iron Atropos had spun these years. You have passed beyond all disaster. *For us, horrible war, and, again, Tydeus*.'

Tiresias's *bella horrida*, which points ahead to the bloody horrors of the Argive assault on Thebes, unmistakably borrows from the Sibyl's prophecy of *bella, horrida bella*. Statius leaves little doubt that Roman readers of *Aeneid* 6 felt the chilling effects of the Sibyl's pronouncements, as this is the very effect which the *imitatio* is meant to recapture. Slightly earlier in this episode, Tiresias's daughter Manto, who is her blind father's 'eyes', is the first to see the denizens of the Otherworld dead roused by her father. Manto expresses what she sees in language which, likewise, recalls the Sibyl: 'ipsum pallentem solio . . . cerno' ('himself I see, pale upon his throne') (of Pluto) (*Thebaid* 4.525–7).

Tiresias's consultation of the dead is obviously drawn from Homer's *Odyssey* 11 more than any other single source. There, it is Odysseus who consults the dead, and Tiresias, now among their number, prophesies for him the events of his return to Ithaca. Statius's Manto, by virtue of her sex, alerts the reader to the second epic model provided by Virgil's Sibyl, who prophesies the events of the hero's own 'return' to Italy. Statius thereby alerts his audience to the characteristic complexity of his *imitatio*, which often unites material from both poets.[30] It is striking, however, how Statius, while making a clear allusion to Virgil's Sibyl in this passage, adapts the theme of recurrence and typology in the Sibyl's prophecy. Tiresias's 'atque iterum Tydeus' ('and, again, Tydeus'), on the surface merely acknowledges the rather plain fact that the Thebans will again have to fight Tydeus, who survived the ambush of the Theban assassins. The Sibyl's 'alius Achilles', however, tokens not the actual Achilles, who is long dead, but is figurative for Turnus. Ostensibly, Turnus will be the Achilles to Aeneas's Hector. Likewise, the Sibyl's identification of the source of the bloodshed as 'coniunx iterum hospita . . . externique iterum thalami' ('again, an alien wife and, again, a foreign marriage') establishes that Lavinia, sought after by both Aeneas and Turnus, will be the New Troy's Helen. On this initial level, these correspondences, in which the tragedy of the old Trojans in Asia prefigures the triumph of the new Trojans in Italy, can be described as typological. With this model of conscious literary typology in mind, we can see that Statius subtly indicates that his 'iterum Tydeus', though still Tydeus, in figurative terms will actually be a second Turnus/Achilles. This nexus of texts, where Statius writes himself into the tradition of Virgil, who writes himself into the tradition of Homer, demonstrates

[30] See above, 135.

that, from the point of view of the creative artist, typology is one technique of literary *imitatio*. Through the Sibyl Virgil clarifies that, while Homer's *Odyssey* was the base for the first half of the *Aeneid*, the second half, which is now getting under way, will be based on the *Iliad*. Statius's *Thebaid* will be based on Homer and Virgil both.

For a reader familiar with Christian biblical exegesis, there is no great difficulty recognizing typology of the sort encountered in the Sibyl's prophecy. An attentive Christian reader would even be alert to the moral component to the typology: Turnus, the embodiment of *furor* in the *Aeneid*, is indeed another Achilles, whose 'wrath' is the famous theme of Homer's *Iliad*. A reader who needs coaching will be aided by Servius's comment on the verse: 'ACHILLES Turnum significat' ('ACHILLES this signifies Turnus'). In this scholium Servius additionally clarifies the interpretive act that is necessary for the prophet's, and hence the poet's, meaning to be clear: 'et hoc est quod dicit "obscuris vera involvens", nam licet vera sint, latent' ('and this is what he intends when he says "concealing truths within obscurities", for although they are truths, they are hidden') (quoting *Aeneid* 6.100). The Sibyl's language is in fact subtly ambiguous, as it is not entirely certain whether 'alius Achilles' here means 'a second Achilles', 'one like Achilles', or even 'a different Achilles'.[31] It is Aeneas, who has seen Achilles in action, who would feel the anxiety created by such ambiguities more acutely than anyone. In this regard, it is telling that Fedelm does not claim that she sees Cú Chulainn, but, more ominously, that she sees someone whose feats are like Cú Chulainn's. Her prophecy therefore reproduces the formal ambiguity which is *de rigeur* of the Sibyline prophecy and is the chief cause of its psychological effect.

It is in fact Aeneas himself who eventually emerges as the true 'alius Achilles', but only readers who make it through the Iliadic books of the poem will see this and appreciate Virgil's full mastery of the Sibyline irony. Virgil's Homeric typologies, therefore, involve some complexity. The overarching aim, however, is clear: the Italian *Iliad* supersedes the Greek.[32] The second Xanthus will be a place of triumph, the second Troy will rule the world. For typological thinking in medieval Ireland, however, the principal literary model was undoubtedly the conventional reading of events and characters of the Old Testament as types for events and characters in the New Testament. Kim McCone has argued that a theory of typology based on the biblical model lies behind the many parallels that he detects between the Bible and much 'native' Irish narrative.[33] Yet in spite of the religious divide which left Latin epic more alien than Hebrew scripture, an additional, though perhaps secondary, influence of Virgil on typological thinking is worth considering. An undeniable link between Christian and Virgilian typology is, as it were, 'hidden in plain sight' in pagan antiquity's greatest Christian poem, Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*. This prophecy of a second Golden Age was widely accepted as a prophecy of the Christ already in Christian antiquity.[34] Virgil's own worldview, however, was characteristically pagan, hence cyclical. Accordingly, what is to come is told in terms of what has already happened:

31 Barchiesi, 'Virgilian narrative', 280, n. 8.
32 See the classic study by Anderson, 'Vergil's second *Iliad*'.
33 McCone, *Pagan Past*, notably 54–83.
34 The Christian interpretation of the poem is represented, for example, in the Filargirian commentary on the *Eclogues*.

> alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae uehat Argo
> delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella
> atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles. (*Eclogue* 4.34–6)
>
> There will be another Tiphys and another Argo such as will carry chosen heroes; there will be, indeed, other wars, and, again, great Achilles will be sent to Troy.

As these verses read like a draft of the story Virgil later told in the *Aeneid*, their echo in the Sibyl's prophecy is not accidental. Servius in fact quotes these verses in his comment on the Sibyl's prophecy in order to further illustrate Virgil's technique. The Sibyline ambiguity is also present. Servius Danielis, commenting on this 'alter Tiphys', clarifies 'vel re vera Tiphys, vel qualis Tiphys' ('is either, in fact, Tiphys, or one like Tiphys'). His distinction interestingly anticipates the language of Fedelm's description of Cú Chulainn as one 'like Cú Chulainn'. We have also, in Virgil's 'iterum . . . Achilles', another clear source for the illustrious tradition in which Statius wished to place his own 'iterum Tydeus'. The fourth *Eclogue* itself is not typological as Christians would understand the term. But its early acceptance by Christians was facilitated by the typological model that already permitted them to accept the non-Christian, often objectionable content of the Old Testament as integral to their own salvation history.

With biblical and secular epic models for typological thought available in medieval Ireland, there is no need to doubt that a medieval Irish *littérateur* of a humanist bent would be able to reimagine native lore in narratives that recall famous epics of antiquity. The reality of this typology in medieval Irish learning has been spelled out in the twelfth-century poem on the kings of Ulster, *Clann ollaman uaisle Emna*, where Naoise is equated with Alexander, Conall Cearnach with Hector and so forth:

> Cosmail gach áen-fher d'iath Emna
> d'fhir ar Tróe muirnig na máer . . .
>
> Each single man of Eamhain's land has a counterpart in spirited, lordly Troy . . . [35]

The typological equivalences within the Latin tradition and their Greek antecedents are fairly easy to detect in the series of prophecies examined above, as they happen to be identical with metrical echoes and verbal *imitatio*. Extrapolation from these prophetic encounters in the Virgilian Sibyline tradition to the encounter between Fedelm and Medb involves a small act of faith, in that we are no longer comparing Latin with Latin. If the correspondence between the Sibyline tradition in Latin epic and Fedelm's encounter with Medb is accepted, we can see that the encounter subtly introduces a classicizing program. Cú Chulainn will be the equivalent of the fierce heroes of classical epic. There may even be a residue of Virgilian *aemulatio*: Cú Chulainn will be a greater 'alius Achilles' than Turnus, maybe even greater than Aeneas himself.[36]

Yet for all that Virgil is the clearest model for the combination of prophecy and typology, it is the *Thebaid* which, though overlooked, affords by far the closest typological similarities with the *Táin*. At the heart of Medb's army are

[35] See above, 49.

[36] *Clann ollaman uaisle Emna*, as it happens, imagines Cú Chulainn as Troilus, for which, see below.

the Ulster exiles led by Fergus, one-time king of Ulster who lost the kingship to Conchobar. The twelfth-century text *Scéla Conchobair maic Nessa* explains how Fergus lost the kingdom: he agreed to give the kingship to his son-in-law Conchobar for one year, at the end of which period he was meant to get it back again.[37] At the end of that year, having made himself popular with the kingdom's subjects, Conchobar refused to give the kingship back. Though not described in *Scéla Conchobair*, Fergus eventually ended up in exile in Connacht. The tale *Loinges Mac nUislenn* gives an explanation for how Fergus entered exile not directly connected with Conchobar's retention of the throne. Conchobar's treachery, however, remains the principal cause.[38] If these texts are considered together as witnesses to a narrative which lay behind the *Táin*, we see the obvious affinities with the *Thebaid*. In the poem, following Oedipus's removal from the throne at Thebes, his two sons Eteocles and Polynices both inherit the kingdom, on the agreement that they will alternate possession of the kingship in successive years. For the first year Eteocles has the throne and Polynices seeks protection in Argos; at the end of this year, Eteocles refuses to relinquish the throne, and Polynices languishes in exile. Considering the loose connection made between Fergus's loss of the throne and his subsequent exile, one cannot argue that the Irish sources are modeled on the *Thebaid* in any simple sense. Yet read in tandem, the *Táin* and the *Thebaid* do look like independent literary treatments of either the same tale-type, or independent depictions of an actual, and if so very rare, political arrangement.[39] Parallels continue. Polynices does not lead the Argive invasion, which task falls to the Argive king Adrastus. Fergus defers military leadership to Ailill and Medb, king and queen of Connacht. Moreover, the Argive host consists of a gathering of men from regions from across the Peloponnese, including exiles from Thebes (*Thebaid* 4.76–80); the Connacht army, likewise, includes men from Leinster and Munster in addition to the Ulster exiles. Book 4 of the *Thebaid*, which begins with a descriptive catalogue of the invasion forces gathering to Adrastus in Argos, happens to parallel the opening of Recension 1 of the *Táin*, with its descriptions of individual bands in Medb's army.[40] The ensuing series of ominous prophecies of bloodshed on the Theban side likewise prefigures, though at a greater remove, Fedelm's prophecy to Medb.

The clearest disagreement in these two texts is the obvious fact that the grandiose military expedition described in the *Táin* does not have as its object the

37 Stokes, 'Tidings'.

38 Other versions of how Fergus went into exile existed, and Carney, *Studies*, 234, doubts *Loinges mac nUislenn* preserves the original story; see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 321; see also Carney, 'Early Irish', 125, for an early critical view of Fergus's exile which he believes *Loinges mac nUislenn* was meant to efface.

39 Alternation for succession among branches of a royal dynasty was sporadically practiced in medieval Ireland; see Jaski, *Early Irish*, especially 228–36; the tract known as the *Réim Rígraide*, 'Succession of Kings' attached to the *Lebor Gabála* describes a seven-year cycle of alternation for kingship between the three cousins Áed Ruad, Díthorba and Cimbaeth, which scheme broke down when Áed's daughter Macha claimed her part in the alternation; see Ó Concheanainn, 'Leabhar na hUidhre', 30–40, for the texts in question; I do not know of anything in Irish tradition which could be understood as an annual alternation between concurrent candidates.

40 Lactantius Placidus draws attention to the opening catalogue in *Thebaid* 4 in his introductory description of the book's contents, illustrating that it was felt to be a distinctive feature of the poet's technique: 'catalogus de his qui uenerunt in auxilium Adrasti, et singulorum nomina ducum' (Lact. Pl. prol.lib.IV, page 238).

recovery of Fergus's throne. Bizarrely, and we can add, improbably, its object is a single bull, the Donn Cúailnge. Even more bizarrely, the battle between the two armies is hardly described by the author. The text concludes, instead, with a battle between the Donn and Connacht's own prize bull, Findbennach 'the White Horned'. This unlikely turn gives the *Táin* considerable charm, but leaves it one of the most uneven texts in the international heroic canon. It reflects well on the *Táin*, therefore, to discover that the theme of the battle between the bulls in fact features prominently in the *Thebaid* as well. The theme is initially introduced with the figure of the 'Sidonian bull' which famously abducted Europa, in the pursuit of which Cadmus, the progenitor of the Theban line, was forced into exile in Greece (*Thebaid* 1.181). Statius follows this up with a paradigmatic simile in which Polynices and Eteocles, now rivals in the kingdom previously ruled by their father, are described as two bullocks unwillingly yoked together:

> sic ubi delectos per torva armenta iuvencos
> agricola imposito sociare affectat aratro,
> illi indignantes . . .
> haud secus indomitos praeceps discordia fratres
> asperat. (*Thebaid* 1.131–8)
>
> So when a farmer strives to yoke two bullocks chosen from the fierce herd at one plough, they rebel . . . Not otherwise does headlong strife enrage the untamed brothers.

Statius returns to the theme of exile with a further simile in which Polynices is described as a humiliated bull, a 'dux taurus', which has been driven away from its pastures by a rival:

> veluti dux taurus amata
> valle carens, pulsum solito quem gramine victor
> iussit ab erepta longe mugire iuvenca,
> cum profugo placuere tori cervixque recepto
> sanguine magna redit fractaeque in pectore quercus,
> bella cupit pastusque et capta armenta reposcit
> iam pede, iam cornu melior; pavet ipse reversum
> victor, et attoniti vix agnovere magistri:
> non alias tacita iuvenis Teumesius iras
> mente acuit. (*Thebaid* 2.323–32)
>
> Like a leader bull deprived of his beloved valley, whom a conqueror has driven from his familiar turf and condemned to low far from his stolen heifer; when the exile's sinews are to his liking and his great neck back again full-blooded and oaks are shattered against his breast, he craves battle and reclaims his pasture and captured herd, now stronger than ever in hoof and horn; the conqueror himself takes fear at his return and the astonished herdsmen scarce recognize him: not otherwise does the young Teumesian hone his wrath in the silence of his heart.

The bull is Statius's symbol for exile and return. But in Thebes, in a pattern begun by Oedipus, return from exile is not triumphant, but bloody and disgraceful. Anticipating the violent conclusion to the narrative, Statius draws on the device of Virgilian prophecy to portray this bull's return to his own turf. A character whom Statius calls the 'silvestris regina chori' ('the queen of the woodland choir'), by which is meant the leader of the Bacchants, appears in a possessed state before

the citizens of Thebes and prophesies the imminent return of Polynices at the head of an Argive army. The vision continues the imagery already established, whereby the brothers in contention for the throne are pictured as bulls:

> ‘aeternis potius me, Bacche, pruinis
> trans et Amazoniis ululatum Caucason armis
> siste ferens, quam monstra ducum stirpemque profanum
> eloquar. en urgues (alium tibi, Bacche, furorem
> iuravi): similes uideo concurrere tauros;
> idem ambobus honos unusque ab origine sanguis;
> ardua conlatis obnixi cornua miscent
> frontibus alternaque truces moriuntur in ira’. (*Thebaid* 4.393–400)
>
> ‘Carry me, Bacchus, and set me among the eternal frosts beyond the Caucasus and the Amazonian armies’ howl, rather than that I should tell of monstrous acts of rulers and an impious race. Lo, you drive me (a different madness I swore you, Bacchus). I see two like bulls clash; to both the same distinction, in origin of one blood. They lock lofty horns butting head to head and fiercely die in mutual wrath’.

This prophetic episode is an object lesson in the tradition of literary *imitatio*. Statius recalls *Aeneid* 12.715–24, where Virgil portrays Turnus and Aeneas in their final battle as two bulls contending for leadership of the herd; this simile was based, in turn, on Apollonius, *Argonautica* 2.88–9.[41] Statius’s Bacchant queen herself is a transparent imitation of Amata, the Latin queen who feigns possession by Bacchus in order to stir up her kingdom against the Trojans in *Aeneid* 7.[42] Of all the prophetic episodes in the *Thebaid*, it is the prophecy of the Bacchant queen which most obviously anticipates the encounter between Fedelm and Medb. The sex of the seer, her sudden unbidden appearance and some affinity between her possession by Bacchus and the otherworldly character of the rite of *imbas forosnai* generically connect the scenes. Furthermore, both the Bacchant queen and Fedelm initially feign reluctance to ‘speak truth to power’ and do so only under compulsion: ‘en urgues’. As it happens, the Bacchant queen’s vision of the two bulls, itself not paralleled in Fedelm’s prophecy, is echoed outside the *Táin* proper in the early poem *Verba Scáthaige*, ‘The Words of Scáthach’. The female speaker Scáthach, speaking to Cú Chulainn out of *imbas forosnai* parallel to Fedelm speaking to Medb, prophesies the chief events of the *Táin* and concludes her vision with: ‘at-chiu firfeth Findbennach / (Ai) fri Donn Cuailnge ardburach’ (‘I see the very glossy Findbennach / (of Áe) in great rage against Donn Cúailnge’).[43]

Neither the Donn nor Findbennach experience anything like the exile of the ‘dux taurus’ described by Statius. A slight comparison can be made with the series of episodes which describe the wanderings of the Donn in the face of the Connacht army, but the similarities do not amount to much.[44] If there is a

41 Virgil also drew on his earlier description of two bulls fighting over a heifer from *Georgics* 3.220; see Williams’s edition, *Books 7–12*, note to 12.715.

42 As noted by Lactantius Placidus at *Thebaid* 4.378: ‘de fonte Vergiliano hunc colorem derivavit. is enim Amatam in silvis eadem fecisse describit’; Statius also follows Lucan’s Bacchant from *Bellum Civile* 1; see Ganiban, *Statius*, 62.

43 Henry, ‘*Verba*’, 201, for text and translation (macrons omitted); for the date and provenance of this poem, see below.

44 TBC-1, 9636, 976–1001, 1487–509 and 1537–42.

counterpart to Statius's 'dux taurus', it is not either of the bulls, but Fergus. This exiled Ulster king formally parallels Polynices, and does return to his kingdom. Although not their military commander, Fergus is their guide through Ulster territory, literally their *dux*. One of the great weaknesses of the *Táin* is that Fergus, unlike Statius's *taurus* Polynices, shows so little interest in meeting his rival. In the battle between the two armies which ends the cattle-raid, the expected encounter between Fergus and Conchobar materializes as a single and indecisive exchange of blows. Following this, Fergus is shamed into retreat, apparently on account of the dishonour of fighting fellow Ulstermen; soon afterwards he turns back before Cú Chulainn, according to a prearranged agreement. Following this mostly desultory account of the battle between the two armies, the *Táin* formally concludes with the battle between the Connacht bull, Findbennach, and the Ulster bull, the Donn. Here the *Thebaid* shows unexpected value to the literary critic, not as a source for the *Táin*, but as an interpretive model. A reflective reader would be unlikely to miss altogether that the battle between the bulls stands in some fashion for the human battle which would have been the epic's expected conclusion. Statius's use of the imagery of rival bulls clarifies, in case it has been missed, that, although the text is ostensibly about a conflict between Connacht and Ulster, the expected confrontation was all the time between two rival kings of Ulster, Fergus and Conchobar.[45]

The argument pursued here is not meant to diminish the *Táin* by suggesting that it is really a story of Fergus and Conchobar, onto which a story of a cattle-raid, Medb and Cú Chulainn has merely been grafted. However, for all that questions as to the growth of the text are generally intractable, they have always been difficult to avoid. This is particularly so in the case of Recension 1, whose compilatory character is universally acknowledged. In consequence, the typological argument pursued in this discussion cannot be separated from the question of the tradition, both written and oral, from which our surviving *Táin* emerged. This is illustrated by considering the discrepancy between the suggestion already made, that the battle between the bulls is a metaphor for Fergus and Conchobar analogous with Polynices and Eteocles, and the description of the battle in question. The protagonists of the human conflict have ceased hostilities and gathered to watch the contest between the bulls. The Donn initially gets the worst of it with his hooves impaled upon his opponent's horns, until Fergus calls out to him that he is 'a miserable old calf':

> La sodain dosrenga a chois fris co mebaid a ḟergaire 7 co sescain a adarc dia chéle co mbaí asain tsléib ina ḟarrad. Sléb nAdarca són íarom dono. (TBC-1, 4138–40)
>
> Thereupon [the Donn] drew back his foot so that his leg burst and one of the other's horns was thrown onto the mountain beside him. And that was Slíab nAdarca [Hill of the Horn] after that.

There follows a detailed account of the Donn's wanderings throughout Ireland, at various stops leaving pieces of Findbennach's body, which subsequently, like Slíab nAdarca, take their name from that body part. At Druim Tairb (The Bull's Ridge), the Donn himself finally dies. On one level, this itinerary is very straight-

[45] For the topos of two fighting bulls as a metaphor for civil war in Latin epic, including the passages discussed here and the connection with the sacrificial order, see Hardie, *The Epic Successors*, 19–26.

forward *dinnshenchas*, 'place-name lore'. The genre is instantly recognizable to any reader of early Irish. What prompts the onomastic excursus, however, the encounter itself between the two bulls, has been interpreted mostly as a feature coming out of Irish mythology. David Greene detected 'memories . . . however altered, of a cult of bull-gods, such as is well known from the ancient civilizations of the Mediterreanean'; Ó hUiginn saw a memory of a 'cosmogonic legend', two divine bulls whose contention created certain features of the Irish landscape.[46] In Mac Cana's view, this is the 'nucleus of myth' around which the *Táin* developed.[47]

The relationship of this myth with the political conflict portrayed in the *Táin*, however, remains to be demonstrated. For example, the places commemorated in the bulls' fight differ radically in Recensions 1 and 2, with only an incidental correspondance to the geography of the cattle-raid itself. Moreover, if there is a 'nucleus' around which the *Táin* we possess developed, it is probably to be detected in content which corresponds to our earliest records for the story told in the *Táin*. This is the early-seventh-century poem *Conailla Medb míchuru* attributed to the poet Luccreth Moccu Chíara.[48] Preserved as a work of genealogical research explaining the presence of Ulster exiles in the genealogies of certain Munster dynasties, *Conailla Medb míchuru* shows obvious knowledge of the story told in the *Táin*, and explicitly names Fergus, Conchobar, Medb and Ailill. The poem does not, however, mention any special contention between two bulls, and furthermore shows no knowledge of Cú Chulainn. Carney argued that the poem preserved a genuine pre-Christian tradition of the story which later developed into *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. In contrast to *Conailla Medb míchuru*, the poem *Verba Scáthaige* clearly alludes to a *Táin* which resembles the surviving version. *Verba Scáthaige* derives ultimately from the lost eighth-century manuscript *Cín Dromma Snechta* and explicitly names the two bulls; the poem also understands Cú Chulainn as the story's principal figure, giving both his early name 'Sétantae' and his warrior's title 'Cú Chulainn'.[49] It is a fair inference, therefore, that a battle between the two bulls was integral to an eighth-century *Táin* at least.[50]

As for the earlier stratum, it cannot be inferred from the absence of the bulls from *Conailla Medb míchuru* that an earlier prose *Táin* also failed to feature the bulls, or to end the story in a battle between them. Yet such a suggestion would be generally in agreement with hints throughout the *Táin*, where the prominance accorded the bulls is inconsistent. The Donn Cúailnge is mentioned only casually in the introductory episodes of Recension 1 (TBC-1, 132), and even then not by

46 Greene, '*Táin*', 95; Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 61.

47 Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology*, 50–1; see also the discussion of the evidence from Celtic and comparative Indo-European mythology by Ó Cathasaigh, 'Mythology', with references.

48 Comments on *Conailla Medb míchuru* draw on Carney's discussion in 'Early Irish' and 'Three Old Irish', 77–9.

49 Henry, '*Verba*', lines 20 and 31–2.

50 Note that, according to Henry's own discussion of the poem's metrical features, '*Verba*', 194–5, the verses which explicitly name the two bulls, Cú Chulainn, Medb and Ailill, and these verses alone, are obviously metrically defective; Henry neither notes the pattern nor successfully accounts for the individual departures from the poem's otherwise internally consistent metrical form; for this form, which agrees with more securely dated early accentual poetry, see Carney, 'Three Old Irish'. Carney, 'Early Irish', 118, dates the poem to the early eighth century at the latest, but Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 59, cautions against the unreliability of linguistic dating in this case. One wonders whether the metrically inferior lines show an eighth-century editor attempting to appropriate an old poem for a fairly recently written prose *Táin*?

name. The elaborate story that accounts for Medb's desire to have the bull is told only in Recension 2. As for the contest between the bulls, the onomastic excursion which concludes their battle, far from reflecting the 'nucleus' to the *Táin*, is probably secondary, if not tertiary. I suspect that this battle in the *Táin* began as what it is in the *Thebaid*, that is, as a fairly transparent metaphor from nature for dynastic rivalry.[51] I would not disallow the possibility that Statius's use of the bull as a *leitmotiv* in the first four books of the *Thebaid*, including his memorable prophecy of the two bulls' battle to the death, was the inspiration. The poverty of surviving early evidence, however, does not allow us to push this claim.

As it happens, Irish literary tradition points to a more 'native' Irish derivation for the encounter between the two bulls. The text *De Chophur in Da Muccida* records that the bulls were the most recent incarnation of two swineherds from the Otherworld *síde* in Connacht and Munster.[52] These rivals changed shape every two years, adopting mostly animal form, in a contest for superiority in the magical arts. A mythological quality in this tale, especially echoes of pre-Christian Irish belief in reincarnation, would point to an origin for the bulls that well predated Irish acquaintance with Statius. A sceptic, however, would note that *De Chophur* is listed as a *remscél* to the *Táin*, and can probably be viewed as ancilliary to the *Táin* in its present form.[53] That is to say, the text is secondary literature, though the shape-shifting theme on which it draws may predate association with the *Táin* specifically. More significantly, however, *De Chophur* does nothing to bolster the claim for one-time cults of divine bulls in Ireland as the ultimate source for the two bulls. If anything, the text is evidence against this claim. If analogues from Celtic sources are sought, the punishment inflicted on Gilfaethwy and Gwydion by Math in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi* is a revealing parallel. Here, shape-changing themes of possibly mythological derivation survive as pure literary entertainment.[54] At any rate, a connection between the cyclical magical contest of the two swineherds and the decisive cosmogonic *dinnshenchas* which ends the *Táin* has to be sought outside the *Táin* proper, in texts which appear further to depend on the *Táin* and *De Chophur in Da Muccida* itself.[55]

If the proposed connection with Statius's *Thebaid* is correct, the battle between the bulls does belong to the earliest strata of the tale, but specifically the earliest literary strata, and for reasons that have little to do with pre-Christian bull cults. If the battle between the bulls did begin in *imitatio* of Statius, the obfuscation that would see the bulls no longer clearly identified with the two Ulster kings probably began immediately. In Statius's original prophetic vision, the point is that the two bulls die in mutual slaughter. An inherited tradition of Fergus and Conchobar, it appears, knew no such early deaths for these two rivals. However,

51 Note that in the lead-up to the encounter between Fergus and Conchobar, Fergus alludes to Virgil's similar metaphor from nature of a swarm of bees, for the command of which two rival *reges*, 'kings' compete; see above, 137.

52 Roider, *De Chophur*.

53 See the list of *remscéla* in Murray, 'The Finding', 23.

54 One can contrast the contest between the two dragons from *Cyfranc Lludd and Llefelis*, roughly contemporary with the Four Branches but obviously dependent on earlier tradition, in this case evidenced as a literary motif at least as early as the battle between a red and white dragon described in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*; see Morris, *Nennius*, §42; this latter motif, as in the model I propose for the *Táin*, is political metaphor, irrespective of its ultimate derivation.

55 See the *dindshenchas* of Limerick and Athlone in Stokes, 'The prose', 452–4, 464–7.

the connection to Statius's poem is maintained by having, not Conchobar and Fergus kill one another, but Findbennach and the Donn. By this device, Fergus and Conchobar are left living for as long as the native genealogical tradition found it convenient that they be left living. More importantly, a typological correspondence that would ennoble an inherited Irish history of dynastic rivalry as a native *Thebaid* was made possible.

Story, Commentary and Imitatio

Among Thurneysen's claims for classical influence in the *Táin* was his suggestion that the long episode entitled the *Macgnímrada*, 'Boyhood Deeds', of Cú Chulainn (TBC-1, 398–824) shows a 'reminiscence' of the *Aeneid*.[56] The *Macgnímrada* is an account of a series of martial exploits performed by Cú Chulainn when he was still a child. The episode is narrated by the Ulster exiles, led by Fergus. Thurneysen was impressed with the sophistication of the past-tense narrative technqiue of this episode, and proposed that the author was familiar with the model of *Aeneid* 2 and 3, in which Aeneas narrates his adventures on the sea before a Carthaginian audience. Thurneysen's suggestion should be understood primarily in terms of the contrast it offers to the dominant model in his time, that the *Táin* represented Irish oral tradition, and the *Macgnímrada*, therefore, medieval oral storytelling technique.

For proposing a literary alternative to the oral hypothesis, Thurneysen's suggestion remains valuable. The claim that *Aeneid* 2 and 3 were the specific literary model, however, fails to convince, and it is doubtful whether Thurneysen would even have bothered to defend the claim if pressed. In the *artes poetriae* of the twelfth century the technique of past-tense narration was described as the *ordo artificialis*. Although prescribed as one technique to be learned, it does not appear that it was felt to be any more or less classical than any other technique there prescribed. Possible models for the technique in scholastic literature familiar throughout the Middle Ages include the brief narrative of the Judgment of Paris from Dares's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, an episode from Alexander's youth, told as a flashback in the first person by Alexander/Paris (7). This narrative is reproduced and greatly expanded with no technical difficulties in *Togail Troí*.[57] More significantly, the technique is exampled in the many inset narratives throughout Latin epic. Virgil's most notable example of the Homeric inset narrative, apart from the extended example of Books 2 and 3, is the account of Hercules's Italian adventures, told in first-person narration by King Evander at Pallanteum (*Aeneid* 8.185–275). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, this narrative is closely consulted by the authors of *Togail Troí* in the construction of their own list of Hercules's feats, as is the chorus's full enumeration of Hercules's tasks which immediately follows. Beginning with the hero's killing of Juno's serpents in his crib, Hercules's tasks are an incipient *Macgnímrada* in their own right.

Play with narrative order was well known to have been a feature of classical epic. In his discussion of narrative order in the *Saturnalia*, Macrobius presents

[56] Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 97. *Macgnímrada* is the title of the episode in Lebor na hUidre and Recension 2.

[57] See above, 84.

Homer as the model of what he terms the *poetica disciplina*. Macrobius explains this as the narrative order employed by the poets which begins in the middle and goes back to the beginning, and gives Evander's narration of Hercules's Italian adventures from *Aeneid* 8 as an example of the technique in Latin.[58] Servius comments on the opening books of the *Aeneid*, which famously begins with Aeneas arriving in Carthage well before it is told how he got there: 'hanc esse artem poeticam, ut a mediis incipientes per narrationem prima reddamus et non numquam futura praeoccupamus, ut per vaticinationem' ('this is poetic technique, that we begin narration at a mid-point and return to the beginning, and sometimes anticipate what is to come, as in prophecy').[59] The author of the *Táin* would have understood Servius's comment on prophecy and narrative time as surely as he understood beginning a narrative at a mid-point, which is precisely where Recension 1 begins. Examples of the *ordo articificialis* in near contemporary European vernacular literature might include Adventure 3 of the *Nibelungenlied*, which contains a narration of how the youthful Siegfried won the Nibelung treasure. This narration formally recalls Cú Chulainn's *Macgnímrada* and, like the latter, puts the narration into the mouth of a grizzled veteran, in this case Hagen of Troneck.

The most obvious classical model for the combining of the *ordo artificialis* and the topos of the 'boyhood deeds' is, however, Achilles's narration of his boyhood training under the centaur Chiron from *Achilleid* 2 (94–167). Statius's own model for the poetic narrative order, here a first-person past-tense narration in the second book of an epic, was manifestly *Aeneid* 2. This is to say, in these examples, the *ordo artificialis* is an extremely literary technique: Virgil, for his own part, imitated the technique from Homer's *Odyssey*.[60] This nexus of texts thus provided the Middle Ages another model of literary *imitatio*.

The first classical allusion from Cú Chulainn's *Macgnímrada* to be considered here, however, is not from Statius's *Achilleid*, but to a different source altogether. The *Macgnímrada* commence when the five-year-old Cú Chulainn, after arguing with his mother about his readiness to go and join the big boys at Emain Macha, arrives while the boytroop of Ulster is engaged in games on the field before the royal residence. Being unknown and having failed to ask to be put under their protection, Cú Chulainn is immediately attacked by the youths, whom he predictably routs. Conchobar asks Cú Chulainn his name, and the boy is received into the household as his foster-son (TBC-1, 439–54). A classical analogue for this story survives as an episode in the biography of Alexander, son of Priam. The relevant part of this narrative begins after Alexander has survived his mother's attempt to have him killed, and has been raised in secret as a shepherd. In good folktale form, Alexander eventually goes to Troy and is not recognized by his biological family. The story is recounted briefly by Servius, who relates only that Alexander overcomes the Trojans in an athletic contest and that Hector attempts to kill him (at *Aeneid* 5.370). A much fuller version of the story is found in the *Excidium Troiae*. In this version, a young Alexander first argues with his foster-father to be let go to Troy, and is initially refused, as in the case of Cú Chulainn.

58 *Saturnalia* 5.14.11–16; see also 5.2.9–13.
59 Servius, at *Aeneid* 1.praef.
60 See Horsfall, *A Companion*, 285–6.

The narrative of his reception by the Trojans continues with further analogues to Cú Chulainn's adventure with the boytroop:

> campestriarii, ut consuetudo habet, ante casam regis ad dimicandum descenderunt. Quos dum Paris dimicantes videret, presumans de iuventute sua se ad dimicandum cum eis cepit petere . . . se in arenam iactavit et cum campestriariis non arte sed virtute dimicavit et coronam accepit . . . hoc videntes, filii regis qui ab eo victi sunt, dolore coacti quia eos inter tantum agonem populi confunderet, ceperunt de nece eius cogitare ut eum interficerent.[61]
>
> The wrestlers, as was the custom, went down to before the king's residence to fight. When Paris saw them fighting, he longed in the presumption of his youth to fight with them . . . he hurled himself into the arena and fought with the wrestlers not with art, but with might, and received the crown . . . Seeing this, the king's sons, those who had been defeated by him, compelled by resentment because he had frustrated them in such a public contest, began to plan his death, and sought to kill him.

MacDonald's criteria for the identification of *imitatio* include the notion of interpretability. One asks, can the theory that an obscure passage has arisen from *imitatio* help to explicate a difficult text? The *Macgnímrada* claims that the boytroop attack Cú Chulainn because he has not put himself under their protection. This is not entirely convincing. However, the story of the boys who attack the newcomer is so good that it is substantially repeated a few lines later in the subepisode headed *Aided na Maccraide*, 'The Death of the Youths', in this case with the pretence of 'protection' abandoned (TBC-1, 470–80). In the story as told in the *Excidium Troiae*, the youths' inability to recognize Alexander is in consequence of his having been raised in secrecy. In this version it follows quite reasonably that they desire to kill Alexander because they feel humiliated at having been defeated by him while he is still thought to be a shepherd. In this version's recognition scene, it is King Priam, his father, who learns his identity and thwarts the plot against his life. The parallel reflects poorly on Cú Chulainn's recognition scene with his uncle Conchobar. There is no particular reason why Conchobar would not recognize his nephew Cú Chulainn: it is not even claimed that he has been away in fosterage at the time. The parallel between Priam and Conchobar, however, does bring into relief irregularities in the boy's upbringing suggested in the foretale *Compert Con Culainn*. Here it emerges that Conchobar may have been the boy's biological father, and Cú Chulainn, therefore, a child of incest. If one were looking for an explanation for Conchobar's initial non-recognition of his nephew/son, it would be that the episode is an adapted version of the story told also in the *Excidium Troiae*, with Conchobar's hidden paternal relationship with the youth implied by the very context.

It is worthwhile examining the problem of how to judge whether a story has been drawn from folklore, when from literary *imitatio*, and when from scholastic texts such as commentary on Latin epic. It was shown above how the *Excidium Troiae*'s idiosyncratic joining of Trojan and Roman history is shared with the Trojan chapters of the First Vatican Mythographer. Furthermore, *Togail Troí*'s account of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, though it has affinities with the Mythographer's own version, shares details with the *Excidium Troiae* not found elsewhere.[62] It is inescapable that the Mythographer, *Togail Troí* and the

[61] Atwood and Whitaker, *Excidium*, 5–6.
[62] See above, 85.

Excidium Troiae all drew on a corpus of Trojan commentary distinct from the dominant Servian and Filargirian traditions; it is from this unidentified corpus of commentary that the Mythographer also evidently got his account of Troilus's death which is echoed in *Togail Troí*.[63] It follows that it would be a false step to argue that the *Macgnímrada* preserve an *imitatio* of the *Excidium Troiae* specifically. In the absence of good evidence for the *Excidium Troiae* in Ireland, it is more sensible to propose that the story of Cú Chulainn and the boytroop has independently drawn on this same corpus of commentary.

Cú Chulainn, Achilles and Play

Despite Statius's model of the technique of past-tense narration, there are, in fact, only minor echoes in the *Macgnímrada* of the content itself of Achilles's boyhood deeds from *Achilleid* 2. Discussion of these echoes has been omitted here in favour of more interesting parallels to be found outside of Achilles's training under Chiron specifically. The first of these parallels comes from outside the *Achilleid* altogether. In the episode which concludes the *Macgnímrada*, the seven year old Cú Chulainn overhears the druid Cathbad telling a class of pupils that the warrior who took up arms that day, 'forbíad a ainm Hérind co bráth ar gním gascid 7 no mértaís a airscéla co bráth' ('his name for valour would be known throughout Ireland forever and tales of his valourous deeds would last forever') (TBC-1, 614–15). Cú Chulainn convinces Conchobar to give him arms and so chooses to pursue the fame forseen by Cathbad. Seeing this, the druid laments that the the boy had not asked for the full omen:

> 'Is glé bid airdairc 7 bid animgnaid intí gébas gasiced and acht bid duthain nammá'. 'Amra brígi són!' ol Cú Chulaind. 'Acht ropa airderc-sa, maith lim cenco beind acht óenlá for domun.' (TBC-1, 638–41)
>
> [Cathbad said:] 'It is clear that he who takes up arms on this day will be famous and renowned, except he will be short-lived.' 'Big deal!' said Cú Chulainn. 'Provided I am famous, I am happy even if I were on earth only one day.'

Ernst Windisch noted as long ago as 1905 the parallel in this episode with a similar feature in the heroic biography of Achilles.[64] Homer records that it had been prophesied that if Achilles went to fight at Troy, he would win lasting renown, but would suffer an early death (*Iliad* 9.410–15). There is little chance that the Irish author read Homer. The argument in favour of the conservatism of the Irish tradition inclines toward seeing a heroic theme generated independently in archaic Greece and medieval Ireland. The question is seen in a different light when it is confirmed that Homer's version of the story was, at the very least, known in medieval Ireland, read in the body of Virgilian commentary in which the Irish were early experts. In this case, the story is preserved by Servius Danielis:

> *apud Homerum Achilles refert, matrem deam sibi dixisse, ut si bello Troiano se subtraheret et reducem patriae daret, alta senecta viveret, sed inglorius; si vero*

[63] See above, 130.
[64] Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage*, 132; see also Ford, 'The idea'.

> *apud Troiam pugnando perseveraret, adeptus magnam gloriam primaevus obcumberet*. (at *Aeneid* 4.696)
>
> According to Homer, Achilles reports that his mother, a goddess, told him that if he kept from the Trojan war and left for his own country, he would live to old age, but without glory; if, however, he remained to continue fighting at Troy, he would die young, but only after gaining great glory.

This note occurs in a long learned scholium on conditionality in fate. Strangely, given the fact that this prophecy of Achilles's greatness was in Homer and therefore not at all obscure, I have not found that it is clearly recalled anywhere else in surviving Latin literature. Moreover, although heroes often die young – one thinks, again, of Siegfried – I have not found that a prophecy in childhood of fame coupled with the choice on the part of the hero to die young is particularly common. The motif seems to have been connected with Achilles specifically in antiquity. If not independently generated by the Irish author, the omen of Cú Chulainn's lasting fame bought at the price of a short life is splendidly heroic, but consciously literary. The episode flags that Cú Chulainn is to be interpreted as an Irish type for Achilles.

Servius Danielis aside, it is Statius's *Achilleid* which gave the Irish a literary portrait of the moment that Achilles's traded life for glory. In this account, in an attempt to escape the prophecy she has heard of her son's short life, Achilles's mother Thetis has taken him to the island Scyros and disguised him as a girl. As prepartions for the Greek attack against Troy are under way, Ulysses has been sent to Scyros to find the young Achilles and bring him to the Greek army. Knowing that Achilles has been disguised, Ulysses brings a quantity of effeminate gifts for the island's girls, among which he has hidden a shield and spear. After the gifts have been presented in a heap in the middle of the palace courtyard, the island's girls snap up the colourful ribbons and cymbals. Achilles, fuming at the indignity of his female disguise, lets out a roar, throws off his dress and seizes the shield and spear in his hands. With this act he rejects his childhood, in which he is forced to live in a feminized world, and enters the company of men as a warrior. All understand, including his mother, that the moment foreseen in the prophecy has come. Through his own agency, he has chosen glory in Troy over long life.

Even on the surface, there is a great affinity between this scene and the episode in which Cú Chulainn takes up arms. A textual examination points to an even deeper relationship. Claiming that Cathbad has given his permission, Cú Chulainn asks Conchobar for arms:

> Dobeir gaí 7 scíath dó. Bertaigthus for lár in taige conná ternó ní dona cúic gaiscedaib déc no bítis di imforcraid hi tegluch Conchobair fri maidm n-airm nó fri gabáil ngaiscid do neoch. Co tardad dó gaisced Conchobair féin. Falloing-side immorro éseom 7 bertaigthi hé 7 bennachais in ríg bá gaisced. (TBC-1, 621–5)
>
> He [Conchobar] gave him a spear and a shield. He brandished/shook them in the middle of the hall until nothing survived of the fifteen sets of arms which were kept in Conchobar's household to replace broken weapons or to be provided when someone took up arms. Finally Conchobar's own arms were given to him. These withstood him, and he brandished them and blessed the king whose arms they were.

This episode in Recension 1 is memorable especially for its visuals of the vigorous young boy. It is equally memorable, though in a different way, as the mental image drawn by Statius of Achilles throwing off his dress to pick up shield and

spear. With close attention to Statius's diction in this episode, a more important parallel becomes apparent. The verses in question are very nearly obscure:

> iam clipeus breviorque manu consumitur hasta
> (mira fides) Ithacumque umeris excedere visus . . . (*Achilleid* 1.879–80)
>
> Now the shield and the short spear 'are consumed' by his hand (strange but true) and his shoulders seem taller than the Ithacan . . .

The verses are pure Statius. The Ithacan is of course Ulysses, and the sense seems to be that Achilles, at that moment become a man, has quite visibly 'gained in stature': next to him even Ulysses now looks small.[65] Modern translators have decided that opaque *consumitur*, literally 'is consumed', hides a similar figure: the shield and spear seem to diminish in size relative to the growth spurt in Achilles's manhood. The figure remains difficult to translate, and Shackleton Bailey offers 'is devoured'. Yet a sense 'is worn away/destroyed', following from a common extended meaning of *consumo*, readily presents itself to the baffled reader. This sense was indeed understood by medieval readers and survives in a gloss to this verse preserved in a copy of this text from a popular medieval textbook, the *Liber Catonianus*. The gloss reads:

> vel consumitur una dictio sic quasi adnichilatur minoratur vel dicamus quia tantum valet.[66]
>
> Or *consumitur* a phrase as if to mean 'it is completely destroyed', 'it is made less', as we should say, because he is so powerful.

Even more revealingly, an anonymous prose paraphrase of the *Achilleid* which precedes the poem in some medieval school copies interprets *consumo* here as equivalent to *discutio*, 'to shatter', literally 'to shake apart':

> scuto accepto et hastam forti manu discutiens sui meminit et horruit pariter.[67]
>
> After taking up the shield and shattering the spear in his mighty hand, he remembered himself and bristled.

We need not argue that any medieval Irish reader knew this gloss or paraphrase specifically. They may be regarded simply as evidence that the interpretation of *consumitur* as 'destroy, shatter' was plausible to medieval readers. The interpretation would present itself especially to students coming to grips with Statius's diction.[68] With the medieval interpretations of *consumitur* in mind, it is clear how these verses from the *Achilleid*, which describe the action with which Achilles enters into his life as a warrior, supply the image of the youth who smashes his arms by waving them vigorously to and fro. This is the action probably intended by the Irish *bertaigid*, 'brandish, wave', presumably *forti manu*, in the depiction of Cú Chulainn's taking up of arms.[69] What is fascinating about this episode is the fact that the motif of the young hero who smashes his arms does not belong

65 I follow the translation in Shackleton Bailey, *Statius*, 3: 379, whose Latin text I quote throughout.
66 Clogan, *The Medieval Achilleid*, 110; for the nature of this text and the origin of the glosses and commentary, see below, 213–14.
67 Jeudy and Riou, 'L'*Achilléide*', 166; the earliest copies of this text are fourteenth-century Italian.
68 For Statius's idiosyncratic use of *consumo*, see Dewar, *Statius*, 69.
69 The author's choice of words may have been facilitated by *vibrare*, 'to brandish' used of Achilles waving his *thyrsus* like a sword at *Achilleid* 1.612; see *DIL* s.v. *bertaigid* for its use to gloss

to the story of Achilles as such, that is, his 'heroic biography'. On the contrary, the motif here is an invention of classroom exegesis and grammar: not 'look what Achilles does here', but 'what could *consumitur* possibly mean here?' Once *consumitur* is interpreted as 'is destroyed', new arms need to be supplied, hence the conclusion to the episode in the *Táin*, where the boy continues destroying shields and spears until, finally, Conchobar's own set survives the test of his precocious strength. If Statius has been an influence on the episode from the *Táin*, we can see that this influence is achieved via an intriguing progression from grammar to interpretation to writing literature. Interpretation has become story.

The humour of Achilles's disguise as a girl on Scyros is unarguably the most imitable feature of the *Achilleid*. The hero's exaggerated modesty is an extension of the joke, and, I believe, features in another *imitatio* of Achilles's boyhood in the *Macgnímrada*. This incident corresponds to the end of the day on which Achilles took up arms. Cú Chulainn has conducted a raid into the border country of Connacht and returned to Emain Macha in a frenzy, his chariot adorned with spoils and the heads of slain Connacht warriors. The boy flush from his first day of killing cries out:

> 'Tongu do dia toingte Ulaid mani étar fer do gleó frim-sa, ardáilfe fuil lim cach áein fil isin dún.'
> 'Mná ernochta ara chend!' ar Conchobar.
> Tothéit iarom bantrocht nEmna ara chend im Mugain mnaí Conchobair meic Nessa, 7 donnochtat a mbruinni friss.
> 'It é óic inso condricfat frit indiu' or Mugain.
> Foilgis-seom a gnúis. La sodain atnethat láith gaile Emna 7 focherdat i ndabaig n-úarusci. Maitti immi-seom in dabach hísin. In dabach aile dano in ro lád, fichis dornaib de. In tress dabach i ndeochaid iar sudiu, fosngert-side combo chuimsi dó a tess 7 a fuacht. Dotháet ass íarom 7 dobeir ind rígan íar sudiu .i. Mugain, bratt ngorm n-imbi 7 delg n-argit n-and 7 léne chulpatach. Ocus suidid fo glún Conchobair íarom. (TBC-1, 808–20)
>
> 'I swear by the gods the Ulaid swear by, unless a man is found to fight me, I will spill the blood of everyone in the fort.'
> 'Send forth naked women to meet him!' said Conchobar.
> The woman-troop of Emain went out to meet him led by Mugain, Conchobar's wife, and they bared their breasts to him.
> 'These are the warriors you face today' said Mugain.
> He hid his face. Then the warriors of Emain seized him and threw him into a tub of cold water. That tub burst around him. The second tub into which he was thrown boiled as high as his hands. The third tub into which he went after that he warmed so that its heat and its cold were properly adjusted for him. Then he came out and the queen Mugain put on him a blue mantle with a silver brooch on it, and a hooded tunic. And then he sat at Conchobar's knee.

With female authority in the boy's life thus reasserted, Cú Chulainn is officially accepted into Conchobar's household.

To my knowledge, the analogue with the *Achilleid* has not been commented upon. The episode in question in the poem relates, again, the efforts of Achilles's mother Thetis to dominate her son. Thetis has brought Achilles to the island Scyros but is having difficulty controlling the natural exhuberance of the boy,

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vibrare in the Milan Glosses. TBC-2, 935–6 describes Cú Chulainn's action with even greater vividness, dispelling the slight ambiguity in the earlier recension.

who is described as 'effrenae tumidum velut igne iuventae . . . equum' ('like a horse . . . swollen with the fire of unbridled youth') (*Achilleid* 1.277–8). To trick him into dressing as a girl, Thetis brings him to view the island's girls gathered to celebrate a festival in honour of Pallas Athene. The procession is led by the beautiful Deidamia. The effect on Achilles of the sight of the maidens, and especially their leader, is remarkable:

> virginitas matura toris annique tumentes . . .
> atque ipsi par forma deae est, si pectoris angues
> ponat et exempta pacetur casside vultus.
> hanc ubi ducentem longe socia agmina vidit,
> trux puer et nullo temeratus pectora motu
> deriguit totisque novum bibit ossibus ignem . . .
> eat atque ultro ferus hospita sacra
> disiciat turbae securus et immemor aevi,
> ni pudor et iunctae teneat reverentia matris. (*Achilleid* 1.292–312)

> [The girls'] maidenhood and their burgeoning years were ripe for the marriage bed . . . and her [Deidamia's] form was equal to the goddess's [Athene's] own, if she should put aside her bosom's snakes and pacify her appearance by taking off her helmet. When he saw her leading her attendant column from afar, the fierce boy, whose breast no stirring had ever darkened, stiffened, and he drank a novel flame in his bones . . . and he would go and wildly disrupt the rituals of his hosts, heedless of the crowd and thoughtless of his youth, did not bashfulness and reverence for his mother beside him hold him back.

Statius continues by describing, in an extended and elaborate heroic simile, Achilles's extremely red face, for which he uses the word *flamma*, 'flame'. A mother knows her son, and Thetis tells Achilles that he can go to play with Deidamia if he just pretends to be a girl. While the boy is stunned with the grandeur of this proposal, Thetis seizes him and puts a dress on him. We are also told she manages to comb his hair. In this disguise, Achilles is allowed to join the maidens and become a member of Lycomedes's household on Scyros.

The parallel of Achilles's experience on Scyros with the episode of the woman-troop of Emain, two heroes tamed into submission by their encounter with a troop of buxom females, is clear. At this level it is a general parallel, and there is no proof that the Irish text alludes to the Latin. However, attention must be paid, again, to Statius's diction. Statius ingeniously expresses the effect that Deidamia's beauty has on Achilles by comparing her to Pallas Athene. It is a humorous comparison, as Athene, in effect a war goddess in epic, is not conventionally praised for feminine beauty. Statius notes in the verses quoted above that Athene herself could live up to the comparison with Deidamia only if she should, first, take off her helmet, and, secondly, put aside the 'pectoris angues' ('her bosom's snakes'). This phrase is Statius's evocative poeticism for the aegis, Athene's breastplate with the image of the head of the Gorgon, on which snakes have taken the place of hair. The classical story of the Gorgon and the aegis was not obscure. In Ireland it could have been read in Servius's commentary to the *Aeneid*, in a note on Aeneas's encouner with the Gorgons at the entrance to the underworld:

> Serenus tamen dicit poeta puellas fuisse unius pulchritudinis, quas cum vidissent adulescentes, stupore torpebant. (at *Aeneid* 6.289)

> The poet Serenus, however, says that they were maidens of singular beauty, and that when young men saw them, they became numb with amazement.

The content of this scholium has been reworked by Servius Danielis, and connected with absolutely no ambiguity to Athene's aegis:

> *hae autem mirae pulchritudinis fuisse dicuntur, et quisquis eas vidisset stupore defigebatur . . . Minerva . . . eius caput dicitur amputasse et suo adfixisse pectori, eique tribuisse vim, ut quidquid vidisset mutaret in saxum.* (at *Aeneid* 2.616)
>
> These [sc. Gorgons] are said to have been of wondrous beauty, and whoever saw them became motionless with amazement . . . Minerva [Athene] . . . is said to have cut off her [Medusa's] head and to have fixed it to her chest, and to have given it the power that whatever saw it would turn to stone.

With this wealth of available commentary, there is no need to believe that an Irish reader would have missed the humour of Statius's comparison of Deidamia's effect on young Achilles with that of the Medusa or Athene on both mature warriors and, as specified by Servius, 'adolescents'. That is, either to incapacitate them with terror, or turn them to stone.[70]

The phrase that Statius chooses to describe Athene's breastplate, 'pectoris angues' ('her bosom's snakes'), is characteristically Statian. It is characteristic because the snakes do not belong to Athene's chest *per se*, but to the image of the Gorgon on the breastplate which protects her chest. Statius delights in this kind of linguistic slight of hand. At any rate, it takes no great feat of imagination to see the secondary image which presents itself in the phrase 'bosom's snakes'. Nor does it require unusual acumen to see the humour in connecting these bosom's snakes, implicit in Statius's choice of words, with the ability of their owner to put young men into a *stupor*. This is precisely the stultifying effect which Deidamia has on Achilles. There is also a racy echo of the troop of maidens as a whole described as being of 'anni tumentes' ('of burgeoning years'). What is most important to note is that the attention drawn to a beautiful woman's chest in the phrase 'pectoris angues' is not a feature of the story as story. Put another way, there is no motif explicitly involving a woman's naked chest. Rather, the figure belongs to Statius's facility with compressed diction, and to his artful choice to emphasise Deidamia's beauty with this irreverent comparison to Athene and the Gorgon.[71] It is this playful juxtaposition of the petrifying qualities of breasts with the traditional Gorgon motif which is echoed in the achievement of the women-troop of Emain of putting Cú Chulainn into a stunned inactivity by exposing to him, specifically, their bared chests. As in the case of Cú Chulainn's experience with his first spear and shield, an extremely visual incident is generated from classroom exegesis of difficult Latin. Even the original martial connotation of Statius's image, owing as it does to Athene's famous wearing of the aegis in

[70] See also Servius at *Aeneid* 8.435; the allusion to the Gorgon might also have been detected in Statius's diction, as his verb to describe Achilles's reaction to Deidamia, *diriguit* (interchangeable with *derig-*), is used also by Ovid, in the same metrical position, to describe the Gorgon's effect on Phineus: 'tum quoque conanti sua uertere lumina ceruix / deriguit' (*Metamorphoses* 5.232–3); from Ovid *deriguit* is picked up in the resumé of this episode in the *Narrationes Fabularum Ovidianarum* and from there is repeated in the First Vatican Mythographer ('Fabula Persei', 1.72); Zorzetti, *Le premier*, 44.

[71] The phrase *pectoris angues* is used again of Athene at *Thebaid* 8.518, but in this instance without the humorous overtones.

battle, is echoed in Mugain's boast to Cú Chulainn: 'it é óic inso condricfat frit indiu' ('these are the warriors who face you today').[72]

One of MacDonald's criteria for distinguishing between coincidence and literary allusion not yet considered is narrative order. That is, if a series of parallels to a possible model text, each of which might individually be considered coincidental, occur in the same order in both texts, then these are less likely to be coincidences. The conclusion to the *Macgnímrada* provides an interesting test case of this principle. The danger that Cú Chulainn will kill everyone in Emain Macha is avoided when he is seized and thrown into successive vats of cold water, 'i ndabaig n-úarusci', as quoted above. Statius had described how the young Achilles, if not stopped, would disrupt the religious rituals in his ardour, or, as Statius expresses it in the verse also quoted above, his *ignis*, 'fire'. There is an orthographic ambiguity in the verse in which Thetis manages to put out her son's fire:

> aspicit ambiguum genetrix cogique volentem
> iniecit que sinus. (*Achilleid* 1.325–6)
>
> She saw him hesitant and compelled him, though he was willing, and threw a dress on him.

This last phrase is literally 'threw folds over him'. *Sinus*, 'fold', is the key word. *Sĭnus* in the plural can be used for any article of clothing in Latin, an extention of its more obvious use as a synecdochal figure for the Roman toga. *Sĭnus*, however, is orthographically indistinguishable from *sīnus*. *Sīnus* is rare. The sole occurrence of the word in Virgil is *Eclogue* 7.33. The word is deemed worthy of a note of explanation by Servius:

> SINVM LACTIS sinus genus est vasis: quod cum significamus, 'si' producitur; cum vero gremium significamus, 'si' corripimus.
>
> SINVM LACTIS a *sinus* is a kind of vessel: when we mean 'vessel', *si* is pronounced long; when, however, we mean 'lap [i.e. fold]', we pronounce *si* short.

The ambiguity in the verse by Statius is that accusative plural *sĭnus*, 'folds', could, orthographically, be taken as accusative plural *sīnus*, 'vessels', provided that the latter is taken as a fourth declension noun like *sĭnus* itself. The recognition of the ambiguity invites the reader, especially a medieval scholar whose interest is the Latin lexicon, to attempt an interpretation of the verse which would find a 'vessel' in 'iniecitque sinus'. 'She throws vessels (over him)' fails to convince, not for grammatical reasons, but because it does not provide a credible visual of what might be meant. Pushing the grammar a little further, 'iniecitque sinus' might be understood as 'iecitque in sinus' or, perhaps, 'in iecitque sinus' with hyperbaton, and translated 'and she throws him into vessels'. One can speculate whether there could have been a corrupt text, or even if the verse was simply

[72] This episode of the *bantrocht nEmna* is examined as a somewhat more serious reflection of anxiety over the effect of female sexuality on warriors in Carey, 'The encounter'; I consider my argument here to be complementary to Carey's; see also the discussion of the episode including reference to Caesar's *pectore nudo*, 'with naked breast' (*Gal*. 7.47), used of the women of Gaulish Gergovium, in Henry, *Saoithiúlacht*, 28–39; for completeness's sake, it can be added that *pectore nudo* is formulaic in Latin hexameter poetry, used in a variety of situations of both men and women; of special note is Statius, *Thebaid* 7.481, of Jocasta, and the effect at 485–6 and 528–33.

remembered in a garbled form. Yet this interpretation is not a grammatical statement, but the extraction of a credible visual from a difficult Latin verse. The passage read in this sense, on first consideration, seems even more natural than that intended by Statius. It would make sense for Thetis to bathe Achilles, in vessels presumably containing water, as the first step in creating a disguise that he is a girl. Self-evidently, this would also contend with the boy's *ignis*.

It is not suggested here that any reader ever proposed in earnest that Statius meant to depict anyone's immersion in vessels of water. This interpretation is not a translation, but a grammarian's play on the visuals suggested by Statius's mannered diction. Above all, there is the scholar's interest in displaying knowledge of the more obscure corners of the Latin lexicon. A picture of how a youth is thrown into 'vessels' in order to extinguish his 'fire' displays that the interpreter knows the rare Virgilian word *sīnus*. However, there is no story in Statius of Achilles being thrown into vats of water, that is, no motif. The episode of Cú Chulainn's immersions in the vats of water, if this interpretation is valid, is not an allusion to Statius's story, but to the classroom exegesis that would have grappled with the poet's diction. As in the example of Statius's obscure description of Achilles's taking up of arms, which in medieval interpretations was interpreted with a clear, non-obscure visual, here grammatical ingenuity again provides a visual in place of what, in Statius, is primarily verbal.

I mentioned that this example is particularly illustrative of the dilemma of distinguishing between literary allusion and coincidence. Here, the *Macgnímrada*'s echo of the ambiguous *sinus* could be dismissed as irrelevant were it not in sequence with the earlier allusion. That is, Statius's 'image' of the blushing boy thrown into vessels of water is the conclusion to the episode in which he is first stopped dead in his tracks by a troop of buxom females. It is equally relevant that the original lexical ambiguity in Statius is commented upon so copiously by Servius, who is the *grammaticus* who clarified for the Middle Ages what of Latinity one needs to know to interpret the Latin poets.[73] With Servius actually being quite useful here, it is no surprise that the *imitatio* in this episode does not suggest that the correct interpretation of *sinus* was missed. Mugain clothes Cú Chulainn in finery, as Thetis clothes Achilles, and cleaned-up versions of both boys are accepted into their new positions. Both senses, therefore, the correct and the fanciful, have been incorporated into the author's *imitatio*. John Carey examines the story of Cú Chulainn and the tubs of water from the point of view of whether it could be a traditional tale, and concludes that the version of the story from *Serglige Con Culainn* has been adapted from the written account from the *Macgnímrada*.[74] We can presume that the latter, therefore, was the original account. Accordingly, we do not have to insist that we are looking at a motif that was originally associated with Cú Chulainn in a variety of contexts and sequences: its original occurrence was probably here at the close to the

[73] The version of the scholium from the Filargirian commentary lacks the explanation of the metrical distinction between the two words, but has acquired a gloss in Old Irish: 'SINVM LACTIS .i. genus vasis .i. bomilge'; Lambert, 'Les gloses', 105; the Irish gloss translates *lactis*, not *sinus*, but in doing so clarifies the kind of *vas* in question.

[74] Carey, 'The uses'; another occurrence of the motif from the tale *Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemni*, edited by Kimpton, *The Death*, 11, specifies that this strategem of stopping Cú Chulainn was first used in the *Macgnímrada*; verbal parallels confirm that this version is also a literary allusion.

Macgnímrada. Here, I would argue, the sequence points to the Statian model.[75] The only lingering impediment to seeing the influence of this wordplay on *sinus* in the Irish text is that Irish *dabach*, 'tub or vat', denotes a vessel which would appear to be larger than that suggested by *sīnus*. In this case, it is up to the literary critic to judge whether our notions of the relative size of a *dabach* and a *sinus* are adequate to dismiss the coincidence of the wordplay and the sequence of visuals shared between the two texts.

As a closing note on the phenomenon of the boy warrior, the passages discussed in the preceding pages should be considered in tandem with the running joke shared throughout the *Táin* and the *Achilleid*, that of the hero too young to grow a beard. In the episode entitled *Aided Lóich meic Mo Femis*, 'The Death of Lóch Mac Mo Femis', the Connacht warrior Lóch will not fight Cú Chulainn because he does not have a beard. The Connacht women tell him that he will have to make a fake beard of black berries before Lóch will fight him (TBC-1, 1898–903).[76] Achilles's own lingering beardless condition is made explicit early in Statius's poem: 'necdum prima nova lanugine vertitur aetas' ('his first youth is not yet changing with new down') (*Achilleid* 1.163). Statius appears to have practiced his comic portrayal of young Achilles in the much more tragic character of Parthenopaeus, one of the Seven against Thebes in the *Thebaid*. Parthenopaeus is probably the most examplary and pathetic of the *ephebi*, 'boy warriors', of Latin epic.[77] The boy's name can be taken to mean either 'boy-girl' (Partheno-pai-os) or 'maiden-face' (Parthen-op-aios).[78] Like Achilles, Parthenopaeus is too young to grow a beard, and like Cú Chulainn he meets reluctance on the part of older men to fight him.[79] In the case of imagery of boy warriors, both comic and pathetic, some obvious motifs, such as beardlessness, are bound to recur independently in different places and times. The density and quality of this imagery in Statius and in the *Táin*, however, strike me as out of the ordinary. The portrayal of young David in 1 Samuel, for example, has nothing to compare.

In the absence of the criteria for *imitatio* which have been explored in this chapter, including flags, interpretability and sequence, it is probably most useful just to note that the motif of beardlessness occurred in classical texts familiar to the reading audience shared with the *Táin*. We can recall that the *Achilleid* was closely consulted also by the authors of *Togail Troí*. The topos of the youthful warrior recurs in Dares's *De Excidio*, where it is Troilus who is described as 'minimus natu non minus fortis quam Hector' ('youngest in age, no less mighty than Hector') (7). The humiliation of facing defeat before a youth is not lost on the Greeks in the Irish version: 'mebol leis dano in moethgilla amulach doná roás finna nó ulcha do beith ic cummai 7 oc letrad trénfer íarthair in betha' ('He [Achilles] thought it sad that the tender youth, whose hair or beard had not grown, was hacking and tearing apart the mighty men of the western world')

75 The prominence of Thetis in the Statian model probably explains the awkwardness regarding Conchobar's wife in this episode, called Mugain in Recension 1, glossed 'Ferach', but altered to 'Scandlach' (Scandalous) in Recension 2; a character analogous with Thetis was required, but her identity could be fluid as there was no traditional story behind the episode.

76 The episode is concluded in the hand of the H-revisor, where Cú Chulainn settles on wearing a beard made of grass.

77 See Sanna, 'Dust'; and Vessey, *Statius*, 285, 298, for Virgil's introduction of the type to epic.

78 Hardie, *The Epic Successors*, 48.

79 See *Thebaid* 9.699–703, 9.782–3; on the latter Lactantius Placidus comments: 'non dignus ira hostis, contemptibilis'; on admirers, see also below, 221.

(H 1528–9).[80] The early transference of this portrait of a youthful Troilus to the Irish heroic corpus in *Togail Troí* raises the possibility of not just imitation, but *aemulatio*. That is to say, the authors responsible for the surviving portrait of Cú Chulainn had not just classical models, but a vernacular text with which to compete. In this regard, it may be relevant that the poem *Clann ollaman uaisle Emna* explicitly equates Cú Chulainn not with Achilles, as expected, but with Troilus.[81]

The Watchman Device, the Epic Catalogue and Toichim na mBuiden

The 'watchman device' is the name given by James Carney to a narrative technique of frequent occurrence in Irish saga in which a character observes an approaching warrior or a group of warriors, and relates a detailed description of what he or she has seen to a second person.[82] Generally, the second person identifies the people seen from the verbal descriptions. The watchman device holds a special place in the history of discussions of classical influence in Irish saga. Carney, following the suggestion of Myles Dillon, argued that the technique derived from the *teichoskopia*, 'observation from the wall', or teichoscopy, of *Iliad* 3. In this book, Priam, from a point of observation atop Troy's walls, describes the Greek warriors he sees before the city, and Helen in turn identifies each. Carney argued that the Homeric technique could have been learned indirectly through the 'mixed' Christian Latin culture of medieval Ireland; he supported this claim with reference to parallels from Statius's *Thebaid* and the ninth-century Notker Balbulus's *De Carolo Magno*, among other texts. Patrick Sims-Williams disputed the relevance of Carney's Latin parallels and argued that the device was a technique of international storytelling, witnessed independently in a variety of texts from Persia to Scandinavia.[83] Although Sims-Williams's discussion was intended to prove that Carney's argument for Homeric influence was inconclusive, neither critic discussed the occurrence of the watchman device in *Togail Troí*. The omission is interesting, given that it is in *Togail Troí* that the narrative told also in the *Iliad*, with the same characters, is reproduced.

The erroneous watchman device

Probably the best known instance of the watchman device comes in a pivotal narrative moment in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, the episode entitled *Toichim na mBuiden*, 'The March of the Companies'.[84] Thurneysen judged that the episode belonged to a late stratum, probably the eleventh century, though it could have existed prior to this as an independent piece.[85] Following a campaigning season in which Cú Chulainn singly faced the invading Connacht army, the Ulaid have finally begun

[80] See also Dares 12; H 1495–7.
[81] See further Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles', for the historical typology between these two figures.
[82] See Carney, *Studies*, 305–21, especially for the numerous parallels from Latin texts which Carney identifies, of which I discuss here only the *Thebaid*.
[83] Sims-Williams, 'Riddling'.
[84] The title is found only in Recension 1, though in the following paragraphs I discuss the version of the episode from Recension 2. Portions of the argument in the following pages appeared in Miles, 'The literary set piece'.
[85] Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 106–7.

to rise from their debility. The Connacht king Ailill sends his messenger Mac Roth to survey the plain of Meath. Mac Roth returns with a description of various supernatural phenomena he has seen on the plain, which, as Fergus proceeds to explicate, are in fact the advancing companies of the Ulaid:

> Tánic Mac Roth reime d'ḟarcsi maigi mórḟarsiṅg Mide. Nírbo chían do Mac Roth dá mbáe and co cúala inní, in fúaim 7 in fothrom, in sestán 7 in sésilbi. Nír ṡúail ní risbud ṡamalta leiss acht marbad hí in ḟirmimint dothuitted bar dunegnúis in talman . . . ná marbad hí ind ḟidbad ra thuitted cách díb i ṅglaccaib 7 gablaib 7 géscaib araile . . .
> 'Cid and sút, a Ḟerguis?' bar Ailill.
> 'Ní handsa,' bar Fergus. 'Is é fúaim 7 fothromm 7 fidréan atchúala-som,' bar Fergus, 'toirm 7 torand, sestainib 7 sésilbi, at Ulaid barḟópartatar in fid, imdroṅg na curad 7 na cathmíled ac slaide ind ḟeda cona claidbib rena carpdib . . .' (TBC-2, 4166–81)
>
> Mac Roth came forward to look over the great plain of Meath. Mac Roth was not long there when he heard something, a noise and a tumult, a clatter and a clamour. He could not liken it to anything trifling, but that the firmament fell over the face of the earth . . . or that the [trees of the] forest fell into each other's forks and branches and shoots . . .
> 'What was that, Fergus?' asked Ailill.
> 'Not difficult,' said Fergus. 'The noise and the tumult and the rustle that he heard, the din and the thunder, the clatter and the clamour, are Ulstermen who were attacking the wood, the throng of champions and warriors cutting down the wood with their swords before their chariots . . .'

Mac Roth goes a second time to the plain of Meath and returns with a second series of illusions, which are again explicated by Fergus, in this case with greater attention to the visual details of the perceived phenomena.

P. L. Henry suggested that the 'rhetorical device of alternative explanations' on display in this passage was an Irish descriptive technique, the influence of which could be detected in the Old English *Finnsburg*-fragment.[86] Patrick Sims-Williams, who referred to the technique as the 'alternatives device', collected examples from various European and Asian sources, and suggested that it belonged to the world of international storytelling; the highly visual version of the technique in the Irish examples, which Sims-Williams thought untypical of the international variants, showed the additional influence of the genre of riddles.[87] In Irish texts, the alternatives device always occurs embedded in the framework of a watchman device, which, when it incorporates an alternatives device, Sims-Williams terms the 'erroneous watchman device'.[88] Although interest in examining Carney's claim for Homeric origins for the erroneous watchman device lies behind Henry's and Sims-Williams's discussions, neither discussed the possibility that the alternatives device itself may have been, in origin, literary. Yet Statius's *Thebaid* provides a striking analogue to the alternatives device in the *Táin*. In the episode in question, the Greek army, gathered around Polynices and King Adrastus of Argos, has delayed at Nemea on their expedition against Thebes. Jupiter sends Mars in order to rouse the Greeks from their inactivity.

86 Henry, *The Early English*, 216–21.
87 Sims-Williams, 'Is it fog'; and 'Riddling'.
88 Sims-Williams, 'Riddling', 97.

Mars, in turn, sets on the Greeks his companion Panic (*Pavor*), whose accustomed illusions on the field of battle are recounted:

> inde unum dira comitum de plebe Pavorem
> quadripedes anteire iubet: non alter anhelos
> insinuare metus animumque avertere veris
> aptior. innumerae monstro vocesque manusque
> et facies quacumque velit; bonus omnia credi
> auctor et horrificis lymphare incursibus urbes. (*Thebaid* 7.108–13)[89]
>
> Then he [Mars] orders Panic, one of his dire company of companions, to go before his steeds: there is none more adept at instilling panting fears and turning the mind from reality. The monster has countless voices and hands and whatever face he desires; he knows well how to make all things credible and drive cities crazy with his terrifying onslaughts.

Panic then manipulates natural phenomena on the plain before the Greek army at Nemea to create the illusion that they are being approached by a threatening host. The Greeks believe, erroneously, that the Thebans are marching against them in a surprise attack.

It is easy to see the general similarity between the episode on the plain before Nemea from the *Thebaid* and that on the plain of Meath from *Toichim na mBuiden*. One could argue that *Toichim na mBuiden* and the *Thebaid* record variants of a universal topos, with no necessary literary relation between the two. This view can be modified upon a more minute examination of Panic's illusions and the parallel sequences of images from Mac Roth's vision, with Fergus's interpretations of what he has seen, as set out in the following two columns. Statius's text is reproduced in full, and the opening sequence of Mac Roth's vision (1–4) is given without alteration in the second column. As the ensuing exchanges between Mac Roth, Ailill and Fergus are much more overwrought than the straightforward narrative in the *Thebaid*, the presentation of the remainder of the device has been simplified, with only images parallel to those of Panic reproduced. To facilitate comparison, illusions not derived from Statius are enclosed in square brackets:

Thebaid 7.114–24	TBC-2, 4168–220
1. si geminos soles ruituraque suadeat astra, / 'if he [Panic] should persuade that there are two suns, or that the stars/heavens are about to fall',	Nír ṡúail ní riṡbud ṡamalta leiss acht marbad hí in ḟirmimint dothuitted bar dunegnúis in talman, [ná marbad hí ind ḟairrge eithrech ochargorm tísad for tulmoiṅg in bethad,] 'he could not liken it to anything trifling, but that the firmament fell over the face of the earth, [or that the finny, blue-bordered sea came over the surface of the world,]'

[89] Hill prints the variant *animoque avertere vires* in his edition, but I suspect that the author of *Toichim na mBuiden* knew a text like that printed by Shackleton Bailey.

2. aut nutare solum 'or that the earth trembles'	ná marbad é in talam barrálad assa thalamchumscugud, 'or that the earth was thrown in an earthquake',
3. aut veteres descendere silvas, / 'or that the ancient forests are coming down',	ná marbad hí ind ḟidbad ra thuitted cách díb i ṅglaccaib 7 gablaib 7 géscaib araile. 'or that the forest fell into each other's forks and branches and shoots'.
4. a! miseri vidisse putant. 'ah! the poor ones think they have seen it.'	[Cid trá acht barrafnit na fíadmíla barsin mag connárbo réil tulmoṅga maige Mide fóthib.] '[However the wild animals were hunted across the plain so that the surface of the plain of Meath was not visible beneath them.]'
5. tunc acre novabat / ingenium: 'Then he renewed and sharpened his invention:'	Fecht n-aill forréccaig Mac Roth in mag. 'For a second time Mac Roth beheld the plain'.
6. falso Nemeaeum pulvere campum / erigit; attoniti tenebrosam a vertice nubem / respexere duces; 'he makes the plain of Nemea to rise through a false dust; the leaders gazed, astounded, at the dark cloud above their heads;'	Is é glascheó mór atchondaic-sium ra erc in comás eter nem 7 talmain imthinnsaitin anála na n-ech 7 na curad . . . Batar íat indsi ás lochaib atchonnaic-sium and . . . cind na curad 'the grey mist he saw which filled the space between heaven and earth was the streaming forth of the breaths of the horses and the heroes . . . the islands in lakes he saw there . . . were the heads of the heroes'
7. falso clamore tumultum / auget, 'with false din he increases the tumult',	
8. et arma virum pulsusque imitatur equorum, / 'and creates the likeness of men's arms and the galloping of horses',	Batar íat línanarta . . . atchondairc-sium and . . . in t-úanbach 7 in chubrach curit glomraigi na srían a bélbaigib na n-ech 'the linen cloths . . . he saw there . . . were the foam and the froth which was thrown from the bridle-bits of the reins from the mouth-pieces of the horses'
9. terribilemque vagas ululatum spargit in auras. / exsiluere animi, dubiumque in murmure vulgus / pendet: 'and casts a fearsome yell upon the wandering winds. Their spirits leaped and the multitude hangs doubtful and murmuring:'	
10. 'ubi iste fragor? ni fallimur aure. '"where is this noise? – unless our ears deceive us. '	Is é in fúaim 7 fothramm . . . atchúala-som and, scellgur na scíath 'the noise and the tumult . . . which he heard there was the clashing of the shields'

11. sed unde / pulvereo stant astra globo?' 'But for what reason do the stars appear in a ball of dust?"'	Ba hé ilbrechtnugud rétland . . . rotafárfáid-sium and ná haíble tened trichemrúaid, súli cichurda adúathmara na curad 'the variegation of stars . . . which appeared to him there, or the sparks of red-blazing fire . . . were the fearsome, awful eyes of the heroes'

In this analysis it is necessary to suspend the view that the Irish text represents the performance of an oral storyteller, and read the passage as a written text pure and simple. In this view, the order of elements is determined, at least to some extent, by the author's immediate written models. If the author has drawn on the model of the *Thebaid*, the proof is not the irrefutable identity of each individual parallel, but the cumulative force of a succession of shared images. Panic's favourite illusions, items 1 through 3, are reproduced in the *Táin* in the same order of their occurrence in the *Thebaid*. The coincidence of this sequence alone is adequate to suggest that the *Thebaid* is the ultimate literary model. However, the parallels continue as Panic 'renews and sharpens his invention' (5), creating a new series of illusions to terrify the Greeks. In the corresponding sequence from the Irish text, Mac Roth renews his observation of the plain of Meath and returns with his own fresh sequence of further phenomena, the *fecht n-aill* (5–11). The second column above reproduces the version of this second series from Fergus's explications, rather than from Mac Roth's first-person narrative, as the parallels with the *Thebaid* are evident sometimes in the illusions, other times in the explications. To be precise, Panic's creation of galloping horses recurs as Fergus's explication of the corresponding illusion in the *Táin* (8), Panic's crashing *fragor* is Fergus's identification of the tumult of the approaching army (10), and Panic's enveloping of the stars in dust recurs as Fergus's explanation that the 'variegation of stars' which Mac Roth saw were the burning eyes of the Ulstermen (11).

The episode of Panic's illusions on the plain before Corinth does not occur in the narrative frame of a watchman device, as in the Irish texts. But here, as in the discussion of the *imitatio* of the *Achilleid*, it is not only the narrative frame which is in question, but a literary imitator's encounter with the tangles of a specific Latin text. The author does show considerable freedom. Items 7 and 9 are not reproduced in the *Táin*. The Irish image of the wild animals chased across the plain (4) is probably a substitution and independent of the model, as the corresponding item in Statius is not an illusion, but Statius's own interpretive hint to his audience to aid them to follow the episode. As for where the author follows the model more closely, it is revealing to consider whether an image in the Irish betrays an effort to grapple with Statius's diction. For example, in illusion 2 Statius's 'astra' may be 'stars'. But the term in Latin means the 'heavenly bodies' including the sun, the moon and the constellations as a whole – English 'heavens' is closer to the semantic range of the word.[90] In this light, the Irish image of the falling *firmimint* for Statius's falling *astra* is not as loose as might seem on first consideration, and is probably truer to what Statius intended. The elaboration of this set piece in the *Táin*, where many illusions have no counterpart in the *Thebaid*, further suggests that we are not constrained to consider Mac Roth's

[90] See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig 1900–) s.v. *astrum* for the range of uses.

vision as the first imitation of the Latin model in Irish. Such a sequence could have developed from the model into a written set piece, to be modified according to the desire of the author to make a special display of rhetorical ingenuity.[91]

However, although Statius's episode of Panic's activities at Nemea has been wholly recast in the *Táin*, it is probable that the context of the original classical model has not been forgotten. In reference to Fergus's revelation that Mac Roth's vision is, in reality, the advancing Ulstermen, Ailill responds in exasperation:

> 'Maith a Ḟerguis', bar Ailill, 'cid latt-su ar ṁbúbthad-ni de smútgur ná do dendgur ná d'análfadaig mórṡlúaig mad gustráthsa acus ná fail latt lín catha dúnni acht sút?' (TBC-2, 4246–8)
>
> 'Great, Fergus' said Ailill, 'why did you frighten us with the cloud and the dust and the panting of a great army just now if you have no more to give us battle than that?'

This suggestion that Fergus has been trying to frighten Ailill flags the role of Panic in the Statian model, who parallels Fergus when he lets it out among the Greeks that the supernatural phenomena before them are the advancing army of the Thebans:

> '. . . num Ismenius ultro
> miles? ita est: veniunt. tanta autem audacia Thebis?' . . .
> haec Pavor attonitis. (*Thebaid* 7.124–6)
>
> 'Is it not the Theban army before us? So it is: they come. Are the Thebans so bold?' . . . Thus does Panic speak to their terror.

In fact the Thebans are not advancing, as Panic is merely spreading further terror as he now circulates among the anxious Greeks. Yet Fergus's announcement that the Ulstermen are approaching is factual in the corresponding sequence in the *Táin*, and the irony of Statius's 'ita est: veniunt' has been lost. Although Mac Roth sees the illusions on the plain of Meath, it is typical of the brilliance of the Irish adaptation that the fear-inducing office of Panic has been given to Fergus. This conflicted Ulsterman's desire to frighten Ailill and Medb would be consonant with his questionable loyalty throughout the *Táin*.

The arguments for the classical origin of the Irish alternatives device presented here have so far drawn on Recension 2 only. If Recension 2 is thought of as a rewriting of Recension 1, one would presume that, the Statian model for *Toichim na mBuiden* from Recension 2 having been demonstrated, the modeling would be apparent, of necessity, also in Recension 1.[92] Such is not the case. Of Mac Roth's first observation of the plain of Meath, Recension 1 has only the non-Statian image of the 'wild animals', item 4 in the second column above, which fill the

[91] The possibility of images in this episode being drawn from other literary models adds a layer of complexity which goes beyond this discussion, as it involves the question of eclecticism, discussed in Chapter 2; considering, for example, similes expressed in the form of visual and aural illusions in Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.703–5 and 6.586–92 have echoes in *Toichim na mBuiden*, but conscious allusion is difficult to prove; eclecticism is easier to prove when Latin is compared with Latin and many of the images Statius gives Panic are themselves clearly imitations assembled from various passages from Virgil; for example, the phrase *veteres descendere silvas* borrows from Dido's description of a witch's magic at *Aeneid* 4.491; see Smolenaars, *Statius*, 55–65 and the table of parallels at 400–1; for possible biblical sources for the alternatives device, see Sims-Williams, 'Riddling', 86.

[92] See Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden* , 113–17, for this view of the origin of Recension 2.

plain, and even that in a shorter form (TBC-1, 3553–7). This recension does have a second observation, the 'fecht n-aill', corresponding to Statius's 'acre nouabat ingenium', item 5. This, too, however, is much briefer than in Recension 2 (TBC-1, 3558–79). Of the original Statian imagery, Recension 1's version of the *fecht n-aill* retains only a 'tromcheó' ('heavy mist'), an 'ilbrechtrad' ('variegation'), and, possibly, 'in toirnech . . . 7 in breisimnech' ('the thunder . . . and the din'), corresponding to items 6, 11 and 10 respectively from Recension 2. Yet these meagre remains of the original Statian model are enough to make it certain that it is Recension 1 which presents the abbreviated version of the set piece preserved more fully in Recension 2.[93]

Discrepancies between Recensions 1 and 2 in this episode demonstrate the fluidity of the erroneous watchman device. The device was a set piece intended to display invention, and never a slavish copying from a received model. The fluidity is apparent also in the version of this set piece from *Togail Troí*. Dares gives a characteristically terse account of the landing of the Greek fleet on the beach at Troy and the commencement of the battle, disregarding any narrative description of the event: 'tota classis ad latitudinem accedit ad Troiae litora' ('The entire fleet, deployed in a wide formation, arrives at the shores of Troy') (19). The author of *Togail Troí* expands this with a long episode which describes how Priam sends a messenger to the shores of Troy, who returns and describes the Greek fleet he has seen on the water. The episode is transparently a version of the erroneous watchman set piece:

> Roíarfaig Priáim scéla do. IS ann dixit:
> 'Andar-lem ém amal rodercus', ar sé, 'domárfás tromchéo tiughaide 7 glasnél dub dorchaidhe forsind fairce, co roleth co níulu nime . . . Domárfás íarsin fogur gáeithe gére gailbighe: indar-lem noth[r]ascérad fidbada in betha, amal esnad mbrátha. Rochuala breisim thornige móre: andar-lem be hé in nem dorochair, no in muir rotráigh, no in talam roscáil i n-ilrannaib, no amal nothut[it]ís frosa rétland for dreich an talman.'
> 'Ali, ced eter sin?' ar Priaim.
> 'Ní anse', ar in techtaire. 'In glasnél tiugaide atconnarc úasin ler, it hé anála na curad 7 na lath ngaile rolínsat dreich na fairge . . .' (H 846–59)
>
> Priam asked him for tidings. Then he said:
> 'It seemed to me as I watched that there appeared to me a thick, heavy mist and a black, dark, grey cloud on the sea which spread to the clouds of heaven . . . There appeared after that the sound of a sharp, stormy wind: it seemed to me that it would lay low the forests of the earth, like the roar of Judgment Day. I heard the din of great thunder: it seemed to me that it was the heavens that fell, or the sea that ebbed, or the earth that broke into many parts, or that showers of stars fell onto the face of the earth.'
> 'Alas, what is that?'
> 'Not difficult,' said the messenger. 'The thick grey mist I saw over the sea, that is the breath of the heroes and the warriors which filled the surface of the sea . . .'

The alternatives device continues in this manner for two further phenomena, at which point Priam asks the messenger a second time: 'Cid aill atchonnarc?' ('What else did you see?') (H 876). The messenger continues with a more real-

[93] Sims-Williams, 'Is it fog', 508, n. 1, allowed that Recension 1 may have an abbreviated text here; see further Miles, 'The literary set piece', 76–7.

istic description of the sails and oars of the Greek fleet. This watchman device, therefore, preserves an outline of the structure seen in *Toichim na mBuiden*, based on the *Thebaid*, where the illusions are considered in two segments.[94] Beyond that, as in Recension 1, the device here shows an advanced state of development away from the Statian model. The terrestrial orientation has been exchanged in favour of a maritime. Effects in the alternatives device clearly recalling Panic's illusions 1–3 and 6 at least occur in *Togail Troí*, including the falling heavens, the earthquake, the collapsing forest and the heavy mist. The order of these, however, has been altered.

Without the comparandum in *Toichim na mBuiden*, no modern reader would suspect that this episode in *Togail Troí* had even a distant model in the *Thebaid*. With the high esteem for Statius in medieval Ireland evidenced throughout the *Táin* and *Togail Troí* itself, one wonders whether contemporary readers would have been more alert. As a marker of the special narrative moment when the Greeks finally arrive at Troy, this watchman device emends the obvious poverty of Dares's own failure to mark this turning point in his own narrative. This works in a manner analogous to the watchman device in *Toichim na mBuiden* in the *Táin*. The episode is also, arguably, the ekphrastic centerpiece of *Togail Troí*. As such, this watchman device is a part of the classicizing technique which can be detected throughout this text, and which was examined in Chapter 3. In this context, the original Statian model may have been recalled, not in terms of distinct motifs, but for the reason that, in the classical environment, there was no reason that the force of originally classicizing motifs would be forgotten.

Toichim na mBuiden for its own part suggests that the watchman device was felt to carry classical overtones, even there in a native context. Apart from the echoes of Panic discussed above, *Toichim na mBuiden* preserves a 'flag' which would draw attention to the classicizing tone of the episode. The climax to the erroneous watchman device in Recension 2 comes when Fergus warns Medb that she will not find in Ireland or in Alba a host to match the Ulstermen (TBC-2, 4226–7). In Recension 1, this topos is varied, with a radically different rhetorical effect:

> 'ní foigébthar i nnÉrind uile nach a n-iarthar domain, óthá Greciae 7 Sceithiae síar co hIndsi Orcc 7 co Colomna Hercoil 7 co Tor mBreogain 7 co hIndsi Gaid, nech foló Ultu foa mbruth 7 foa ferg', or Fergus. (TBC-1, 3581–4)
>
> 'Not in all Ireland nor in the western world, from Greece and Scythia westwards to the Orkney islands, to the Columns of Hercules, and to Tor Breogain and to the Islands of Gades, will be found anyone who can withstand the Ulstermen when they are in their ardour and their anger' said Fergus.

The geographical survey, especially one employing the phrase *óthá*, is a favourite construction in *Togail Troí*, and occurs, for example, in the Virgilian and Statian muster of Greece quoted in the previous chapter.[95] As in the *Táin*, a version of the geographical survey is the fitting rhetorical climax to this first part of the watchman device in *Togail Troí*:

94 In the second recension of *Togail Troí* in the Book of Leinster the first observation is explicitly called *in cétna fecht* (L 32182), though the phrase *fecht n-aill* lacks from both versions.

95 See above, 116; see also H 121–5, 130–3, 324–7, 613.

> ‘Bid garb an comhracsa condricfad fir Asía 7 Éorpa. Comraicfid anál ind Ethiopácdai frisin Tragecdai, co mbiat cend ar díb cendaib. Bid tnúthach ind imthúarcain dogénat na hailithir, in Persicda a haerthiur in betha 7 in Macedónda asa íarthar.’ (H 905–9)
>
> ‘Rough will be this conflict the men of Asia and Europe will fight. The breath of the Ethiopian will meet with the Thracian until they meet head to head. Furious will be the mutual striking the foreigners will cause, the Persian in the east of the world and the Macedonian from its west.’

The items in the run from Fergus’s speech, which include Greece and Scythia in their retained Latin spellings, flag the intertextual reference with the world of classical heroes who had already entered Irish tradition in *Togail Troí*. As with other cases where the *Táin* alludes to the world represented in *Togail Troí*, there may be an implicit *aemulatio*, the claim for the superiority of the heroes from the *Táin* to those of the classical text.[96]

The realistic watchman device and the epic catalogue of troops

In *Toichim na mBuiden*, following the description of the illusions he has seen, Mac Roth goes yet a third time to observe the warriors on the plain, comes back to Ailill and Fergus and ‘adfét scéla derba dóib’ (‘he gives them an accurate report’). This third segment, a descriptive catalogue of the Ulstermen, can be called the ‘realistic watchman device’. Mac Roth describes the appearance, clothing and arms of each troop and the warriors that lead them. As in the watchman’s preceding erroneous description, Ailill inquires as to the identity of each, and Fergus is again the respondent. For example, the first troop Mac Roth sees:

> ‘tánic buden bruthmar brígach mórchaín isin tulaig sin i Slemuin Mide . . . Óclach seta fata n-airard n-ardmín forúallach i n-airinuch na budni sin. Caíniu di flaithib in domuin ritacoemnacair eter a ślúagaib, eter urud 7 gráin 7 báig 7 chostud. Folt findbuide iss é cass dess drumnech tóbach faride. Cuindsiu cháem chorcarglan leis . . .’
>
> ‘Cia sút ale?’ bar Ailill ri Fergus. ‘Ratafetammar ám ale,’ bar Fergus. ‘Is hé cétna láech cétrachlass in fert fótbaig i n-urard na tulcha go toracht cách cuce Conchobor mac Ḟachtna Fáthaig meic Rosa Rúaid meic Rudraigi, ardrí Ulad . . .’
>
> (TBC-2, 4296–346)
>
> ‘A fierce, mighty, very handsome company came onto that hill in Slemain Mide . . . A warrior, slender, lanky, very tall and fine and very proud in the vanguard of that band. Finer than the princes of the world was he among his troops for dreadfulness and horror and boldness and restraint. Fair yellow hair he had, curled, well-arranged, wavy, cut short. His countenance was fair, ruddy and open . . .’
>
> ‘Who are those now?’ asked Ailill of Fergus. ‘We know them indeed’, said Fergus. ‘The first warrior, for whom the sodded mound was cast up on the top of the hill until they all came to him, was Conchobar son of Fachtna Fáthach son of Ross Rúad son of Rudrach, the high-king of Ulster . . .’

Even more than the erroneous watchman device which precedes it, the catalogue in the realistic watchman device from *Toichim na mBuiden* is the ekphrastic

[96] See further Chapter 5 for *Cathcharpat Serda*, a rhetorical text which preserves features of the erroneous watchman device and which may reflect the kind of text which stood intermediary between Statius and the *Táin* and *Togail Troí*.

centerpiece of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, occupying 480 lines of the printed edition of Recension 1, and 311 lines of Recension 2.

The catalogue of heroes is an obligatory feature of classical epic. By far the most famous example is the Catalogue of Ships from the second book of the *Iliad*, where Homer methodically enumerates the Greek fighters who have come to Troy, with the number of each company's ships. The *teichoskopia* from *Iliad* 3 is another, much shorter version of a catalogue, involving features of physical description. So conventional a feature as the catalogue could, of course, be varied greatly by individual authors without the distinctive epic flavour ever being lost. Even Dares mimics *Iliad* 2 with his own lists of the Greek and Trojan forces (*De Excidio* 14, 18). The topos of the catalogue is also recognizable in mock heroic, where it is parodied as early as Ovid. Unsurprisingly, Virgil has examples of his own. The question is, do these classical catalogues convincingly anticipate the extremely formal descriptive catalogue of *Toichim na mBuiden*? McLoughlin mentions in passing that the Irish author may have known Virgil's catalogue of the Italian forces, in which there are occasional notices of clothing and weapons (*Aeneid* 7.641–817).[97] To this one could add the second catalogue of Aeneas's Etruscan allies (*Aeneid* 10.163–214).[98] It is significant, however, that neither of Virgil's epic catalogues occurs in the watchman narrative frame, nor in a question-answer format, such as in the *Táin*.

It is Homer's *teichoskopia* itself which Carney posited as the ultimate source for the Irish watchman device. Although the Irish author could not have known the *teichoskopia* from the *Iliad* directly, Statius closely imitates the device in the *Thebaid* (7.227–374), a fact which has not escaped Carney's notice.[99] Statius's *teichoskopia*, therefore, is an obvious candidate for the indirect Homeric influence which the 'mixed culture' of medieval Ireland presented. However, it is unlikely that Statius's *teichoskopia*, with its typically overwrought elegance, is the sole model for the methodical role call of the stereotyped portraits of *Toichim na mBuiden*. If anything, the two texts are a study in contrasts. Sims-Williams observed that the structure of the device in Statius's version has been so obscured by the poet's elaboration that it was not a very serviceable model for medieval authors.[100] Statius's *teichoskopia* does pose a challenge for the reader, granted, but by no means a challenge more formidable than in any other stretch of his poem. Moreover, a serious medieval reader of Statius might have been able to avail himself of Lactantius Placidus's commentary on the *Thebaid*, where this passage is discussed. Lactantius not only clarifies the structure, but tells us that the device is Homeric:

> hanc oeconomiam transtulit iuxta Homerum, qui per inquisitionem narrationem catalogi inducit. hic per Antigonen ut illic per inquisitionem Priami et relationem Helenae. (at *Thebaid* 7.247–50)
>
> [Statius] has copied this arrangement according to Homer, who introduced his narration of the catalogue according to a scheme of questioning: here through Antigone, as there through Priam's questions and Helen's reports.

97 McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical', 153.

98 For the sake of noting ancient Celtic antecedents to *Toichim na mBuiden*, Virgil also has an ekphrastic portrait of the troops of Gauls who sacked Rome, inspired by Roman statuary but by no means unlike the ekphrases of the Irish text, carved onto Aeneas's shield, *Aeneid* 8.659–62.

99 Carney, *Studies*, 312.

100 Sims-Williams, 'Riddling', 87.

If the ekphrastic character of the device were lost in the *densa silva* of Statian elegance, it is spelled out in the prose paraphrase of Book 7 which precedes the verse by verse commentary:

> sequitur descriptio catalogi exercitus Thebanorum, interrogatio Antigones, responsio Phorbantis.
>
> A catalogic description of the army of the Theban troops follows, Antigone's questioning, Phorbas's responses.

Lactantius Placidus's summary of the device ignores the detail that the observation occurs from atop a city's walls, the element which the title modern scholarship gives to the device, *teichoskopia*, literally, 'wall-observation', would consider its defining characteristic. Instead, it is the question-answer format and the catalogue itself which are stressed, and, in the prose paraphrase, the catalogue's ekphrastic quality. The latter is made especially clear by the term *descriptio*, which a reader of Priscian would know is the Latin term for the Greek exercise of ekphrasis.[101] Thus, the commentary aids a reader to detect in Statius's *teichoskopia* those very characteristics which are shared with the watchman device of the Irish texts. The commentary in this case provides a welcome link, not just between Homer's version of the device and *Toichim na mBuiden*, but between the Irish text and Latin epic.[102] The latter is more immediately relevant to the Irish tradition than Homer in any case.

A feature of the watchman device not yet considered is the watchman himself. The watchman who goes apart to observe a foreign host, in effect a scout, has no obvious counterpart in the *teichoskopias* of Homer and Statius. One might judge that a story which depicts an army massing for the invasion of a city or province would naturally invite the invention of the figure, as reconnaissance belongs to the world of real warfare. However, the figure is not generic to the tale-type represented in the story of Troy; for example, there is no trace of a watchman on Troy's shores in Dares's *De Excidio*. The *Aeneid* has only an indistinct occurrence of the motif.[103] Yet possible secondary literary models for Mac Roth's role as the watchman in *Toichim na mBuiden* are not lacking. The *Ilias Latina* retains no trace of Homer's *teichoskopia*, but does reproduce Homer's narrative of how Zeus, to announce the arrival of the Greeks before a day's fighting at Troy, sends his divine messenger Iris to alert Priam.[104] Interestingly, in this Latin version, the Greeks, although in the tenth year of their siege, are depicted as if landing for the first time on the beach in their ships:

> Iamque citi appulerant classes camposque tenebant,
> cum pater ad Priamum mittit Saturnius Irim,
> quae doceat fortes venisse ad bella Pelasgos. (*Ilias Latina* 222–4)
>
> [The Greeks] had speedily brought their fleet to shore and were holding a beachhead, when the Saturnian father sent Iris to Priam to inform him that the mighty Pelasgi had come for war.

101 See above, 112.
102 For (late) evidence that Lactantius was read in medieval Ireland, see above, 85.
103 See below, n. 105; Ovid has the goddess Fama perform an office analogous to that of the watchman; see above, 67.
104 *Iliad* 2.786–801; for the *Ilias Latina*, see above, 107.

The *Thebaid* has an analogous episode, in which a messenger brings word of the first arrival of the Argives at Thebes. In this case, the Argives make a terrestrial advance, on foot:

> nuntius attonitas iamdudum Eteoclis ad aures
> explorata ferens longo docet agmine Graios
> ire duces . . .
> qui stirpe, qui nomine et armis. (*Thebaid* 7.227–31)
>
> A messenger meanwhile has reconnoitered and brought to Eteocles's stunned ears report that the Greek leaders are advancing in a long column . . . [he reports] who they are by lineage, name and arms.

Eteocles 'demands to be told', but the exchange is not recorded, nor any actual description of the Argive army. This passage, however, thematically introduces the *teichoskopia* between Antigone and Phorbas which follows only fifteen verses later, where lineage, names and arms will be given, in the question and answer format proper to the Homeric model. This thematic progression had been imitated directly from the sequence in *Iliad* 2 and 3, Iris's visit to Priam followed by Homer's own *teichoskopia*.[105] When regarded as the introduction to the descriptive catalogue of the Argives from the *teichoskopia*, Statius's few lines describing the activities of his own *nuntius* are a brief but convincing prefiguration of the realistic watchman device from *Toichim na mBuiden*.

What of the Trojan orientation of Homer's original *teichoskopia*? Lactantius Placidus made this explicit. As it happens, there is a connection to be made between the realistic watchman device of *Toichim na mBuiden* and the Trojan story world in Dares's *De Excidio*. The descriptions of warriors in *Toichim na mBuiden* have been discussed by McLoughlin and Swartz from the point of view of their adherence to the conventions of ekphrases of persons in the medieval *artes poetriae*.[106] It has been demonstrated, for example, that the description of persons in this catalogue, as elsewhere in Irish saga, stereotypically proceeds from the head downwards to the feet, the order prescribed in learned rhetoric, and which had become universal currency in European writing by the twelfth century.[107] This stereotyped portrait occurs at several points in Recension 1, including, in addition to *Toichim na mBuiden*, the portrait of Cormac's companies from the opening of the text, the ensuing description of the prophetess Fedelm, and the catalogue of Connacht assailants from *Caladgleó Cethirn*, 'The Hard Fight of Cethern'.[108]

As the broad agreement between the Irish practice of describing persons and the prescriptions of medieval rhetoricians has been demonstrated by McLoughlin and Swartz, the argument will not be repeated here. However, it is worth recalling that a key component in their arguments was that the Irish learned the techniques

[105] Smolenaars, *Statius*, 114–15; Smolenaars notes that Statius reintroduced the Homeric messenger-motif as an introduction to the sequence leading to the conventional *teichoskopia*, after it had been separated in Virgil's version of the messenger motif at *Aeneid* 11.447–50.

[106] McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical'; Swartz, 'Stylistic', especially 125–44.

[107] See above, 101; for the description of persons, the principal technique of *amplificatio* in the *artes poetriae*, see Faral, *Les arts*, 75–84.

[108] See Swartz, 'Stylistic', 246–62; see also 'The beautiful women'; Matasović, 'Descriptions', 98, judges that the order of description in Irish saga is in fact highly variable, and Swartz does draw attention to variation on the prescribed order; one is forced to admit that this instance of Irish adherence to learned prescription can be questioned, and the order, when followed, may be independent of learned rhetoric in any case.

of ekphrasis, directly or indirectly, from antique and late-antique models shared with the twelfth-century rhetoricians. Model authors who can be identified include Sidonius Apollinaris, Trebellius Pollio and Suetonius. As these authors were imitated already in Carolingian works such as Einhard's *Vita Caroli Magni*, it is undesirable to claim that the Irish developed their ekphrastic technique wholly in isolation from writers working in Francia, from whom the twelfth-century rhetoricians stand in a direct line of descent.[109] But while McLoughlin's and Swartz's arguments center on the models of good rhetoric provided by writers such as Sidonius, a complete discussion of rhetorical description in the Middle Ages, of necessity, would include the anti-stylist Dares Phrygius. Dares's contribution to techniques of description arise from the curious fact that he claims to have been an eyewitness to the Trojan War. Dares defends this claim by describing the physical appearance of the war's protagonists, as he saw them:

> Dares Phrygius, qui hanc historiam scripsit, ait se militasse usque dum Troia capta est, hos se vidisse . . . Priamum Troianorum regem vulto pulchro magnum voce suavi aquilino corpore. Hectorem blaesum candidum crispum strabum pernicibus membris vultu venerabili barbatum decentem bellicosum animo magno in civibus clementem dignum amore aptum. (12)
>
> Dares Phrygius, who wrote this history, says that he fought up to the point that Troy was captured, that he saw these men . . . The Trojan king Priam had a beautiful face, was tall, with a soft voice, an aquiline body. Hector lisped, had fair, curly hair, squinted, was agile of limb, had a venerable face, a becoming beard, was warlike, great-spirited, forgiving to fellow citizens, deserving of love.

The principal figures of both the Greek and Trojan armies are described in this telegraphic manner. The entire passage, consisting of Chapters 12–13 of the *De Excidio*, has been dubbed the Portrait Catalogue by modern critics. The plain asyndetic phrases represent Dares at his least literary. It is not surprising that the passage was replaced already in the 'common source' of the first and second recensions of *Togail Troí* by the ekphrastic tour-de-force of the muster of the Greeks derived from Virgil and Statius quoted in the preceding chapter.[110] In a work of history, however, Dares's style is not necessarily egregious, and draws on an established Greek historiographical tradition; in certain contexts this style is quite appropriate.[111]

Dares's Catalogue is mostly concerned with details of physical appearance, most of which, by the very predictability of human physiognomy, we have to accept will recur in otherwise unrelated written descriptions of persons. On the other hand, it is hard to resist the suspicion that Dares's description of Castor and Pollux had a direct echo in *Toichim na mBuiden*, in this case in Recension 1. Dares had never seen the famous twins, but he had heard them described: 'fuerunt autem alter alteri similis capillo flavo' ('for they were like one another, with yellow hair') (12). In *Toichim na mBuiden*, Fiachna and Fiacha, two sons of

109 See McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical', 184, where the influx into Ireland of foreign materials in the eleventh century is considered.

110 See above, 116.

111 See Meister's edition for the parallel from the Byzantine historian Malalas; the style recurs in an iconographic catalogue of Christ and the apostles written in the early days of the Irish chuch, probably an instructional document intended to facilitate preparation of images for the use of the young church; see Ó Cróinín, 'Cummianus'.

Conchobar, are described: 'dá óclóech cáema cosmaili díb línaib ina hairinach. Fuilt buidi foraib' ('two fair warriors, like to each other, in the lead. They had yellow hair') (TBC-1, 3761–2).[112] There is also a trace of Dares's description of Aeneas as 'rufus quadratus' ('red, square [chested?]'). Mac Roth's description of Cú Chulainn includes the phrase 'cetherlethan corcaineach' ('four-broad, ruddy-faced') (TBC-1, 3851). In this case, the opaqueness of *cetherlethan*, which the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* declines to translate and for which O'Rahilly suggests simple 'broad', suggests that it is a mechanical translation of *quadratus*.[113]

One would like more evidence than this that *Toichim na mBuiden* drew on Dares. As slight as the evidence is, however, its does indicate that the obvious model Dares offered for the formulaic description of heroes was not willfully rejected. Darean influence would be more credible if it came through the obvious intermediary, *Togail Troí*. Unfortunately, the question of the Portrait Catalogue in *Togail Troí* is complicated by formidable textual problems which have not yet been adequately examined. A translation of the Catalogue survives in the second (copies apart from the Book of Leinster) and the third recensions of *Togail Troí*. It occurs, not in its original narrative position corresponding to Dares 12–13, but inserted into passages corresponding to Dares 18, following the catalogue of Priam's allies. Even moved to this new position, the Catalogue oddly preserves Dares's own introduction: 'Atfet dono Dariet stairscribhnidh na Troianna eter cruth 7 delb 7 denum 7 aicned foirind do maith*ib* Gr*e*c 7 Troian*nach*' ('Now Dares, the historian of the Trojans, reported the shape, appearance, build and character of the companies of the Greek and Trojan nobles').[114] In light of the fact that the Portrait Catalogue in this position is in neither the first recension nor the early copy of the second in the Book of Leinster, it would be a fair assumption that it was not in this position in the 'common source'.

Given that the earliest strata in *Togail Troí* show that the first translation followed Dares fairly closely, one would expect that this Portrait Catalogue which survives was in the original translation. However, this version of the Catalogue could well be a late stratum, freshly translated from Dares well after the twelfth-century version of the second recension in the Book of Leinster was committed to parchment.[115] The result is that there is no evidence that this Catalogue was in eleventh-century versions of *Togail Troí*, when it might have served as a model for formative versions of *Toichim na mBuiden*. However, there is indirect evidence that the first recension, a text of the eleventh century, did have its own Catalogue. The long passage of the watchman device in this recension is followed by a shorter paragraph which relates that the Greeks, upon landing on the beach at Troy, are opposed by Hector, until Achilles arrives and routs the

112 McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical', 182–3, for this and the following example.

113 John Carey suggests to me that *cether-* here may be a misreading of minims in original *im-* (as .iiii.) in *im-lethan*, which is indeed used to describe Aeneas in surviving copies of the Portrait Catalogue in *Togail Troí*, for which, see the following; a connection with Dares's Portrait Catalogue is thus still suggested, however.

114 Version of D iv 2, fo. 35rb; if it had been in the Book of Leinster version, this would have been at L 32140, following *Tochastul Troian*.

115 The evidence of the language is inconclusive as to the date of the passage and discrepancies with Dares's version suggest at the very least that the passage has been adapted and possibly modernized.

Trojans. The text says that Priam again sent his messenger, *in fer cetna*, 'the same man', to survey the Greeks, now as they land the remainder of their men:

> dochúaidside 7 atchondairc rémend na mbuiden 7 na cath, cech cath 7 cech slúag immá ríg 7 immá tóisech, oc escomlód asa longaib. Atchúaid íarum do Priaim cruth 7 delb 7 écosc cach ríg 7 cach tóisig, cech óclaig 7 cech míled do Grécaib. (H 916–20)
>
> He went and saw the advancing of the companies and the battalions, each battalion and each host about its king and about its chieftain, disembarking from their ships. Thereupon, he related to Priam the form and shape and habit of each king and each chieftain, each warrior and each soldier of the Greeks.

At this point the scribe signals an *esbaid ar in leabar*, that is, a 'loss' or 'defect' in his exemplar. This marks the beginning of the lacuna which continues to a point corresponding to the middle of chapter 21 of the *De Excidio*.[116] The messenger's third report of the Greek army, therefore, is lost.

There is no surviving reference to this messenger's third observation in the second and third recensions. As for what this third observation consisted of in the undamaged text, it can only be inferred from internal evidence and the available source material. I think it likely that the undamaged first recension here had a realistic watchman device of the Greek army based on Dares's original Portrait Catalogue. The surviving cue which introduced the messenger's third report to Priam appears formulaic, but it can be compared profitably to the formula which introduces the Portrait Catalogue from the other versions ('Atchúaid íarum do Priaim cruth 7 delb 7 écosc cach ríg . . .'; 'Atfet dono Dariet stairscribhnidh na Troianna eter cruth 7 delb 7 denum' and so forth).[117] At the very least, the author, once he had set himself to describe the physical appearance of the Greek warriors, would have been very eccentric to ignore Dares's own descriptions if he knew them to have been near at hand. Unfortunately, the textual corruption in this entire passage is much more severe than the scribe signaled with his comment on the *esbaid*, 'loss'. The preceding lines, as this same scribe copied them, are very unlikely to have preserved an undamaged text of the recension either, as, exceptionally, they abbreviate Dares's original narration. Most of the events of the first day's fighting are lost, including Hector's battle with Protesilaus on the beach and details of his first skirmish with Achilles. By contrast, in the Book of Leinster version this first day's fighting takes up a little over three and a half columns, and includes a sequence of remarkably fanciful episodes with no counterpart in Dares.[118] At this corresponding point in the Book of Ballymote, the scribe even pauses to complain that the version of the day's fighting he has just copied is corrupt, and he supplies an alternative version; his first version

116 The second copy of this recension, in Mac Eoin's opinion made from the same exemplar, makes no reference to a problem here, so the *esbaid* probably did not consist of obvious physical damage to the exemplar; see Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text', 43.

117 Note that *atchúaid* and *adfet* are the same verb *ad-fét*.

118 From mid-236b to the top of 238b (L 32277–410); Dares's narration verifiably underlies the text at least until the arrival of Achilles; from this point, the fanciful sequence includes a repetition of the erroneous watchman device, this time from a Greek point of view, the first instances of Trojan and Greek heroes undergoing *ríastrada*, a mind-numbingly tedious ekphrastic encomium of Hector and a formulaic description of Achilles arming for battle.

incidentally resembles the Book of Leinster's account, with none of the fanciful additions; his second version is a different account altogether.[119]

It is inescapable that something had gone amiss with the text describing the first day's fighting probably already in the textual tradition of the 'common source' of the first and second recension. This is unlikely to have been wholly unrelated to the *esbaid* signaled in the surviving first recension, which would have described that day's close. In Dares, this evening consisted of Agamemnon bringing the remainder of his fleet to shore and establishing a camp: 'nox proelium dirimit. Agamemnon exercitum totum in terram educit, castra facit'. An early literary artist working on *Togail Troí*, most likely the author of the common source, probably felt that the occasion of the Greeks at long last present to the eyes of the Trojans afforded an opportunity finally to reproduce Dares Portrait Catalogue of the Greeks. This was artistically recast as the eyewitness account of Priam's messenger, a realistic watchman device, as the surviving cue in the first recension suggests. Eteocles's messenger from the *Thebaid* in sequence with the *teichoskopia* of the Argives was a welcome, but by no means necessary, model. In the place where the first recension has only this truncated remnant of an ekphrastic catalogue, all copies of the second recension portray the end of the first day's fighting with a sequence of councils among the Greeks and Trojans which have no counterpart in Dares, and which consist of extremely formulaic speeches of exhortation to the soldiers. One has the feeling that the author of this recension, faced with a hopelessly damaged text of the common source's version of the Portrait Catalogue, simply jettisoned it and replaced it with this improvised series of councils. This would account for why the councils, which add nothing to the narrative, are present, and Dares Catalogue has disappeared, at least from the early copy of this recension in the Book of Leinster.[120]

On the other hand, it may be irrelevant whether the Portrait Catalogue had been incorporated into the messenger's third observation already in the common source, or was introduced only in the first recension. The point is that, if this analysis is correct, an early circulating version of *Togail Troí* had an episode which significantly paralleled Mac Roth's realistic watchman device of *Toichim na mBuiden*. As suggested, the structure of the episode, including the Catalogue moved to this point at the close of the day and incorporated into a watchman device, could have followed the available model of Eteocles's messenger in sequence with the *teichoskopia* in the *Thebaid*. Alternatively, the structure could have been generated independently from the raw material Dares presented, including a ready-made ekphrastic Portrait Catalogue. The result happened to recreate something like Statius's *teichoskopia*, which, as Lactantius Placidus

119 B fo. 238vb45f.: 'Olc ata in blad sin issin sceol, ar ni raemaid riam for Echtair' etc. (see Breathnach 1894–912); the third recension stands in the same tradition as the Book of Leinster, though the details of the relationship remain to be examined.

120 The third recension follows the second in having these councils; Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 491, notes the similarity of diction in these speeches with passages in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, suggesting one possible source for the author's inspiration in this section. Note that the second recension resumes Dares's narration on the following day, still Dares Chapter 19, while the lacuna in the first recension extends to mid-Chapter 21; this would imply that the copy of the 'common source' consulted for the second recension did not have quite the same damage as did the copy used for the first recension; I have not been able to account for this without assuming that recourse was made to a variant version, but this must await further investigation.

explained, is simply a *descriptio catalogi exercitus*, 'a catalogic description/ ekphrasis of the army'.

No one will believe, however, that *Toichim na mBuiden* reproduces this same structure – arrival of army, messenger, erroneous watchman device and then realistic watchman device – by mere coincidence. Even the day's fighting which would have separated the messenger's first observation of the Greek fleet from the realistic ekphrastic catalogue has a formal parallel in *Toichim na mBuiden*. In Recension 2, though the erroneous watchman device takes place at dawn, the realistic watchman device does not commence until the end of the day, as is clarified in the passage which introduces Mac Roth's third observation:

> Ra gabsat Ulaid ac tachim isin tulaig sin á dorbblais na matni muchi co tráth funid na nóna. Iss ed mod nárbo thornocht in talam fótho risin ré sin, cach droṅg díb imma ríg 7 cach buiden imma tóesech, cach rí 7 cach toísech 7 cach tigerna go lín a ślúag 7 a ṡochraite, a thinóil 7 a thóchostail fo leith. Cid trá acht doríachtatar Ulaid uile re tráth funid nóna isin tulaig sin i Slemuin Mide. (TBC-2, 4285–90)
>
> The Ulaid began to march on that hill, from the dawn of early morning until evening's sunset. In that time the ground was hardly bare of them, with every division round its king and every company round its leader, every king and every chieftain and every lord with the full number of his hosts and army, his muster and his gathering respectively. However before the hour of evening's sunset all the Ulaid had reached that hill in Slemain Mide.

The formalized language describing the divisions of the Ulstermen, 'cach droṅg díb imma ríg 7 cach buiden imma tóesech, cach rí 7 cach toísech 7 cach tigerna', recalls the formulae in the description of the Greek divisions by Priam's messenger: 'cech cath 7 cech slúag immá ríg 7 immá tóisech . . . cruth 7 delb 7 écosc cach ríg 7 cach tóisig, cech óclaig 7 cech míled'. Moreover, Cormac Cond Longas and Conchobar lead sallies against the Connacht army even before the gathering of the Ulster army is complete, parallel to Protesilaus's and Achilles's sallies, the first day's fighting, which precede the bulk of Agamemnon's warriors being brought to land (TBC-2, 4263–77; Dares 19). This passage of a day in Recension 2 of the *Toichim* disappears in Recension 1. This gives another instance where Recension 2 is revealed to be closer to the original text and the Latin models, the day's disappearance similar to the fate of the Statian alternatives device in the first part of Recension 1's *Toichim na mBuiden*.

Given the damaged state of the first recension of *Togail Troí*, arguments based on that text having had a realistic watchman device cannot be pressed, as they are unverifiable. However, if accepted as probable, this recension of *Togail Troí* gave, already by the eleventh century, an available model for the entire sequence of ekphrastic set pieces paralleled in *Toichim na mBuiden*: the morning's 'first' and 'second observation' of the messenger, the passage of a day with its preliminary skirmishes, and the third observation of the evening's realistic watchman device. The initial expectation that *Togail Troí* borrowed this sequence from *Toichim na mBuiden* itself founders on the fact that the underlying sequence in *Togail Troí* verifiably goes back to Dares, elaborated with reference to Statius and the illusions of Panic. With so much to take from Dares and Statius, it follows that *Togail Troí* needed so much less to take from *Toichim na mBuiden*. If anything, it was *Togail Troí* which gave native tradition, represented by *Toichim na mBuiden*, its first day in the confrontation between two great armies.

As a corollary to this view, classicizing elements throughout *Toichim na*

mBuiden, which include the mention of classical Greek geography, need not follow only a direct engagement with Statius, but could follow also an engagement with the Statian *Togail*. It is not unlikely that the portraits of the realistic catalogue of the Ulstermen, prefigured by Dares and perhaps modeled in an undamaged *Togail Troí*, were felt by contemporaries to continue the allusion to that classical tale in Irish. In this case, echoes of Dares's soldiers in *Toichim na mBuiden* could be considered another example of *aemulatio*. Carney, who did not include *Togail Troí* in his analysis of the realistic watchman device, detected the more distant, second-hand allusion in *Toichim na mBuiden* to the *teichoskopia* of Statius's *Thebaid*. Given that Carney could detect this allusion in our own time, what is the likelihood that the medieval readers of the *Toichim*, whose own schooling, unlike our own, included Statius, would have been unaware of it themselves?

Conclusion

The preceding argument demonstrates that features of narrative and iconography which derive ultimately from *imitatio* of classical epic permeate *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. The argument presented here agrees in general terms with Thurneysen's and Carney's beliefs concerning classical influences on the *Táin*. Heroic typology – that Cú Chulainn was to the Irish what Achilles was to the Greeks and Aeneas to the Romans – was the point of departure in earlier discussions. This, however, was only occasionally expressed clearly.[121] The above discussion of medieval typology in relation to the typological poetics of prophecy in Latin epic is intended to clarify this underlying assumption, and represent something more than just a 'backward glance' to Thurneysen and Carney. But it is intended that the attention given here to precise features of orthography, metrics and occasional obscurities in Statius and Virgil, as well as to the commentaries which addressed these obscurities, represent an innovation in the earlier critics' approach.

In part, the argument of this chapter has been cumulative. It is the number of allusions, and especially the number of 'flags', such as the naming of Allecto or the mention of Greece in *Toichim na mBuiden*, which support the argument that *imitatio* occurs in the *Táin*. Yet it is also due to the concentration on techniques of allusion such as these flags that discussion of some well-known possible classical allusions has been omitted. For example, there has been no place to discuss the familiar suggestion, made originally by Thurneysen, that the rising of the river Cronn against the Connacht army reproduces the rising of the river Skamander against Achilles from the *Iliad*.[122] Such an allusion could be made credible if we consider Statius's meticulous *imitatio* of the Homeric episode in *Thebaid*

121 For example, see Carney's comment, above, 12; and Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles', 238.

122 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 96; see also TBC-1, 256, n. 1000; Stanford, 'Towards a history', 32, n. 68; and Ó hUiginn, 'The background', 40; for recent installments in the debate that do not argue for classical literary models, see Nagy, 'The rising'; and Carey, 'The encounter'; for a biblical analogue, see Kelly, 'The *Táin*', 85.

9 as a Latin intermediary.[123] I have not, however, found any flag in the *Táin* which would point to the *Thebaid* at this point, nor any convincing sequence of motifs associated with available models.[124] Nor has been found any notice in the commentary-tradition that would explicitly state that the episode is an *imitatio* of Homer, the kind of note which might have secured an ambitious Irish author's attention. Yet it is hoped that the preceding discussion is adequate to demonstrate that *imitatio* is structurally essential to the *Táin*, and underlies, for example, both the shape and content of the sequence of erroneous and realistic watchman devices from *Toichim na mBuiden*. *Aemulatio*, in this last case with *Togail Troí*, is offered as one explanation for what inspired the authors of the *Táin* to expend such effort on *imitatio*. *Aemulatio* with the competing prestigous vernacular text can be considered a complement to the equally valid theory that they had a desire to imitate Latin epic proper.

The cumulative argument leaves little doubt that the *Táin*, certainly at the stages in its development witnessed in Recensions 1 and 2, was written in a library, the contents of which were not restricted to native *senchas*. But what is most important is the acknowledgement of the very considerable invention and play which is evident in all cases of *imitatio*. These include the witty transformation of Statius's portrait of Achilles's boyhood into the masterly *Macgnímrada* of Cú Chulainn, and the seemless fusion of elements from Statius and Dares Phrygius into the technically brilliant watchman devices of *Toichim na mBuiden*. There can be no lingering sense that these products of *imitatio* can be represented adequately by the term 'external', nor even 'borrowed'. This is not unless one were also able to imagine a stage of Virgil's *Aeneid*, prior to the addition to it of epic features from Homer, to which the name *Aeneid* could still be meaningfully applied.

123 To my knowledge the Statian intermediary has not been discussed by critics; see also the *Ilias Latina* 905–20 for a concise version of the Homeric episode, where the Trojan youths pray for the river's aid, as does Cú Chulainn.

124 See, however, Sayers, 'Homeric', 66–7, 69, who identifies a possible echo in the meanings of 'Xanthus' (alternative name for the Skamander) and 'Cronn'; Sayers is mistaken when he says that the *Ilias Latina* does not include the episode of the river's rising, nor the name 'Xanthus'; the latter, furthermore, is the form used by Virgil, for example in the prophecy of the Sibyl quoted above.

5

THE RHETORICAL SET PIECE AND THE *BRESLECH* OF THE PLAIN OF MURTHEMNE

Classical epic, indebted so much to Homer's *Iliad*, has a superabundance of detailed, extravagant depictions of life and its loss on the battlefield. Early prose literature in Old Irish, interestingly, has comparatively few. The desultory description of the human battle which comes near the end of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is one instance of early Irish indifference to the genre. Heroic single combat, however, fascinated the author; perhaps the impersonal quality of actual battle between armies failed to inspire him. A vigorous tradition of describing battle between armies did develop in the Middle Irish period. The descriptions of battle in these later texts, however, are highly formulaic, and Uáitéar Mac Gearailt proposed that the Iliadic books of Virgil's *Aeneid* could have been the ultimate literary model.[1] The contrast with the earlier tradition highlights how, as universal as battlefield killing is, literary descriptions of the activity are not universally alike. This chapter is devoted to one episode from the *Táin* in which the iconography of battle and the effect of battle on a hero are most vividly portrayed, *In Carpat Serda 7 in Breslech Mór Maige Murthemne*. In terms of chronology this text comes between the contrasting Old Irish and later Middle Irish traditions of portraying battle. Of all the episodes from the *Táin* here discussed, it is most verifiably contemporary with the 'school of classical translations' and the flowering of medieval Irish classical studies in the vernacular. The discussion will emphasize details in the iconography of battle in this episode which appear especially literary. Given over mostly to examination of details which would have no place in a plot synopsis, this chapter will treat techniques of literary prose composition specifically.

The Breslech *and the* Iliad

In Carpat Serda 7 in Breslech Mór Maige Murthemne, 'The Sickled Chariot and the Great Rout of the Plain of Murthemne' (hereafter *Breslech*), is the title given in Lebor na hUidre to a long episode belonging to a manifestly late stratum of the *Táin*.[2] The first half of the episode recounts, in a mostly simple style, how

1 See above, 124.

2 TBC-1, 2072–334; Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 103, understood the *Breslech* to include the elaborate ekphrasis of Cú Chulainn in his festive clothing, entitled *Túarascbáil Delba Con Culaind* in Lebor na hUidre (TBC-1, 2335–66); for the present discussion, for reasons apparent below, Thurneysen's view is adopted. In the critical literature the title is sometimes shortened to *Breslech Mór Maige Murthemne*, but this may cause confusion with the independent tale bearing this title, for which, see below.

Cú Chulainn, having fought in daily single combat for an entire winter, faces the armies of the four provinces as they gather on Mag Murthemne. Exhausted, Cú Chulainn is visited by Lug mac Ethlend, his supernatural father from the *síd*, who puts him to sleep for three days and three nights and heals his wounds. During this time, Fallamain mac Conchobair and the boytroop of Ulster perish in a disastrous attempt to face the Men of Ireland in Cú Chulainn's stead. Upon waking and hearing of the youths' fate, Cú Chulainn calls for his charioteer Láeg to ready the 'sickled chariot' of the episode's title. The second part of the *Breslech* continues with a series of elaborate ekphrases of the horses, chariot, and Láeg and Cú Chulainn as they individually arm. Following a description of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*, 'contortion', there is an account of the 'Sesrech Breslige', the famed *breslech*, 'rout', which Cú Chulainn visits on the population of Ireland.

On the basis of the episode's style and language, Thurneysen dated the *Breslech* to the eleventh century.[3] Mac Gearailt notes that, from the evidence of language, the episode could be the same age as the second recension of *Togail Troí*.[4] Because of its late date of composition, the *Breslech* has received somewhat anomalous treatment in the critical literature concerning the *Táin*. It could be accorded only secondary attention in the recensional models of Thurneysen and O'Rahilly, who sought to reconstruct the growth of the *Táin* from its presumed original composition in the seventh or eighth century. In her own growth model, according to which the *Táin* was committed to writing only in the eleventh century, Tristram nevertheless chose to regard the *Breslech* as an 'interpolation', and not a part of the 'single creative act' which she believes accounts for Recension 1.[5] Mac Gearailt has proposed that, so much as being a late stratum in Recension 1, the *Breslech* may have been substantially borrowed from an early version of Recension 2.[6] Thurneysen wondered whether the piece originally circulated independently, as was apparently the case with *Comrac Fir Diad 7 Con Culaind*, another long episode belonging to the same linguistic stratum.[7]

Critical interest in the *Breslech* has been most sustained with respect to what the episode reveals of how the Irish viewed their Old Irish prose epic in the altered cultural environment of the eleventh century. Máire Herbert sees in the *Breslech* an attempt to refashion an inherited story of a *táin bó* as a text devoted to creating a model for martial heroism, focused on the ever-growing character of Cú Chulainn. Such reinterpretation was typical of post-Viking Ireland, and partook of a trend to connect contemporary Irish military leaders with classical heroes who were then entering vernacular tradition as characters in the classical tales.[8] The fullest examination of the *Breslech* is Ann Dooley's recent study of how the episode presents a key moment in Cú Chulainn's biography, his encounter with Lug. In Dooley's view, through Cú Chulainn's encounter with his divine father, this episode, though late in composition, becomes the 'narrative hinge' of the text and marks Cú Chulainn's investiture as an epic hero.[9] This recent

3 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 103.
4 Mac Gearailt, 'Zur literarischen', 110, 113; see also above, 8.
5 Tristram, 'Aspects', 19–20.
6 Mac Gearailt, 'Forbairt', especially 12–28.
7 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 103; for the independent versions of this text, see Rutten, 'Displacement'.
8 Herbert, 'Reading'.
9 Dooley, *Playing*, especially 125–55.

work on the *Breslech* demonstrates how philological criticism, which in the first instance seems to remove the episode as an 'interpolation', in the end benefits sensitive literary reading of the text. It is only with this late 'interpolation' that the character of the literary text here called Recension 1 is fully developed.

Given its clear Middle Irish date, it is not unexpected that the *Breslech*, of all the *Táin*, matches the literary style of the first recension of *Togail Troí* most convincingly. The episode has been positioned at the very mid-point of the *Táin*; this and the extraordinary contrast the new prose makes with the rest of the *Táin* effectively leaves the *Breslech* as the *Táin*'s stylistic climax.[10] The boldness of the *Breslech*'s prose style, however, is matched by the episode's content. The reader is struck by the writerly complexity of the piece. The *Breslech* comes across as even brazen in its invitation to interpretive flexibility. For example, consciously pagan features jostle with what one could take as very Christian imagery. Central to the episode is the healing of Cú Chulainn from mortal wounds he has suffered. In the *Breslech* from Recension 1, two versions of this healing are conflated.[11] In both versions, a visitor from the *síd* (Otherworld mound) puts Cú Chulainn to sleep on *ferta Lerga*, 'the burial mound of Lerga', for three days and three nights, by the end of which time he is healed. In the first version of the healing this figure from the *síd* is identified as Lug mac Ethlend, Cú Chulainn's Otherworldly father, who wakes his son from his healing sleep with the incantatory verses *Éli Loga*, 'The Prayer of Lug'. The incantation begins:

> 'Atraí, a meic mór Ulad
> fót śláncréchtaib curetha . . .'
>
> 'Arise, O son of mighty Ulster now that your wounds are healed . . .'
> (O'Rahilly's translation, TBC-1, 2118–19)

Given the context of the hero, dead to the world for three days on a burial mound and then raised, healed from his wounds by his divine father, I do not think that contemporary readers would have failed to see an allusion to Christ in the tomb and risen on the third day. The parallel is not exact, but does not need to be. The fact that two versions of the healing are conflated, the first much more redolent of Christian imagery than the second, suggests that a reviser felt the theme could be played with, either to the detriment or enhancement of the Christian allusion. As for the first healing, most readers not armed with the arsenal of Celtic philology would immediately judge that *éli*, 'prayer', in the title *Éli Loga* looks like a fairly obvious borrowing from Christ's invocation to his father on the cross: 'Heli Heli lema sabacthani hoc est Deus meus Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me' ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?') (Matthew 27: 46).[12] There, the divine father removes the wounded hero's ghost; here, the divine father signals that it has been given back.[13]

In the interests of a structuralist reading, it can be pointed out that Cú Chulainn's appearance to his foes at the beginning of this episode presents a

10 Drawing on observations made by Dooley, *Playing*, 127, 131.

11 See TBC-1, 268, n. 2114.

12 See *DIL* s.v. *éle*; for *éli* as simple 'charm, prayer', compare 'pater' from the Pater Noster which was borrowed as the usual word for prayer in Old Irish; *eli*, the correct Hebrew, of course varies freely with *heli* in Medieval Latin spelling.

13 For the Christian character of Cú Chulainn's healing, see Dooley, *Playing*, 145–52.

striking visual index to the iconography of the crucifixion. The invading armies have encamped for the night on Murthemne Plain:

> Gabais Cú Chulaind icond ḟert i lLercaib i comfocus dóib . . . Itchonnairc-seom úad grístatinem na n-arm nglanórda úas chind cethri cóiced nÉrend re funiud néll na nóna. Dofánic ferg 7 luinni mór ic aicsin in tslóig re hilar a bidbad [7] re himad a námat. Ro gab a dá śleig 7 a scíath 7 a c[h]laideb. Crothis a scíath 7 cresaigis a ślega 7 bertnaigis a chlaidem, 7 dobert a srem caurad asa brágit coro recratár bánánaig 7 boccánaig 7 geniti glinni 7 demna aeóir re úathgráin na gáre dosbertatár ar aird.
>
> (TBC-1, 2076–84)

> Cú Chulainn took up position on the mound of Lerga near them . . . He looked out over the fiery glitter of the bright, shining weapons above the heads of the four provinces of Ireland as the sun set among the evening's clouds. Anger and rage filled him when he saw the host, because of the multitude of his foes and the great number of his enemies. He seized his two spears and his shield and his sword. He shook his shield and brandished his spears and waved his sword, and he uttered a hero's shout deep in his throat. And goblins and sprites and spectres of the glen and demons of the air gave answer for terror of the shout that he had uttered.[14]

The hero faces his foes from an elevated place at evening's approach, with arms outstretched as he brandishes his weapons and shows his wounds, before he lets out a great cry. Aside from the fact that the iron pieces in Cú Chulainn's hands are weapons and not nails, these features can all be closely paralleled in the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion. The 'goblins and sprites and spectres of the glen' happen to recall Matthew's description of how the dead rose from their graves following Jesus's last great cry. Of course, one can counter that the impression created by the latter is quite unlike the Irish text. In the title *Éli Loga*, however, with its retained Hebrew, we have, in fact, a reasonably clear 'flag' to the typological encoding in this scene. This reading of Christian typology into the *Breslech* is not impaired by the bloody slaughter which concludes the episode, provided we recall the importance of Christ's Harrowing of Hell in the medieval iconography of Christ's death and resurrection. Cú Chulainn's slaughter carried out over the five provinces of Ireland lends a cosmic quality to the *Breslech* nowhere else met in the *Tain*. This devastation leaves Cú Chulainn, as the universal avenger, a figure even worthy as a type for the Second Coming.

This brief digression into biblical typology is intended to serve as an admonition against the temptation to reduce a complex text to a single interpretation, following a single interpretive model, for the sake of critical tidiness. However, it is for the sake of throwing light on features of the *Breslech* which have been mostly ignored hitherto that this discussion will emphasize a single model, that in favour of the *imitatio* of classical epic. Application of this model is not arbitrary. Although most of this chapter will concern details of language and diction, the first thing which strikes the reader is the general similarity of the *Breslech*'s basic narrative with the story told in the *Iliad*. Cú Chulainn's absence from battle, which results in the death of Fallamain mac Conchobair, is strikingly reminiscent of Achilles's withdrawal from battle and the death of his companion Patroclus which his withdrawal precipitated.[15] The 'wrath and its devastation' which

[14] See TBC-1, 267, n. 2084, for the translation of the closing phrase.

[15] To my knowledge, the parallel between the *Breslech* and the narrative of Patroclus's death has been commented on only by Sayers, 'Homeric', 69, and there only in passing.

Achilles visits on the Trojans upon his reentry into battle in revenge for Patroclus are the theme of the *Iliad*. This theme of revenge is recalled in the exaggerated *breslech*, 'rout, defeat', Cú Chulainn visits on the people of Ireland. The hero suggests as much himself in the lead-up to the incident: 'Apraind ná bá-sa for mo nirt de side, úair día mbeind-se for mo nirt ni tóethsitís in macrad feb dorochratár 7 ní tóethsad Follamain mac Conchobair' ('Alas that I was not in my strength, for if I had been in my strength, the youths would not have fallen as they did fall, nor would Fallamain mac Conchobair have fallen') (TBC-1, 2173–5).[16]

With this comparison to the *Iliad* we even glimpse a second meaning behind Cú Chulainn's healing sleep which suggests symbolic death. In the *Iliad* Achilles's death, necessary for him to have the stature of a full hero, is portrayed in the body of the poem in the person of his surrogate, Patroclus. In his own person, Achilles therefore effectively avenges his own death when he kills Hector.[17] Cú Chulainn's death-tale, *Brislech Mór Maige Muirthemni*, which depicts the hero's death in a later *breslech* on the same plain in Murthemne, shares the near identical title with the *Breslech* episode in the *Táin*.[18] This cannot be coincidence, as the texts are obviously related. The details of the relationship, however, have not been worked out. Thurneysen suggested that, in the *Breslech* episode from the *Táin*, Cú Chulainn is given the opportunity to avenge his own death.[19] As in the *Iliad*, the hero 'dies' and avenges himself within the confines of his own heroic text.

Notwithstanding thematic similiarites with the *Iliad*, it is difficult to prove the operation of literary allusions in the absence of distinctive features, such as quotations or wordplay, which 'flag' the relationship with the model text, as argued in the preceding chapter. No such obvious references or flags to Homer's *Iliad* have yet been detected in the *Breslech*. Moreover, it is not impossible that the role of Fallamain and the youths in this episode, essential to the operation of the allusion, is secondary. Dooley notes how Cú Chulainn's wounding and healing in the *Breslech* corresponds to a pattern which recurs throughout the *Táin*.[20] It follows that the 'death of the youths', and the death of Fallamain especially, may be secondary elements in a narrative which, at its heart, is about the transformation of a wounded hero by a divine healer. Furthermore, the motif of the 'death of the youths' is met elsewhere in the *Táin*, in the final instance in a variant form where the youths do not even meet their deaths, but simply fight conspicuously in a group alongside the adult warriors.[21]

As it stands, the *Breslech* looks like an accidental *Iliad* in miniature. The Homeric subtext detectable in Cú Chulainn's withdrawal from battle would be bolstered if a convincing intermediary for the theme could be found among his Latin imitators. Virgil brilliantly incorporates an *imitatio* of the Homeric story into the *Aeneid* in the relationship of Aeneas with Pallas, the young son of Evander of Pallanteum, whose death Aeneas brutally avenges. In this version, however, the theme of the hero's withdrawal is unlike Homer's (Aeneas is away on an embassy) and sufficiently removed from Pallas's death that a medieval

16 Even more explicit at TBC-1, 2178–9.
17 I draw on Nagy, *The Best*, especially 33, 63.
18 See the recent edition by Kimpton, *The Death*.
19 Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden*, 103.
20 Dooley, *Playing*, 129–30.
21 TBC-1, 1631–57; and 3887–99.

reader not directly familiar with the *Iliad* could easily miss the *imitatio*. Virgil does, however, have an instance of the hero's withdrawal which is related to his healing by a divine parent. In the final battle of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas, wounded by an arrow, carried from the battlefield and found to be beyond the competence of his surgeon to heal, is surreptitiously treated by his mother Venus instead (*Aeneid* 12.411–19). Interestingly, Venus cures Aeneas with herbs, as Lug cures Cú Chulainn in the second version of the healing in the *Breslech*.[22] This echo of Virgil in the *Breslech* is reinforced when considered in context, as it is directly following this divine healing that Aeneas enters on his most fearsome battle-frenzy, culminating in his killing of Turnus in revenge for Pallas. As well as anticipating Cú Chulainn's *breslech*, this is also where Aeneas most obviously emerges as an *alius Achilles*.[23] This second version of the healing, where Cú Chulainn is treated with herbs, is the only version in the *Breslech* in Recension 2. This recension, lacking both the identification of Cú Chulainn's healer specifically as his father and the Christian-tinged *Éli Loga*, is slightly less Christian than the version of Recension 1, and marginally more 'classical' in consequence. Not showing the conflation evident in Recension 1, it is also probably the original author's version.[24]

Expansion: the Arming of the Warrior

Once Cú Chulainn has risen from his three days' sleep, he asks his healer from the *síd* to join him in taking vengeance for the deaths of the boytroop. The visitor declines and leaves. Cú Chulainn then calls his charioteer Láeg to ready his 'scythed chariot'. At this point begins a string of ekphrastic set pieces describing, first, Láeg as he dons his battle-dress, outfits his horses and readies the chariot. The passage continues with a lavish description of Cú Chulainn's dress and arms, followed by the even more lavish description of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*, 'contortion'. Following a description of the scythed chariot itself, the series concludes, or nearly so, with the *breslech*, 'rout, defeat', of the title.

These passages, though ekphrastic in the sense that they are given to detailed description, are not static as was the case of the portraits of people discussed in Chapter 4. They are dynamic and resemble the best ekphrases from *Togail Troí*. The language throughout is recognizably formulaic. One suspects that, if it were worth the effort to comb through enough saga texts, few items and phrases in these pages would fail to be closely echoed somewhere else. This quality in the language strongly suggests that these passages were practiced set pieces in Irish prose already before the composition of the *Breslech*. The most important characteristic of this series of descriptive passages, however, is that, while they are dynamic, they contribute strictly no action to the story. These ekphrases,

22 Venus supplies the herbs for the healing broth which the physician Iapyx lacks; the plight of the hapless physician in this episode, fearful of Aeneas *acerba fremens*, invites comparison with the comic scene of Cethern's treatment of his physicians in *Caladgleó Cethirn* (TBC-1, 3161–327); for herbs as a possible representative of Indo-European 'third function' healing, see Dooley, *Playing*, 260.

23 See above, 155.

24 For a different view, see TBC-2, xlii; O'Rahilly is slightly inconsistent here; see above, n. 11.

comprising by far the bulk of the *Breslech*, are the *Táin's* most convincing example of rhetorical *amplificatio*, 'expansion', pure and simple.

The depiction of a warrior arming before battle is a familiar convention of classical epic. The elaborate episode of Achilles's arming and preparation for battle in the *Iliad*, where he receives new arms from Hephaestos following Patroclus's death, is probably the single most paradigmatic example from ancient literature. An allusion to this famous episode was detected already in *Togail Troí*, where the *Ilias Latina* was the likely intermediary.[25] Turnus's doomed preparations for his final battle against the Trojans, which include the readying of his horses and his taking up of the arms made originally for his father by Vulcan, is a familiar Latin example of the technique (*Aeneid* 12.81–106). There are no obvious Virgilian models, however, for the elaborate arming of Láeg and Cú Chulainn in the *Breslech*. Yet an invitation to search for classical models is felt in a learned reference from the opening lines of Láeg's arming. It is stated that Láeg's overmantle had been made originally by Simon Magus for 'Dáir rí Rómán' ('Darius, the king of the Romans') (TBC-1, 2194). This is a nod to the world of *Scéla Alaxandair* and Alexander's chief protagonist, Darius (he is actually the king of the Persians). The reference not only introduces a classical quality to the arming scene, it marks the literary environment shared with the school of classical translations. Coming programatically early in the string of several ekphrases, the allusion heralds the operation of a classicizing aesthetic.

As formulaic language is viewed here as an important technique of expansion, this discussion will especially address the question of where formula comes from. The assumption of a prose formulary in an oral storytelling tradition does not quite do away with the question. One still wants to know where oral tradition would have gotten some rather odd learned items, such as the overmantle made by Simon Magus. Also, one wonders whether the absorbtion of such exotic items into a native heroic inventory had any special significance for Irish audiences. Moreover, textual oddities throughout the *Breslech* lead one to doubt that the author and scribes who copied the work always knew the material as something abundantly familiar from their society's popular entertainment. The commencement of Cú Chulainn's arming is a case in point:

> Is and so ro gab in caur 7 in cathmílid 7 in t-indellchró bodba fer talman, Cú Chulaind mac Súaltaim, ro gab a chatherred catha 7 comraic 7 comlaind imbi.
>
> (TBC-1, 2213–15)

> It was then that the hero and the battle-soldier and marshalled fence of battle of the men of the earth, Cú Chulainn, put on, he put on his battle-dress of battle and contest and combat.

English word order in the translation misrepresents the Irish somewhat, as, in the verb-initial order of Irish, the repetition of *ro gab*, 'he put on', is not particularly objectionable. Suspense as to the identity of the grammatical subject 'Cú Chulainn' is drawn out over an accomplished *tricolon abundans*, by the end of which a fluid, oral delivery may well have felt the usefulness of repeating the verb. However, this cannot be verified, and we may wish to agree with the judgment of the author of Recension 3, who rewrote the passage to improve the gram-

[25] The ekphrasis of Achilles's shield; see above, 106.

mar.[26] There is no question that the offending phrase was formulaic in its own right, as it is subtantially repeated, among other places, in the passage describing Achilles's first arming in *Togail Troí*:

> Tan atchuala Achil anísin rochuir etach imtecht de 7 rogab a chatherriud catha 7 comlaind imbi. (H 724–5)
>
> When Achilles heard that, he threw off his travelling clothes and he put on his battle-dress of battle and combat.

This extract demonstrates that, on a phrase by phrase basis, the existence of a formulary is unquestionable. One wonders, then, how it happened that the opening to Cú Chulainn's arming scene has the appearance of someone applying the formulary precisely on this phrase by phrase basis only? Once the rules of syntax have been broken, this comes across as somewhat primitive. Such conflict as is encountered in this instance from the *Breslech* is not common in Middle Irish, so this example is interesting for the fact that it survived in both Recensions 1 and 2. Contrary to the assumption of an oral formulary coopted for literary composition, it is possible that this was a literary formulary which was only beginning to be assimilated into the more fluid style of oral composition. This instance, however, does successfully demonstrate that formulas in Irish are characteristically repeated with variation.[27] As this is a prose formulary, neither choice of formula nor variation are conditioned by metrical criteria, as might have been deduced from poetic models from the school of oral-formulaic criticism associated with Parry and Lord.[28] As for the structure which takes the place of meter, readers quickly figure out that it is the alliterative run which governs Irish formulaic style.[29] This form allows for the addition or subtraction of alliterating items, depending on the judgment and stamina of the author or scribe. In recognition of the full implications of a formulaic prose tradition, the current critical view would incline to diminish the distinction between author and scribe, particularly when it is such formulaic passages which are question.[30]

Cú Chulainn's arming in the *Breslech* is much longer and more detailed than Achilles's in *Togail Troí*. As the *Breslech* continues, Cú Chulainn's 'battle-dress' includes accoutrements which are not strictly martial, for example, a leather tunic and a silk shirt. These items, similarly formulaic, do not feature in the much briefer description of Achilles's arming in *Togail Troí*, which continues:

> Rogab éim a lúirig d'iúrn athle[g]tha imbi 7 a cathbarr círach cummaide fora chiund. (H 726–7)[31]
>
> He put on his breastplate of twice-melted iron and his shapen, crested battle-helmet on his head.

[26] Nettlau, 'The fragment', §138: 'Is annsin ro eirigh in cur 7 in cathmhílidh 7 in t-innelchró bodhbha fer nEirenn .i. Cú Chulainn mac Sualtaigh 7 do ghabhasdair a chatherredh catha' etc.

[27] This formula happens to be repeated, with variation, a few lines later, TBC-1, 2228–9.

[28] See above, 9; Irish practice is likewise unacquainted with the principle of economy.

[29] However, metre may be taken as a secondary element in the formulary; see O'Rahilly, '*Cath-charpat*'.

[30] See, for example, Slotkin, 'Medieval'; for a view of prose formula and its relationship with classical practice drawing on the Parry-Lord model, see O'Nolan, 'Homer and Irish'.

[31] These two items are repeated in Achilles's second arming scene, H 997–1001.

Lúirech was borrowed from Latin *lorica*, 'cuiress, breastplate', and was assimilated early via its frequency in the military imagery of the early church as a figure for protection against sin. One can presume that *cathbarr*, literally 'battle-top', was a normal word for the helmet in medieval Ireland in any register, and uncompounded *barr* glosses Latin *cassis*, 'helmet', in the Old Irish glosses.[32] Yet, while both *lúirech* and *cathbarr* occur in the *Táin*, they occur only in these series of ekphrases in the *Breslech*.[33] From this distribution it can be deduced that they are late introductions to saga-prose.[34]

The more important feature of the *cathbarr* worn by both Achilles and Cú Chulainn, however, is that it is described as 'crested'. *Cír* is both 'comb' and 'tip'; as there are no material survivals of a 'crested helmet' from early-medieval Ireland, nor reliable pictorial records, we can only assume that saga audiences understood this to be a helmet with a hair tuft resembling Greek and Roman headgear familiar from ancient art. On first consideration, it might seem that this *cathbarr círach*, which varies with compounded *cír-chathbarr*, was coined purely for the sake of alliterataion; consider, for example, Cú Chulainn's helmet from the *Breslech*: 'ro gab a chírchathbarr catha 7 comraic 7 comlaind ima chend' ('he put on his crested battle-helmet of battle and contest and combat about his head') (TBC-1, 2237–8). However, both the *lorica* and the crested helmet occur in tandem in the scene of Turnus's arming from *Aeneid* 12:

> circumdat loricam umeris, simul aptat habendo
> ensemque clipeumque et rubrae cornua cristae. (*Aeneid* 12.88–9)
>
> He puts the lorica about his shoulders and at the same time readies for use his sword and shield and red-crested helmet.

Cornu, 'cone (into which the crest is placed)', as a metonymous figure for 'helmet' could be clearer here. However, this was not the only instance of the item in available classical sources. In its occurrence in *Togail Troí* especially, this type of helmet could show familiarity with another place in the *Aeneid* where the specifically visual impression made by the crest is indelibly associated with Achilles. This is the ekphrasis describing the scenes from the Trojan War painted on the walls of Juno's temple in Carthage:

> namque uidebat uti bellantes Pergama circum
> hac fugerent Grai, premeret Troiana iuuentus;
> hac Phryges, instaret curru cristatus Achilles. (*Aeneid* 1.466–8)
>
> For he [Aeneas] seemed to see the warriors contending around the defenses at Troy, on one side, Greeks fleeing pressed by the Trojan youth; on the other, Trojans in flight, pursued by crested Achilles in his chariot.

32 See *DIL* s.vv. *barr* and *cathbarr*; use of *cathbarr* for 'helmet' can be inferred from early attestions in the meaning 'headdress', 'diadem', 'protector' and even 'caul', none of which figurative uses would support the prefix *cath-* 'battle' unless the word were already established in its martial sense.

33 As observed by Mallory, 'The world', 131; Mallory uses this fact as evidence that they are not items present in Iron Age Ireland.

34 See also Achilles's *lúirech threbraid trédúalach* (H 999), a collocation which Poppe, 'A Virgilian model', shows to derive from Virgil's phrase *auro trilix lorica*, 'corslet of three-leash golden weave'; Poppe wonders whether the idiom could have entered Irish via *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, yet I would view earlier instances such as this from *Togail Troí* to be the more likely entry of the phrase into Irish, though Virgil was still the model.

The specifically Homeric character of this crested helmet is spelled out by Servius, who comments: 'CRISTATVS ACHILLES secundum Homerum, qui dicit in Achillis cristis terribile quiddam fuisse' ('CRESTED ACHILLES following Homer, who says that there was something terrifying in Achilles's crest').

The phrasing of the image from *Togail Troí*, that is, *cathbarr círach* instead of *círchathbarr* as in the *Breslech*, is shared with the item's recurrence in an unusual rhetorical exercise entitled *Cathcharpat Serda*, 'A Sickled Battle-Chariot'.[35] The lone copy of *Cathcharpat Serda* is in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster; the language points to a composition later than the bulk of Recension 1 of the *Táin*, though perhaps contemporary with Recension 2 and all copies of the *Breslech*. The *Cathcharpat* is an elaborate ekphrasis of a chariot, its horses and warriors. The latter are not identified, and the piece is clearly an exercise in the stereotypical descriptions of chariots, their horses, charioteers and warriors which recur throughout native saga. The unnamed warrior in *Cathcharpat Serda* wears the expected crested helmet:

> Dofuil cathbarr cirach clárach comecartha do gemmaib solusglana do chumtuch ingantach tiri Arabiae .i. Crichi na Sorcha. A ferand mín Manannain doberthe do-som do ascid fhlatha. (lines 29–31)
>
> He has a broad, crested helmet, set with shining gems from the wonderful ornament of the land of Arabia, that is, the Land of Sorcha [= Syria]. It was brought to him as a lordly gift from the sweet land of Manannán.

O'Rahilly suggested that there was a close relationship between *Cathcharpat Serda* and the *Breslech*. In *Cathcharpat Serda*, the gems on the helmet come from the 'Land of Sorcha'; *Sorcha*, Irish 'brightness', occurs here in its variant attested meaning 'Syria'.[36] The helmet's provenance, however, was 'the sweet land of Manannán'. In the text of the *Breslech* from Recension 2, immediately after the description of the crested helmet, Cú Chulainn is said to have a different item from a similarly exotic location:

> Ro chres a cheltar chomga tharis don tlachtdíllat Tíre Tairṅgire dobretha dó ó Manannán mac Lír ó ríg Thíre na Sorcha. (TBC-2, 2259–61)
>
> There was cast about him his protective dress of the raiment of Tír Tairngire which was brought to him from Manannán mac Lir, from the king of the Land of Sorcha.[37]

O'Rahilly believed that the author of the *Breslech* read *Cathcharpat Serda* and took *ferand mín Manannain*, 'the sweet land of Mannanán', as equal to *Crichi na Sorcha* understood as 'the Land of Brightness'. The latter was felt to be synonymous with *Tír Tairngire*, 'the Land of Promise', which was duly added.[38]

To a reader familiar with *Sorcha* as 'Syria', the resulting passage is odd. One might infer that Manannán, an Irish god of the sea, had an association with desert kingdoms of the Middle East. *Cathcharpat Serda*'s 'Syria' pointed to the geography of *Scéla Alaxandair*, to say nothing of the geography of early Christianity. The *Breslech*'s *Tír Tairngire*, however, points not to the Bible's Promised Land in Canaan, but, if anything, to St Brendan's *terra repromissionis sanctorum* in the

35 O'Rahilly, '*Cathcharpat*'.
36 TBC-2, 313, n. 2261.
37 For the alternative translation of passive *ro chres* as an active, see TBC-2, 313, n. 2259.
38 See TBC-2, 313, n. 2261.

ocean to the west of Ireland, as the association with Manannán would suggest. Recension 2's reading is shared with Recension 3 and thus likely reproduces the exemplar from which the versions of all three recensions descend. But Recension 1 removes the reference to Manannán and substitutes: 'tlachtdillat Tíre Tair[n]gire dobretha [dó] ó aiti druídechta' ('raiment of Tír Tairngire which was brought [to him] from his teacher of wizardry') (TBC-1, 2244–5). The fact that *dó*, 'to him', must be supplied from the other recensions shows that the author responsible for Recension 1 edited the text before him, and accidentally dropped the pronoun along with the reference to Manannán and the Land of Sorcha. In the original reference to Sorcha in *Cathcharpat Serda*, there is no Irish deity and the collocation with Arabia clarifies that Syria is meant. The accidental association of Mannanán with Syria which emerges in the *Breslech* in Recensions 2 and 3 was obviously wholly textual in origin and an invention of reading. This is not the sort of thing one would expect from an entertainer working in a native oral tradition. The author of the version from Recension 1 who felt the need to correct the text was further along in the process by which such literary formulas were being assimilated and made intelligible in a more fluid, practiced oral idiom.

As shown above in Chapter 3, *Togail Troí* is replete with features of classical epic, such as arming scenes, which, absent in Dares, were reintroduced by the Irish adaptor. The Homeric motif of the divine origin of a hero's arms was sufficiently interesting to the author of *Togail Troí* to have merited the note at the conclusion to the ekphrasis of Achilles's shield, where Homer's narrative is recounted, and Vulcan's creation of Achilles's shield is emphasized.[39] Given the role the people of the *síd* play throughout native saga, we do not have to presume that Cú Chulainn's *celtar chomga*, 'protective dress', given him by Mannanán was felt to carry any necessary allusion to the classical motif. The fact that this was probably identical with Láeg's *bricht comga*, 'spell of protection', explained explicitly as a spell granting invisibility, makes an interesting coincidence with the invisibility cast around Aeneas by Venus throughout the *Aeneid*.[40] This, however, is a fairly common medieval motif.

Looking beyond the commonplace of divine arms, there is evidence which hints that Cú Chulainn's shield specifically shares a model with the ekphrasis of Achilles's shield in *Togail Troí*. Cú Chulainn's shield is described in a characteristic alliterative run:

> Ro gabastar a ocht scíathu cliss imma chromscíath ndubderg ina téged torc taiselbtha ina tul tárla cona bil áithgéir ailtnidi imgéir ina hurtimcheull contescfad finna i n-aigid srotha ar áthi 7 ailtnidecht 7 imgéri. (TBC-1, 2232–6)
>
> He seized his eight play-shields with his curved dark-red shield, into the boss of which would go a show boar, with its sharp-keen, acute, very-keen rim around it which would cut a hair against a current on account of its sharpness and its acuteness and its keenness.

The aim of this passage is clearly not to give a careful description of Cú Chulainn's shield as if it were of ideological importance in its own right, as in the case of the famous shields of Achilles or Aeneas. The aim, rather, appears to

[39] See above, 109.

[40] Láeg's garment becomes a *celtair chomgha* in Recension 3, obviously felt to be identical with Cú Chulainn's own *celtar chomga*; see TBC-1, 270, n. 2208.

be to luxuriate in alliteration and the practiced formulas of martial description. The latter do not need have any necessary connection to Cú Chulainn; the edge so sharp that it cuts a hair floating in a stream, for example, occurs also in *Cath-charpat Serda*, where it is used more credibly of a sword.[41] The mental picture of a boar fitting onto Cú Chulainn's shield, likewise, strikes a reader of native saga as fairly familiar. The image of the boar on the curved shield is used also of Achilles's shield in *Togail Troí*:

> Cromscíath caladgér for a chlíu, i tallfad torc trebliadan no lanamain i cosair. Bá lán [immorro] o or co hor de delbaib dracon ndodeilb . . . (H 1001–3)
>
> A hard, sharp curved shield on his left side, on which would fit a three-year's boar or a couple in bed. It was full from edge to edge with the shapes of unshapely dragons . . . (etc.)

It was demonstrated above that the *Ilias Latina* likely provided the model for this Irish version of Achilles's shield, at least for the cosmic images which dominate the second part of the ekphrasis.[42] The *torc trebliadain*, 'three-year's boar', however, does not have any obvious counterpart in the Latin model, and so might be considered a 'native' motif. Yet consideration of the creative reading style practiced in medieval Irish exegesis reveals that a boar could be found in the *Ilias*:

> Illic Ignipotens mundi caelaverat arcem
> sideraque et liquidis redimitas undique nymphis
> Oceani terras et cinctum Nerea circum . . . (*Ilias Latina* 862–4)
>
> Then, Vulcan engraved the citadel of the heavens and the stars, and the lands of the Ocean wreathed round about with watery nymphs, and Nereus girt round about . . .

The maritime god Nereus is the key. Old Irish *ner*, 'boar', is evidenced in fragments of early Irish poetry, and probably was remembered as belonging to a specifically poetic register by the later Middle Ages.[43] The term survived mostly, however, in the learned glossaries of the Old Irish period, for example in *Cormac's Glossary*: 'Ner .i. torc allaid' ('*Ner*, that is, a wild boar').[44] It appears that a learned reader of the shield-ekphrasis from the *Ilias Latina* saw the wordplay between poetic *ner*, 'boar', and a Latin *Ner-ea*, who is 'girt', that is, 'contained' inside the compass of the shield, 'cinctum Nerea circum'.

On first consideration, these verses which open the ekphrasis of Achilles's shield in the *Ilias Latina* and which feature this Nereus appear to be absent from the adaptation in *Togail Troí*. In fact, they were not deleted but simply transformed into the *torc trebliadan*, 'three-year's boar'. The Irish verbs which introduce the image in the native and classical texts, *téid*, 'to go', and *do-alla*, 'to find room in', respectively, both show the alliteration with *torc* one would predict for forulaic language. Of these two, *do-alla torc* from *Togail Troí* provides the closer match with the 'cinctum Nerea' of the suggested Latin model. If the model

41 O'Rahilly, '*Cathcharpat*', lines 37–39; the image is not unique to Irish saga, and is used, for example, of Sigurd's sword; see Finch, *Völsunga Saga*, 27.
42 See above for the complete text, 106–7.
43 See *DIL* s.v. *ner*.
44 See Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §968.

is accepted, it follows that this example from *Togail Troí* probably represents the version via which the image entered the Irish prose formulary. Association with Achilles's shields, those from both the *Ilias Latina* and *Togail Troí*, would attach a classical connotation to the formula. This connotation could have remained even after the ekphrastic sense explicit in the classical texts had faded and the formula had come to represent, apparently, a physical boar snugged into the boss of a capacious shield. The alliterating adjective from the *Táin*'s version of the motif, 'taiselbtha' ('for show'), is an explanation of the original ekphrastic character of the image. This has supplanted the classical text's 'trebliadan' which, although alliterative, does nothing to clarify that the boar is merely an image.

It would surprise no one if there was a practice in medieval Ireland of painting or engraving images of animals onto shields, but this cannot be verified in the material record.[45] The form that the boar motif takes in many saga occurrences, as an expression of volume measure, suggests that pictorial representation was not the obvious association. A small oddity in the *Breslech* may record one commentator's difficulty with the original ekphrastic sense. Of the boar on Cú Chulainn's shield the *Breslech* preserves the words 'ina tul tárla' (Recension 2: 'ina thaul tárla'). The passage as it stands, in both versions, appears ungrammatical. Windisch suggested that the words were an embedded gloss and translated 'in seinen Buckel passte er'; O'Rahilly, though she found *tárla*, 'obscure', translated according to Windisch's suggestion: 'into the boss of which (would go a show boar)', as followed above.[46] Yet if 'ina tul tárla' was originally a gloss, it might have been penned by a reader unfamiliar with the classical convention that shields are described as being painted or engraved with images of animals. The gloss, therefore, intended to suggest precisely the novel interpretation that the shield boss was big enough to hold a real boar. Less likely, the gloss was intended to do the opposite, to draw attention to the ekphrastic convention which the formula originally conveyed, and which was taken for granted in classical contexts such as *Togail Troí*; it is not easy to tease this sense out of 'ina tul tárla', however. The corruption undergone by the gloss, embedded without concern for syntactic agreement in a case much more serious than *ro gab* above, shows that this effort to clarify the nature of the boar on Cú Chulainn's shield was itself not wholly understood. Recension 3, as in the case of 'ro gab', has tried to clarify the passage, but the results are mixed: 'ina thul tarla insgeth mhoír míletasin' and so forth.[47] Windisch judged 'insgeth mhoír míletasin' to be another addition, presumably a further explanatory gloss, in this case on *tul*: 'in its boss it fit, (that is) of that great, warlike shield'. It would be a strange formula from native storytelling which would present items requiring as much effort from glossators as does this shield-boar.

Interestingly, there is no corruption in the formula in its later occurrence in *Comrac Fir Diad 7 Con Culaind* from Recension 2, where the verb *do-alla* is retained: 'Ra gabastar a scíath mór ṁbúabalchaín . . . barsa mbátar coíca

45 Note, however, *túagmíl*, defined in the *DIL* as 'a gold or silver ornament of shields and tunics, incorporating an animal design', of common occurrence in passages of formulaic description, but to my mind not clear enough to be helpful in the present discussion; see also above, 109, n. 57.

46 See Windisch, *Die altirische Heldensage*, 365, nn. 5, 8; TBC-1, 270, n. 2234. Windisch presumably saw in *tárla* the perfect of *do-curethar*; *do-alla*, 'to fit in' does not seem to have taken the *ro* augment, so probably is not present here.

47 Nettlau, 'The fragment', §138 (adapted).

cobrad bara taillfed torc taisselbtha bar cach comraid díb' ('He seized his huge enormous-fair shield . . . on which were fifty bosses, into each boss of which fit a show boar') (TBC-2, 3260–2). This translation of the compounded adjective describing Fer Diad's shield, *búabalchaín*, 'enormous-fair', follows O'Rahilly, who understood *búabal*-, from Latin *bubulus* (< *bos*) 'related to cows, oxen', as an intensive; the element occurs also compounded with *scíath* in *Cathcharpat Serda*: 'dofuil bopulsciath dub delgnach díchummais' ('he carries a huge shield, black, spiky, enormous').[48] Even in these instances where a compounding element identical with 'ox, buffalo' could lead one to interpret that a shield is described as having an animal painted onto its surface, modern editors prefer a sense pertaining to size. Yet there were available classical models for oxen and cows on shields as well as boars. Turnus's divine shield has an engraven image of Io: 'at leuem clipeum sublatis cornibus Io / auro insignibat, iam saetis obsita, iam bos, / argumentum ingens' ('Io, worked in gold, dignified the light shield with her raised horns, already covered in bristles, already a cow, an enormous argument') (*Aeneid* 7.789–91). Compare, equally, the association of animals with a shield's boss specifically in the odd phrase from the *Achilleid*: 'septemque Aiax umbone coruscet / armenti reges atque aequum moenibus orbem' ('Ajax flashes seven lords of the herd in/with his boss, and a circle to match a city wall') (*Achilleid* 1.470–1).[49] Note that both these descriptions join the animal image to an expression of size. One of the most pleasing variations on the classical topos is the shield carried by Parthenopaeus, the child-warrior of the Seven against Thebes, which is described by Statius as bearing the image of the Calydonian Boar: 'imbelli parma pictus Calydonia matris / proelia' ('On his fledgling shield are painted his mother's Calydonian combats') (*Thebaid* 4.267–8). The Calydonian Boar hunt was the most famous exploit of Parthenopaeus's mother Atalanta, so the image here conveys both martial ambition and a child's attachment to its mother. The shield, therefore, is reminiscent of Cú Chulainn's own immature arms in the *Breslech*, which include 'eight little swords', 'eight little spears' and 'eight little darts' (TBC-2, 2247–50). The association of shield-animals with exaggerated size in the Irish examples is entirely consistent with more verifiable instances of classical *imitatio* in the *Táin*, as exaggeration can be taken as a characteristic marker of *imitatio* throughout the text.

The Iconography of Wrath in Cú Chulainn's Ríastrad

Although the topos of the arming scene is reminiscent of classical epic, it is hardly exclusively so. We could expect a tradition of such stereotyped scenes to recur independently in various literatures concerned with the portrayal of fighting men. The arming scene is included among the themes of modern oral-formulaic poetry, examples of which Albert Lord cogently puts beside parallels from Homer.[50] By contast, Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*, 'contortion', is described in

48 See *DIL* s.v. *búaball*; O'Rahilly, '*Cathcharpat*', line 32 (O'Rahilly's translation).

49 Boss = shield through the figure of synecdoche, and seven layers of oxhide are probably intended; see *Iliad* 7.245; the *scíath sechtfillti*, 'seven-folded shield' of Irish prose, for example *Togail Troí* L 32648 and *passim* in *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, probably owes more directly to the example of *Aeneid* 8.447–8 and 12.925.

50 Lord, *The Singer*, 86–91.

an exaggerated imagery which appears to be unique to Irish saga. Much about the *ríastrad* remains to be explained. Disagreement lingers even as how best to translate the word *ríastrad* itself, which, probably most evocatively, Kinsella rendered as 'warp-spasm'.[51] Given differences of opinion which are going to arise in any discussion of the *ríastrad*, in the following pages I draw heavily on the translation and critical notes from Cecile O'Rahilly's editions of Recensions 1 and 2 of the *Táin*, which will be the principal reference for most readers.

In her 1902 translation of the *Táin*, Lady Gregory chose to delete the *ríastrad* as one of the passages from the venerable Irish epic which she judged her target Irish audience 'would not care about for one reason or another'.[52] One can have sympathy for Gregory. The *ríastrad* presents a phenomenon that even the most worldly Victorian *littérateur* would have found wholly alien, as demonstrated in the opening lines:

> Is and so cétríastartha im Choin Culaind co nderna úathbásach n-ílrechtach n-ingantach n-anaichnid de. Crithnaigset a charíni imbi imar crand re sruth nó imar bocṡimin fri sruth cach mball 7 cach n-alt 7 cach n-ind 7 cach n-áge de ó mulluch co talmain. Ro láe sáebglés díberge dá churp i mmedón a chrocind. Táncatár a t[h]-raigthe 7 a luirgne 7 a glúne co mbátár dá éis. Táncatár a ṡála 7 a orcni 7 a escata co mbátár ríam remi. Táncatár tulḟéthi a orcan co mbátár for tul a lurgan combá métithir muldor[n]d míled cech mecon dermár díbide. Srengtha tollḟéthe a mullaich co mbátár for cóich a muineóil combá métithir cend meic mís cach mulchnoc dímór dírím dírecra dímesraigthe díbide. (TBC-1, 2245–55)
>
> Then a great distortion came upon Cú Chulainn so that he became horrible, many-shaped, strange and unrecognizable. All the flesh of his body quivered like a tree in a current or like a bulrush in a stream, every limb and every joint, every end and every member of him from head to foot. He performed a wild feat of contortion with his body inside his skin. His feet and his shins and his knees came to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams came to his front. The sinews of his calves came on to the front of his shins, and each huge round knot of them was as big as a warrior's fist. The sinews of his head were stretched to the nape of his neck and every huge, immeasurable, vast, incalculable round ball of them was as big as the head of a month-old child. (O'Rahilly's tr.)

Any consideration of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* must address the question of whether the description of the phenomenon derives in a meaningful way from preliterary Irish tradition. Put another way, have the various images which constitute the *ríastrad* traveled together from their putative source as a traditional description of a Celtic or Irish hero?[53] By far the fullest description of the *ríastrad* is this instance from the *Breslech*. Other *ríastrada* in Recension 1 do not confirm that the phenomenon occurred in the story of the *Táin* prior to the eleventh-century penning of this episode. Cú Chulainn's first *ríastrad* is described as occuring when he is still a child, as an incident in the *Macgnímrada*, 'Boyhood Deeds' (TBC-1, 428–34). This specific incident, however, is absent from the version of the *Macgnímrada* in Recension 2, and, on this evidence, was considered an 'interpolation' by Zimmer.[54] This incident incorporated into the

51 Kinsella, *The Táin*.
52 Lady Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, vi.
53 As an example of an attempt to prove such a tradition, see Vielle, 'The oldest'; see also Henry, 'Furor'.
54 See TBC-1, 247, n. 428.

Macgnímrada may, therefore, have been contemporary with the *ríastrad* from the *Breslech*, but is very unlikely to have been earlier, as the *Macgnímrada* is a late episode in the *Táin* in any case. Going further, in the episode *Aided Nath Crantail*, 'The Death of Nad Crantail', it says: 'Siabartha im Choin Culaind amal dorigni frisna maccu i nEmain' ('Cú Chulainn was distorted as he had been when with the boys in Emain') (TBC-1, 1478–9; O'Rahilly's tr.). However, there is nothing in Cú Chulainn's actions here which resembles anything in the *ríastrad* as described elsewhere.[55] Cú Chulainn's treatment of the boys in Emain included a range of acts not limited to that suspect *ríastrad*, and it is doubtful that the translation 'distorted' conveys what the original author had in mind. Given that the verb is a denominative of *síabair*, 'spectre, phantom', supernatural possession is suggested.[56] However, the element of supernatural possession in the *ríastrad* itself is very slight. O'Rahilly suggested that *síabraid* in this passage was understood as an equivalent to *ríastraid* at least by the H-interpolator, who inserted what is the latest *ríastrad* in the text, where it is accompanied by yet another occurence of the 'Death of the Boys' motif (TBC-1, 1651–6). In O'Rahilly's view, H here followed the sequence he believed was modeled in *Aided Nath Crantail*.[57] But it is just as likely that the sequence was borrowed from the much clearer model in the *Breslech*, as H clearly knew the vocabulary of the *Breslech* very well.[58]

Ríastrad is the verbal noun of *ríastraid*, which has the passive participle *ríastarthae*. *Ríastraid* may have had the primary meaning 'to hinder' in Old Irish, but the overwhelming number of attestations of the word and its associated forms are attached to Cú Chulainn and the phenomenon of the *ríastrad* itself.[59] A less specific meaning associated with a jester's tricks is suggested by a rare occurrence of *ríastraid* not explicitly used of Cú Chulainn, in the antiquarian glossary *Sanas Cormaic*: 'Remm nomen do fuirseoir fobith cach riastardae dobeir for a agaid' ('*Réimm* is the name of a buffoon, for every *ríastarthae*, he turns before himself').[60] *Ríastarthae* is an epithet for Cú Chulainn in the *Táin*, but the glossary entry suggests that simple 'contortionist' may have been one acceptible meaning. The association of Cú Chulainn with buffoonery is not much of a stretch when you consider that descriptions of his martial feats include juggling and variations on jumping around, and the weapons he takes up in the *Breslech* include the *claidbíni*, *slegíni* and *cletíni*, 'little swords, little spears and little darts', of his childhood games (TBC-1, 2230–2). In the first part of the *ríastrad* from the *Breslech*, however, the challenge of even forming a mental picture of the contortion, whereby the hero seems to be turned backwards and inside-out,

55 O'Rahilly, TBC-1, 260, n. 1478, comments that the phrase could easily be omitted.

56 See *DIL* s.v. 1 *síabraid*; see also Nagy, *Conversing*, 264; note that *siabartha* is drawn from the late manuscsript C *siabarthi* and the parallel *locus* in Recension 2: 'ra síabrad immi' (1737); all other manuscripts have *siartha*.

57 TBC-1, 247, n. 428.

58 For H's take on the *ríastrad* in this passage, interestingly reflecting a Connacht perspective on the Ulster hero, see Dooley, *Playing*, 79–81.

59 See *DIL* s.vv. *ríastraid* and *ríastrad*.

60 Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', §1080 (B *réim*); see *DIL* s.v. 2 *réim(m)* for other versions of this gloss, which hinge on association with 1 *réim(m)*, 'movement'.

suggests that the phenomenon retains little in common with the performance of an actual entertainer.[61]

The second part of the *ríastrad*, a little shorter than the first, is less concerned with the imagery of contortion. Although still exaggerated, this second part succeeds in describing the effects of more credible, easily visualized phenomena on the hero's body. For example, Cú Chulainn's hair becomes spiked like the branches of a thorn bush. The distinction between the first and the second part of the *ríastrad* can be made also in terms of the schematic direction of the phenomena described. The first part of the *ríastrad* mostly describes movements within Cú Chulainn's body, imagined either as movements along a horizontal axis, as in the turning of his shins backwards, or as the movement of his insides outwards, for example, the fluttering of his lungs in his mouth (TBC-1, 2245–65). Starting with 'na kłne bodba' (2265), the so-called 'torches of the war-goddess', the remainder of the *ríastrad* is a series of phenomena above the hero's body, which is to say, movements along a vertical axis. In the *ríastrad* considered as a whole, the order of elements described, starting with the hero's feet and ending with the spout of blood above Cú Chulainn's head, is an inversion of the learned rhetorical norm which describes a character from the head downwards, and which is otherwise followed in Irish saga.[62] The strictness of the inversion itself argues that there has been a tacit recognition of normative practice.

The Ríastrad *and Statius's* Achilleid

Given that Latin epic and, indeed, most traditions describe anger as expressed in the face more often than, say, in the shins, the passage in the *ríastrad* describing the contortions of Cú Chulainn's face is the most logical place to begin comparisons with classical models:

> And sin dorigni cúach cera dá gnúis 7 dá agid fair. Imslo[i]c indara súil dó ina chend; iss ed mod dánas tairsed fïadchorr [a] tagraim do lár a grúade a hia[r]thor a c[h]locaind. Sesceing a sétig co mboí fora grúad sec[h]tair. Ríastartha a bél co úrtrachta. Srengais in n-ól don fidba chnáma comtar écnaig a ginchróes. Táncatár a scoim 7 a t[h]romma co mbátár ar etelaig ina bél 7 ina brágit. (TBC-1, 2255–61)
>
> Then his face became a red hollow (?). He sucked one of his eyes into his head so deep that a wild crane could hardly have reached it to pluck it out from the back of his skull on to his cheek. The other eye sprang out onto his cheek. His mouth was twisted back fearsomely. He drew back his cheek from his jawbone until his inward parts were visible. His lungs and his liver fluttered in his mouth and his throat. (O'Rahilly's translation)

Classical literature preserves no description of a phenomenon like this. However, less detailed and less exaggerated descriptions of the effects of martial fury on a warrior are plentiful. Restricting attention to the Latin tradition, depictions of martial fury often show the predictable imprint of Virgilian diction and imagery; the Virgilian imprint on descriptions of fear is even more pronounced, as shown

[61] Dooley, *Playing*, 80, suggests that H seized the potential for word-play in the language of the *ríastrad* precisely to deconstruct the hero and leave him 'a figure of burlesque and most pointedly a verbal construct'.

[62] See above, 186.

below. That said, there is enough variation that facile statements about commonplaces in the depiction of emotion on the battlefield in Latin epic should be avoided. This is not to say that Irish readers of epic did not have their own sense that some passages in their reading were more memorable than others. Probability suggests that models felt to be imitable would have been those attached to the more memorable persons or episodes of epic. One could suppose further that iconography borrowed to depict the martial fury of Cú Chulainn would be most valuable if drawn from epic's most obvious typological matches to Cú Chulainn, Achilles and Turnus.

The fullest source for the iconography of Achilles specifically available in medieval Ireland was Statius's *Achilleid*. The authors of the first recension of *Togail Troí* definitely knew the work, and in the third recension there survives a long episode detailing Achilles's childhood experiences on the island of Scyros, the so-called 'Irish *Achilleid*', which unquestionably is a vernacularization of the Latin poem.[63] In Chapter 4 it was argued that the encounter between Ulysses and the young Achilles on Scyros in the original Latin version was extensively imitated in the episode of the *Macgnímrada* in the *Táin*. This same episode has a description of the young Achilles moved to fury that preserves probably the clearest parallel in Latin epic to Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. The episode in question recounts how Ulysses tricks Achilles to put aside his disguise as a girl by including a spear and shield among the gifts which he brings to the maidens of Scyros:

> at ferus Aeacides, radiantem ut comminus orbem
> caelatum pugnas (saevis et forte rubebat
> bellorum maculis) acclinem conspicit hastae,
> infremuit torsitque genas, et fronte relicta
> surrexere comae; nusquam mandata parentis,
> nusquam occultus amor, totoque in pectore Troia est. (*Achilleid* 1.852–7)
>
> But when the fierce grandson of Aeacus inspects at close hand the shining round, chased with battles (and by chance it was red with cruel stains of war), as it leaned against the spear, he cried out and rolled his eyes, and his hair rose from his forehead; forgotten were his mother's orders, forgotten his hidden love, Troy is in all his heart.

Following an epic simile which compares the hero to a lion which turns on its master, the description continues as Achilles beholds his own reflection in the shield:

> ut vero accessit proprius luxque aemula vultum
> reddidit . . .
> horruit erubuitque simul. (*Achilleid* 1.864–6)
>
> When he came closer and the rival radiance gave back his face . . . he shuddered [or 'bristled'] and turned red at the same time.

Aside from the fact that the *Achilleid* here and the *ríastrad* from the *Breslech* share an element of comedy, the two passages are unlike in character and context. Yet evidence from outside the *Táin* and the *Achilleid* narrowly considered compels us to consider a possible relationship. Rather than begin with speculation on how

[63] See above, 118; and 59.

these verses were read and interpreted in the medieval Irish classroom, we can examine, very concretely, how they were translated in the 'Irish *Achilleid*':

> Iss ed dano do-roine Achil beith ic uirrleginn scribind isin cathsciath do-rala occa; scel cath dano ro bhai isin sciath. Cid tra acht ro garbaidh a folt uas Achil in tan-sin 7 ro ruamnaigh a rosc 7 ro tsaeb a dhealb.[64]
>
> Achilles read the insription on the battle-shield which was put before him; for a tale of a battle was on the shield. In any case the hair above Achilles became rough at that moment and his eye became red and his shape became contorted.

Sáebaid, 'to make or become crooked, to contort', in 'ro tsaeb a dhealb' probably recalls *torqueo*, 'to twist', in Statius's 'torsit genas'. Shackleton Bailey translates the latter phrase as 'he rolled his eyes', which I follow above.[65] However, *torqueo* has the secondary meaning 'to distort'. Latin *genae* has the primary meaning 'cheeks, side of face', which is extended to 'eye-sockets, eyes' only through the figure of metonomy. Interestingly, the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* includes this occurrence of *torqueo* under the definition 'to bend, distort, twist out of shape', and may understand *genae* in its primary meaning. The implication is that 'he twisted/contorted his cheeks' is not an improbable understanding of the phrase, regardless of what Statius intended.

The imprecise formulation 'ro tsaeb a dhealb' in the Irish text may reflect that the translator saw no satisfactory mental picture behind Statius's overly refined *torsit genas*. Simple *dealb*, 'shape, appearance', was chosen to express the various possible facial localities of *genae*. The translation therefore suggests that the medieval author understood the phrase in much the same way as the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, that is, as a contortion of Achilles's face. This Irish Achilles, representing a critical interpretation of difficult Statian diction, emerges as a clear link between Statius's Achilles and Cú Chulainn of the *ríastrad*. To quote again the effect of the *ríastrad* on Cú Chulainn's face:

> Ríastartha a bél co úrtachta. Srengais in n-ól don ḟidba chnáma comtar écnaig a ginchróes. (TBC-1, 2259–60)
>
> His mouth was twisted back fearsomely. He drew his cheek back from his jawbones until his inward parts were visible.

'His mouth was twisted back' translates one possible interpretation of 'torsit genas'. *Genae*, 'sides of the face', imagined as 'mouth' specifically could have been facilitated by its similiarity to Irish *gin*, 'mouth'. The image is varied in the succeeding phrase with *ól*, '(lower) cheek, mouth', and the possible pun on *gin/genae* itself in *gin-chróes*, 'inward parts'.[66] This succession of images may be a comment on the semantic range of *genae* in the original Statian model. The development of the images, however, for example, the notion that the contortion of his cheeks is extreme enough to expose Cú Chulainn's guts, shows the Irish

64 Ó hAodha, 'The Irish version', §40.

65 Shackleton Bailey, *Statius*, 3: 377.

66 See *DIL* s.v. *óil*; O'Rahilly translates the form *ginchróes*, properly 'wide-open mouth', as a corruption for *inchróes*, 'inward parts' (cf. *inchróes*, TBC-2, 2277); see O'Rahilly, 'Five notes', 143–4; I do not believe that it is necessary to see a corruption, but if O'Rahilly is correct, the recollection of *genae* would be the psychological explanation for how the corruption *in-* to *gin-* occurred in the first place.

author's ekphrastic flair. This expansion also reflects the challenge to provide striking images where Statius's diction is characteristically opaque. In this, the author of the *ríastrad* unpacks Statius's imagery, in contrast to the translator of the *Achilleid*, who worked to contain it.

A sceptic can comment that it is still a stretch to go from Achilles's minor spasm to Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. Given that the preceding analysis draws on close textual comparison of the *Achilleid* with medieval Irish texts, there is a further complication that copies of the *Achilleid* circulating in medieval Ireland may not have been always identical with the modern critical edition. As it happens, it can be verified that difficulty encountered in 'torsitque genas' was marked in copies circulating in the Middle Ages. One text of the poem with its accompanying marginal and interlinear glosses has been edited by Paul Clogan from a thirteenth-century continental copy of the popular schooltext dubbed the *Liber Catonianus* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 1663 [**V**]).[67] For the verses which describe Achilles's physical transformation quoted above, **V** has a significant variant:

> vel torsit huc et illuc torvus apparuit (1)
> Infremuit rubuitque genas, et fronte relicta
> surrexere come . . .
> horruit erubuitque simul.[68]
>
> (1) 'that is, twisted hither and thither, appeared fierce'

'Rubuitque genas' in place of 'torsitque genas' is not impossible. But the phrase has clearly been borrowed from the continuation of the description of Achilles's transformation at 'horruit erubuitque'. The phrase presumably entered the text when a concerned exegete worried rather too much over odd 'torsitque genas'. The correct reading, however, survives in the interlinear gloss: 'vel torsit huc et illuc torvus apparuit' ('that is, twisted hither and thither, appeared fierce'). Although we read this gloss as containing a *varia lectio*, a reader without access to a critical edition would be just as likely to assume that 'that is, twisted hither and thither, appeared fierce' was an explanatory gloss. Whether it was *rubuit* which was felt to need explanation, or whether something much worse originally had crept into the text at this point, we cannot know. What is to be noted is that this textual tradition of the *Achilleid* shows the confusion and glossing activity one would predict of the difficult text in this passage, and the struggle of school masters to cope.

It is inconclusive whether the author of the 'Irish *Achilleid*' read a glossed text resembling **V**. 'Ro ruamnaigh a rosc' ('his eye became red') might, inexactly, recall corrupt 'rubuitque genas', or even further, 'erubuitque' at verse 866, were it not for the fact that *rubesco* and *erubesco* tend to refer to blushing or phenomena like the dawn. If anything it is 'torvus apparuit' in the gloss attached to verse 855 which supplied the Irish image, as *torvus* is regularly used to denote fierceness in a person's eyes especially. The Irish copy of the poem, therefore,

67 Clogan, *The Medieval Achilleid*. For **V**, a manuscript apparently copied in France from a Flemish exemplar, see Pellegrin, *Les manuscrits*, 3: 294–7; for the growth of the *Liber Catonianus*, see Boas, 'De librorum'; and, more recently, Hunt, *Teaching*, 1: 66–77.

68 Clogan, *Medieval Achilleid*, 107, for text and gloss; Clogan consigned the reading *rubuitque* to the *apparatus criticus* (where it is misspelled); the reading has been checked against a microfilm of the manuscript.

may have shared such glossarial comments with the tradition represented in **V**. More interesting is the light thrown on what happened to Statius's *genae* as medieval interpreters and translators struggled with the verse. Correct 'torsitque genas', as argued earlier, is odd enough that it could have inspired Irish *dealb*, 'shape, appearance', on its own. In this instance, however, the gloss preserved in **V**, 'torsit huc et illuc' ('twisted hither and thither'), leads one away from the mental picture of the hero rolling his eyes upward and discourages the correct reading. The correct interpretation is absent from the Irish translation, but the vague 'ro tsaeb a dhealb' ('his shape contorted') of the Irish is a tolerable nod towards the equally vague 'he twisted hither and thither' of the explanatory Latin gloss.

It appears that the contortions which begin with Cú Chulainn turned backwards forwards and which constitute the first part of the hero's *ríastrad* are collectively termed his 'sáebglés díberge' (TBC-1, 2249). 'Wild feat of contortion' in O'Rahilly's translation, this could be rendered more literally his 'contortion-feat of wrath'. *Sáeb-* of *sáebglés* recalls the verb *sáebaid*, 'to become crooked, contort', used in the translation of Achilles's physical transformation in the Irish *Achilleid*, the vague 'ro tsaeb a dhealb'. If one presumed that the saga text had priority, the similarity in vocabulary would lead one to assume that Achilles's 'contortion' in the Irish text contained an allusion to the 'sáebglés díberge' of the *ríastrad*. If it is recalled that the *Achilleid* itself circulated in Ireland well before this translation was penned, and was possibly familiar to the authors of the *Breslech*, one would not be far from suggesting that it is Cú Chulainn's *sáebglés díberge* which contained the allusion to Achilles's own original torsion 'hither and thither'. The *ríastrad*, according to conventions of saga *imitatio* and practiced techniques of expansion, may have been the result of one attempt to provide visuals for what, exactly, such twisting 'hither and thither' might have looked like. There is little question that the remainder of this *ríastrad* portrays a youth who intends to 'appear savage', that is, 'torvus apparuit' in the glossator's phrase. Nor is there doubt that the *ríastrad* responds to the ekphrastic challenge of portraying what, exactly, exaggerated *torvus* might look like.

The 'Medieval *Achilleid*' printed by Clogan must be used with caution, as it has not been demonstrated that the glosses which constitute a part of this commentary are ancient, as Clogan claims. At least one reviewer severely criticized Clogan's editorial assumptions and denied that there was a commentary as such, and not just the ad hoc glosses of various masters in otherwise unrelated manuscripts.[69] This being the case, we cannot propose that there was an early version of this scholar's apparatus to the *Achilleid* which may have circulated in Ireland in the Old Irish period, in the same way that we can be confident that the ancient commentary of Servius, for example, circulated in early Ireland in roughly the same form as it survives in later continental manuscripts. But the vast majority of surviving tenth- and eleventh-century copies of the *Achilleid* are school copies with marginal and interlinear glosses.[70] It is reasonable to assume that the poem circulated in such a format in Ireland, at least by this time. This period in the transmission of the poem is well within range of the later strata of

69 Hall, 'The editing'; for the anonymous texts which accompany the *Achilleid* in medieval schoolbooks and ad hoc glossarial activity, see Jeudy and Riou, 'L'*Achilléide*'.

70 See Munk Olsen, *L'étude*, 2: 521–67.

the *Táin*, including the *Macgnímrada* and the *Breslech*. As for the quality of the commentary preserved in **V**, it is not the kind which one would imagine written by ancient grammarians in any case. For example, the observation that Achilles twisted *huc et illuc* does not represent ancient philological learning, but simple familiarity with Statius's poetry, as the phrase is a favorite of Statius's.[71] Such a gloss could have been written whenever and wherever interpretation of the poem was being attempted by someone who had spent any length of time with the poet's work. This is to say, any *magister*, whether in late-antique Rome, Carolingian France or eleventh-century Ireland.

The inclusion of the *Achilleid* in the widely circulating *Liber Catonianus* reminds us that the text, which is accessible, humourous and mercifully short, was standard reading for medieval readers acquiring Latin. It is a tradition of reading, interpreting and teaching, rather than a tradition of ancient lore narrowly considered, which comes across in **V**. In the previous chapter, a gloss on the word *consumitur* from **V** was cited as an example of an interpretation of a difficult verse which, it was argued, could have been arrived at independently by an Irish reader.[72] In this discussion of the *ríastrad*, it is this same passage of the poem which is considered, that is, Achilles's eventful meeting with Ulysses, with reference to the glosses in the same manuscript. Again, the glosses are not a source for the *ríastrad*, but can be considered for what they reveal of medieval *magistri* contending with Statius's diction.

Eclecticism and Literary Imitatio

Beyond the question of whether specific commentaries were known in medieval Ireland is the complication introduced by the eclecticism of medieval Irish classical studies. The second part of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* offers a case in point. Of Achilles's rather muted 'contortion', Statius described how 'surrexere comae' ('his hair rose'); he varied this with a second version of the same image a few lines later: 'horruit erubuitque simul' ('he shuddered [or "bristled"] and turned red at the same time'). A version of this occurs in the section of Cú Chulainn's contortion which describes phenomena above the hero's head:

> Ra chasnig a ḟolt imma c[h]end imar craíbred ṅdergscíach i mbernaid athálta. Ce ro crateá rígaball fó rígthorad immi iss ed mod dá rísad ubull díb dochum talman taris acht ro sesed ubull for cach óenḟinna and re frithchassad na ferge atracht dá ḟult úaso. (TCB-1, 2268–72)
>
> His hair curled about his head like branches of red hawthorn used to re-fence a gap in a hedge. If a noble apple-tree weighed down with fruit had been shaken about his hair, scarcely one apple would have reached the ground through it, but an apple would have stayed impaled on each separate hair because of the fierce bristling of his hair above his head. (O'Rahilly's tr.)

Hair standing on end in terror is probably universal. The same associated with anger, not necessarily felt as normal in humans, can be inferred from the phenomenon in animals, especially boars and dogs. Accordingly, this image in Statius can

[71] See, for example, *Thebaid* 4.366, 380 and 10.168, the latter in proximity with *genae*.
[72] See above, 168.

be considered an image from nature.[73] The version this image from nature takes in the *ríastrad*, extended to include experience from shrubbery, points to an inspired comic writer. But we can ask whether Irish *dergscé*, translated by O'Rahilly 'red hawthorn', owes more to Statius's 'horruit erubuitque' than is evident at first glance. From *horruit*, 'shuddered, bristled', to a thorn bush is an obvious visual association. As for *erubuit*, a reader might note in the verb *erubesco* a wordplay between the verb's root *rubeus*, 'red' in this sense, and its homograph *rubeus*, 'made of bramble'. The noun related to the latter is *rubus*, 'bramble bush'. A careful reader of epic encountering Statius's 'horruit erubuitque' might recall the collocation of *horreo* and *rubus* from *Georgics* 3.314–15:

> pascuntur uero siluas et summa Lycaei
> horrentisque rubos et amantis ardua dumos.
>
> For they graze the woods and summits of Lycaeus, and the bristling bramble bushes and hill-loving thorn bushes.

A medieval Irish scholar not necessarily carrying a Virgilian concordance in his head might recall school days with Virgil's *Eclogues* and fairly basic vocabulary lessons spent with the Filargirian commentary on Virgil, especially the day he acquired *rubus*:

> mella fluant illi, ferat et rubus asper amomum. (*Eclogue* 3.89)
>
> For him let honey flow, and let the rough bramble bush bear spices.

The Filargirian *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii* comments: 'ET RUBUS ASPER spineta' ('a thorn brake').[74]

The present writer is not prepared to comment on natural history in Virgil and his commentators, nor on *rubus* as anything other than a word. What a medieval Irish reader needed to know about this word and got from the Filargirian commentary is that it was some kind of thorn bush. The kind of bush meant by compound Irish *derg-scé*, literally 'red thorn bush', though perhaps exactly identified in the mind of the author, today is not certain; O'Rahilly translates as 'red hawthorn', Dinneen as simple 'red thorn'.[75] Remembering that *rubus* appears to contain the Latin for 'red' *rubeus* within itself, we can see that compound Irish *derg-scé*, 'red thorn bush', whether a traditional name for a native Irish plant or not, is a very effective translation of the Latin word. Given the various meanings embedded in the words *rubus/rubeus*, I suggest that the Irish author saw a potential wordplay in verbal *e-rub-uit*, something like: 'he became like a *rubus*'. The wordplay would have been hastened by the preceding 'horruit' ('he bristled'), already connected with *rubus* by no less a model of propriety in diction than Virgil. The elements of the hair standing upright, the bristling, and the red thorn bush all recur in the image of Cú Chulainn's hair. Although, as

[73] For the application of the language used throughout these passages in Virgil and Statius to describe a boar, consider Ovid's description of the Calydonian Boar at *Metamorphoses* 8.284–6; the language is echoed at *Thebaid* 2.470, where Tydeus is compared to the Calydonian Boar, and further examples could be cited.

[74] Read *spinetum*; for the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*, see above, 28; the same *locus* in the Bern Scholia has '*rubus* spineta'.

[75] See Dinneen, *Foclóir*, s.v. *dearg-*; see *DIL* s.v. *scé* for the Old Irish glossaries which specify that *scé* was defined as bearing *delge*, 'thorns'.

with earlier examples, it cannot be proven that the Irish author alludes to a Latin source, the availability of this potential wordplay in the *Achilleid*, in a passage which anticipates the *ríastrad*, should be given fair consideration. The humorous spirit of the wordplay need not be questioned, as it is the same humour which lies behind all the *ríastrad*, evident additionally in the image of apples which become impaled on this 'red hawthorn bush' on Cú Chulainn's head. The latter is a further example of the exaggeration which typically accompanies *imitatio* throughout the *Táin*.

If Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* is to be seen as a reflection of these few verses from Statius, the key is to regard the *ríastrad*, not as a translation of the model, but as a continuation of the techniques of expansion encountered in *Togail Troí*. This technique was never merely to translate, but to interpret and unpack the imitated passage. According to the practice of *aemulatio*, the aim could be to surpass the model. However, the elaboration evident in the *ríastrad* suggests that the *imitatio* of the *Achilleid* is not direct, but that there have been intermediaries. For example, the arrangement of motifs in an inverted order, bottom to top, may reflect a stage in the model's development. We can only speculate whether these stages initially accompanied the development of the iconography of a vernacularized Achilles, or Cú Chulainn specifically. Alternatively, the developing model may have been impersonalized from the outset, that is, intended as a formulaic model pure and simple.

The techniques of expansion developed in *Togail Troí* included drawing on the eclecticism characteristic of medieval Irish classical studies. For example, the *imitatio* in the muster of Greece from *Togail Troí* combined at least two epic models.[76] Multiple models may, likewise, lie behind the *ríastrad*, although in this case their identification is by no means as straightforward. Eclecticism may impair the identification of *imitatio* according to criteria discussed in Chapters 3 and 4; for example the clustering of motifs in a sequence may not figure if motifs are drawn from several competing sources. Less persuasive criteria, such as typological correspondence, become proportionately more important. In illustration of this, one interesting verse from the *Thebaid* describes the physical reaction experienced by the youth Parthenopaeus when he meets in battle the more powerful warrior Dryas. Upon the boy's realization that he will certainly die in the encounter:

> tremor ora repens ac viscera torsit
> Arcados. (*Thebaid* 9.857–8)
>
> A sudden trembling twisted the face and the insides of the Arcadian.

Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* has obvious affinities with this picture of Parthenopaeus's experience of the twisting of his internal organs and face. Principally the parallel comes in the 'contortion-feat' performed 'dá churp i mmedón a chrocind' ('with his body inside his skin') (TBC-1, 2249), and the phenomenon described in the words: 'táncatár a scoim 7 a t[h]romma co mbátár ar etelaig ina bél' ('his lungs and his liver fluttered in his mouth') (TBC-1, 2260). This latter parallel could have been hastened by observation that the primary meaning of *os* in the singular is 'mouth', that is, 'ora . . . torsit' ('he twisted . . . his mouth(s)'). The narrative

[76] See above, 116.

context shares nothing with Parthenopaeus's encounter with Dryas, however, and both these phenomena in the *ríastrad* are separated from one another by several lines. Accordingly, an argument in favour of *imitatio* would need something like a 'flag' or evidence of wordplay to be persuasive. The parallel in this case has some force only because Parthenopaeus is the child-warrior of the Argives, who, like Cú Chulainn, is dismissed for being beardless, as discussed above. The parallel is made also with the beardless Achilles in the *Achilleid*, for the characterization of whom Statius drew heavily on his earlier portrait of Parthenopaeus. In this case, Parthenopaeus here as a prefiguration of Achilles is clarified by the verbal echo of 'ora . . . viscera torsit' with the 'torsit genas' that renders Achilles's own 'contortion' so memorable.

What this means is that a pattern of correspondences in the imagery of Cú Chulainn, Achilles and Parthenopaeus is not likely the result of mere chance, nor, if conscious *imitatio*, the result of that morning's random reading. If it was that morning's reading, it was a session regulated by a critical eye practiced in biblical typology, which would see, and find demonstrated in verbal echoes in the Latin, that child-warriors are described to type. Furthermore, with his portraits of Parthenopaeus and Achilles, Statius here provided Irish writers yet another model for literary *imitatio*, although, in this case, it was the poet imitating himself. A reader quickly realizes that such *imitatio* in the *Achilleid* is overwhelmingly for comic effect, the poet, now in Ovidian mode, taking himself down a notch from the seriousness of his earlier, very ponderous Homero-Virgilian *Thebaid*. A kindred spirit of fun manifestly runs throughout the *ríastrad*. The latter demonstrates that imagery drawing on typological relationships by no means has to retain anything like the seriousness which biblical typology on its own might foster.

Following the trace of learned Irish eclecticism further, *torqueo* occurs again in the following description of the physical effect of fear, in this case mingled with rage, on another, at least youngish warrior, Turnus. The verses describe how the Fury Allecto appears to Turnus in a dream in the form of the aged priestess Calybe, and how she moves him to anger against the Trojans when she unexpectedly transforms back to her original infernal appearance:

> talibus Allecto dictis exarsit in iras.
> at iuueni oranti subitus tremor occupat artus,
> deriguere oculi: tot Erinys sibilat hydris
> tantaque se facies aperit. (*Aeneid* 7.445–8)
>
> When [Turnus] had finished speaking, Allecto blazed forth in anger. And a sudden trembling seized the youth's limbs as he spoke, his eyes became fixed: so many are the snakes with which the Fury hisses and so great the appearance she reveals.

A medieval reader with an interest in *imitatio* might notice the verbal echo of Turnus's *subitus tremor* with Statius's description of the sudden *tremor repens* experienced by Parthenopaeus. Two features in this description of Turnus have parallels in the *ríastrad*. In the first, the *tremor* which seizes Turnus's limbs ('occupat artus') is paralleled at the very beginning of Cú Chulainn's transformation, to repeat:

> Crithnaigset a charíni imbi . . . cach mball 7 cach n-alt 7 cach n-ind 7 cach n-áge de ó mulluch co talmain. (TBC-1, 2246–8)

> All the flesh of his body quivered . . . every limb and every joint, every end and every member of him from head to foot.

In the second parallel, Turnus's eyes are said to 'become fixed' ('deriguere oculi'). The parallel with the description of how one of Cú Chulainn's eyes retreats into his head, and how the other springs out onto his cheek, reproduced above (TBC-1, 2256–8), is not particularly convincing. However, it is interesting to compare the shape that this motif takes in the version of the *ríastrad* which the child-warrior Troilus is described as experiencing in the first recension of *Togail Troí*:

> Ros-lín bruth 7 ferg, 7 atraracht an lon láich asa éton combó comḟota frisin sróin, 7 dodechatar a dí śúil asa chind combat sith[ith]ir artemh fria chenn anechtair. Ropo cumma a ḟolt 7 cróebred sciád. Roḟóbair an cruthsin na slógu, amal léoman léir lán luind letarthaigh reithes do thruchu torcraide. (H 1473–8)
>
> Fury and anger filled him [sc. Troilus], and the *lon láich* arose out of his forehead until it was as long as his nose, and his two eyes came out of his head until they were as long as the measure of a fist around his head. His hair was like the branches of a thorn bush. He attacked the army in that form, like a stern lion full of lacerating fury which runs to destroy a herd of boars.[77]

This phenomenon is not termed a *ríastrad* in *Togail Troí*, yet the occurrence of motifs shared with Cú Chulainn's transformation leaves no doubt that the author either knew the *ríastrad* from the *Táin*, or had at hand a common model.[78] The effect undergone by Troilus's eyes, that is, that they protrude from his head, is not a translation of Virgil's 'deriguere oculi' used of Turnus. What happens to Troilus's eyes, however, is a credible picture of what is suggested by Virgil, who here describes terror. The image that Troilus's eyes extend from his face, therefore, may interpret the Latin; the continuation of the image, whereby the youth's eyes extend as far as the length of a fist (*airtem*), is another example of exaggeration employed in Irish expansion. There is no necessary reason to suggest that this variant of the image of the eyes in *Togail Troí* was borrowed directly from Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. On the contrary, the latter variant, being the more exaggerated, with the two eyes going off in separate directions, is likely the more developed version. The comparison of Troilus's hair to a thorn bush is, of course, shared with Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* and suggested in Statius's description of Achilles's 'contortion'. The possibility that the author of *Togail Troí* even recalls the *Achilleid* directly is increased by the fact that Troilus's transformation is accompanied by the simile which compares him to a lion. The identical image is used of Achilles during his transformation, in a simile where he is compared to a young lion which turns on its master (*Achilleid* 1.858–63).

77 For the *lon láich*, see below.

78 We can note that Troilus's *ríastrad* preserves the correct reading *airtem*, where all copies of the *Táin* have meaningless *airnem*; something like a *ríastrad*, clearly a less-detailed variation on the common model, occurs also of Hector and Patroclus in the second recension of *Togail Troí*, L 32326–32.

Fear, Rage and the Child-Warrior

It is difficult to see why the Irish translator would associate iconography connected to Statius's Achilles with Dares's Troilus, other than, perhaps, that they are both child-warriors. Troilus's *ríastrad*-like experience has in common with Cú Chulainn's the fact that it appears to be intended to express rage. No further cause or rationale for the transformation is offered in either Irish text. In the case of Turnus and Parthenopaeus, the cause for their more muted physical transformations is terror. Statius, in fact, in his representations of both Achilles and Parthenopaeus, employs language which occurs with fair regularity in depictions of terror in Latin poetry, including especially verbs like *torqueo*, *horreo*, *deriguo*, variations on *membra*, *viscera* and the phrase *surrexere comae*. Passages in Virgil such as the effect of Allecto on Turnus were one model for this tradition, and Statius would have known the continuation of the same in Ovid.[79] 'Wrath' is probably felt at least to lie beneath Virgil's description of Turnus's terror before Allecto, given that Turnus stands for *ira* in the poem.[80] Statius developed this further with the application of this language to Achilles, where the aim was certainly to have fun with the iconography of terror. Showing Virgilian perceptiveness in addition to his own comic sense, the language of terror is employed to express a boy's typically conflicted bravura rage.

Taken apart from Statian idiosyncrasy, the application of the iconography of fear to rage is not obvious. In **V**, a school master judged that the 'rising' of Achilles's hair was potentially misleading enough to merit an explanatory gloss: 'erecte fuere non metu sed pre ira' ('[his hair] was raised not in fear but in anger') (at *Achilleid* 1.856). The author of the *ríastrad* judged, similarly, that the same explanation needed to be spelled out in relation to the thorn bush on Cú Chulainn's head: 'ro sesed ubull for cach óenfinna and re frithchassad na ferge atracht dá fult úaso' ('an apple would have settled on each individual hair on account of the "bristling of anger" which rose up from his head of hair') (TBC-1, 2270–2; my translation). This specific reference to anger may have been felt necessary to counterbalance an existing association of fear with the word *scé*, 'bush', in Irish, which in the Old Irish glossaries is equated with *úath*, 'whitethorn', homonymous with *úath*, 'terror'.[81] What of terror is left in the *ríastrad*, one would presume, was transfered from the hero to his opponents. About the emotional experience of the latter, however, we read nothing. Absent, indeed, is any suggestion of character psychology in this passage. This is even though the Latin parallels, sources in this view, are exquisite models for how psychology is portrayed through just such language.

I deduce from the sources of this imagery and its use by Irish authors that the *ríastrad* is first and foremost a phenomenon of the exercise of rhetorical description. This is iconography practiced mostly for its own sake, though the comic potential of overly detailed description is clearly appreciated. Comic effect in *Togail Troí*, however, is exceptional, so we have one reason for suggesting that Troilus has acquired a *ríastrad*-like phenomenon second hand from the *Táin*. As

79 Compare, for example, *Aeneid* 12.867–8; *Metamorphoses* 3.100; and descriptions of the effect of the Gorgon and Athene's aegis, above, 171–2.

80 Servius in fact comments of this passage: 'vicinitate scilicet furiae: nam tremor furoris est'.

81 See *DIL* s.vv. *scé*, 1 *úath*, 'terror', and 3 *úath*, 'whitethorn'.

for a final look at the *Táin*'s own direct models, it is revealing to consider again Statius's portrait of the child-warrior Parthenopaeus. The twisting of the lad's insides in the moments before his death is mentioned above, but there is a more interesting, though subtle, distortion of his features earlier, at the commencement of his *aristeia*. Self-conscious of his beauty and the fact that his beard has not yet begun to grow, Parthenopaeus attempts to contort his features to present a fierceness they do not otherwise convey:

> nec formae sibi laude placet multumque severis
> asperat ora minis, sed frontis servat honorem
> ira decens. (*Thebaid* 9.704–6)
>
> He takes no pleasure in the praise of his beauty and greatly roughens his face with grim threats, but the anger becomes him and preserves his brow's comeliness.

Lactantius Placidus explains the boy's motivation: 'ipse tamen formae laudem aspernatur et, ut celet pulchritudinem suam, irascitur' ('[nevertheless] he despises the praise of his appearance and enrages himself in order to hide his own beauty'). Even in spite of Parthenopaeus's efforts to give a face to *ira*, Statius describes how the Theban warriors, reminded of their own children, refuse to fight him. Lactantius Placidus provides precisely the type of comment which we feel could be supplied, yet is not, to explain Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. But some such motive is at least implied in the scene from the episode entitled *Aided Lóich*, in which Cú Chulainn is told by the women who have gathered to admire his beauty to make himself a false beard so that Lóch will consent to face him (TBC-1, 1899–903).

The troop of admiring women recurs in *Túarascbáil Delba Con Culaind*, 'The Description of the Appearance of Cú Chulainn'. This episode closes the *Breslech* and contrasts with Cú Chulainn's monstrous *ríastrad*. In this episode, in a variant of the incident from *Aided Lóich*, Cú Chulainn, following his *ríastrad* and slaughter of men, women and children throughout the four corners of Ireland, parades in his fine clothes; the passage is realized as a long ekphrasis typical of Irish techniques of expansion.[82] The women of Connacht – oddly, the force he opposes – gather to admire him:

> Is and sin frisócbat mná Connacht forsna buidne 7 fordringtís mná firu do décsin crotha Con Culaind. (TBC-1, 2367–8).
>
> Then the women of Connacht climbed up on the hosts and women climbed on top of the men in order to look at the beauty of Cú Chulainn.

This motif occurs associated with Parthenopaeus as well, where it follows the boy's failed attempt to mar his beauty at the beginning of his *aresteia*. Like the parallel in the *Tain*, in this instance a troop of admiring females is associated with the opposing army:

> illum et Sidoniae iuga per Teumesia Nymphae
> bellantem atque ipso sudore et pulvere gratum
> laudant, et tacito ducunt suspiria voto. (*Thebaid* 9.709–11)

[82] O'Rahilly, TBC-2, xxxv, notes that the lines in *Aided Lóich* which describe Cú Chulainn in his finery and the clambering of the women to admire him are a doublet to *Túarascbáil Delba Con Culaind* and an 'interpolation' in Recension 1; the observation does not affect the present argument other than to clarify that the motif is a late introduction to the *Táin*.

> Even the Sidonian [= Theban] nymphs, on the Teumesian ridges, praise him as he fights and wins favour from the sweat and dust, and they draw sighs in silent longing.

The adoration of the women of Connacht for Cú Chulainn after his gruesome contortion and *breslech* marks another moment where the author dispenses with a realistic portrayal of the psychology of his protagonists. The logical progression from the *breslech* to Cú Chulainn's *túarascbáil* is wholly absent, enough so that one could well suspect that the two parts of this episode have been joined by mere accident. In the version of this motif attached to Parthenopaeus, where Parthenopaeus's attempt to seem fierce only succeeds in making him appear more adorable, the love of the Theban nymphs is wholly convincing. A muted version of the motif was present already in Statius's first introduction of the boy: 'dulce rubens viridique genas spectabilis aevo' ('sweetly blushing and with the freshness of youth on his cheeks he was made to be admired') (*Thebaid* 4.274). The motif of nymphs falling in love with boys was a topos in antiquity, and Statius's example well illustrates the literary potential.[83] In this run-up to the *aristeia*, Statius gives a model for a narrative sequence portraying a boy's impatience with his own beauty, his expression of frustrated *ira*, and throngs of fawning older women who frustrate him only further. Given the additional typological correspondence between Parthenopaeus and Cú Chulainn, it is possible that Statius did more than provide the model for this strange episode which concludes the *Breslech*. Statius may have been further recalled as a typological prefiguration for the otherwise unexplained *ríastrad*, a boy desiring to look scary, and its linking to his oddly opposing *túarascbáil*. The Statian model therefore reveals the interpretability of this odd sequence from the close to the *Breslech*. Considered apart from the classical model, this sequence is pleasingly grotesque but, in a critical reading, emerges as somewhat arbitrary. A Parthenopaean allusion here goes some way to rehabilitating the ambitious literary artist we feel to be behind the *Breslech*.

The 'Hero's Light' and the 'Torches of the War-Goddess'

The second part of the *ríastrad* is preoccupied with phenomena that occur around or above Cú Chulainn's head. Although the visuals in this second part are clearer than in the first, two phenomena require special consideration, namely *in lúan láith* and *na klne bodba*. These are translated by O'Rahilly as 'the hero's light' and 'the torches of the war-goddess' respectively. Understood in these terms, these items have resulted in some odd speculations in critical discussions of the character of the *ríastrad*.

The description of the *lúan láith*, 'hero's light', emitted from Cú Chulainn's forehead comes near the end of the *ríastrad*:

> Atracht in lúan láith asa étun comba sithethir remithir airnem n-óclaích corbo chomfota frisin sróin coro dechrastár oc imbirt na scíath, oc brogad ind arad, oc taibleth na slóg. (TBC-1, 2272–4)

[83] See Sanna, 'Dust', 202; for the nymphs' love for Hylas in Valerius and the Filargirian commentary to Virgil, see above, 69.

> The hero's light rose from his forehead, as long and as thick as a hero's fist and it was as long as his nose, and he was filled with rage as he wielded the shields and urged on the charioteer and cast sling-stones at the host. (O'Rahilly's tr.)

The collocation *lúan láith* occurs as 'lónd láith' in the corresponding passage in Recension 2 (2289), and as 'lon láich' in Troilus's *ríastrad* from *Togail Troí* (see above).[84] The second elements in the phrase, *láth* and *láech*, can both mean 'hero', but are etymologically distinct.[85] As for the first element, the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* suggests that *lúan* of this phrase may be identical with [1]*lúan*, 'Monday', a word which, arguably, carries the sense 'moon' in some examples. The *Dictionary* then takes this *lúan* to be extended to 'radiance, light', and suggests that the *lúan láith* may be 'some kind of radiation (?) above the head of a warrior in battle' (see s.v. [2]*lúan*). In addition to the uncertainty as to whether the base form is *lúan* or *lónd/lon*, the variation between *láith* and *láich* in Troilus's 'hero's light' appears to be the common misreading of Insular *c* for *t*, or vice versa. Scribal confusion as to the spelling of this common phrase does not inspire confidence that the collocation was a familiar idiom of oral storytelling, but such variations are by no means unparalleled throughout the literature.[86]

In fact, it has been difficult to extract sense from the phrase *lúan láith* without resort to analogy with other traditions. Stokes's suggestion 'hero's light', the sense favoured by the *Dictionary*, was apparently encouraged by the analogy with the divine radiance or flame seen around the head of Diomedes and Achilles in their battle-rages from Books 5 and 18 of the *Iliad*.[87] Murphy appears to accept Stokes's translation, and posits a shared Indo-European heroic motif as the source of the image in the Irish and Greek texts.[88] Given that the analogy with Homer's heroes informs Stokes's interpretation of the *lúan láith* in the first place, the question as to whether the Irish author could have known the Homeric example invites a circular argument. Yet it is instructive to consider the several places where the Homeric topos was available. Macrobius quotes the verses from Book 5 of the *Iliad*, the first occurrence of the motif in Homer, in this case the flame cast by Athene upon Diomedes at the beginning of his *aristeia*:

> δαΐέ οἱ ἐκ κόρυθός τε καὶ ἀσπίδος ἀκάματον πῦρ. (*Saturnalia* 5.13.34; *Iliad* 5.4)
>
> [Athene] made tireless fire blaze from his helmet and shield.[89]

What is interesting about this Homeric occurrence is the fact that, in spite of Stokes's and Murphy's claim, the ἀκάματον πῦρ 'tireless fire' from Diomedes's helmet and shield is a weak parallel with the presumed 'radiance' of the *lúan láith*. Macrobius quotes four places from the *Aeneid* where Virgil imitates the Homeric verse (*Saturnalia* 5.13.35–6). In these imitations of Homer's ἀκάματον

84 See also the second recension of *Togail Troí*, L 32509 'lonna láith', as well as TBC-1, 69 and 433 'lúan láith', and 1651 'lón láith'.

85 See Henry, 'Furor', 236; and Sharpe, 'Hiberno-Latin *laicus*'.

86 Although I choose not to discuss here whether *lónd/lon* can be taken as *lon*, 'blackbird', and identified with the formulaic *én gaile*, 'bird of valour', the association is explicit in a late passage in Cú Chulainn's death tale, Kimpton, *The Death*, 19: 'Énblaith (.i. lón gaile) etarlúamnach úasa erra óencha(i)rpait' ('A fluttering bird of valour (?) (i.e. warrior's light) [is] above the champion of the single chariot') (Kimpton's translation); see also *Togail Troí* at L 32508–9.

87 Stokes, *Togail Troi*, 169 s.v. *lonn láith* (note that Stokes does not claim *lúan* as the base form).

88 Murphy, *Saga*, 29, n. 44.

89 For the knowledge of the *Saturnalia* in Ireland and on the continent, see above, 37–8.

πῦρ, Virgil onces interprets this as *micantia fulmina*, 'flashing thunderbolts', twice as a *flamma*, 'flame', and twice as an *ignis*, 'fire'.[90] With Macrobius and his expertise on Virgil as the critical intermediary, it would be obvious even to readers with little Greek that it is flame, not radiance, which is described by Homer. Only Macrobius's example of Virgil's 'ardet apex capiti' ('the helmet gleams/is ablaze on his [Aeneas's] head') (*Aeneid* 10.270), approximates the phenomenon suggested by Irish *lúan*.

The flame blazing from Diomedes's helmet might be felt to approximate 'radiance' by analogy with the second *locus* cited by Stokes and Murphy, *Iliad* 18, which recounts the commencement of Achilles's *aristeia*:

> ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κεφαλῇ νέφος ἔστεφε δῖα θεάων
> χρύσεον, ἐκ δ'αὐτοῦ δαῖε φλόγα παμφανόωσαν.
> ὡς δ'ὅτε καπνὸς ἰὼν ἐξ ἄστεος αἰθέρ' ἵκηται,
> τηλόθεν ἐκ νήσου, τὴν δήϊοι ἀμφιμάχωνται,
> οἵ τε πανημέριοι στυγερῷ κρίνονται ἄρηϊ
> ἄστεος ἐκ σφετέρου· ἅμα δ'ἠελίῳ καταδύντι
> πυρσοί τε φλεγέθουσιν ἐπήτριμοι, ὑψόσε δ'αὐγὴ
> γίγνεται ἀΐσσουσα περικτιόνεσσιν ἰδέσθαι,
> αἴ κέν πως σὺν νηυσὶν ἄρεω ἀλκτῆρες ἵκωνται,
> ὣς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος κεφαλῆς σέλας αἰθέρ' ἵκανε. (*Iliad* 18.205–14)
>
> And the divine among goddesses circled about his head a golden cloud, and kindled from it a flame far-shining. As when smoke goes up into the air from a city from an island far away, while enemies fight all around it, who all day long in the hateful division of war fight from their own city, but as the sun goes down signal fires blaze out in a dense throng, so that on high a pulsing light goes up for neighbouring islands to see, so that they might come in ships to fight off the enemy; so the blaze reached up into the air from Achilles's head.

The single adjective χρύσεον, 'golden', in the phrase 'golden cloud' has afforded the critics' analogy with the radiance assumed in the *lúan láith*. But the *lúan láith* which 'arises from out of' the hero's head contrasts in direction and space with the cloud which Athene circles about Achilles's head. Moreover, the development of the image in the Irish text, namely that the *lúan láith* rose until it was 'as long and as thick as a hero's fist, until it was as long as his nose', is an odd visual to attach to radiance. One can legitimately question whether the Irish author intended to give an intelligible picture of the phenomenon, or even had one in mind.

In Homer, this cloud is set upon Achilles in tandem with the φλόξ παμφανόωσα, 'flame far-shining', from the top of Achilles's head; ἀκάματον πῦρ, 'tireless flame', the identical formula used of the flame from Diomedes's helmet, is also used in the continuing description of the phenomenon[91]. The singularity of the scene in Book 18 argues against the notion that such divine radiances around the heads of warriors are formulaic in a meaningful sense. In the *Iliad* at any rate, only the ἀκάματον πῦρ is a recurring motif. Descriptions of flame emitted from the helmets of warriors in the *Aeneid* are, as Macrobius witnesses, imita-

[90] *Aeneid* 9.732–3, 10.270–1, 7.785–6, 8.620.

[91] *Iliad* 18.225–7: ἡνίοχοι δ'ἔκπληγεν, ἐπεὶ ἴδον ἀκάματον πῦρ δεινὸν ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς μεγαθύμου Πηλεΐωνος δαιόμενον 'The charioteers were frightened out of their wits when they saw the tireless terrible flame above the head of great-hearted Achilles'.

tions of the *Iliad*, and cannot be considered commonplaces of martial description. Moreover, something like 'divine radiance' is reasonably familiar in a variety of non-martial contexts. For example, at *Aeneid* 2.682–3, a light around the head of Aeneas's son Ascanius marks the boy's divine destiny to be the ancestor of Rome. Servius Danielis records of an 'effulgent cloud' around the head of Pallas Athene that it is a 'divine cloud': 'est [enim] fulgidum lumen, quo deorum capita cinguntur. sic etiam pingi solet' ('for that is a shining light with which the heads of deities are circled; and it is also the custom to paint it that way') (at *Aeneid* 2.616). Servius Danielis's comment, if intended for representations of pagan gods, anticipates the most obvious source for the motif in the Christian Middle Ages, the haloed images of Christ and his saints in Christian art. In a sense, the unarguable availability of the motif in the visual culture of the Irish monastery renders any further speculation about the visual sources for a 'divine radiance around the head' pointless.

While Achilles's 'flame far-shining' bears little comparison with Cú Chulainn's *lúan láith*, there is a surprising comparison to be made between the simile in which this flame is described and which ends the passage from Homer quoted above, and the image which closes the *ríastrad*:

> Ardithir immorro remithir talcithir tresithir sithidir seólc[h]rand prímlui[n]gi móri in buinne díriuch dondḟala atracht a fírchléthe a chendmullaig hi certairdi, co nderna dubchíaich ndruídechta de amal chíaig do rígbrudin in tan tic rí día tincur hi fescur lathe gemreta. (TBC-1, 2274–8)
>
> As high, as thick, as strong, as powerful and as long as the mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose straight up from the very top of his head and dissolved into a dark magical mist like the smoke of a palace when a king comes to be waited on in the evening of a winter's day.

Such elaborate extended similes are a defining feature of Homeric and Virgilian style, but are exceptional in native Irish saga.[92] However, as demonstrated above, it was a preoccupation of the author of *Togail Troí* to incorporate imitations of epic similes into his own text as a feature of his classicizing style.[93] In regard to the simile which ends the *ríastrad*, the Greek and Irish similes bear an unexpected resemblance to one another. Both similes are in two parts. The first part gives a picture of smoke, καπνός/*ceó*, rising into the air; in the simile from the *ríastrad* this *ceó* is 'mist' (acc. sg. -*chíaich*) in its first occurrence, 'smoke' (variant acc. sg. *chíaig*) in its second. Both similes are extended in their second part to specify a nocturnal setting: in the Greek example nightfall has led to the lighting of signal fires; in the Irish the smoke comes from fires lit at the end of day. Strictly speaking, Homer compares the flame, called both φλόξ and σέλας, from Achilles's head to the signal fires more than to the smoke. However, both smoke and signal fires reach up to the αἰθήρ, 'air', and both are integral to the comparison with the supernatural phenomena around Achilles's head.

If there had been a Latin translation for this simile available in medieval Ireland, one would be justified in suggesting that the Irish author might have thought himself to be writing, like Virgil before him, in a Homeric tradition.

92 Glennon, 'The similes', 214, judges this example to be the sole 'Homeric' simile from Recension 2.

93 See above, 131–40.

However, this simile does not seem to have been translated in familiar Latin texts, nor available in any of the sources from which the Middle Ages maintained its modest knowledge of Homer. Yet it is worth considering a possible intermediary from *Aeneid* 7. The imitation comes as the conclusion to Allecto's transformation of Turnus, considered above already as one possible source for the iconography of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*. The confusion of Turnus's mind, now seething with the Fury's rage, is compared to a vat of boiling water:

> saeuit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli,
> ira super: magno ueluti cum flamma sonore
> uirgea suggeritur costis undantis aëni
> exsultantque aestu latices, furit intus aquai
> fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis,
> nec iam se capit unda, uolat uapor ater ad auras. (*Aeneid* 7.461–6)
>
> Love of the sword rages and the wicked madness of battle, and wrath besides: as when a fire of twigs, loudly roaring, is heaped up under the ribs of a seething cauldron, and the water leaps out in the heat, a smoky river of water rages within and abounds upwards in foam, and the water overflows, the dark steam soars into the air.

This simile is not an imitation of the blaze from Achilles's head, and is actually identified by Macrobius as based on Homer's description of the river Skamander (*Iliad* 21.362–5; *Saturnalia* 5.11.23). Yet the general similarity of context between Allecto's transformation of Turnus, the Sibyl's *alius Achilles*, and Athene's magnification of the original Achilles, in which Homer's simile of the signal fires occurs, suggests that it may have been secondarily recalled by Virgil. We can speculate whether the comparison was made in antiquity, and perhaps preserved into the Middle Ages, though now perished. Three terms, '(amnis) fumidus', 'uapor ater' and 'alte exuberat' formally echo the καπνός and αἰθέρ᾽ ἵκανεν, 'reached up into the air', of Homer's simile. Yet even more clearly, these three Latin phrases resemble the salient terms of the Irish simile, that is, 'ceó' (here 'smoke'), 'dubcheó' ('dark mist') and 'atracht . . . hi certairdi' ('rose . . . straight up').

Exuberare, 'grow thickly, abound', is confused graphically with *exsuperare*, 'mount up, appear above, surpass' in the A-text of the *Hisperica Famina*:

> pari ausonicum ex[s]ubero pululamine fluuium
>
> With equal turbulence do I surpass your Ausonian flood.[94]

Here in the *famina*, a rhetor's eloquence is expressed in a passage describing flowing water's ravages, followed immediately by a description of the burning of trees and the 'crackling flames' of a furnace which reach 'through the ceiling' of a hut. This string of associations strongly suggests that the faminator here recalls this simile of the fire under the cauldron from Virgil, and especially its form 'exuberat'. It follows that the imitation of Virgil's simile was likely, however early, a feature of Irish rhetorical education. If we read 'fumidus alte exuberat amnis' as if it contained a visual variant of 'uolat uapor ater ad auras', the resemblance to the Irish simile, which likens an upwardly ascending spout of dark

[94] *HF*-A 92 (Herren's translation); Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 37, sees a deliberate wordplay and retains the manuscript's spelling *exubero*.

liquid to a dark mist rising into the air, is even clearer. Moreover, this Virgilian model gives a convincing possible source for the primacy in the Irish simile of 'atracht' ('arose'). The form recalls Virgil's 'exuberat', apparently understood as *exsuperat*, 'to mount up', as it was by the faminator. The key form *atracht* and the emphasised vertical orientation of the supernatural phemenona in the second part of the *ríastrad* would have been encouraged by Virgil's phrase 'ira super'. Although properly to be understood 'and wrath besides', this could obviously be understood as 'and wrath above', with *super* taken in its primary sense. This model accounts for the Irish author's lingering on supernatural phenomena above Cú Chulainn's head at the conclusion of the *ríastrad*. Looking to the more general context, we can see that the comparison of Turnus to a boiling cauldron is a Virgilian model for the use of a sophisticated, extended simile to conclude an over-the-top description of a warrior's rage. The passage was therefore an obvious available model for a rhetorical flourish to climax the *ríastrad*.[95]

Although the picture created in the Irish simile which describes the 'stream of dark blood' is clear, the visual image intended with the phrase *lúan láith* may be beyond recovery. The same may have to be concluded for another obscure phrase from the *ríastrad*:

> Atchessa *na kłne bodba* 7 na cithnélla neme 7 na haíble tened trichemrúaid i nnéllaib 7 i n-áerib úasa chind re fiuchud na ferge fírgarge hitrácht úaso. (TBC-1, 2265–8; reading of LU restored and in italics)
>
> There was seen in the air above his head *na kłne bodba* and the virulent rain-clouds and the sparks of red-blazing fire, with the seething of fierce rage that rose over him.

I print the reading of Recensions 1 and 2, 'na kłne bodba'. For these, O'Rahilly substituted the reading of Recension 3, 'na coinnli bodba', and translated as 'the torches of the war-goddess'. O'Rahilly's translation is doubly misleading. *Badb*, literally 'scald crow', by itself can be translated as the proper name of the Irish battlefield goddess with minimal complication. Genitive singular *badba/bodba*, however, commonly occurs as an attributive adjective in the sense 'deadly, warlike'. O'Rahilly's decision to print the word here with lowercase *b*, where she had printed uppercase *Badba* in Recension 2, arguably reveals her own vacillation as to whether the name of the goddess as such is present. Secondly, there is no reason to assume that 'kłne' is, as O'Rahilly believed, a contracted form; it is hard to see, at any rate, by what convention of manuscript abbreviation 'kłne' could be expanded to 'coinnli'. 'Coinnli' of Recension 3 is likely the attempt of the author of that recension to find a substitution for meaningless 'kłne', chosen because of the initial /k/ sound shared with the graph *k*, and possibly the influence of 'na haíble' ('sparks') which follows; the author of the version from the Stowe manuscript omits the phrase altogether.[96] There is, in any case, no reason to assume that there is a traditional image behind this phrase, which the author of Recension 3, alone, knew and saw fit to spell in normal letters.

[95] Cú Chulainn's association with vessels of water, made in the conclusion to the *Macgnímrada*, may also have been recalled, and encouraged the further application to Cú Chulainn of similar iconography associated with Turnus.

[96] TBC-1, 270, n. 2265.

'Na kłne bodba' may have resulted when a piece of an interlinear gloss became embedded in the text. This is one way of accounting for *ł*, which is the normal abbreviation for Latin *uel*, 'or/that is', and a standard way of introducing a gloss in both Latin and Irish; Greek-looking *k*, meanwhile, is the normal Irish abbreviation for *cath*, 'battle'. Alternatively, one suspects that 'na kłne', which could be expanded (meaninglessly) to *'na c*ath-uel*ne', may have begun as a variant of 'na cith-nélla' which immediately follows; confusion of Insular *u* and *n* (*nel- > uel*) could have hastened the corruption. Equally likely, an actual gloss has been corrupted beyond the point that attempts to restore it are useful. This being the case, if there was, prior to the development of 'na kłne bodba', an intelligible image following 'atchessa' in the exemplar from which this version from the *Breslech* has been adapted, its nature remains a matter for speculation. The necessary conclusion is that there is no evidence in this passage that the Badb, nor any other supernatural entity of the battlefield, has any immediate part in Cú Chulainn's transformation. The apparent parallel in the *ríastrad*, therefore, of an Irish war-goddess having an effect on Cú Chulainn analogous with Athene's magnification of warriors on the battlefield, proves to be a false lead.

The real lesson to be taken from 'na kłne bodba' is that the *ríastrad* is a very textual phenomenon, copied manuscript phrase by manuscript phrase. Such would be a normal expectation for prestige texts, whether classical Latin or even early Christian Old Irish. Such a transmission, however, slightly conflicts with the model that would predict more fluid scribal practice in saga-texts, where the language approximated the spoken idiom of the scribes, and the material, one presumes, lived in oral tradition. The accurate copying of a textual exemplar, however, is the editorial assumption which underpins modern critical editions of the text. Such concern for reproducing a written exemplar accurately is seen in the *Breslech* more than in any other episode of the *Táin*. To spend too much time looking for the correct oral version of *kłne bodba*, therefore, flies in the face of the obvious textual character of the episode. The episode illustrates that reproduction of written models was an important technique of saga composition.

The question remains, what was the text of the *Breslech*'s own immediate written source? Do we assume that the conservative textual character of the episode only commenced once it had been incorporated into the prestige text *Táin Bó Cúailnge*; or did it begin with earlier written templates, such as a rhetorical exercise or academic composition that constructed a model of a chariot-team preparing for battle and an over-the-top description of a hero's battle-rage? The entire second half of the *Breslech* has the appearance of having been constructed from such a written template. The retention of vexed 'kłne bodba' probably already in the original author's copy of the *Breslech* reveals deference to the template which, frankly, is unusual in Irish saga texts. It also conflicts somewhat with the principal of variation which is clearly central to the practice of Irish formulaic prose. Speculating, one can wonder whether the episode's creator had a misplaced, and inconsistent, piety in favour of fidelity to written models. This might have been borrowed from attitudes to scripture, but would by no means have been discouraged by Servius's obsessive attention to minute oddities in Virgil's language, his frequent critical examination of the text of the poems and obvious reluctance to emend. The classicizing character of the second half of the *Breslech* especially might have encouraged exaggerated fidelity to the written exemplar, with the model of Servian pedantry abetting the author's deference.

Chariot Warfare and Ekphrasis

It is as a set piece entirely in the fashion of the rhetorical text *Cathcharpat Serda* that Cú Chulainn's sickled chariot and team are finally introduced and described:

> . . . is and sin doreblaing ind err gascid ina chathc[h]arpat serda co n-erraib iarnaidib, cona fáebraib tanaidib, cona baccánaib 7 cona birc[h]rúadib, cona thairbirib níath, cona nglés aursolcdi, cona thair[n]gib gaíthe bítís ar fertsib 7 íallaib 7 fithisib 7 folomnaib don charpat sin. (TBC-1, 2279–83)
>
> . . . the chariot hero sprang into his scythed war-chariot, with its iron sickles, with its thin sharp edges, with its hooks and with its steel points, with its warrior's spikes with their opening apparatus [?], with its nails which were on the shafts and thongs and loops and fastenings to that chariot.

This description is followed in Recension 1 by several lines given over to a transparently formulaic second description of the chariot, in tandem with the horse-team that draws it. O'Rahilly notes that this latter passage is 'superfluous', and that it occurs at least two further times in the text.[97] To this could be added more occurrences of the piece from other saga texts.[98] This second description, not in the exemplar from which the *Breslech* immediately derived, probably drew on a variant version of the same original written model which stood behind the preceding first description of the scythed chariot. One presumes the original written model was an early version of *Cathcharpat Serda*, and the second 'superfluous' description drawn from a later, more refined version of the same. Stylistic comparison of this second description with the surviving *Cathcharpat Serda* strengthens this view. From the time of its inclusion in the *Breslech* this set piece enjoyed an existence possibly largely independent of academic written models.

As for chariot warfare, this manner of battle is absent from Dares's *De Excidio*, and is all but invisible in *Togail Troí*. Chariot warfare is, however, prominent in both the *Aeneid* and the *Thebaid*. This warfare was therefore felt to be proper to the reconstructed archaic heroic age which the ancients incorporated into their own epic tradition. As for the war-chariots of Irish epic, archaeologists have found little evidence that those such as are described in the *Táin* existed in the centuries which the *Táin* claims to portray. J. P. Mallory has little doubt that these elaborate descriptions derive from Latin models.[99] Yet the use of wheeled vehicles as a mode of conveyance is in itself rather unremarkable, and archaeology confirms that early-medieval Ireland had roads constructed for such traffic.[100] The modest archaeological evidence for the two-wheeled cart itself in Ireland is in accord with the existence of words to describe such an object in the lexicon of Old Irish.[101] The evidence points to vehicles for the transportation of a privileged class, but not for martial use specifically.

Native tradition is probably reflected in the occurrence of Latin *currus*, 'chariot', in Irish hagiography from Muirchú's seventh-century *Vita Sancti*

97 TBC-1, 271, n. 2283.
98 See Sayers, 'Textual'; 'Conventional'; and O'Rahilly, '*Cathcharpat*', 194–5.
99 Mallory, 'The world', 147–51.
100 Mallory, 'The world', 148.
101 Greene, 'The chariot'.

Patricii onwards, and corresponding *carpat* in the vernacular tradition.[102] Early association of the chariot with Christian civilization specifically in Ireland is seen in Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface (Letter 5), where Christ, the 'Charioteer of Israel', is depicted as coming to Ireland on a chariot over a 'sea of nations' and the intervening waters.[103] The chariot being a mainstay of the Roman *triumphus*, the imagery here is part of Columbanus's rhetoric to sweeten his criticism of Boniface with a somewhat over-enthusiastic endorsement of Roman primacy, together with a fitting echo of the triumph over paganism by the Christianity come from Peter's Rome. Recurrence of this imagery linking the chariot and the coming of Chrisitianity in *Immram Brain* probably draws on a parallel tradition. However, for all that the chariot clearly points to aristocratic entitlement and military triumph, the practice of actually fighting from atop a chariot is not common. The practice clearly fascinated Julius Caesar when he encountered the technique practiced with such skill among the Britons, long after it had been abandoned by Celts on the continent and forgotten.[104]

Warfare in the *Táin* conducted from the back of a chariot, as far as Cú Chulainn's *breslech* can be described as such, is almost restricted to this episode. For example, in the episode entitled *Caladgleó Cethirn*, Cethern appears to descend for his first attack, while in his second there is merely the joke that the ribs of his chariot have been sewn into his chest (TBC-1, 3161–327). Likewise, in the parodic *Meillgleó nIliach*, the point of having Iliach fight from a chariot seems to be to facilitate the visual joke that his testicles hang through the bottom planks (TBC-1, 3366–86). These examples are characteristic of the true import of chariot warfare in the *Táin*, which is to provide the occasion, in effect a raised stage, for the description of warriors. The technique is encountered most clearly in *Comrac Fir Diad ⁊ Con Culaind*, which has the *Táin*'s fullest description of a chariot and its warriors, but where the protagonists predictably descend from their chariots for the actual contests.[105] This preoccupation with chariot warfare thus shares in the Irish fascination with ekphrasis, and appears to have its origin in rhetorical exercises. The claim is made most convincingly by the existence of *Cathcharpat Serda* itself. It can be deduced that the topos of the ekphrasis of chariot and team, charioteer and warrior, owes its existence to rhetorical instruction.[106]

It remains to be settled whether this set piece of the chariot and its occupants shares the classicizing interests of the school of classical translations. *Togail Troí*, after all, has no descriptions of chariots or chariot warriors. There seems, at any rate, to be little disagreement that that odd creature of Irish chariot warfare, the *carpat imrind* or *carpat serda*, 'sickled chariot', is a literary motif.[107] In this, the

102 Greene, 'The chariot', 61.

103 Walker, *Sancti Columbani*, 48.

104 Caes., *Gal*. 4.33; see Raftery, 'Fahren', 174.

105 See TBC-1, 2706–20, 2941–73; see also O'Rahilly's comments, TBC-2, xi, who notes that the heroes do fight from their chariots in this episode in Recension 2.

106 Greene, 'The chariot', 62, in contrast, infers an actual historical practice: warriors paraded themselves in the chariot prior to battle, descended to fight, then displayed their enemy's head from the chariot in triumph.

107 See Greene, 'The chariot', 59–60; and Mallory, 'The world', 148. For the early instances of the 'sickled chariot' in Latin literature, see Smolenaars, *Statius*, 337, n. 712; examples include Lucretius's *De rerum natura* 3.642, Caesar's *De bello Alexandrino* 75.2 (as *quadrigae falcatae*), and Valerius's *Argonautica* 6.105.

Irish were not alone. The *currus falcatus*, 'sickled chariot', is encountered in medieval Latin texts such as Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* and Simon of Kéza's *Gesta Hungarorum*, and one suspects that the thing was a commonplace adornment of medieval ethnic historiography. One source for the commonplace was probably Alexander literature. *Quadrigae falcatae*, 'sickled chariots', are mentioned among Alexander's forces in the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.[108] The Persian practice of arming their chariots with sickles, presumably remembered from their appearance in Alexander's campaigns, may have been the barbarian model which led Pomponius Mela in his *Chorographia* to claim that sickled chariots were used by the British, where they were called *covinni*.[109] Jordanes appears to have shared a source with Mela's account of the Britons' *currus falcatus* in the opening chapters of his *Getica*.[110] It is not impossible that the Irish appropriated this sickled chariot, not for any classical connotation, but as a familiar barbarian motif to lend verisimilitude to their own heroic literature. The fact that the motif, as Mela and Jordanes preserve it, is British, and therefore Celtic, is a rather disarming coincidence.[111]

As for the chariots of Latin epic, the sickled chariot does not occur in the *Aeneid*. However, for the verse which describes how Troilus is dragged behind his own chariot, 'fertur equis curruque haeret resupinus inani' (*Aeneid* 1.476), Servius comments: 'curribus falcatis usos esse maiores et Livius et Sallustius docent' ('both Livy and Sallust tell us that the ancients used sickled chariots'). Aware of this reputed ancient practice, Statius outfitted his Greek warriors with the conveyance in the *Thebaid*. One brief mention of the sickled chariot, 'Anthea falcato lustrantem moenia curru' ('Antheus circling the walls in his sickled chariot') (*Thebaid* 10.544), elicits the comment from Lactantius Placidus: 'hoc genus armorum etiam Sallustius describit' ('Sallust describes this type of arms'). One wonders whether the information that Sallust composed a description (*describit*) of a sickled chariot could have been taken as a suggestion to medieval tyros of rhetoric to do the same.[112] It is interesting to note that the Irish for 'chariot' used of the 'sickle chariots' from *Scéla Alaxandair*, namely *cethairríad*, 'four-wheeled [sc. chariot]', is a good verbal echo of the term from the *Epistola*, *quadriga*, literally 'a team of four [sc. yoked horses]'.[113] The term *carpat serda* is therefore not shared with that important text from the school of classical translations, but is a literal translation direct from Servius's and Statius's term *currus falcatus*.

108 See note below for instances quoted in Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage'.

109 Mela, 3.52: 'dimicant non equitatu modo aut pedite, uerum et bigis et curribus Gallice armatis – couinnos uocant – quorum falcatis axibus utuntur'.

110 Iord. *Get*. 2. 15: 'gerunt, non tantum equitatu vel pedite, verum etiam bigis curribusque falcatis, quos more vulgare essedas vocant'; the latter term preserves Gaulish **ensedon*, Caesar's *essedum*, a word also in use in Britain; see Greene, 'The chariot', 62; and Koch, '*Llawr*'.

111 The peril in drawing facile conclusions concerning medieval ethnography is illustrated by the author of *Tochmarc Emire*, who suggests that the adjective *serda* indicates that the *carpat serda* was an invention of the Syrians, *Serdai* in Irish; see Van Hamel, *Compert*, 63.

112 Sallustius's description does not survive to be compared with that of the Irish; for Livy's attempt to give a description of the sickle-apparatus, see Liv. 37.41.5–7.

113 Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', 203, n. 345, and 123–24/29–31 for the Irish translation; mentioned again at 207, n. 381, 126/46 for the Irish; there is disagreement as to the second element *-ríad* and inflection varies; see *DIL* s.v. *cethairríad*.

Aristeiai and the *Breslech*

The second occurrence of a sickled chariot in Statius is that rode in by the prophet-warrior of the Argives, Amphiaraus:

> falcato Clonin et Chremetaona curru
> comminus hunc stantem metit, hunc a poplite sectum. (*Thebaid* 7.712–13)
>
> He [Amphiaraus] mows down Clonis and Chremetaon with his sickled chariot, one standing to fight him, the other cut off at the knee.[114]

This episode, in which Amphiaraus visits slaughter on the Thebans from atop his sickled chariot, is the first *aristeia* in the battle at Thebes. This *aristeia* is replete with allusions to Diomedes's *aristeia* from *Iliad* 5 and establishes the Homeric quality that predominates in the second half of the *Thebaid*.[115] Statius describes Amphiaraus's warfare most evocatively in the details of the deep piling of the corpses fallen in the chariot's wheel-tracks:

> et iam cornipedes trepedi ad moribunda reflantes
> corpora rimantur terras, omnisque per artus
> sulcus et incisis altum rubet orbita membris . . .
> rotaeque
> sanguine difficiles, et tardior ungula fossis
> visceribus. (*Thebaid* 7.760–8)
>
> And now the horses snort in alarm at the dying bodies and probe the ground, every furrow [runs] through limbs and every wheel-track reddens deep with cut members . . . the wheels are impeded with blood, and the horses' hooves are slowed in the trenches with entrails.

The image is paralleled in the description of how Cú Chulainn's chariot cuts ditches deep into the earth:

> dollotar rotha íarnaide in c[h]arpait hi talmain corbo leór do dún 7 do daingen feib dollotár rotha íarnaide in charpait hi talmain, uair is cumma atrachtatár cluid 7 cairthe 7 carrce 7 táthleca 7 murgrían in talman aird i n-aird frisna rothaib íarn-daidib súas sell sechtair. (TBC-1, 2299–303)
>
> . . . the iron wheels of the chariot went into the earth so that there was enough [sc. earth cast up?] for the making of fortress and fastness, as the iron wheels of the chariot went into the earth, for in this way were thrown up ramparts and boulders and rocks and flagstones and gravel of the deep earth with every revolution of the iron wheels [?].

The action of Cú Chulainn's chariot-wheels interests the author. O'Rahilly suggests that the repetition of 'dollotar rotha íarnaide in charpait hi talmain' should be deleted, as if there has been scribal dittography.[116] However, it is as likely that the repeated phrase has been borrowed from competing model texts

114 The verbal echo with *comminus* show that Statius here alludes to the sole occurrence of the adjective *falcatus* in Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.732, where it is used of a sword; see Smolenaars, *Statius*, 338, n. 713.

115 See Smolenaars, *Statius*, 322–3.

116 TBC-1, 271, n. 2299.

which, drawing on a common template, share the identical wording; the resulting repetition of *dollotar* recalls the awkward stitching together of formulas in 'ro gab . . . ro gab' from the beginning of Cú Chulainn's arming scene. In turn, the two efforts to develop the image, 'corbo leór do dún 7 do daingen' and 'uair is cumma atrachtatár cluid 7 cairthe' and so forth, reflect the two originally independent competing models. Both alliterative runs display the exaggeration typical of expansion in Irish *imitatio*. The seminal image, however, is not the ramparts thrown up by Cú Chulainn's chariot so much as the depth of the wheel-tracks themselves, the image also dwelled upon by Statius. Statius does this to connect Amphiaraus's chariot onslaught with the ploughing of a field (*sulcus*), consistent with the prophet's association with the earth; imagery drawn from agriculture in fact runs throughout the passage.[117] In the *Breslech*, the association with the earth is lost and the substituted martial imagery of erecting fortresses and ramparts seems lazier, to say nothing of its inconsistency with the act of destruction portrayed.[118] In this instance, only Irish *clad*, here 'rampart' but more often 'ditch' and in this sense identical with Latin *fossa*, gives a verbal echo with Statius's Latin that would flag the *imitatio* of Statius's model. However, the basic affinity of Amphiaraus's ghastly creation of a corpse-strewn earth with the savagery of Cú Chulainn's *breslech* is clear.

The Iliadic books of the *Aeneid* are, like those of the *Thebaid*, constructed around *aristeiai*. Most, however, are not associated with chariots. Mezentius fights prominently on horseback in his *aristeia* (*Aeneid* 10.689–768), while Aeneas, in his first *aristeia*, fights on foot, the most common mode of battle in the poem (*Aeneid* 10.510–605). However, this latter episode is interesting from the point of view of comparison with the *Breslech*, as Aeneas is thrown into this, for him, uncharacteristic state of fury by Turnus's killing of Pallas. This is Virgil's transformation of the story at the heart of the *Iliad*, that is, Achilles's wrath over Hector's killing of Patroclus and its 'devastation'.[119] The *Breslech* is without question Cú Chulainn's most Achillean moment, his wrath and its devastation being the episode's closing themes. In terms of iconography shared with the *Aeneid* specifically, Cú Chulainn here has characteristics reminiscent of both Turnus, Virgil's obvious type for Achilles, and Aeneas, Virgil's surprise type for Achilles. As for the narrative sequence in the second half of the *Breslech*, the closest match is the extended narrative of Turnus's defeat from *Aeneid* 12.[120] This episode begins when Turnus first examines his horses and the readiness of his charioteer, then takes up his arms which had been made for his father by Vulcan (*Aeneid* 12.81–95). Turnus is then described in terms of his altered appearance:

> his agitur furiis, totoque ardentis ab ore
> scintillae absistunt, oculis micat acribus ignis. (*Aeneid* 12.101–2)
>
> He is driven with this rage, and sparks go out from his face as he burns, flame flashes from his fierce eyes.

117 See Smolenaars, *Statius*, 338, note to 713 *metit*.

118 In other cases the chariot is described as knocking down ramparts, although the vocabulary is roughly the same; see Sayers, 'Textual', 20.

119 See above, 198.

120 See above, 200. This sequence from *Aeneid* 12 is considered by Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 486, in terms of its model for the descriptions of battle in *Togail Troí*.

The Servian commentary interestingly clarifies the Homeric typology in this episode, commenting specifically on Turnus's eyes: 'OCVLIS MICAT ACRIBVS IGNIS *ut supra dictum est, furoris immanitate*. Homeri est' ('*as it was said above, this is with the enormity of his fury*. This is a Homeric figure'). This transformation bears an obvious generic resemblance to parts of the *ríastrad*, but, unlike the case of Virgil's descriptions of terror, there are no verbal parallels to confirm that it is recalled in the *ríastrad* specifically. However, following the account of the failed attempt to have Turnus and Aeneas meet in single combat, the full battle begins with Turnus fighting from his chariot in a true *aristeia*:

> poscit equos atque arma simul, saltuque superbus
> emicat in currum et manibus molitur habenas.
> multa uirum uolitans dat fortia corpora leto.
> seminecis uoluit multos: aut agmina curru
> proterit aut raptas fugientibus ingerit hastas. (*Aeneid* 12.326–30)
>
> He calls for his horses and arms, and with a leap proudly springs into his chariot and takes the reins in his hands. As if in flight he sends many powerful bodies of men to their deaths. He throws down many half-dead: he tramples down ranks in his chariot and seizes spears and sends them against those in flight.

This memorable depiction of a warrior plying death from atop a chariot is a clear potential model for the topos of Cú Chulainn's chariot warfare. Indeed, the model Virgil provides for the entire sequence of topoi shared with the *Breslech*, including the readying of the horses and charioteer, the arming of the warrior and the somewhat muted supernatural description of his rage, is rather obvious if one follows Turnus throughout these early passages in Book 12.

The affinity of *Aeneid* 12 and the *Breslech* is even clearer if we consider Aeneas's own raging on the battlefield, which is portrayed in parallel with Turnus's:

> iam tandem inuadit medios et Marte secundo
> terribilis saeuam nullo discrimine caedem
> suscitat, irarumque omnis effundit habenas. (*Aeneid* 12.497–9)
>
> Then, at last, he charges into the midst [sc. of the enemy] and, with the aid of Mars, frightfully exacts a savage, indiscriminate slaughter, and lets go all that had reined in his wrath.

'In medios' from this account anticipates the description of Cú Chulainn's attack: 'dothάet isin cath innond ar medón' ('he comes over into battle into the middle [sc. of the enemy?]') (TBC-1, 2306). The phrase is a formula of Irish battle-descriptions, and is among the commonplaces which Mac Gearailt suggests derive from the ultimate model of the *Aeneid*, though he argues that such recollections are rather general.[121] According to the model proposed here, the Irish stands rather close to the Latin. Intermediaries, however, are possible and consideration of these opening verses to Aeneas's *aresteia* may throw some light on the question of the *Breslech*'s immediate written sources.

The question has not been answered whether the *Breslech* drew heavily on originally independent academic models of rhetorical composition; or, further, whether the text originally circulated independently, perhaps in variant versions,

[121] Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 486.

before it was stitched into the *Táin*. For lack of evidence, these questions will remain open. But a curious note at the end of the description of Cú Chulainn's *breslech* points to the existence of variant versions. In the middle of the description of Cú Chulainn's *breslech*, the author notes that this was named more exactly the 'Sesrech Breslige', noted as one of the three 'unreckonable slaughters' of the *Táin*. In Recension 2, a marginal gloss reports:

> Iss ed atberat araile ro fích Lug mac Eithlend la Coin Culaind Sesrig ṁBresslige. (TBC-2, 2322–3)
>
> Others [or 'other versions'] say that Lug mac Eithlend fought alongside Cú Chulainn in the Sesrech Breslige.

In the copy of Recension 1 in Lebor na hUidre this gloss has been embedded in the text (TBC-1, 2316–17). We can only speculate what this alternative version was. It is reasonable to suppose that an alternative version of the *Breslech* was meant, presumably entitled the Sesrech Breslige.[122] As to whether the content differed signficantly beyond the question of the participation of Lug, we cannot verify. Lug may or may not have taken the place of Láeg as Cú Chulainn's charioteer; it cannot even be demonstrated that the alternative version presented the battle as one conducted from a war-chariot in the first place. Lug's role in even the surviving versions of the *Breslech* is not easy to assess. The Otherworld character who heals Cú Chulainn of his wounds, identified only as an *ócláech* from the *síd* in Recension 2 (2148), is named as Lug only in Recensions 1 (2109) and 3 (§121). In both instances this is in tandem with the incantation *Éli Loga*, the title of which, uncoincidentally, bears his name. Recension 3 describes explicitly how Lug departs prior to Cú Chulainn's *breslech* and, lacking the gloss on the Sesrech Breslige, makes no mention of an alternative narrative (§131).

The account of Cú Chulainn's healing differs in Recensions 1 and 2, but it is supernatural in either case, and brought by a member of the *síd*, whether identified as Lug or not. Supernatural intervention on the battlefield is a staple of classical epic. If the battle from the lost alternative version described a chariot onslaught, then Lug's divine parental intervention might have reproduced the familiar heroic topos of the mortal warrior and his divine charioteer. Specifically Latin adaptations of the divine charioteer-motif which belong to episodes already proposed as models for the *Breslech* include Amphiaraus's *aristeia*, in which the driver of the mortal's sickled chariot is his patron Apollo, and Turnus's *aristeia* from *Aeneid* 12, in which the charioteer is Turnus's divine sister Iuturna. However, given that the note on the alternative version does not describe precisely how Lug aided his son, but only that he fought 'beside him', suggestions as to the motif of the divine charioteer in the *Táin* must remain on the level of speculation.

To address divine parentage more specifically, according to the story told in the *Aeneid*, the divine parent who aids Aeneas is Venus, who heals his wound by an arrow. Yet the opening verses of Aeneas's final *aristeia*, quoted above, announce that Aeneas's horrible slaughter is effected 'Marte secundo' ('with Mars aiding him') (*Aeneid* 12.497). This phrase is properly understood in a metonymic sense, according to which 'Mars', the god of war, often means 'warfare' in Latin poetry. Virgil does not claim that the divinity is present on the battlefield

122 *Sesrech* is taken by the author to refer to the groupings of six (*seisser*) into which corpses fell in Cú Chulainn's wake, but it is clearly the title which has inspired the image.

in the flesh, and no vigilant translator of the poem would render the phrase to suggest such. Yet for a reader inclined to take the phrase in its literal sense, there is an echo with an episode from near the beginning of Book 12, in which Aeneas, in a succession of prayers to many deities, ends with a plea to Mars for help in that day's battle with Turnus:

> . . . tuque inclute Mauors,
> cuncta tuo qui bella, pater, sub numine torques. (*Aeneid* 12.179–80)
>
> . . . and [I beseech] you, famous Mars, father, who determine the course of all battles under your sway.

Virgil does not intend this expression of a parental relationship with Mars to be taken literally. But gentle Aeneas is enabled to reach the furor of an *aristeia* precisely because his prayer to Mars is answered. The two mentions of Mars, though separated by several hundred verses, are to be taken together. When these verses are recalled, it appears that Aeneas is aided by a divine parent, in this case an inferred *pater*, 'father', in the *aristeia* which formally parallels Cú Chulainn's *breslech*. The uncertainty in the *Táin* whether Cú Chulainn is aided by his divine father may, therefore, reflect not just the accident of variant textual traditions, but an uncertainty as to the original model. Competing model passages of a *breslech* in Irish, incorporating *imitatio* from this account of Aeneas's *aristeia*, may have disagreed as to whether an *aristeia* was to include a divine father joining in the slaughter, or not.[123]

Epic Topoi of Battle and Imitatio

One of the most intriguing traces of the Virgilian model behind Cú Chulainn's *breslech* comes in the opening verses to Aeneas's *aresteia*: 'saeuam nullo discrimine caedem / suscitat' ('he exacts a savage, indiscriminate slaughter') (*Aeneid* 12.498–9; see above). Of Cú Chulainn's slaughter, it is observed that 'ba cumma cú 7 ech 7 dune and' ('it was alike for hound and horse and man') (TBC-1, 2314). This phrase on its own appears less a formula of heroic prose than an idea special to the *Breslech*. Though an idea which could be generated independently wherever heroes succumb to an *aristeia*, it does convey, indeed, could be a gloss on Virgil's phrase 'nullo discrimine'. The idea is immediately developed (following the embedded gloss about the Sesrech Breslige) by a further clarification:

> Nícon fes immorro a árim 7 ni cumangar a rím cía lín dorochair and do dáescorślúag. (TBC-1, 2318–19)
>
> Their number is not known, nor is it possible to count the number of the common troops who fell there.

The idea is repeated yet a third time at the conclusion to the account of the fallen: 'dírime immorro olchena di chonaib 7 echaib 7 mnáib 7 maccaib 7 mindaínib 7

[123] Note also that Lug tells Cú Chulainn before the healing that he will fight in his stead, but does not appear to do so; this might be another reflection of competing models, but the text is uncertain (TBC-1, 2113).

drabarślóg' ('[that was] moreover an uncountable reckoning besides of hounds and horses and women and boys and children and common folk') (TBC-1, 2329–30). Labelled now a *dírime*, 'uncountable reckoning', this becomes a topos in saga which occurs, among other places, in *Togail Troí* in the *aristeiai* of Troilus.[124]

One wants to know whether, in martial occurrences, the *dírime* in saga prose shows the influence of the *Breslech*. That is, is this a literary topos, or does it simply reflect a reality of warfare which can make its way into texts independently of literary models?[125] I do not find a phrase or formula equivalent to the *dírime* in the *aristeiai* of *Aeneid* 12. The idea, however, is paralleled in the familiar rhetorical topos which invokes the aid of the gods to express the inexpressible:

> quis mihi nunc tot acerba deus, quis carmine *caedes*
> *diuersas obitumque ducum*, quos aequore toto
> inque uicem nunc Turnus agit, nunc Troius heros,
> expediat? (*Aeneid* 12.500–3; my italics)
>
> What god can set forth for me that great number of bitter losses, recount in song *the various slaughters and the destruction of princes*, those whom all over that field now Turnus, now the Trojan hero assails?

These lines, which immediately follow the introduction to Aeneas's *aristeia* quoted above, clarify the consequence for a poet that a slaughter is *nullo discrimine*. But this is epic, so Virgil, aided by that *deus* which is the muse, of course does immediately recall the names of the princes killed in that battle. This is epic's gruesome inversion of the catalogue of heroes, the catalogue of the slain. Victims of both Aeneas and Turnus are described in tandem. The author of the *Breslech*, though he has said that the dead from the *dáescorślúag*, 'common troops', cannot be counted, adds: 'acht ro rímthé a tigernai nammá' ('but their lords, alone, have been reckoned') (TBC-1, 2319). He then does, like Virgil though with much less elaboration, record the names of the fallen 'kings and chieftains', listed in parallel columns on the page (TBC-1, 2320–8).

Virgil may not have intended an actual contrast between the *caedes diuersae*, 'diverse slaughters', and the *obitus ducum*, 'destruction of princes', as if these were two distinct groups. The figure may be taken as hendiadys. It is interesting, however, that this figurative division among the slaughtered groups in Virgil is formally paralleled in the *Breslech*. The Irish author forcefully, even with inexplicable pedantic insistency, draws this distinction between the *dáescorślúag*, 'common people', a term varied with the equally dismissive *drabarślóg*, 'rabble', who constitute the *dírime*, and the *tigernai*, 'lords'. The first parallels Virgil's vague and uncounted 'diverse slaughters'; the second, Virgil's *duces* who, as in the Irish, are named. Illusion of hendiadys or not, the division was picked up by Statius, who recalls Virgil's 'caedes diuersas obitumque ducum' in his own version of the inexpressibility topos from the corpse-strewn dénouement to the

124 *Togail Troí* H 1358–9, 1548; see also 950–2, a short *aristeia* of Hector which includes a *dírime* of common folk and soldiery; and note the passage quoted above, 128.

125 This reality of warfare could enter literary tradition in different ways; I note, for example, Augustine, *City of God* 3.9, where Augustine records the story that Hannibal, unable to count the number of Romans killed at Cannae, sent back to Carthage a quantity of gold rings taken from fallen Roman nobles, leaving the number of total dead merely guessed at; this parallel lacks the catalogue of the slain found in the *Aeneid* and the *Breslech*.

Thebaid. Here, as in the *Breslech*, fallen *duces* are unambiguously contrasted with commoners, whose necessary anonymity is conveyed in the loaded cultural term *vulgus*:

> Non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet
> voce deus, *tot busta simul vulgique ducumque*,
> tot pariter gemitus dignis conatibus aequem. (*Thebaid* 12.797–9; my italics)
>
> If some god were to loose my breast in a hundred voices, I could not, with worthy effort, do justice to *so many pyres of common people and princes*, such a like chorus of groanings.

The inexpressibility topos takes many forms, some of which were discussed already above in Chapter 3 in relation to an occurrence in *Togail Troí*. The topos is shared with Homer, but Virgil was probably the single most important model in the Latin poetic tradition; at some point, the topos became a fixture of Christian homiletic usage, available evidence associating it especially with the Irish.[126] Although Christian examples of the topos are often positive, for example delights which cannot be reckoned, drawing attention to the dead masses or the damned by declaring them uncountable is also available as an obvious homiletic image. Any Christian flavour to the topos in the *Breslech*, however, is challenged by the very convincing sense that the masses are uncounted here because, in an aristocratic society, they are, very obviously, not worth counting. But the relevance of Statius's version of this topos is precisely that it is not, in his use, a universal impersonal topos, whether Christian or classical. Statius likely recalled Homer's version, but his use here is more precisely Virgilian. Statius is so imbued with Virgil that nothing that sounds Virgilian in his poetry can be assumed to be so wholly by accident. It is only a few lines after these that Statius concludes his epic with what are arguably its most famous verses, his pious address to his own work and its great model:

> vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta,
> sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora. (*Thebaid* 12.816–17)
>
> Live, I pray; and do not challenge the divine *Aeneid*, but ever follow her footsteps from afar in devotion.

Statius challenges the modern reader to face head on the question of where literary topoi come from. There is no necessary reason that something obvious and taken for granted in the real world, such as the inconsequence of the lower classes in war, should become fixtures of literature. Statius's 'tot busta simul vulgique ducumque' are obvious in warfare, but they are expressly learned in poetry. This is the *vestigia* of Virgil. Do we assume that the author of the *Breslech* was so hampered by the familiarity of Christian topoi that the artistry of Virgil and his own great ancient imitator could not be appreciated and imitated in turn?

This examination of the *Breslech* concludes with one final instance of heroic formulary which, arguably, places the Irish author unambiguously in a long tradition of classical *imitatio*. Cú Chulainn's attack throughout the whole of Ireland, as well as the field of slaughter he leaves in his wake, is described in a memorable sequence:

[126] See above, 120–1.

> . . . dobert fóbairt bidbad fo bidbadaib forro co torchratár bond fri bond 7 méde fri méde, ba sí tiget ind árbaig. (TBC-1, 2308–10)
>
> . . . he visited on them an attack of a foe against foes until they fell sole to sole and headless neck to headless neck, such was the density of the slaughter.

The images 'bond fri bond' and 'méde fri méde' are formulaic in Irish descriptions of battle, though they seem to occur mostly in the variant *bond fri méde*. Poppe considers occurrences of the formula in *Imtheachta Aeniasa* as symptomatic of that text's adoption of the native literary tradition.[127] Though Poppe's examples leave little doubt that the phrase occurs in *Imtheachta Aeniasa* as an item which had become formulaic, there is a possibility that the 'bond fri bond' phrase does, regardless, owe its origin to imitation of Virgil. The verses in question do not belong to any of the *aristeiai* of Book 12, but to an earlier description of a battle in which neither the Trojans nor the Italians are able to gain the upper hand:

> haud aliter Troianae acies aciesque Latinae
> concurrunt, haeret pede pes densusque uiro uir. (*Aeneid* 10.360–1)
>
> In just this way meet in conflict the Trojan ranks and the ranks of the Italians, foot cleaves to foot and man is pressed densely against man.

The formal parallel of the pattern of repeated items in these verses with the phrases from the *Breslech* is self-evident: 'acies acies . . . pede pes [et] uiro uir' / 'bidbad fo bidbadaib . . . bond fri bond 7 méde fri méde'. Of the repeated items, *bond*, 'sole', alone could be considered equivalent to one of the Latin terms, *pes*, 'foot'. But Irish *tiget*, 'density', in 'ba sí tiget ind árbaig' ('such was the density of the slaughter') provides the additional verbal echo with Virgil's *densus* which significantly betters the case for *imitatio*.

Given that the proposed Virgilian model is not associated with one of Aeneas's *aristeiai*, there is no reason to assume that the author of the *Breslech* here imitates Virgil directly. The phrase may have been formulaic by the time he wrote. Yet I think it likely that the phrase displays direct familiarity with the verses from Virgil, as it is consistent with the string of classicizing features in the *Breslech* examined here.[128] It may be noteworthy that the version of the formula from the *Breslech* is, of the instances quoted by Poppe, the one most like Virgil's, being the only instance in which full three items are repeated, as in Virgil, as well as being accompanied by distinctive *tiget*, 'density'. As Virgil's verses memorably model one pattern for bringing poetic order to a battlefield's chaos, we are not surprised to find them recalled also by Statius:

> iam clipeus clipeis, umbone repellitur umbo,
> ense minax ensis, pede pes et cuspide cuspis:
> sic obnixa acies. (*Thebaid* 8.398–400)

127 Poppe, 'The classical epic', 26–8.

128 The connotation is probably classical also in the variant version of the *bond fri bond* formula at TBC-1, 4010–15, in Fergus's boast of the devastation he intends to wreak on the Ulstermen, likewise in a classicizing sequence between two similes which are compared above to similes from Virgil, 137.

> Now shield is repulsed with shield, boss with boss, threatening sword with sword, foot with foot and spear with spear: so the armies strive against one another.

The translation of these verses in *Togail na Tebe* confirms the formulaic status that the classical image had already achieved in Irish, but it incorporates Virgil's idea of 'density', absent in Statius, back into the image:

> 7 ba he *dlus* ro himnaiscid na hairsidi sin, co comraictis a troighthi ar n-ichtur 7 a n-aigthi ar n-uachtar, 7 a sceith chuanna chabradacha re 'roili, 7 a cloidbi cruadgera cathaigthi, 7 a cathbairr choema chummaidi re cheli, coma snasta datha 7 dellradacha dona cumdaigib. (*Togail na Tebe* 3068–72; my italics)
>
> And such was the *density* in which those veterans joined that their feet joined below and their faces above, and their fine bossy shields with one another, and their hard, sharp swords of war and their fair, shapely battle-helmets with another, so that brilliant were the colours and the lustre of the ornaments.

Dlus, 'density', is a variant of *tiget*, and therefore recalls the instance of this formula in the *Breslech*. The translator has not necessarily remembered the full classical connotation of the occurrence in the *Breslech* and its connection with Virgil, but he certainly connected the motif in Statius with the formula as it existed in his own prose tradition already by the time he wrote. The most interesting feature of this formula, however, is that Macrobius had identified Virgil's instance as one of the phrases which had become already formulaic in Latin verse via, initially, Virgil's own immediate written model, Furius. The original Homeric model, however, was not forgotten:

> ἀσπὶς ἄρ' ἀσπίδ' ἔρειδε, κόρυς κόρυν, ἀνέρα δ'ἀνήρ.
> (*Saturnalia* 6.3.5; *Iliad* 13.131)
>
> Shield pressed against shield, sword against sword, man against man.[129]

It remains impossible to know whether Irish authors knew this section of the *Saturnalia*. If they did, it could provide another example of an Irish author learning from the kind of *imitatio* practiced by Virgil. Of greater importance, the parallels collected by Macrobius verify for readers medieval and modern that, in a culture that has become literate, formula begins with imitation. Macrobius gave medieval writers a model for how to trace commonplaces in their Latin, and by extension their own literate vernacular traditions, back to written exemplars. Macrobius also clarified that the prime ultimate model for epic was Homer. We are safe in the assurance that, where the *Saturnalia* was not available or sat neglected in the book cabinet, direct familiarity with Homer's poetry was scarce in the medieval West. John Scottus emerges as an eccentric hero in this regard for translating the few verses he did. The importance of a tradition descended from Homer, however, was understood by readers who had spent any time pouring over Latin epic in the company of commentary, and had learned that epic has its own distinctive way of saying things. Deference to Homer as the cornerstone in this edifice of epic, if not knowledge of his poetry itself, is witnessed in a triad

[129] Furius is also quoted: 'pressatur pede pes, mucro mucrone, viro vir'; for completeness's sake note also Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 1.6–7 and doubtless further examples.

from the genealogies of Irish saints, which argues for the greatness of the eighth-century poet Ruman mac Colmáin precisely by writing him into this tradition:

> Tri filid in domain .i. Homer o Grecuib 7 Fergil o Latinnaib et Ruman o Gaedelaib.[130]
>
> The three poets of the world: Homer of the Greeks, Virgil of the Latins, and Ruman of the Irish.

Conclusion: Set Pieces and Rhetorical Exercises

Apart from the death of the youths and Cú Chulainn's healing, both which happen when the hero is asleep, there is remarkably little 'story' in the *Breslech*. In this episode alone, Cú Chulainn faces no adversary, and his slaughter of the people of Ireland comes with no consequences for the story told in the *Táin*. Indeed, the slaughter passes unnoticed. The episode is dominated by description, and in its latter half is an ekphrastic set piece almost empty of content. But this is not empty rhetoric. The nature of iconography is to point to something. In the ekphrases which dominate the second part of the *Breslech* especially, the iconography points to the heroes and conventions of classical epic. Even the first part, with the divine healing and the death of the youths, can be read in this way if desired, as the models were available in Virgil, as shown above. Placed in the very center of what appears to have been a revived eleventh-century *Táin*, the *Breslech* vigorously reasserts what the earliest readers knew and the creators had in mind, which was that the *Táin* is epic.

The argument presented in Chapter 4 that medieval Irish writers engaged in the *imitatio* of classical models has been extended in the present chapter. Principally, it is suggested that the author who penned Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* and *breslech* was conscious of reproducing Achilles's physical transformation from the *Achilleid* and Turnus's and Aeneas's *aristeiai* from the *Aeneid*. Yet the preceding discussion aimed more specifically at examining the author's compositional technique. The artistry of the *Breslech* rests above all on the manipulation of iconography imitated from classical models. This iconography has, to all appearances, become formulaic. This formulaic character complements the impression that *breslig* and *ríastrada* are, like arming scenes, practiced set pieces in both the *Táin* and *Togail Troí*. I suggest that written models such as *Cathcharpat Serda* may represent one stage through which *imitatio* develops into formulaic set pieces. These virtuoso displays of rhetorical prose, in which ekphrasis remains the single most important technique, were part and parcel with the achievements in the techniques of prose expansion of the school of classical translations.

The argument for written models of composition would be strengthened if there were more examples of exercises like *Cathcharpat Serda*. But while this text, as far as I am aware, is the lone example of an exercise surviving independently of any saga-narrative, the sagas themselves retain embedded clues to the existence of written practice models. The discussion above skipped over some-

[130] Ó Riain, *Corpus*, 126, from the saints of Clann Lugdach; the passage begins: 'Ruman m. Colmain in fili dia 'tá Sil Rumain i nAth Truim'; probably to be identified with the Ruman mac Colmáin whose death the Annals of Ulster give as 747.

what the description of the *carpat serda* itself from the *Breslech*. Recensions 2 and 3 preserve the common model's brief version of this description, while Recension 1 has expanded this with a second formulaic passage which, as noted above, O'Rahilly deemed 'superfluous'. Yet the versions of Recensions 2 and 3 have in common with *Cathcharpat Serda* precisely the fact that the description of the chariot itself is brief. As remarked earlier, the chariot is mostly an excuse to pursue more interesting ekphrases of warriors and horses. The relative unimportance of the chariot itself is obscured by the fact that the phrase *In Carpat Serda* is employed in the opening rubric to the episode in Recension 1. Recension 2 has the closing formula: 'Carpat Serda connice sin' ('[this has been] *Carpat Serda* to this point') (2438); while Recension 3 has: 'gorub e in Carbad Seardha' ('this was the *Carpad Seardha*') (§171). Both these are typical *explicit* formulas in early Irish. In each case, the prominence accorded the sickled chariot seems to owe to the accident of the name of the model exercise, or template, from which the second half of the *Breslech* was constructed. This model clearly resembled *Cathcharpat Serda*, which is probably a later version of the model, and which has preserved the model's title with only slight alteration.[131] Given the obvious model of Servius's and Statius's *currus falcatus* for the phrase *carpat serda* itself, the classicizing character flagged by this title presumably would be felt to operate over the rest of the model. Given that the 'scythes' of this chariot are put to no use in any of the occurrences of this *carpat serda*, there is, one concludes, no purpose in these scythes other than to flag the classicizing character of the model.

Given the theory proposed here that vernacular heroic prose drew on written exercises, one wonders whether the model Latin exercises of Priscian's *Praeexercitamina* provided a pedagogic model. In Chapter 3 it was argued that Priscian is one possible source for the interest in classical ekphrasis evident throughout *Togail Troí*, an argument suggested by the much earlier indebtedness to Priscian detected in the *Hisperica Famina*. However, the knowledge of the *Praeexercitamina* cannot be regarded as proven even in the case of *Togail Troí*, and the greater complexity of *imitatio* and formulaic ekphrasis in the *Breslech* makes it even less possible to point to the use of Priscian's school exercises. On the other hand, the *Hisperica Famina* provide analogues for the imitation, not just of Virgilian similes and imagery, but even of epic set pieces, including, for example, the scene of a warrior arming for battle.[132] The more important point to be made from the *famina*, however, is that, as Orchard demonstrates, they do not rest on the level of exercise. On the contrary, the exercises have been assembled with literary skill and have become literature. Literature is presumably the ultimate aim of rhetorical exercise in the first place. The movement from exercise to literature no less distinguishes the rhetorical achievement of the *Breslech*.

The arguments put forward in this chapter express my belief that the *Breslech* was not an episode from Irish oral tradition, whether early or late. As for comments on the Irish prose formulary throughout this chapter, I have mostly chosen to bypass the question of how much of the prose style on display in the *Breslech* represents the techniques of medieval storytelling. As it happens, medieval Irish studies can draw on the analogy of the storytelling tradition of modern

131 The title is barely legible in the upper margin of the Book of Leinster, and I do not know whether it has been added by a later hand; see Best *et al*., *The Book of Leinster*, 4: 833 (note to 24856).

132 *HF*-A 29–35; see Orchard, 'The *Hisperica*', 22.

Ireland and Scotland to bolster a theory of oral composition that stands even absent the Parry–Lord model.[133] Fair consideration of oral features in Irish prose, however, does not require the introduction of oral composition *per se*. Uáitéar Mac Gearailt has argued often for the influence of medieval storytelling on the flamboyant, alliterative style of Middle Irish prose, and has cited *Togail Troí*, clearly not a tale from oral 'tradition', as a major source.[134] However, adequate assessment of the implications of oral style in Irish formulaic prose would still go well beyond the aims of this chapter. This discussion has privileged Irish prose as a written tradition for the reason that it is written tradition, exclusively, which we have before us to evaluate. Our knowledge of medieval storytelling, of necessity, rests on inference from the remains of the written tradition and analogy with modern observed traditions. From descriptions in the surviving literature, we learn more of the profession of storytelling in the Middle Ages than the craft.[135]

There are complexities in distinguishing oral from literary features in Irish prose which are far from resolved and which I do not feel prepared to tackle. To my mind, the 'oral' quality of literary prose throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages has not been adequately acknowledged in discussions of the Irish material. Commentators on Recension 2 of the *Táin* appear to have been universally agreed that the work was intended to be read aloud, with its style designed to please the ear. The question is, was Recension 1 not read aloud in the same way? Performance before an audience hoping for entertainment may have been less in view. But would not even the solitary reader know the work primarily through the ear? Silent reading was an invention of the Middle Ages; as it happens, it may have been the Irish who invented it.[136] In antiquity, readers heard a text as they read aloud the syllables on the page, or as the text was read to them. We can hardly claim that oral reading ever died out in medieval Ireland, regardless whether silent reading by then existed or not. At the very least, novice monks of the period had their ears trained early with the immense stylistic range of the Latin Bible, which has always been and remains a text which is read aloud. Indeed, given the discouragement of garrulousness in the Irish monastic rules and the omnipresence of biblical study, one suspects that the aural world of an early Irish monastery, certainly during the formative years of Irish literacy, might have been effectively more Latinate than Irish.

As for formal criteria for distinguishing texts intended for performance from those intended for study, the diversity of styles which can be produced in a culture that practices oral reading is demonstrated by the literature of Rome itself. This literature ranged from the famed functional 'terse' style of Cato to the 'flamboyant', or better, 'Attic' style of Apuleius. With the superabundance of evidence for features of a literature written for the ear which Rome gives us, any attempt to write Roman literary history from the point of view of the contention between oral and literary style would be impractical. Notions of what is literary

133 See Delargy, 'The Gaelic story-teller', for a classic portrait of the techniques of the modern Irish storyteller and extrapolation from these techniques back to the Middle Ages; see also the reconsideration of Delargy's thesis in Ó Coileáin, 'Oral or literary?'

134 See, especially, Mac Gearailt, 'Change', 489–93; 'Forbairt'; and a resumé of the arguments of the latter in '*Togail Troí*: an example'.

135 Medieval evidence and modern theories as to the relationship of written saga with oral storytelling are expertly reviewed in Nagy, 'Orality'.

136 I refer to arguments put forward by Saenger, *Space*.

and what is oral in medieval Ireland should probably be tested against the Roman model before modern models, to say nothing of Archaic Greek, are given undue weight. The recorded practices of storytellers in the modern Irish and Gaelic speaking world, for all that they can seem atavistic, cannot be assumed to be survivals of medieval practice. If anything, the techniques of modern storytelling are post-literary innovations in a society that, prior to material and linguistic dispossession in the modern period, was as literate, and as proudly conscious of the fact, as any in Europe.

AFTERWORD: AN INVITATION TO STUDY

From the opening chapter of this book I chose to describe medieval Irish interest in classical literature and history as a nascent medieval Irish 'classical studies'. Medievalists and classicists both may judge this choice of terms odd. Medieval literacy was so imbued with the learning and language of late antiquity that the existence of a 'classical studies' distinct from the mainstream medieval curriculum needs defending. Classicists may resist the comparison of what the medieval Irish modestly accomplished to what is done today in departments of Classics. The term has been chosen, however, to bring into relief features of the medieval Irish tradition which have been largely overlooked by modern readers, and hence have not been assimilated into the critical mainstream. In effect, the term is an invitation to readers from outside the world of medieval Irish studies to come in and look around: what they will find will not be wholly alien. Neither, however, will it be Medieval Studies nor Classics exactly as they have grown comfortable with.

I believe that admission of the full evidence of medieval Irish classical studies into the critical mainstream may lead to significant revision of the literary history of Western Europe. 'Literary history', of course, is an idea which many today would reject. But there can be no denying that readers generally find their experience of pre-modern literature mediated through something of this sort, whatever its validity. An unofficial current 'literary history of medieval Europe' can be recognized with regard to some characteristic and consistent features. One such feature is the marginalized position it allots to medieval Ireland. This marginalization has been consistent respecting the centuries where the Irish wrote mostly in their own language, most markedly in the period following the introduction of English colonialism to the island in the twelfth century. The contrast which the vibrant Irish tradition makes with the comparative poverty of French and English civilization on the island in the period has, perhaps, been felt as a mild embarrassment to modern sensibilities.

The most obvious justification for the term Irish 'classical studies' is the mostly secular character of the materials in question. There are few traces of the Christian allegorical interpretation which provided an intellectual buffer with the pagan culture of poets such as Virgil and Ovid in England and on the continent. Although Irish mythographers drew on sources shared with the Vatican Mythographers and Boccaccio, the final product was very different in character. Christian learning associated with Roman imperial history and Augustinian salvation history certainly lies behind the classical tales in Irish. Yet this weighty background is lightly felt in the classical tales themselves, which are overwhelmingly given over to narrative and, for stretches, resemble modern annotated translations as much as anything else. One wonders, in fact, whether the medieval Irish had any developed notion of the 'usefulness' of the pagan classics, whether moral or practical? The classical tales are even of questionable use in the acquisition of Latin. One is left with the oddly modern sense that learning is somehow valued in its own right. It is an idea which, extrapolating from a suggestion by Michael

Herren, I have felt free to describe as humanist.[1] The idea needs to be further interrogated, as it is a notion which struggles mightily to survive even in the enlightened environment of universities today.

As regards the classical tales in Irish, one problem for modern scholarship has been the difficulty of writing criticism about a translation literature. My approach is to clarify that the classical tales, for all that they occasionally resemble translations, are much more. The argument made here in favour of an Irish classicism is intended to illustrate at least one approach according to which the classical tales emerge as worthy of critical attention. The key is to see that 'classicism', in spite of what the word might suggest, is not an unchanging quality. On the contrary, it belongs very much to a given time. We must reeducate our ears before we are able to believe that any English reader in the eighteenth century believed for a moment that Dryden's translations of Virgil sounded anything like Virgil. Yet the mock heroic of authors like Pope or, for that matter, Dryden himself, has no meaning unless iambic pentameter heroic couplets and triplets sounded 'classical' to English ears. Who would believe that the prose of *Togail Troí*, which to our ears sounds nothing like Virgil, sounded 'classical' to the first audiences? Perhaps the audience that heard the parody of the style in Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad* did not have the same difficulty. Classicism is clearly not identical with classical. Where, then, is it coming from, and what does it mean?

To the general reader of European literary history, the medieval Irish writer can appear as a revenant, a figure straddling epochs. Rome having been overwhelmed with the barbarian flood, this antediluvian entity emerged from his cave among the inhospitable rocks at the edge of the world. He brought from his treasure-hoard manuscripts from before the catastrophe, taught the English to write Latin, maybe tried to teach the French some Greek; and then, sensing a second turning of the tide, retired again to become a mere memory among the inheritors of the new earth. At any rate, the Irish have rarely been credited with saving civilization any time after the ninth century. As for the conventional literary history which a general reader might encounter, it is, again, uncodified but instantly recognized. It is recognized in this pattern of loss and recovery, which I am able to parody here precisely because it is a narrative we have all learned to carry in our heads.

The antediluvian analogy above ought to be meaningless from a perspective in Ireland itself, of course. The pattern of loss and recovery, however, oddly applies. This is because Europe's imagined pattern of cyclical loss and recovery happens to be in step with an analogous pattern in Ireland. The Carolingian Revival was, among other things, a recovery of interest in classical authors who had been neglected, with some renewed interest in Greek. Ireland in her Golden Age of learning happens to have been a place where the interest had never been lost, and Carolingian scholars of Greek, strangely, were Irish. Following a few centuries of underachievement, the Twelfth-Century Renaissance reaffirmed the gains of the Carolingians and added its own successes. But this Renaissance happened to be anticipated by a similar recovery of Irish learning in Ireland itself in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries following the years of the Viking wars. Evidence for such a revival, as proposed by Máire Herbert, was reviewed

[1] See above, 30.

in the Introduction. Recoveries in the world of learning in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance included a renewed interest in the pagan poets, exampled by the commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* attributed to Bernardus Sylvestris; and original large-scale composition on themes from pagan antiquity. Among works illustrating the latter, interest in hexameter epic was witnessed by Joseph of Exeter's *Ilias* and Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*; while a vernacular tradition emerged with the French *romans d'antiquité*, which began with the *Roman de Thèbes* (*ca* 1155), followed close by the *Roman d'Eneas* (*ca* 1160), the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure (before 1172), and French Alexander literature.[2] The European 'literary history' already referred to has not yet accounted for the identity of the ancient histories and source texts in this latter list from the twelfth century with the literary movement that got under way in Ireland as much as a hundred and fifty years earlier. The Irish movement had many of the same interests and vernacularized the same source texts, that is, Dares's *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, late-antique Alexander texts, the *Thebaid* and the *Aeneid*.

One interesting difference between models of loss and recovery on the continent and Ireland is the fact that the continental model happens to stress disjuncture, the Irish model, continuity. Given discontinuity between late-antique and Carolingian education, the architects of the Carolingian Revival needed to be brought in from outside Charlemagne's empire, including from England, Spain, Italy and Ireland itself. The manuscripts which underlay the Carolingian editions of classical pagan authors, one would have presumed, likewise could have been brought from abroad. In Ireland, Irish involvement with classical literature is fairly consistent as long as it is attested, and its origins are not a story of disjuncture, but continuity. The Irish became literate in Latin early enough that we can say that late-antique secular learning moved to Ireland before it had really come to an end on the continent. There, hexameter epic on pagan themes and the *romans d'antiquité* represent significant innovations in the twelfth century, a departure in practice by any account. By contrast, the Irish revival of the late tenth and eleventh century stressed continuity following a comparatively brief hiatus. Herbert has found no evidence that the revival even required the importation of books from outside the island.

This study has confirmed that, as far as classical studies are concerned, the classical tales which begin in the tenth century represent continuity of sources and interest with the so-called Golden Age of the seventh through the ninth centuries. The French interest in vernacularizing Dares, Virgil, Statius and narratives of Alexander may reproduce the earlier Irish interest in the same authors by pure accident. Furthermore, the drive to vernacularize the pagan classics in the French-speaking world of Angevin France in the twelfth century cannot be entirely separated from the Carolingian period, as this is where the parchment trail, so to speak, begins for the Latin source texts used. If the role of the Irish in the latter cannot be clarified, hopes to identify Irish influence in the twelfth century are even more surely frustrated. However, the question has hardly been taken up by literary historians. Literary history has identified the Angevin court as where the *romans d'antiquité* had their origin, and where, from their model,

[2] The literature on relevant works in Latin and French from this period is too vast to survey, but for Walter, see especially Lafferty, *Walter*; for Joseph, see Mora, *L'Iliade*; and for the history of Troy in French especially, Jung, *La légende*.

Arthurian Romance had its birth; the contemporaneous emergence of the *artes poetriae* in France only confirms the impression that literary trends begin in the center and move outwards.[3] At the outset, one would have presumed that the Irish classical tales, at least the latest strata, would show some influence of this high prestige literature in French. But even the latest classical tales have betrayed no familiarity with French literature, nor, to my mind, with the *artes poetriae*. Contrary to expectations, Irish practice looks back to the world of the *Hisperica Famina*, to Servius, Servius Danielis and Filargirius, continuous with its own tradition.

That medieval Irish classicism early moved into native literature such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and that it survived so long, argues that the tradition was vigorous enough that it should not be dismissed as a minor phenomenon of a merely provincial literature. Literary historians for the most part enjoy looking for connections between literary works, especially if such connections can be described according to a pattern of influence. Caution is always required, but such influence is not viewed as unlikely when we deal with the languages of the major political powers. For example, we readily imagine an English author working from a French model text. The model is generally rejected out of hand when we are forced to imagine an English or French author reading something in the language of a smaller political power, for example something in Irish. In the controversy concerning the sources for French Arthurian romance, the critical reluctance to admit Welsh or Breton written sources on equal footing with subaltern oral informants is a revealing case in point.

It will be a hardy critic, therefore, who will undertake even to investigate whether Benoît de Sainte-Maure had ever perused a copy of *Togail Troí*. That being the case, what about the influence of a cultural tradition itself? The fame of the Irish in the early Middle Ages for their version of classical studies in Latin and Greek is well attested. Unbeknownst to most modern criticism, the tradition continued through the vernacular period. Did the fame need die with the shift to the vernacular? Throughout this book I have returned to what I consider an admirable feature of Irish classical studies, namely its secular character and its humanistic vision. I have also attempted to argue in favour of its tenacity and its brilliant originality. Admiration for such things could grow even outside the Irish language community – perhaps even mild *aemulatio*. It may benefit medieval studies if critics have new material with which to return to the question of Irish literature and English and continental tradition from the High Middle Ages onwards. The place literary history has given the Irish has been rather over-influenced by the damning critical judgment of Gerald of Wales on civilization in Ireland, to say nothing of the later yet curiously unchanged indictment of Edmund Spenser. Yet neither Gerald nor Spenser was interested in relating to their readers that among the things which Anglo-Norman and English colonists encountered in Ireland was a vernacular literature steeped in classicism and a continuity of investment in classical studies which left their own cultures with the appearance of being *parvenus*. The principal change from the twelfth century on was that Europe, represented by the expansionist society of first the Normans then the Angevin court of Henry II, now encountered Irish culture, not as some-

[3] See Poppe, 'The classical epic', for references.

thing which came to their schools and courts from abroad, but something which they were actively marginalizing. Beginning with Henry's coming to Dublin in 1171, Irish writing increasingly found itself, quite literally, beyond the Pale. Literary history began here. Here it does not need to remain.

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BRENT MILES† is a Fellow in Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork.

Cover: Achilles slaying Troilus, from a late sixth-century BC hydria (© Trusteees of the British Museum), superimposed on the opening lines of Clann ollaman uaisle Emna, *Book of Ballymote f. 34v (© Royal Irish Academy).*

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