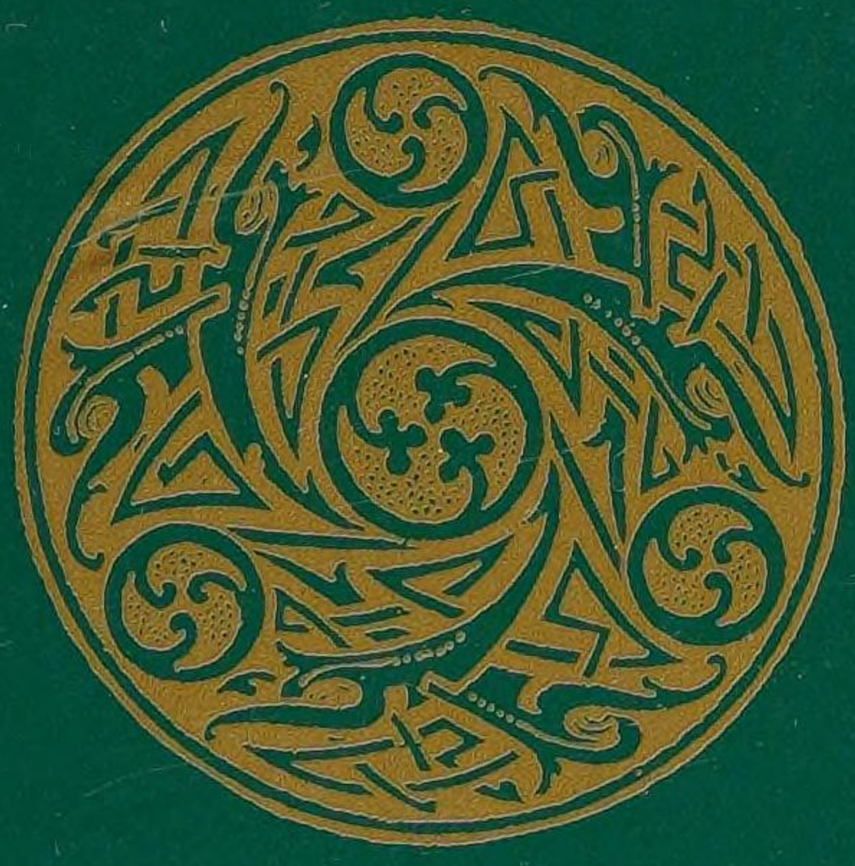
# TRANSLATIONS FROM CLASSICAL LITERATURE:

## *Imtheachta Æniasa*

## AND

## *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*

EDITED BY:
KEVIN MURRAY



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# TRANSLATIONS FROM CLASSICAL LITERATURE:

## *IMTHEACHTA ÆNIASA*

## AND

## *STAIR ERCUIL OCUS A BÁS*

COLÁISTE NA HOLLSCOILE GAILLIMH
LEABHARLANN
WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

EDITED BY:
KEVIN MURRAY

Coláiste na hOllscoile Gaillimh
Leabharlann

Irish Texts Society
Cumann na Scríbheann nGaedhilge
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Translations from Classical Literature:
*Intheachta Éneasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*

Edited by: Kevin Murray

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *Aeneid* | 'The *Aeneid*', in *P. Vergili Maronis*: *Opera*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford University Press, 1969). |
| Apollodorus | Apollodorus, *The Library*, ed. J.G. Frazer, 2 vols (London, 1921; repr. Harvard University Press, 1989-90). [This includes the *Epitome* of the *Library*]. |
| *CCath.* | 'In Cath Catharda: The Civil War of the Romans. An Irish Version of Lucan's Pharsalia', ed. W. Stokes, in *Irische Texte mit Übersetzungen und Wörterbuch* iv, 2, ed. W. Stokes and E. Windisch (Leipzig, 1909). |
| *DIL* | *Dictionary of the Irish Language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials*, general editor E.G. Quin (compact ed., Dublin, 1983). |
| ITS | Irish Texts Society. |
| *LL* | *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, 6 vols, ed. R.I. Best, O. Bergin, M.A. O'Brien, A. O'Sullivan (Dublin, 1954-83). |
| *LU* | *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow*, ed. R.I. Best and O. Bergin (Dublin, 1929). |
| *Rec.* | *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, written in French by Raoul Lefèvre, translated and printed by William Caxton*, ed. H.O. Sommer, 2 vols (London, 1894) [reference is to page numbers]. |
| RIA | Royal Irish Academy. |
| *SE* | *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás. The Life and Death of Hercules*, ed. E.G. Quin, Irish Texts Society 38 (Dublin, 1939) [reference is to line numbers]. |
| TCD | Trinity College, Dublin. |

# FOREWORD

The archives of the Irish Texts Society, currently housed here in University College Cork, are a mine of information with regard to the publication of many of the volumes in the Society's Main Series. Unfortunately, however, no correspondence or other pertinent details survive regarding the production of either *Imtheachta Æniasa* ('The Irish Aeneid') or *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* ('The Life and Death of Hercules').[1] Thus, we are free to imagine (even if it may be far from the truth) that the editors of these volumes, George Calder and Gordon Quin, went about their work in a quiet unobtrusive way and that these by-now standard editions emerged phoenix-like from the unobserved labours of two important Celtic Studies scholars of the twentieth century.

It is to modern-day scholars, interested in the legacy of Calder and Quin, that the Organising Committee turned when assembling the programme for the Seminar on 'Translations from Classical Literature' which was held on 5 November last year; this volume constitutes the Proceedings of that one-day seminar. We looked to those who had investigated deeply and published widely in this subject area and were delighted by the breadth and depth of material presented by our panel of speakers; their learning and enthusiasm for the subject ensured that we had a memorable day.

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh's contribution on 'Classical Compositions in Medieval Ireland: The Literary Context' comprises a detailed and nuanced analysis of the medieval Irish tradition of translating and adapting classical texts. What her study shows is that by the eleventh century, when *Imtheachta Æniasa* was most probably adapted from a version of Virgil's *Aeneid*, there existed a long-standing and well-developed tradition of translating material from Latin extending back to the seventh and eighth centuries. However, the creation of an Irish *Aeneid* at this time was part of the first major wave of literary adaptations of classical compositions which so influenced the course of Irish literature from the late Middle Irish period onwards. Dr Ní Mhaonaigh also demonstrates that *Stair Ercuil* belongs to a further wave of literary adaptations of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

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[1] See P. Ó Riain, *Irish Texts Society: The First Hundred Years*, ITS Subsidiary Series 9 (London, 1998), pp. 93, 96.

when the favoured source language was English. After reading her essay, we are left under no illusions about the important place that these translations and adaptations occupy in the development of Irish literary culture.

Gearóid Mac Eoin's investigation of 'The Greek Background to *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*' demonstrates how far removed *Stair Ercuil* is from Greek writings on Hercules (or Herakles as he was called in Greek). A comparison of the Irish material with Herakles' biography, as preserved in Apollodorus' *Library*, shows how some strands of Greek tradition survived in the Irish re-telling while others were lost. The lack of widespread knowledge of the Greek language and its traditions in medieval Ireland, combined with the scribe's treatment of his source material, lead Prof. Mac Eoin to the conclusion (p. 36) that 'it is no wonder that no second copy of his work survives'.

Erich Poppe's essay follows on, both logically and chronologically, from Prof. Mac Eoin's contribution as is evident from the title: '*Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* – Rewriting Hercules in Ireland'. This extended comparison between *Stair Ercuil* and its immediate English-language source, Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, is the bedrock from which Prof. Poppe draws his conclusions concerning the nature of the adaptation / translation created by the fifteenth-century Irish scribe, Uilliam Mac an Leagha. He concludes (p. 65) that '*Stair Ercuil* emerges as both a free *and* faithful rendering of Caxton's *Recuyell*'. This chapter clearly demonstrates how studies of this kind have much to offer students of medieval Irish literary culture.

Fiona Cox evinces a different approach in her contribution on 'Virgilian Transformations – The *Aeneid* in the History of Translation'. She looks at how two modern Irish poets, Séamus Heaney and Eavan Boland, use Virgilian imagery and references to articulate their experiences of loss, exile and marginalisation. However, when comparisons are drawn between these uses of Virgil and the authorial attitude which emerges from the Irish adaptation, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, we see that the medieval author has excised this sense of uncertainty. However, though this re-working may seem anti-Virgilian in tone, Dr Cox concludes (p. 82) that *Imtheachta Æniasa* belongs to the 'tradition of turning to Virgil in order to counter a feeling of marginality by changing the centres of civilisation'.

In the final chapter of the book, Diana Luft presents her thoughts on 'Translation Theory and Medieval Translation'. While acknowledging the widespread scholarly reluctance to engage with

'theory', she recommends an approach that allows us to extract what we find useful and to change those aspects which require modification. As Dr Luft argues (p. 99): 'we can add to that theory, challenge some of its assumptions and, if we do not find it to be entirely to our liking, shape it in such a way that it becomes more useful to us'. Her paper presents a compelling case for engaging with theory in the study of medieval Irish texts to help make the primary sources more accessible and more comprehensible to a wider audience.

Although the Society, the Organising Committee (Prof. Pádraig Ó Riain, Dr Pádraigín Riggs, Mr Liam P. Ó Murchú, Dr John Carey and myself) and various staff members of Na Ranna Gaeilge all played their part in organising the Seminar, it is with gratitude that we acknowledge the contribution of Dr Pádraigín Riggs in particular; as organising secretary, she did more than anyone else to ensure the success of this event. *Míle buíochas*. Our thanks also go to Ms Siobhán Ní Dhonghaile and Ms Ciara Ní Churnáin, administrative staff of Na Ranna Gaeilge, for all their assistance, and to the administrators of the Conference Fund of the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences for their continued financial support of our Seminar. Finally, I wish to salute the five contributors to this volume, and Mr Richard Kelly of CRM Design + Print, whose professionalism and enthusiasm made the job of editor such an enjoyable and pleasurable experience.

Kevin Murray,
Roinn na Sean- agus na Meán-Ghaeilge,
Coláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh.

# CHAPTER ONE

# Classical Compositions in Medieval Ireland: the Literary Context

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh

*Imtheachta Æniasa*, the Irish *Aeneid*, which may have been adapted from a version of Virgil as early as the eleventh century, and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, a fifteenth-century retelling of the tale of Hercules' life and death based on William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, are key examples of a type of intellectual activity at which the medieval Irish excelled – creative adaptation. Classical compositions, like the *Aeneid*, many of which would have been required reading in schools throughout Europe, provided popular source material from perhaps the tenth century. A translation of the Troy saga, *Togail Troí*, may have been undertaken at this time, although it has only survived in eleventh- and twelfth-century recensions.[1] *Scéla Alexandair meic Philip*, a vernacular rendition of the Alexander story, is another early example,[2] though later than *Togail Troí* if we accept that its author did in fact draw on a version of that text.[3] Significantly, both titles are contained in the medieval Irish tale-lists,[4] having quickly become part of that particular literary canon. They also served as forerunners to a group of related narratives which were made to don Irish dress in the twelfth century when the taste for this kind of material was especially intense. These include Lucan's *Pharsalia* or *Bellum Civile*, an account of Caesar's conflict with his son-in-law, Pompey, which appeared in a much

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1 Stokes, *Togail Troí*; Stokes, 'The Destruction of Troy'; Mac Eoin, 'Ein Text'. See also Mac Eoin, 'Das Verbalsystem'; Myrick, *From the* De Excidio Troiae Historia; Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí*: An Example'.

2 Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage'; see also Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander'.

3 Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', p. 94. Many of the early linguistic forms highlighted by Peters in favour of a tenth-century date for this text (pp. 88-93), however, remained current in the eleventh century and later (e.g. the deponent form *atacoemnacair*; the preterite passive forms *atchuas* and *fofrith*).

4 Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, pp. 52, 54, 84, 91.

revised form as *In Cath Catharda*,[5] as well as the story of the war between Oedipus's two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, told in the *Thebaid* of Statius which was somewhat more faithfully recast as *Togail na Tebe*.[6] Another work of Statius, the *Achilleis*, was incorporated in fragmentary form into one recension of *Togail Troí* about this time[7] and a poetic rendering of the latter was also composed.[8] The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, was cast very loosely into prose, the twelfth- or thirteenth-century author of *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis* drawing perhaps on a variety of sources,[9] as did his contemporary, the creator of Minator's story, *Sgél in Mínaduir*.[10] Latin material continued to provide inspiration in the following centuries as *Gabháltas Sherluis Mhóir*, an Early Modern Irish account of Charlemagne's adventures, shows.[11] Increasing familiarity with other vernaculars and with English in particular, however, ensured that the latter was to become the favoured host language in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries providing literary models for such Irish adaptations as *Eachtra Uilliam*,[12] *Lorgaireacht an tSoidhigh Naomhtha*,[13] as well as *Stair Ercuil*.[14]

Thus, what is often seen as a twelfth-century phenomenon predominantly has in fact a long and varied history, all the more so when we consider that the art of adaptation of foreign material to which these literary texts so eloquently bear witness is evidenced earlier still, albeit in a less extended form, in a variety of other genres. In *Aipgitir Chrábaid*, one of the earliest extant prose compositions,[15] for example, extracts from John Cassian are

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5 Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda'.
6 Calder, *Togail na Tebe*.
7 Ó hAodha, 'The Irish Version'.
8 Mac Eoin, 'Dán'.
9 Meyer, *Merugud Uilix*; see also Hillers, 'Ulysses and the Judge of Truth'.
10 Meyer, 'Mitteilungen'; see also Hillers, '*Sgél in Mínaduir*'.
11 ITS 19.
12 O'Rahilly, *Eachtra Uilliam*.
13 Falconer, *Lorgaireacht*.
14 On classical influences in Ireland generally, see Stanford, 'Towards a History'. On 'translation literature' specifically, see Ó Cuív, 'Medieval Irish Scholars'; Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations'; Mac Cana, 'La traduction'; and most recently Poppe, 'Mittelalterliche Übersetzungsliteratur'. I am grateful to Professor Poppe for sending me a typescript of this article prior to its publication.
15 Pádraig Ó Néill has adduced extra-linguistic evidence in support of the early seventh-century date suggested mainly on phonological grounds and on the basis of the ascription of the text to Colmán moccu Béognae (*ob.* 611): 'The Date and Authorship'. It may be, however, that the work was composed later in the seventh century or indeed in the eighth century, as suggested by Kim McCone: 'Prehistoric', pp. 34-5.

transformed into the vernacular, as Pádraig Ó Néill has shown.[16] Similarly, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Aidan Breen have demonstrated the extent to which authors of seventh- and eighth-century vernacular law tracts drew on canonistic texts, specifically the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*.[17] In the same way, the ninth-century hagiographical text, *Bethu Brigte*, could be a partial translation of a Latin original,[18] as might be its Patrician counterpart, the *Vita Tripartita*.[19] A fragmentary tenth-century shortened version of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* has survived,[20] the form of which may suggest, in Próinséas Ní Chatháin's words, 'that an abridged translation of the full work was originally envisaged'.[21] Furthermore, a number of vernacular versions of the *Historia Britonum*, ascribed to Nennius, came into being in the eleventh century,[22] just as Irish interest in the history of the Greeks and Romans was also growing, as evidenced by the production of vernacular versions of classical compositions noted above.

As the common historical dimension of many of the texts translated into Irish in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries makes clear, it is against this broader intellectual background that our group of classical adaptations should first and foremost be placed. Their dynamic reworking of non-native material undoubtedly owes much to earlier exemplars, although their focus on the matter of Latin heroic tales represents something of a new departure. Nonetheless, this too can only be properly understood in the context of the considerable classical learning of the day. Notwithstanding the fact that Virgil is the only classical author of whom it has been demonstrated that the learned classes had direct knowledge in medieval Ireland,[23] an acquaintance with other authors is indicated by a range of references in a variety of texts.[24] Thus, while a direct debt to Homer's *Iliad* in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*

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16 'The Date and Authorship', p. 207.

17 Ó Corráin, Breatnach and Breen, 'The Laws of the Irish'; Breatnach, 'Canon Law', pp. 445-52.

18 Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte*, xix.

19 Jackson, 'The Date', p. 7; Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí*: An Example', p. 75.

20 Bergin, 'A Middle Irish Fragment'.

21 'Bede's Ecclesiastial History', p. 122. Tristram, on the other hand, has argued that only the first two books of the work were translated: 'Bedas *Historia Ecclesiastica*', pp. 55-6.

22 van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach*; see also Dumville, 'The Textual History'.

23 Hofman, 'Some New Facts'.

24 John Carey has drawn attention to classical lore in the work of such poets as Máel Muru Othna, Gilla Cóemáin mac Samthainne and Gilla in Choimded: *The Irish National Origin-legend*, pp. 16-17.

is questionable,[25] a reference to the Furies is found in the version of the *Táin* contained in *Lebor na hUidre*, as well as in *Fled Dúin na nGéd* composed about the same time.[26] Moreover, as is well known, another contemporary, writing in the second half of the same century, envisaged Emain Macha as Ireland's own Troy with Conchobar as Priam, Cú Chulainn as Troilus and heroes such as Fergus mac Róich, Conall Cernach and Naíse as Aeneas, Hector and Alexander respectively.[27] This is unsurprising when we consider that a classical curriculum appears to have been in place in centres of learning such as Glendalough, as suggested by the range of typical texts found in fragments in twelfth-century schoolbooks, as well as by the copy of a translation by Chalcidius of Plato's *Timaeus* made there about the same time.[28]

Hence, the intellectual atmosphere prevailing in centres of learning in Ireland in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in particular was such that knowledge of the classics might easily have been obtained. In addition, the eleventh century witnessed a surge in the popularity of pilgrimages not least among aristocratic rulers, most notably Brian Bórama's son, Donnchad, who went to Rome in 1064 where he died shortly afterwards.[29] He would probably have felt reasonably at home there since there was a colony of Irish monks in Rome at the end of the eleventh century.[30] Similarly, the foundation of a number of the Schottenklöster can also be dated to about this time,[31] including Regensburg where, in 1149, *Visio Tnugdali* was written by an Irishman, Marcus, whose primary education had most likely been obtained in Ireland.[32] Displaying considerable knowledge of Munster politics of its day, this famous vision tale bears witness to the close ties that were retained between learned travellers and their kinsmen at home.[33] Indeed, many of those who ventured abroad returned, among them the twelfth-century author of *Vita Flannani* and *Vita Mochullei* who was educated in France and in the Rhineland before

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[25] For an overview of the debate concerning classical influence on the *Táin*, see Ó hUiginn, 'The Background', pp. 35-41.

[26] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, p. 30, l. 955; Lehmann, *Fled*, p. 9, l. 290.

[27] Byrne, '*Clanna Ollaman*', pp. 61-2, 76.

[28] Henry, *Irish Art*, p. 48.

[29] Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 1064.4. On the changing nature of pilgrimage in this period, see Hughes, 'The Changing Theory'.

[30] Gwynn, 'Ireland and the Continent'.

[31] Breatnach, 'The Origins'.

[32] Pfeil, *Die 'Vision des Tnugdalus'*; Picard and de Pontfarcy, *Vision*.

[33] Picard and de Pontfarcy, *Vision*, pp. 40-4; see also Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Aspects', pp. 225-7 and 'Cork and Europe', pp. 6-9; Breatnach, 'The Origins', pp. 76-7.

working in an Uí Briain scholarly milieu, as Donnchadh Ó Corráin has shown.[34] Texts and ideas popular on the continent, therefore, found their way into intellectual circles in Ireland, influencing much of what was written at the time.[35]

Hence, it seems likely that the obviously increased interest in classical material in eleventh- and twelfth-century Ireland, as evidenced most concretely in the substantial corpus of Latin narratives rendered into the vernacular at the time, owes its impetus to the cultural climate which a new wave of academic and aristocratic Irishmen encountered overseas.[36] Notwithstanding this, the medieval Irish demonstrated a particular affinity with such texts, promptly producing what in many instances are their earliest incarnations in the vernacular.[37] That selective adaptation of foreign sources had long since been part of the literary tradition may explain in part the enthusiastic embrace afforded this material. Additionally, however, the subject matter of what are often long and complex stories must have provided both author and audience with themes to which they could readily relate. As heroic tales, the similarities between the deeds of their main characters and those of native champions would have been immediately apparent, as Erich Poppe has noted.[38] Furthermore, Uáitéar Mac Gearailt has demonstrated how an aspiring Irish overking could eagerly identify with the portrayal therein of great and powerful rulers.[39] In this connection, the predominantly historical focus of the Irish adaptations is significant[40] since it enabled putative parallels to be more easily drawn.

Indeed, it may well have been the historicity of these Latin epic narratives in the first place which attracted Irish adaptors, as has previously been claimed.[41] This is supported by the fact that the events recounted in these foreign texts are also recorded in the

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[34] 'Foreign Connections'.

[35] See, for example, Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Pagans and Holy Men'.

[36] Riché, 'La "Renaissance" intellectuelle'; Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander', p. 132.

[37] Exceptionally, the Old English Alexander material was translated in the late ninth century and is earlier, therefore, than its Irish counterpart: Bately, *Old English Orosius*. See also Tristram, 'Der insulare Alexander'.

[38] *A New Introduction*, p. 29.

[39] '*Togail Troí*: An Example', p. 79; see also Poppe, 'Mittelalterliche Übersetzungsliteratur'.

[40] On which, see Myrick, *From the* De Excidio Troiae Historia, pp. 70-1; Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 5-8, 14-15.

[41] Myrick, *From the* De Excidio Troiae Historia, pp. 70-1.

chronological scheme of world history preserved in what forms the pre-historic section of annalistic compilations.[42] Furthermore, that their chronology was of chief interest is underlined by the restructuring which a number of them, including the *Aeneid* and Statius's *Achilleis*, were made to undergo in vernacular guise to ensure that the events were set out in the order in which they had allegedly occurred.[43] Like their European counterparts, the learned Irish viewed the history of the world in terms of a succession of empires in which those of Alexander and Julius Caesar, for example, had their fixed place. *In Cath Catharda* begins with an enumeration of these, drawn perhaps from Isidore of Seville;[44] similarly, *Scéla Alexandair* alludes to *coic primflathiusa ro batar for in domun ria flaithius Roman*, 'the five chief empires over the world before the Roman empire', in its opening lines.[45] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that interest in what was key material as far as the establishment of an historical construct was concerned blossomed as part of the enterprise concerned with creating an overarching framework and locating Ireland's pivotal place within it. In this context, it is significant perhaps that some of the earliest settlers in Ireland are said to be Greek in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*.[46] It is in the latter text, of course, that the clearest expression of this ordered historical approach can be found.[47] Drawing on the earlier poetic work of synthetic scholars such as Flann Mainistrech, Eochaid ua Flainn and Gilla Cóemáin mac Samthainne, the text as we know it achieved something approaching final form in the eleventh century when classical narratives were becoming increasingly well known.[48] Growing familiarity with these accounts of central events in world history certainly served to heighten chronological awareness and aided the weaving together of internal and external affairs.

Hence, it was as historical sagas that the classical adaptations were primarily read and in this connection the obvious popularity of the story of Troy which is preserved in three prose recensions, as well as a poetic one, need not surprise us, Troy being perceived as history's

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[42] Poppe, 'Reconstructing', p. 39, n. 32.
[43] Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 6-7 and '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*', pp. 76-7; O hAodha, 'The Irish Version'.
[44] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 2-13.
[45] Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', p. 99, ll. 1-2.
[46] ITS 34, pp. 152-5.
[47] Carey, *The Irish National Origin-legend* and '*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History'.
[48] Carey, *The Irish National Origin-legend*, pp. 17-22; Smyth, 'Early Irish Historical Verse'.

defining moment. Furthermore, such was the confidence and maturity of the medieval Irish *literati* that it was with Troy that Emain Macha and Cruachain were compared, as we have seen.[49] Indeed, it was precisely this self-assuredness which could have led the Irish to these chronological cornerstones in the first place, their being of the conviction that the history recounted therein was one with which Ireland's significant past should undoubtedly be reconciled.

As is well known, however, the period in which interest in these history-recounting narratives was at its height, namely the twelfth century, is characterised primarily by a movement of church reform.[50] In this connection, one might question whether the wholesale rehabilitation of what were after all pagan authors is one which would have met with universal applause. In particular, the attitude to them in monasteries newly founded by continental orders, in which classical learning might well have been popular, was likely to have been hostile. Indeed, even the author of the version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* preserved in the Book of Leinster turned to Latin to pour contempt on what he had transcribed.[51] By contrast, however, the authors of other contemporary compositions went to considerable lengths to counter the claim that the Church should not concern itself with what was in effect pagan lore. Thus, in both *Acallam na Senórach* and *Buile Shuibne*, a saint (Patrick in the former text, Moling in the latter) serves as the conduit by means of which the essentially pagan matter of a pre-Christian remnant, Caílte, and a fluent madman, Suibne, is preserved for posterity. Moreover, this is done with the explicit approval of the Church.[52] Similarly, a prominent member of a *cliar crossán*, 'buffoon band', is given explicit permission to voyage with the Uí Chorra brothers in the Middle Irish *immram* recounting their adventures. Since his travel permit was granted *ar Dhia,* 'for God's sake', we may assume that this author too shared the view that secular learning did indeed fall within an ecclesiastical remit.[53] In this context, the translation of long and highly visible pagan texts may also have served to underline the inclusive nature of the Church's intellectual domain.

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[49] Byrne, '*Clanna Ollaman*'.

[50] See, for example, Constable, *The Reformation*, and from an Irish perspective, Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel, *Ireland and Europe*.

[51] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, p. 136, ll. 4921-5, p. 272; Ó Néill, 'The Latin Colophon'.

[52] Stokes, 'Acallamh', p. 9; ITS 12, pp. 142-3; Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Pagans and Holy Men', pp. 147-8, 152-5, 157-8.

[53] Stokes, 'The Voyage', pp. 40-1; Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Pagans and Holy Men', pp. 155-7.

This presupposes, of course, that the vernacular versions of these narratives were in fact composed in a clerical context. Where the authors appear to have been drawing substantially on Latin narratives, this is surely likely to have been the case. Moreover, in certain contexts, Latin remained pivotal for later medieval translators. Thus, those adapting medical texts were undoubtedly immersed in the language[54] as were those whose main focus was religious matter.[55] The latter was a chief concern of Franciscans but their translated repertoire encompassed a wide variety of material. Notwithstanding this, the linguistic genesis of some of the texts in question is difficult to ascertain. *Merugud Uilix meic Leirtis*, for example, a twelfth- or thirteenth-century loose retelling of the *Odyssey*, is not drawn directly from any known source. Barbara Hillers has noted that the account of the Cyclops therein may well be closest to the Irish *Aeneid* and has further postulated that its author may not have known Latin at all, or if so, that his knowledge of it was unsophisticated.[56] Yet this is precisely the kind of text that might equally have been cultivated by increasingly prominent secular patrons of learning. Indeed, in general, the universal subject matter of these classical narratives would have ensured that they made the transition from ecclesiastical to secular spheres of learning with remarkable ease.

Furthermore, these narratives appear to have been directed primarily at a secular audience, as their transposition into the vernacular in the first place would indicate. The process itself imbued each narrative with its own specific meaning or nexus of meanings, elucidation of which requires close analysis of the individual texts, as Erich Poppe has undertaken for *Imtheachta Æniasa* revealing its historical concerns.[57] Similarly, the detailed reading by Barbara Hillers of *Merugud Uilix* has highlighted the concept of truth as an overarching concern.[58] More universal thematic concerns can also be identified. In particular, it is scarcely coincidental that struggles pertaining to kinship feature prominently in a number of the works, since this is a topic which is also prevalent in freshly composed Irish tales. Thus, as *Táin Bó Cúailnge* portrays the tragic destruction which warring kinsmen inflict on a society,[59]

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[54] Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations', pp. 111-15; Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Early Modern Irish'.
[55] Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations', pp. 118-22.
[56] 'Ulysses and the Judge of Truth', pp. 201-3, 205; but see Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 8-9.
[57] *A New Introduction*.
[58] 'Ulysses and the Judge of Truth'.
[59] Radner, 'Fury Destroys the World'.

similar concerns are addressed in roughly contemporary translation tales. The tragic encounters between Cú Chulainn and his various foster-brothers are mirrored in the conflict between the sons of Oedipus in Statius's *Thebaid*.[60] In the same way, Caesar may have been triumphant in battle against his son-in-law, according to *In Cath Catharda*, but the story ends on a bitter note. Since 'there chanced to be opposite him in this great battle of the plain of Thessaly his father or his son or his brother or his son-in-law or his fellow citizen' (*tarla i cinncomair friss isin cath mór-sa maighe na Tesaili a athair no a mac no a brathair no a cliamain no a comchatharda*), detailed accounts of the individual combats were omitted lest 'hatred and ill might arise in their hearts amongst themselves when they should hear that their fathers and their brothers killed one another in the combats of this battle' (*ro eirged miscais ocus miduthracht ina cridibh etarru fein, in tan at-cluinfitis a n-aithri ocus a mbraithri do commarbad araili i comraictib in cathæ sæ*).[61] Furthermore, that this aspect of the tale is dominant in the mind of the Irish author and his audience is underlined by the fact that a dramatic account of strife between two thirteenth-century Uí Briain relatives, Toirdelbach and his uncle Brian Ruad, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, composed by Seán Mac Craith in the mid-fourteenth century,[62] drew on *In Cath Catharda* for thematic inspiration mentioning it specifically on occasion while basing passages directly on it elsewhere in the work.[63]

## Form

Not surprisingly, therefore, it was texts whose subject matter resonated with an Irish audience which were chosen for recasting in Irish dress for, as Poppe has observed, the primary interest of the medieval translator was in what Djordjevíc has termed 'acceptability (to the recipients) rather than adequacy (to the original)'.[64] To this end, the material borrowed was frequently accorded a native hue. By way of example, a number of Caesar's adventures, including his hosting to Spain, his difficulties with mutinying soldiers, and the death-tales of certain of his trusted men, as recounted in *In Cath Catharda*, are specifically described as *remscéla* 'fore-tales' to the final tale, *Cath mór muige na Tesaile*, 'The great battle of the plain

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60 Calder, *Togail na Tebe*.
61 Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 446-9.
62 ITS 26, 27.
63 ITS 26, p. xiv. As Simms has noted, the battle formation in *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* mirrors the arrangement in the adaptation of Lucan's work: 'Gaelic Warfare', p. 107.
64 Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*', p. 75.

of Thessaly'.[65] Concern with the end product is equally evident in the liberty which Irish translators often took with their sources. Thus, the literary craftsman who was responsible for the Irish Alexander tale drew on a range of works to produce what is, in the words of Erik Peters, 'eine selbständige Komposition des irischen Verfassers'.[66] Of such freedom, however, Irish literary stylists did not always avail: both the eleventh-century recension of *Togail Troí* and *Togail na Tebe*, for example, remain reasonably faithful to the host text.[67] But as in all Irish adaptations, the poetry of the original is in these instances too rendered into prose, the preferred medium for narrative texts. Yet narrative verse is not entirely unknown, as the metrical version of *Esnada Tige Buchet* and poetic renderings of various voyage tales attest.[68] Furthermore, there was a well-established tradition of writing historical verse, to which such poets as Máel Muru Othna (†887),[69] as well as the trio mentioned above – Flann Mainistrech (†1056), Eochaid ua Flainn (†1004) and Gilla Cóemáin (*fl.*1072) – bear eloquent witness. That prose was nonetheless the dominant medium of these classical adaptations suggests that generically their authors categorised them alongside so-called saga narratives, as the inclusion of *Scéla Alexandair* and *Togail Troí* in the appropriate thematic sections of the tale-lists indicates.[70]

In one major formal respect, however, translation texts differ significantly from many of their indigenous counterparts, namely their length. Furthermore, it has been suggested that such compositions in fact 'served as a model for the expansion of older Irish tales'[71] and that without their impetus 'integrative macro-form writing in the Irish vernacular' could not have occurred.[72] Yet a movement from short succinct saga to longer discursive narrative, if such there was, must surely be viewed against the background of an evolving intellectual environment being increasingly enriched by a multitude of influences, including classical texts. In this regard, it is

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[65] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 171-2, l. 2261; pp. 218-19, l. 2858; pp. 244-5, l. 3207; pp. 246-7, l. 3247; pp. 322-3, l. 4304.

[66] 'Die irische Alexandersage', p. 72 ('an independent composition of the Irish author').

[67] Mac Gearailt, 'Change and Innovation', p. 454.

[68] Greene, *Fingal Rónáin*, pp. 32-41; van Hamel, *Immrama*, pp. 54-77, 86-92. See also Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland', pp. 43-4.

[69] For his poem, *Can a mbundadas na nGáedel*, 'Whence the origins of the Irish?', see Best and O'Brien, *Book of Leinster* iii, pp. 516-23 and Carey, *The Irish National Origin-legend*, pp. 14-16.

[70] Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales*, pp. 52, 54, 84, 91.

[71] Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 351.

[72] Tristram, 'The "Cattle-raid of Cuailnge"', p. 70.

worth stressing that the learned Irish were long since familiar with the ultimate macro-text, the Bible, whose subject matter they quarried in the tenth century to produce a sophisticated extended narrative poem, *Saltair na Rann*.[73]

Moreover, what appears to have been an appreciative audience was in no way perturbed by the length of these narratives, to judge from their popularity. In this regard, it might be argued that the choice of such lengthy tracts for assimilation into an Irish literary setting could indicate a predilection for such epic tales in the first place though this, of course, intimates a previous familiarity with work of broadly similar structure. In an Irish context, the lengthy narratives, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* are clearly crucial in this connection, the obvious difficulty being that both compositions, in the elaborate form in which we have them, are eleventh- and twelfth-century in date.[74] In the case of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, no early copy of the text survives although some of the events it relates are alluded to in a pair of older poems, *Verba Scáthaige* and *Conailla Medb Míchuru*.[75] For *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, on the other hand, a much abbreviated early version has survived in *Lebor na hUidre* citing *Cín Dromma Snechta* as the source.[76] In addition, Old Irish forms are sufficiently numerous in the extant text to accept in general outline the premise put forward initially by Lucius Gwynn and Rudolf Thurneysen that a ninth-century written text (or texts) underlies what has survived in an eleventh-century reworking.[77] That we cannot precisely determine the nature of that rewriting means that any attempt to reconstitute a ninth-century *Togail* must remain speculative. Nonetheless, since the earliest linguistic stratum permeates the entire narrative, including the descriptive passages which form an integral part of the whole, the possibility must be entertained that *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* was a reasonably lengthy, elaborate ninth-century literary composition. There is nothing inherently implausible in this. In the ninth century, and perhaps earlier, medieval Irish scholars were actively engaged in the construction of a convoluted origin-legend drawing extensively on

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[73] Stokes, *The Saltair na Rann*.
[74] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*; Knott, *Togail*.
[75] Ó hUiginn, 'The Background', pp. 59-60.
[76] Ó Cathasaigh, 'On the *Cín Dromma Snechta* Version'; West, 'Leabhar na hUidhre's Position', pp. 62-3, 91-8.
[77] Gwynn, 'The Recensions'; Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 621-52.

foreign sources of varying length and complexity.[78] These provided native scholars with a multitude of structural models, many of which may simply have reinforced directions in which prose writing for a nexus of reasons was beginning to evolve. In writing a biography of King Conaire Mór, one of the key figures in Irish pseudo-history, the author of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* may have been especially attuned to literary developments and thus his work may provide us with an early example of a more discursive text. Be that as it may, he is unlikely to have been a lone pioneer.

## Style

If the influence of translation texts on the form of saga narratives is less significant than might at first appear, what is often viewed as their significant effect on the style of such compositions remains to be addressed. As is well known, a number of twelfth-century narratives in particular are characterised by a diffuse, bombastic style punctuated by such features as ornamental repetition, rhythmical runs of alliterating adjectives and nouns, as well as by a wide and varied lexis, which stands in marked contrast to earlier literary products which display a terse, relatively unadorned narrative technique. The finished work is an elaborate, polished, rhythmical whole which smacks of a certain artificiality. It is not confined exclusively to any one text type, occurring in the heroic tales, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Cath Ruis na Ríg* and *Mesca Ulad*, as preserved in the Book of Leinster,[79] and to a lesser extent in the bilingual vision tale, *Fís Adamnáin* and the duo of religious texts it precedes in *Lebor na hUidre*, *Scéla Laí Brátha* and *Scéla na hEsérgi*.[80] Nevertheless, the assiduous cultivation of this flamboyant style in many literary adaptations has led to this body of material being accorded a pivotal role in its development, and being seen as the conductor by means of which elaborate effects came to be employed in generically unrelated texts.[81] The exact mechanism involved, however, is far from clear and could not have functioned on a purely literary level. Since it is precisely such stylistic embellishments that often differentiate a vernacular adaptation from its Latin original, the possibility of a simple cross-cultural transfer must be ruled out. That being so, the

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[78] Carey, *The Irish National Origin-legend* and '*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History'.

[79] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge*; Hogan, *Cath Ruis na Ríg*; Watson, *Mesca Ulad*, pp. 1-40.

[80] Windisch, 'Fís Adamnáin'; Stokes, 'Tidings of Doomsday'; Stokes, 'Tidings of the Resurrection'.

[81] Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 351; Tristram, 'Latin', p. 872.

evolution of this new style may be bound up with the act of adaptation, as intimated by Mac Gearailt, who views the actual process of translation as being instrumental in opening up the ears and minds of prose writers to contemporary storytelling.[82] It is scarcely conceivable, however, that learned Irish clerics ignored a highly ornamental indigenous oral tradition until forced to do otherwise when confronted with long and complex Latin literary texts. As Mac Gearailt has claimed in the case of the authors of *Togail Troí* specifically, they drew on a 'contemporary, non-literary storytelling tradition … rather than developing an entirely new style of narrative prose'.[83]

Not surprisingly, the textual evidence indicates that 'translation texts' are not stylistically uniform. *Scéla Alexandair*, an early adaptation, as we have seen, is not especially ornamental, nor is the earliest extant version of *Togail Troí*,[84] in contrast with Recension II of that text which came into being when the highly rhetorical style had secured a significant foothold in the literary field.[85] The means by which it did so are not immediately apparent but foreign adaptations cannot have been the sole agent for the change. Its increase in popularity is certainly linked with a growing trend towards composition of longer, more discursive texts, as Mac Gearailt has observed.[86] This may well be a natural step in a literary evolutionary process. In this connection, it may be noted that the same marked style also flourished contemporaneously in a specific kind of propaganda tract, of which *Cocad Gáedel re Gallaib* and *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil* provide the most prominent examples,[87] and which represent something of a new departure in eleventh- and twelfth-century learned circles. Both translation texts and propaganda tracts, as well as other emerging genres, undoubtedly provided an ideal, convention-free environment for engaging in stylistic experimentation. But other factors too must be considered: familiarity with convoluted Hiberno-Latin prose may have played a secondary role, as Hildegard Tristram has claimed.[88] More significantly, elaborate descriptive passages had long since been a feature of vernacular narrative prose; these too may have

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82 'Change and Innovation', p. 492.
83 '*Togail Troí*: An Example', p. 81.
84 Ibid., p. 77.
85 Mac Gearailt, 'Change and Innovation', pp. 453-92 and '*Togail Troí*: An Example', p. 79.
86 'Change and Innovation', p. 492.
87 Todd, *Cogadh*; Bugge, *Caithreim*.
88 'Latin', p. 872.

contributed to the evolution of a more expansive style. Translation literature certainly played a part in this productive process, but it formed but one crucial element in a highly complex chain.

In addition, what is often perceived to be the all-pervasive nature of this bold and flowery prose style may in fact be more apparent than real. Although it is employed in a wide variety of narratives, a terse, relatively unadorned stylistic technique was also used and brisk, basic prose continued to be composed.[89] That such texts tend to be overshadowed by the verbosity of their more elaborate counterparts is unsurprising. The latter are long, highly visible texts, a number of them being preserved in the Book of Leinster, which is one of only three extant contemporary vernacular manuscripts. Theirs is a style that demands attention. Nonetheless, it represents only one type of writing among many in which the medieval Irish were actively engaged.

Indeed, it may well be that this hyperbolic style was the preserve of a single, albeit highly influential, scribal school, as James Carney has suggested.[90] In support of this, Mac Gearailt's detailed analysis of the language of a number of the texts in question has highlighted close correspondences between many of them.[91] Moreover, a significant number of them can be linked with one another in various ways. Two prominent examples, *Togail Troí* and *In Cath Catharda*, bear an obvious affinity with each other since both are dependent on Latin exemplars, as we have seen. The former may have been drawn on by the author of *Cocad Gáedel re Gallaib* to judge from verbal parallels[92] and more specifically from the wholesale comparison between the chief heroes at Clontarf and such Trojan warriors as Hector and Hercules.[93] Be that as it may, the *Cocad* itself was certainly used as a model by the author of *Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil*,[94] and may also have served as inspiration for the creator of the Book of Leinster version of *Cath Ruis na Rig*.[95] In the first place, as Mac Gearailt has noted, both liken an army to an oak-wood in which the young saplings get cut down but the sturdy, battle-warriors

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[89] See, for example, *Cath Crinna* (O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, i, 319-26, ii, 359-68) and the twelfth-century version of *Cath Almaine* (Ó Riain, *Cath Almaine*).

[90] Stanford, 'Towards a History', p. 33, n. 65.

[91] 'On Textual Correspondences'; 'Change and Innovation'; 'The Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts'.

[92] Mac Gearailt, '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild'.

[93] Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 186-9.

[94] Ó Corráin, '*Caithréim Chellacháin Chaisil*', p. 5.

[95] Mac Gearailt also suggests that *Togail Troí* was quarried by the author of *Cath Ruis na Rig*: '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild'.

remain standing.[96] More specifically, they employ a figurative turn of phrase – *bleith muilinn tuaithfil*, 'the grinding of a left-handed mill' – to indicate a disorganised military move.[97] The phrase may, of course, be proverbial; nonetheless, it may be significant that it is perhaps only in these two texts that it is used in this particular way. Yet another common motif serves to link the *Cocad* and another stylistically ornamented narrative, *Cath Cummair*: such was the sense of security in the reigns of both Echu Feidlech and Brian that a woman could have travelled fearlessly from north to south.[98] In its account of grievous familial strife between Echu Feidlech and his three sons, however, it is of another kin-feud, *In Cath Catharda*, that *Cath Cumair* most resonates, the needless tragedy of it all being highlighted by both authors at the end.[99]

Indeed such were the marked correspondences between three particular texts employing this bombastic style, *Cath Ruis na Rig*, *Mesca Ulad* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, all preserved in the Book of Leinster, that Thurneysen was led to posit that they were in fact penned by the same author (*Bearbeiter C*).[100] Such striking affinities as there are, as far as the Book of Leinster *Táin* is concerned, however, are confined to one particular stratum of the text, as Mac

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[96] Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 346, n. 7; 'Change and Innovation', p. 487; '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild', pp. 123-5; Todd, *Cogadh*, p. 198, ll. 25-8; Hogan, *Cath Ruis na Rig*.

[97] Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 345 (p). In the *Cocad*, it forms part of a watchman-device scenario towards the end of the tale where Brian Bórama's attendant describes for him the state of the forces, *Gaídil* and *Gaill* alike: *ocus atad [na catha] go hanordaighthe imaccuairt, ocus bleith muilinn tuaithfil orra*, 'and they [the battalions] are disorganised all around, like a mill being ground the wrong way': Todd, *Cogadh*, p. 198, ll. 33-4. In *Cath Ruis na Rig*, on the other hand, it is one of Conchobar's men, Féic mac Follomain, who makes the manoeuvre when going to estimate the size of the opposing army. His expedition was ill-judged, however: *Et ralluid-sium reme innund dar inber na Bóinne. Et tuc bleith mulind tuathbil forthu*, 'and he went across the River Boyne and he gave the grinding of a left-handed mill on them': Hogan, *Cath Ruis na Rig*, p. 34, ll. 14-15.

[98] Todd, *Cogadh*, p. 138, ll. 11-14: *tainicc aenbhen ó Thoraigh tuaisceirt Erenn co Cliodhna deisceirt Erenn, ocus fail óir ar eachluisc re a hais, ocus ni fhuair a slad, na a saruccadh do dhenamh*, 'a lone woman came from Torach in the north of Ireland to Clídna in the south carrying a ring of gold on a horse-rod and she was neither robbed nor insulted'; Dobbs, 'Cath Cumair', pp. 278-80: *ni badh eagail d'aon mhnaoi dhiobh Éire do thaisdioladh, no do thiomchiolladh, ó Thuinn cairrge cuipghile, chneis-anfenaighe, cuan-thórthairthaighe Chliodhna go Tonn chairigach ghairbhe bhuantoruidh badh thuaidh*, 'not one of the women of Ireland would have been afraid to make the journey or circuit from rocky, white-foamed, storm-ruffled, populous harbour of Tonn Clídna to the rocky, rough, ever fertile Tonn in the north'.

[99] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 446-9 (and see above p. 9); Dobbs, 'Cath Cumair', pp. 334-7.

[100] *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 33; see also, de Paor, 'The Common Authorship'.

Gearailt has shown.[101] Multiple authorship rather than co-authorship, therefore, is surely more likely, all the more so since various individuals were responsible for other tales with which these three Book of Leinster texts form an obvious stylistic and structural unit. Hence, we may conclude that we are dealing with the approach of a particular school and one which certainly encompasses a number of authors. It was also one which proved to have a certain durability as the evidence of texts from both ends of the twelfth century can testify.[102]

Nevertheless, it is an approach which may well be over-represented in the extant corpus, a fact which has undoubtedly to do with the delight taken by various Book of Leinster scribes in this particular kind of predominantly military macro-text. While its development, as has previously been suggested, may indeed be connected with the work of translating longer literary Latin works (many of them of a military nature) which became common from the eleventh century onwards, this is but one of many factors to be considered, as we have seen.

## Content

In the prevailing cultural climate, it is scarcely surprising that these newly translated works may also have influenced the content of contemporary compositions. In particular, given the military nature of many of them, they could certainly have furnished Irish authors with useful battle descriptions, as Mac Gearailt has noted.[103] However, whether we owe the existence of a particular literary sub-group, *catha*, to their inspiration, as suggested by Proinsias Mac Cana, is another matter.[104]

A tale-type *cath* formed part of the original tale-list, on the evidence of the pair of titles, *Cath Maige Tuired* and *Cath Maige Mucrama* that the two extant lists, A and B, edited by Mac Cana, contain.[105] Moreover, these two tales survive, to a greater or lesser

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[101] 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 353; 'The Language of Some Late Middle Irish Texts', pp. 167-8, 192.

[102] Elements of this particular style survive in a number of Early Modern Irish battle-tales, most notably in *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* (ITS 26, 27) and to a lesser extent in *Cath Maige Léana*: Jackson, *Cath Maighe Lèna*.

[103] 'Change and Innovation', pp. 485-7.

[104] 'La traduction', p. 80.

[105] Thurneysen had suggested that these *catha* were added later to the list. Against this, as noted by Mac Cana, is the fact that *Cath Maige Tuired* heads the catalogue of battle-tales in both lists: *The Learned Tales*, p. 72; see further Toner, 'Reconstructing', pp. 112-3.

extent, in ninth-century form.[106] An indication of scholarly interest in military matters is also provided by the versified battle-lists so beloved of historical poets such as Dallán mac Móire who, when writing of his patron, the late ninth-century Leinster king, Cerball mac Muirecáin, promises that 'his battle and his fights, all shall hear them from me' (*a chatha 's a chongala / úaim nos cechla cách*).[107] Not surprisingly, the manner in which such military encounters are related evolves and it is in the development of a lengthy battle tale with the theme of conflict between two kings at its centre manifested above all in the clash of their mighty forces that Mac Cana, followed by Mac Gearailt,[108] sees the influence of translation texts at work, the new literary form standing in marked contrast to earlier narratives punctuated by heroic single combats in which the king takes something of a back-seat. However, some of these new developments are evident in the tenth-century narrative *Cath Maige Rath* which is roughly contemporary with the earliest translation texts.[109] Moreover, the literary take-over was far from complete, both Recension I and II of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* presenting an elaborate series of valorous duels before alluding rather perfunctorily to the meeting of two armies at the end.[110]

Even in vernacular adaptations the predominant focus is rarely the actual battle itself. Comparison of *Cocad Gáedel re Gallaib* with *In Cath Catharda* reveals the concern of both authors with establishing the credentials of their heroes by reference to earlier engagements. In addition, they employ similar props when setting the scene for the final encounter: numerous counsels are held to determine military strategy[111] while messengers are sent to recruit allies.[112] Portents of battle dominate,[113] to a far greater extent in *In Cath Catharda* than in Lucan's parent text, as do references to the din of the battle.[114] The earth trembles as a result and the noise is heard in far-distant lands. Armies advance in similar fashion: it is the deeds of invincible

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[106] ITS 50, 52. *Cath Maige Tuired* was reworked in the eleventh century, as indicated by the Middle Irish material which has been prefaced to the whole.
[107] Meyer, 'A Poem', p. 211 §6.
[108] '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild'.
[109] Marstrander, 'A New Version'.
[110] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge*; O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*.
[111] For example, Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 154-5; Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 282-3.
[112] For example, Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 150-5; Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 394-5, 416-7.
[113] Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 174-5; Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 364-5.
[114] For example, Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 322-7.

heroes, however, which are given pride of place.[115] Significantly, Caesar undergoes something of a character change in this regard in the Irish version of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, acquiring heroic feats with a distinctly native hue. Such is his fury and might that he resembles none other that the war-goddess, Badb, herself[116] – sweet literary justice perhaps, since his counterpart, Murchad, son of Brian Bórama, is likened to Hector son of Priam in the *Cocad*.[117] Emphasis too is placed on the large number of casualties[118] and a certain mopping-up time is allowed. In the *Cocad*, the pitiful journey homewards of Brian's men is described[119] while the Irish adaptor of Lucan's *Bellum Civile* comments in general terms on the horrors of a civil war.[120]

Notwithstanding this, in their depiction of a somewhat different type of military encounter, these two texts and others like them do represent a changed literary emphasis. Influential translation texts undoubtedly affected the detail of the presentation; on the other hand, they can scarcely have been solely responsible for the creation of a wholly new kind of battle text. Early medieval Ireland constituted a militarised society in which conflict was an ever-present danger. That this should be echoed in the literary products of a learned class that was acutely socially aware is only to be expected as is the fact that descriptions therein would bear some relationship to contemporary reality. Even allowing for considerable poetic licence, in Mac Gearailt's words 'mittelirische Erzähler würden ... kaum von anrückenden riesigen Herren, von Gefechtsformationen, von aufrüttelnden Reden der Heerführer auf beiden Seiten, von sterbenden Kriegern usw. berichten, wenn in ihrer Gesellschaft nur kleinere Gefechte üblich waren'.[121] Furthermore, the changing nature of warfare is chronicled in historical sources which present kings increasingly as commanders-in-chief of sizeable forces, some of whom formed a core of permanent fighting men. In addition, these kings had recourse to a new class of professional mercenaries whose

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[115] For example, those of Murchad in the *Cocad*: Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 186-97; Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', p. 435.
[116] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 434-5.
[117] Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 186-7, ll. 19-20.
[118] Ibid., pp. 206-11; Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', p. 435.
[119] Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 212-17.
[120] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', pp. 448-9.
[121] '*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild', p. 125 ('Middle Irish storytellers ... would scarcely have told of great, advancing armies, of battle formations, of rousing speeches made by the leaders of the armies on both sides, of dying soldiers etc. if minor skirmishes alone were the norm in their society').

rise paralleled that of aristocratic knights elsewhere in medieval Europe of the day and therefore could engage in more protracted military campaigns.[122] That narratives recording such activities should also have evolved need not surprise us; thus, it is in current political developments that the origin of our revamped *cath* is to be found. In its formation, its vibrant creators undoubtedly drew on the variety of material at their disposal; indeed the popularity of foreign works describing major battles might in part stem from their fulfillment of a very specific literary need.

For a variety of reasons, therefore, medieval Irish authors were drawn to classical tales, with interest in them being at its most intense in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Appropriation of this material involved, most obviously, translation into the vernacular, but transference into a new cultural milieu simultaneously took place. The narratives in question were remoulded, shaping contemporary writing in turn, with what were once distinct literary strands becoming inextricably enmeshed in the process. Their context is the learned environment for which they were so readily and suitably adapted. It is as Irish texts, therefore, that *Imtheachta Æniasa*, *Stair Ercuil* and their many complex counterparts must ultimately be read.

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[122] For an account of the nature of military activity in Medieval Ireland, see Charles-Edwards, 'Irish Warfare', Flanagan, 'Irish and Anglo-Norman Warfare', Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, pp. 273-7 and Simms, 'Gaelic Warfare'.

I am grateful to Professor Erich Poppe for much general discussion of this material and to the editor, Dr Kevin Murray, for valuable assistance.

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Greek Background to *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*

Gearóid Mac Eoin

It is often said that Irish and Greek literature have much in common, not least the Heroic Literature which is so important in both. There is, however, a lapse of about 1800 years between the writing of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and the time when most of the Heroic Literature of Ireland was written down. The ambience in which each was composed was also very different, the Greek being written in a pagan culture which accepted the events described in the narrative as factual, the Irish in a Christian, monastic setting where the tales were told merely for entertainment. *Stair Ercuil* (*SE*), of course, falls between the two ambiences, since it is the Greek story of Herakles in an Irish translation of the fifteenth century. It is written in Modern Irish while our Heroic Literature is mostly in Old and Middle Irish. It is a translation by Uilliam Mac an Leagha[1] of an English work by William Caxton, which he had translated from the French of Raoul Lefèvre, itself being a compilation from Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum* and Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae,* which is based ultimately on the works of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, both of which are descriptions of the Trojan War in Latin dating from the end of the classical period. Though it is clear that the Greek background of *Stair Ercuil* is at a far remove from the Irish narrative, a comparison of the treatment of the story in Irish and Greek may be of interest.

Herakles – as Hercules was called in Greek – is mentioned many times in Homer's two poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and there are depictions of him and his labours on vases, coins, and in sculptures from as early as the sixth century B.C. In the *Iliad*, Herakles was not an active character and clearly belonged to an earlier generation than the heroes of Homer's story. In the *Iliad*, he is mentioned frequently in passing, but always as a figure who existed before the time of the

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[1] See Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 37-46 for a biography and discussion.

Trojan war. His birth as son of Zeus and Alkmene is mentioned in Books 14 (l. 323) and 18 (l. 118), but he was also son of Amphitryon (Book 5, l. 392). There is only one long passage (Book 19, ll. 95-133) in which the story of Herakles's birth and Hera's deception of Zeus is related. His victory over Cerberus, the guardian dog of Hades, is mentioned in Book 8 (l. 362). How Laomedon, king of Troy, cheated Herakles of his reward for freeing his daughter is in Book 20 (l. 145). His destruction of Troy and slaying of Laomedon are in Books 5 (l. 640) and 14 (l. 250). He was driven by Hera to the island of Kos in Books 14 (l. 250) and 15 (l. 26). He conquers Pylos (Book 11, l. 690) and wounds Hera (Book 5, l. 392) and Hades (Books 5, l. 396, and 11, l. 689). The destruction of Ephyra is mentioned in Book 2 (l. 657). His death occurs in Book 18 (l. 117). His son, Tlepolemus, is recorded in Books 2 (l. 653) and 5 (l. 628). In the *Odyssey*, there are fewer and less important mentions of Herakles. The most notable of these is in Book 11 (l. 601) where Odysseus on entering the Underworld sees the spirit of Herakles. In Book 21 (l. 26), he slays Iphitos.

Herakles is a very old figure in Greek mythology. He is the Hero, the strong man, the one who is able by his strength to overcome all physical opposition. His great strength is complemented by his mighty body and all he accomplishes is achieved by means of his physical power. To judge by the references to him right throughout the poems, his complete story existed for Homer. In the *Iliad*, Herakles is only recalled in the speeches of the heroes. In Book 2 (ll. 653-70), his son, Tlepolemus, is recorded as having been born to Herakles and Astyokheia, as having killed his father's uncle, later becoming an outcast when opposed by other relatives, and as having finished his life on the island of Rhodes. He comes with nine ships to the Trojan war and in Book 5 (ll. 627-62) he faces Sarpedon, son of Zeus, in battle and they argue about Herakles's destruction of Troy, and Sarpedon agrees with Tlepolemus that Laomedon, king of Troy, has treated Herakles badly. Eventually, Sarpedon kills Tlepolemus but is grievously wounded by him. In Book 19 (ll. 95-124), Agamemnon recalls how Hera prompted Zeus to swear that the next male child born of his blood would be ruler of all those living near him. Zeus thought that his next descendant born would be Herakles, but Hera by a trick brought it about that the next child born was Eurystheus, who plays an important role in the Greek version of the life of Herakles. Other citations go to show that the story of Herakles was known to Homer as it was attested in later Greek literature.

Elements of this story were dramatised by Sophokles in *Trachiniai* and Euripides in *Heracles*. Hesiod was author of *The Shield of Herakles* and Hyginus told the story in his *Fabulae*. Since these authors concentrate on particular elements of the Herakles story, I intend to use the version of Apollodorus' *Library* as containing the full story of Herakles's life and labours, as well as his death, when referring to the Greek traditions of Herakles.

Incidentally, Herakles's name contains as second element the word for 'fame', related to the Celtic root **klewos* found in Irish *clú* 'fame'. Note the Irish name in the genitive, *Birchlúi* 'spear-famous'.[2] Herakles's name, then, appears to have meant 'famed because of Hera', much as Sophokles means 'famed because of wisdom'. The implications of this etymology are puzzling, because Hera was always an opponent of Herakles. Does it mean that Herakles achieved fame through being opposed by Hera? Or does it point to a previous stage in the development of the story when Hera was more favourable to him than in the surviving tale?

The story of Herakles appears in vol. 1 of Sir James George Frazer's edition of Apollodorus' *Library*.[3] This presents us with the tale of Herakles's birth and upbringing, his labours, his various liaisons with women (including a list of 67 or so sons whom he fathered), and his death and reconciliation with Hera in the Otherworld. It is a work of pure mythology written, apparently, by a true believer in the stories he told. His tale is a complete account of Greek mythology, covering material from the wedding of Sky and Earth to the death of Odysseus and the return of the Heraklids. The gods behave as humans, womanising and murdering. Their emotions are primitive and rough.

The story of Herakles as told in the Irish of *Stair Ercuil* is quite different. It shows us, indeed, Jupiter (Zeus) falling in love with Alkmene at her wedding with Amphitryon and his ruse to deceive Amphitryon and lie with Alkmene. Here Jupiter behaves as a mere mortal who leads his army with Creon and Amphitryon. But he has the power to change shape and so appears to Alkmene in the form of Amphitryon. When Amphitryon returns, Alkmene is surprised to see him so soon, but this leads to the conception of Herakles who was the son of Jupiter and Amphitryon. This is a subdued version of the birth of Herakles as it is recounted in Greek. One gets the feeling that

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[2] Uhlich, *Die Morphologie*, p. 179.

[3] On pp. 172-277 (the Loeb edition of 1921).

Jupiter in *Stair Ercuil* is a decent enough fellow and that it would be quite all right to meet him.

In Apollodorus's *Library*, there is a great number of personal names. These are the names of the characters and their patronymics, sometimes their extended pedigree, their wives, their concubines, their opponents in disputes, their gods and goddesses, and their servants. All of these seem to have been familiar to the readership, at least to the extent that long explanations were superfluous, though Frazer, in his notes to the text, gives wide-ranging explanations of the background to the names and characters. In doing so, he is merely supplying for the modern reader the information which would have been well known to the Greeks.

In *Stair Ercuil*, Uilliam Mac an Leagha curtails the Greek names in his text. This he does by expanding the narrative of the episodes, whereas Apollodorus tends to fill his narrative with names. Compare the account of Herakles's marriage to Megara: 'And Hercules received from Creon his eldest daughter Megara as a prize of valour, and by her he had three sons, Therimachus, Creontiades, and Deicoön'[4] with the expanded account in *Stair Ercuil* (505-55), where the expansion is due to the description of Megara in the garden and to the outlining of the contests at the wedding of Herakles and Megara, which are either not present in Caxton's text or are present there in short form. The three sons of Herakles by Megara are not mentioned in *Stair Ercuil*; neither is their murder by Herakles in a fit of madness induced by Hera.[5] Mac an Leagha clearly took over the story as told by Caxton and adapted it to his own taste.

Another method of getting rid of names employed by Mac an Leagha is the omission of the characters. Just as he leaves out the names of Herakles's sons, he omits Eurystheus, the person who, in Greek tradition, imposes the labours on Herakles, not only by name but as a character in the story. This meant that Mac an Leagha was obliged to find another motivation for the labours which in the Greek, under Eurystheus' direction, were Herakles' penance for the murder of Megara and their children[6] which had been retained by Caxton (*Rec.* 312). Mac an Leagha's solution was to turn his labours into adventures. Each of the labours happens because Herakles is moved to destroy a monster which was killing and devouring the

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[4] Apollodorus i, p. 181.
[5] Ibid., p. 183.
[6] Kovacs, *Euripides*, pp. 402-5.

people of a particular area or, playing his role as international policeman, he decided that the unjust ruler of a country had to be deposed. This change in the basic mechanics of the tale is derived from Caxton who also despatches Herakles all over the Mediterranean on similar errands.

In general, Uilliam Mac an Leagha sought to make the work easier for his readers who were unfamiliar with Greek names, by simply omitting them. Thus, in *SE* 607, he omits three of the names, Nessus, Myncus, and Astilo, which were represented in Caxton by Cilarus, Pheotones, Nessus, Myncus, Astilo, Lodeum, and Piseon (*Rec.* 341). He omits Ysiphyle, Lennos, and Phyneus (*SE* 896 ff.); these are mentioned in Caxton (*Rec.* 348). He omits Dedoum (*SE* 1050), son of Herakles, who is found in Caxton (*Rec.* 360). Theseus is omitted (*SE* 1068) from the story of the death of the king of Cotuli (*Rec.* 363). Menalipe is omitted or perhaps rather combined with Sinoip (*SE* 1125); these are two separate characters in Caxton (*Rec.* 368). In *SE* 2267-70, Nesus is not named (cf. *Rec.* 384 ff.) but he is named at *SE* 2490.

Uilliam Mac an Leagha's policy in dealing with Greek placenames is similar. Whereas in the Greek texts these are expected to be familiar to the readers, in an Irish context no such assumption could be made. Indeed, he seems to have shared his attitude with Tírechán, the seventh-century biographer of St Patrick, who was unwilling to relate his story in Latin owing to the number of Irish placenames which would have had to be included in the narrative.[7] In this, Mac an Leagha again shows consideration and fellow-feeling for his readers in sparing them the unfamiliar placenames and he avoids using them whenever possible. For example, Mount Olympus (*Rec.* 248) is replaced with *sliabh adhbulmor* (*SE* 118); 'in Thessalonyque' of Caxton is omitted (*SE* 550); Ancone (= Aragon, *Rec.* 426) is replaced with Terracone (*SE* 1807). He substitutes more familiar names for the less familiar: Botheme (*SE* 19, 36, 69) for the less well-known name Thelleboye (*Rec.* 228).

He could go astray in identifying places: he places the city of Megida in Greece instead of in Spain (*SE* 1644). He confuses Itali with the name of a city in Italy (*SE* 1648). Similarly, he writes *co cathraigh na Galale* (*SE* 2357) where *Galale* is for Trace (*Rec.* 481). He invents other names, particularly *Oilén na Caerach Corcra* (*SE* 266, 372) and *Tulach na Gleaca* (*SE* 2407)[8] and *Aenach na mBuadh*

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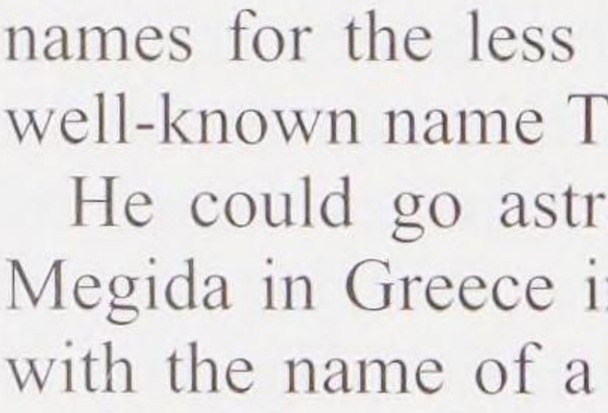
[7] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 178-9.

[8] He borrowed these from *In Cath Catharda* (ed. Stokes, ll. 2889, 2488).



(*SE* 216, 328) to translate Caxton's 'Olympiade', and *faidhche na Teibe* (*SE* 328) replaces his 'Mount Olympus'.

As a translator Mac an Leagha is pretty adept. But he is occasionally in error, as when in *SE* 2252 he translates 'garderobe' as *erber* (< Lat. *arbor* 'tree') 'garden', although he had previously (*SE* 516) used the same word to translate 'gardyn'. Here he must have misunderstood 'garderobe', which is the correct reading, as the text tells us that it contained a likeness of the goddess Diane.

As we are speaking of errors in translation, it may be as well to refer to such an error of Gordon Quin's – if it is not merely a case of over-sensitivity – he translates *bot cruaidh codad comnuidhe co ceteora troighidh trenmiledh ina fod* (*SE* 1238) as 'a hard, tough, horny (?) tail four warrior's feet long'. But surely *bot* ought to have been translated 'penis'. In favour of this interpretation is the sentence which follows that just quoted: *finnfadh fada firamnas forniata amail chraeibach sciach no amhail eó graine no aittinne fuirre*, 'it has long, ruthless, dangerous hair on it like the branches of a thorn-bush or like the spine of corn or of furze'. The comparison of hair with the branches of a thorn-bush or with the spine of furze reminds us of the Old Irish adjective *aittenchaithrech,* 'having pubic hair like furze', which is composed of *aitten* 'furze' + *caithir* 'body-hair', especially 'pubic hair'.

In the Greek story of Herakles's life in Apollodorus's *Library*, there seems to be an effort to cover all the events of his life, including the twelve labours and other adventures. In *Stair Ercuil*, the story has been adapted to suit the Irish audience. The labours have here been reduced to seven, but other adventures are added which are not part of Greek tradition. Meanwhile, other episodes are omitted such as Eurystheus, the madness of Herakles and his subsequent enslavement to Eurystheus.

The seven labours of Herakles as narrated in *Stair Ercuil* are:

(1) The Hesperidean Apples or the Crimson Sheep, 217-372;
(2) The Nemean Lion, 383-431;
(3) The killing of Busiris, 432-504;
(4) The fight between Antaeus (Anntenon) and Herakles, 913-1108 (second version: Ainntius mac Terra and Herakles, 2378-409);
(5) The killing of the Hydra, 1223-367;
(6) The killing of Geryon, 1389-619;
(7) The killing of Cerberus and of Pluto, 754-856.

Ollscoil Gan Smál LIMERICK

There are traces of the fight of Herakles with the Amazons in the story of the fight of Herakles and Theseus with Synope and Hippolyte, but there is no mention of the Amazons or of their peculiar culture or of Hippolyte's belt which is the subject of the Greek story.

The new adventures of Herakles in *Stair Ercuil* are:

(1) He partakes in the games aged 7 (Aenach na mBuadh), 130-216;
(2) He marries Megara, 505-55;
(3) The wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia and the slaughter of the centaurs, 556-626;
(4) Andromadas takes Thebes, 689-751;
(5) Herakles re-takes Thebes and kills Megara having been told that she had slept with Lykos, 859-95;
(6) Herakles captures and plunders Troy, 896-912;
(7) Herakles meets Afer son of Abraham, king of Macedonia, and weds his daughter, Echea, 913-43;
(8) Herakles goes to learn the arts and meets Atlas, 967-1037;
(9) Echea dies in childbirth, 1052;
(10) Herakles meets Deianira and weds her, 1145-222;
(11) Herakles teaches the liberal arts in Athens and Lycia. In Spain he erects the Columns of Herakles and founds the city of Seville, 1368-88;
(12) Herakles founds the city of Corunna, 1620-43;
(13) In the city of Merida, Herakles encounters Calcus and fights him in Spain and in Italy, 1644-2041;
(14) Fatua, queen of Laurentum, and her husband, Faunus, 2045-82;
(15) Pricus challenges Herakles and is defeated and killed in the following battle, 2083-202;
(16) Iole, daughter of Pricus, becomes Herakles' wife, 2203-63;
(17) Herakles and Deianira and the boatman (unnamed) who in dying gives Deianira the phial of blood from the Hydra saying that it is a love-potion, 2264-2302;
(18) Herakles fights Diomedes and captures his city, 2303-77;
(19) Duplicate of Herakles' fight with Antaeus son of Terra, 2378-409;
(20) Herakles dons the shirt sent to him by Deianira and dies, 2410-544;
(21) Lamentation of Deianira, 2545-93.

Most of these episodes are part of Greek tradition. Thus, the marriage of Herakles and Megara is found in Euripides' play, *Heracles*, as is the story of Herakles' madness and his murder of Megara and their children. There too is found the Theban usurper, Lykos, whom Herakles suspects of having slept with Megara and whom Herakles kills in revenge. Herakles's capture and plundering of Troy is mentioned in Homer's *Iliad* (Books 5, ll. 638-41 and 14, l. 251). Herakles's victory over Diomedes, his vengeance on Diomedes by feeding his body to his horses, and the capture of his city, here called Galilee, is to be found in Apollodorus (i, p. 201).

Herakles was the most famous and the most popular of the Greek mythological figures. His story is told by many writers including Sophokles, Euripides, Hesiod, and Hyginus (see above p. 22). However, even though these were well-known Greek writers, they were not known in Ireland. The information about Herakles, which we find in early medieval Irish, was derived from Latin texts such as the *Heroides* of Ovid.

## The Labours of Herakles

The Greek story of the life of Herakles is centred on his twelve labours which are narrated in detail, and on some other adventures which are told separately. In Irish, we find the labours listed in *Togail Troí*, where they derive from the *Heroides*. In the older version of *Togail Troí*,[9] there are only ten labours listed, while in the version in the Book of Leinster the list is expanded to fourteen.[10] The theme of great tasks being imposed on the hero of a story recurs in Irish in the *dindshenchas* of Mag Raigne in Co. Kilkenny.[11] There it is said that the hero of the poem, Raigne, was a Roman who came among the Gauls and at the city of Tours was obliged by the citizens to fell a great forest, to carry off the clay in wagons, and to divert the course of the Loire. He accomplished all this in three days.

In *Stair Ercuil*, we find the labours of Herakles in a confused state and it is difficult to say with certainty whether they are all to be found there. There is no general term for Herakles' labours in *Stair Ercuil,* such as Greek *athloi*, and they are not viewed as a separate type of episode, but they are all taken as adventures which he went through.

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[9] Stokes, 'The Destruction of Troy', pp. 4-5.
[10] *LL* 31198-285.
[11] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas* iii, pp. 194-7.

### Birth of Herakles

Herakles was the son of Zeus who was the husband of Hera. Zeus fell in love with Alkmene, wife of Amphitryon, who was conveniently absent when Zeus came a-visiting. So Herakles was Zeus's son. But he had a twin brother, Iphikles, who was son of Amphitryon. Zeus expected that his son, Herakles, would be the first born, but Hera, out of jealousy, delayed the birth of Herakles and caused Iphikles to be born before him. When Herakles was a small child in the cradle Hera sent two serpents to attack him. He succeeded in choking the serpents with his bare hands. His twin brother died during the attack of the serpents. This is essentially the same story as is told in Apollodorus (i, pp. 173-5), except that Hera is not said to have delayed Herakles's birth.

### The Training of Herakles as a warrior

In *Stair Ercuil*, Hera tells Amphitryon that Herakles is not his son, whereupon Amphitryon sends him into exile to Thebes. There he is taken under protection by Creon, king of Thebes, and grows into a very strong young man at the age of seven. He then sends a challenge to all the heroes and fighting men of Greece to come and compete with him. They come and he wins all contests. He loves Megara, the daughter of Creon, and she loves him and they are married – it is not said whether he is still seven when this happens! In the Greek story, Herakles, in a fit of madness caused by Hera, kills Megara's children, thinking they are the children of Eurystheus, his enemy. In retribution for these murders, Herakles is condemned to spend twelve years carrying out difficult tasks for Eurystheus. For this he is promised immortality. This episode of Eurystheus is not in *Stair Ercuil*.

### Herakles kills his tutor with a lyre

In Apollodorus (i, pp. 174-7), we find Herakles, as a youth, studying the *kithara* 'lyre' with Linos. He strikes Linos with the instrument and kills him. This reminds us of the peculiar trait of Ercuil in *Stair Ercuil*, that he is fond of learning and that he goes to learn the arts (967-1037). This is unusual in stories of Herakles and may be a fiction composed by William Caxton.

Let us take the episodes of *Stair Ercuil* and compare them in a general way with the stories of Greek tradition. In doing this, I shall begin with the labours of Herakles such as can be identified in *Stair Ercuil* and see which are transmitted in Greek tradition.

## The Nemean lion

Early in *Stair Ercuil*, we find what appears to have been the first of Herakles' labours, the killing of the Nemean lion. The beginning of the story is missing, owing to a page or more being lost from the manuscript. In the Greek version, this task is performed in Greece, in a valley of south-eastern Peloponnese, in Argos. The lion is causing great depredations in the district and Herakles is sent by Eurystheus to kill it. He wrestles with the lion and succeeds in strangling it. Essentially the same story is told in *Stair Ercuil.* Herakles skins the lion and ever afterwards wears the lionskin as his only garment. It is said to be impenetrable.

## The Hesperidean Apples

In *SE* 220-372, we have the episode which corresponds to the story in Greek of the Hesperidian apples. The Irish version differs from the Greek tale in that the apples are identified with 'crimson sheep' (*co n-olainn corcra* 226-7, *caerigh chorcra* 253, *Oilén na Caerach Corcra* 266, 372), the wool of which the traders who came to King Creon used to make their clothes. Herakles sets out for Spain, where the Island of the Crimson Sheep is located. He fights the giant who guards the apples, and Philoktetes, the usurping king of the island who then becomes his faithful henchman until death. They bring sixty of the crimson sheep back to Greece.

In Greek tradition, there is no mention of crimson sheep but of the golden apples. Here we find the story of Herakles fighting Busiris in Egypt (for which see below). Herakles travels through Asia, Arabia, and the land of the Hyperboreans. There, on the advice of Prometheus, he tricks Atlas into fetching the apples and gets them from him by another ruse. He brings them back to Eurystheus.[12]

## The Death of Busiris

The story of the death of Busiris at the hands of Herakles is told in *Stair Ercuil* as an independent episode (*SE* 432-504), but in Greek it forms part of the labour of the Hesperidian apples[13] which is the eleventh labour. In *Stair Ercuil*, the story goes: The country of Egypt is suffering from a great drought. The gods say that if the people offer the blood of a foreign person to them that there will be water again. The cruel king, Busiris, offers many innocent lives to the gods. Hera persuades Herakles to go there to depose Busiris, hoping that

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[12] Apollodorus i, pp. 218-33.
[13] Ibid.

he will be sacrificed like the others. When Herakles arrives at the city, he is surrounded by the king and his army, but he kills them all and brings Busiris to the temple to sacrifice him, for Busiris is himself a foreigner in the country. No sooner has Herakles slain him than the wells and springs, the lakes and rivers break out and fill Egypt with water. The people want Herakles to remain as their king, but he refuses but gives them proper law and good customs.

The Greek story is similar[14] but is told in a more succinct way than the Irish version

## The Fights with Antaeus

The same is true of the story of Herakles' fight with Antaeus which forms part of the eleventh labour of Herakles in Greek tradition. Antaeus is called son of Terra in Irish, which corresponds to the Greek name of his mother, Gaia; his father is Poseidon.[15] Herakles hears of his depredations in an unnamed country: in Greek it is Libya. He fights him but observes that when he throws Antaeus on the ground he recovers his strength. Herakles guesses that his new strength comes from the earth. So the next time they fight, he takes him in his arms and crushes him until dead. This is the same story as is told in *Stair Ercuil* (2378-409).

There is a second version of this episode in *SE* 941-1108 which tells how Herakles goes to Libya to fight and kill Antaeus, king of Libya. This is much longer than the version in *SE* 2378-409, which seems closer to the Greek version than the other.

## Geryon

Herakles, in both Greek and Irish tradition, travels widely. Not only does he go with Jason to Kolchis at the eastern end of the Black Sea, he also goes to Spain where he erects the columns of Herakles. He journeys to Italy, Egypt, and to Spain, where he kills Geryon, king of Spain, who had ravaged Africa. This is one of the labours of Herakles in Greek too.[16] In Greek, however, Geryon lives in Erytheia, said to be in the far west. He owns cattle and Herakles' task is to bring the cattle back to Eurystheus. This is not in the Irish version of the story (*SE* 1389-619), where the fight with Geryon is merely another adventure of Herakles. Geryon is said in Greek to have three bodies joined at the waist, whereas in Irish this is reflected by the fact

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[14] Ibid., pp. 222-7.
[15] Ibid., pp. 222-3.
[16] Ibid., pp. 211-9.

that he is one of three brothers and Herakles kills one of them before killing Geryon himself.

### The Hydra

In *SE* 1271-367, we find an account of Herakles' slaying of the Hydra, which dwelt in Greece, near Argos in the Peloponnese. In Greek, Hydra is a multi-headed serpent whose heads, when chopped off, grow back on the double. In Irish, the serpent is never designated as such but is called *torathar* (*SE* 1280, 1298, etc.) or *béist* (*SE* 1294, 1332, etc.) and is said to speak with a human voice (*do glor daenna*, *SE* 1295). In Greek, Herakles manages to subdue the serpent by burning the place where the heads had been. In Irish, there is no mention of this; Herakles fights and kills the monster in the normal way, by his strength and valour.

### Cerberus

In *SE* 806-57, we find the account of how Herakles defeats Pluto and takes the head of Cerberus, the mighty dog, guardian of the Otherworld. In Greek, Herakles defeats Hades (= Pluto) and brings the great dog back to Eurystheus, which was the task imposed on him. One cannot avoid thinking of the young Cú Chulainn and his contest with the fierce hound belonging to the blacksmith Culann.[17] Cú Chulainn, of course, kills the hound. It looks as if the translator changed the story of Herakles' encounter with the dog in Hell and, in imitation of Cú Chulainn's feat in *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, made him kill the dog instead of bringing him to Eurystheus.

### Herakles and Deianira

Although Herakles liaises with several other women in the story, his true wife is Deianira, daughter of Oeneus, king of Calydon in Aetolia. They meet and fall in love while Herakles is in that country. He fights Acheloos, his rival for her hand, defeats him and wins Deianira as his wife. Later in the story, when going to sort out another country, he sends Deianira ahead of him in a boat across a bay. Lying in wait is the centaur. He hates Herakles because he had killed all his friends (*SE* 576) and relations before that. He rushes at Deianira and takes hold of her, carrying her off. Herakles sees that and shoots an arrow at the centaur, striking him in the chest and mortally wounding him. As the centaur is dying, he confesses his love for Deianira and gives her a phial of poison which he says is a

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[17] Cf. O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, ll. 540-67.

love-potion and that if it is rubbed into Herakles' shirt it will cause him to love Deianira alone of all women. Deianira desires this because she is aware of Herakles's love for Iole, daughter of Pricus, whom Herakles had killed. Thereafter, Herakles continues to live with Iole and comes with her to Lycia, the city where Deianira is living. She is glad to hear of his arrival and sends a letter to him, berating him for having deserted her. He is ashamed of his conduct, but refuses to go back to her. Eventually, she gets her women to douse a shirt in the poison which the centaur had given her and sends it to Herakles. He puts it on and immediately begins to burn in all his body. He pulls at the shirt but cannot get it off and tears out his intestines in the effort. Finally, he makes a great fire in which he lies down and dies. That is the death of Herakles. He is taken into the society of the gods, and receives Hebe as his goddess wife.

When allowances are made for the passage of the story from Greek to Irish, this may be said to represent the Greek story faithfully. The differences are that in Greek he meets Iole before Deianira. She is daughter of Eurytos, whom Herakles kills because he does not want to allow his daughter marry him. Herakles takes her as his mistress then. Later, he meets Deianira and fights Acheloos, a bull-like figure with horns who is also a contender for her hand. Herakles falls on him and kills him with a sword, though later sources agree with the Irish text in saying that it is with arrows steeped in the blood of the Hydra. Before he dies, the centaur tells Deianira that his blood is a love-potion and that if she puts it on Herakles he will love her forever. She soaks his shirt in it and the effect is as we find it in Irish. But Deianira does not intend to kill Herakles, unlike the Irish story, but merely to win his love, and when she sees what she has done, she hangs herself.

These are typical of the stories told in serial fashion in the course of *Stair Ercuil* and we can get an idea of the style of the rest of the stories from them. We are given no clear picture of Herakles, apart from alliterative descriptions of him as manly and strong.

## THE STORIES APART FROM THE LABOURS

There are many stories in *Stair Ercuil* which do not belong to the tradition of Herakles' labours. Most of these are derived from Greek tradition. Thus, the account of Herakles' exploits at Aenach na mBuadh (*SE* 170-216) seems to echo some account of the competitions at the Olympic Games. It may be based on the passing mention of Herakles celebrating the Olympian games in Apollodorus (i, p. 249). The account of Herakles' destruction of Troy is found in

the *Iliad* (Book 5, ll. 633-46), where Tlepolemus, on the battlefield before Troy, derides Sarpedon in a taunting speech and recalls his father's destruction of Troy. Further, in Book 14 (ll. 250-6), Hypnos (Sleep), in replying to Hera who asks for his help in putting Zeus to sleep, delivers a speech in which he recalls how Herakles destroyed Troy and was subsequently cast up on the island of Kos, far from all his friends. These passages show that the story of Herakles' destruction of Troy was well known at the time of the composition of the *Iliad*, in the eighth century B.C.

Herakles' connection with Thebes and his marriage to Megara, and the following tragic story of how he kills her, is not found in the *Iliad* but is known from Euripides' dramatisation in his play *Heracles,* written in the early fifth century B.C. In contrast to Euripides' play, Herakles returns to Thebes in *Stair Ercuil* after various adventures and cuts off the arm of Lykos who had assumed power there. Lykos, to taunt Herakles, claims that Megara had been his wife as long as he had been in the city. Herakles then kills both Lykos and Megara. There is no mention of a fit of madness as in Euripides' *Heracles*. In that play, Megara and her children are in the power of Lykos who is about to have them killed; then Herakles returns from his adventures, having been previously presumed dead. Herakles hears of their plight and kills Lykos. Then Hera sends two minor divinities, Iris and Lyssa, to bring madness on Herakles. This is done and Herakles kills Megara and his children thinking them to be the children of Eurystheus. Herakles, realising what he has done, wishes to commit suicide. Theseus arrives with an Athenian army then and persuades Herakles to abandon the idea of suicide. Herakles and Theseus depart for Athens.

The story of the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodamia and the slaughter of the centaurs by Herakles is told in *SE* 550-626. Pirithous announces at Herakles' wedding that he is to wed 'another woman'. The centaurs, called in Irish *fomoir fircalma d'feruib*, though with no mention of their physical shape, are invited. They carry off the bride. Herakles and the Greeks take to their arms and confront the centaurs, killing most of them and rescuing Hippodamia. In Apollodorus, it is said that the reason the centaurs are invited to the feast was that they are kinsmen of Hippodamia.[18] The centaurs are said to be fond of wine,[19] becoming very drunk at the feast and attempting to violate

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[18] 'Epitome', ii, p. 151.
[19] Apollodorus i, p. 193.

Hippodamia. Pirithous and Theseus defend her and kill many of the centaurs. In this version, there is no mention of Herakles.

Lykos appears in *Stair Ercuil* for the first time in the episode of Pirithous' wedding, when his life is spared by Herakles (*SE* 618). Thereafter, he is rescued from Philoktetes by Andromadas, kills Creon, king of Thebes, and assumes the kingship. He takes Amphitryon and Megara prisoner. When Herakles returns, he fights with Lykos and cuts off his right arm. In the *Library* of Apollodorus, there are five characters called Lykos, none of whom is called a centaur. One of them, Lykos son of Chthonios, usurps the kingship of Thebes and reigns there for twenty years. Eventually, he is killed by the sons of Antiope.[20] This story seems to have provided the name, Lykos, used in *Stair Ercuil* for the usurper of Thebes.

A peculiar feature of *Stair Ercuil* (967-1055) is Herakles' interest in the arts (*ealadhain*, *SE* 968). He teaches the arts in the schools of Athens and in Lycia (*SE* 1368-75). There is nothing in Greek corresponding to this but it is found in Roman tradition.

The story of the erection by Herakles of the pillars or columns called after him at the straits of Gibraltar is told in *SE* 1368-88, followed by tales of the foundation of Seville and of the cities of Corunna and Salamanca (1620-830). This is also recounted in Apollodorus[21] except that in Irish he erects four columns, while in Greek he erects two.

The account of the fight of Herakles with Nestor and the eleven 'giants' (Irish *fomoraigh*) in Cremona (*SE* 1832-89) is reflected in the *Iliad* (Book 11, ll. 690-7) where Nestor recalls the fight with Herakles and the death of his eleven brothers, sons of Neleus in Pylos. Nestor is known for his part in the Trojan War. He is neither giant nor centaur. Saturn, the only other name of one of the giants in the text, is not a Greek name but is the Latin correspondent of Greek *Kronos*. It derives from the Caxton version.

Calcus appears in *Stair Ercuil* in a long episode[22] particularly in connection with his wooing of Iole daughter of Calcus. In *Rec.*, he is called Cacus (< Greek *κάκος* 'bad'), as in Virgil's *Aeneid*[23] and in Ovid's *Fasti*,[24] both of which represent a tradition also contained in *Stair Ercuil*. He replaces Eurytos, father of Iole, in the English and

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[20] Ibid., pp. 335-9.
[21] Ibid., pp. 211-3.
[22] *SE* 1650-2241 (with interruptions), with further mentions of him in the following sections.
[23] Book 8, ll. 195-272.
[24] Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso*, ll. 543-87.

Irish versions. In the Greek version, Eurytos is king of Oechalia, which is located somewhere in Greece, and offers to give the hand of his daughter, Iole, to anyone who can beat himself and his sons at archery. Herakles enters the contest and wins but does not get the maiden, allegedly in case he should kill any offspring as he had already done with his children by Megara. Later, Herakles assembles an army to punish Eurytos for not giving him the prize, attacking Oechalia and killing Eurytos and his sons. The name Calcus has probably been influenced by 'Calchas', the soothsayer of the Greeks on the expedition to Troy, who tells the Greeks that Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, will have to be sacrificed if the Greeks are to get a fair wind for Troy. But it is not clear how his name comes to replace that of Eurytos in *Stair Ercuil*. His city is not in Greece but is Carthagena in North Africa (*SE* 1646). Nor is there any similarity between the account of the death of Eurytos and that of Calcus in *Stair Ercuil*. It would appear that the author or translator who substituted Calcus for Eurytos decided to devote a lot of space to Herakles' struggle with him. Calcus, in *SE* 1770-89, cannot only produce fire and smoke but can also create darkness for his enemies and light for his own men. Herakles is surprised at that and later (*SE* 1890-7) calls the scholars of the country together and works out a method to accomplish these wonders. He uses them when attacking Calcus on the Aventine Hill (*SE* 1905-6). As he feels the approach of death (*SE* 1922), Calcus asks Pricus for one of his daughters; Pricus' four daughters are brought in and he chooses Iole as his wife. In Greek, Eurytos is father of Iole but here Calcus becomes her husband. This raises the question of the identity of Pricus who is called King of Calcedonia in *SE* 1914. He seems to have no other function in the text except to be the father of Iole and is clearly a duplicate of Eurytos. Herakles marries Deianira before he meets Iole. He is thus in a predicament between the two women. In Greek, nothing much is made of this situation.[25] It is merely said that Deianira fears that Herakles will love Iole more than herself. In the Irish version, the situation between Herakles and Deianira is developed into a serious love-scene, with her writing letters to him and him replying in writing after serious consideration. In Greek, when Deianira learns that Herakles is dead she hangs herself. In Irish (*SE* 2545-93), she survives and utters a lamentation (*Dichuma Dianíra*) in which she recalls the deeds of Herakles.

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[25] See Apollodorus i, p. 269

*Stair Ercuil* is not a story which appeals in any way to our modern tastes. Herakles goes through the world, as it was then perceived, killing all who oppose him, deposing and murdering unjust rulers, destroying monsters, founding cities, while simultaneously guilty of the murder of innocent people, of multiple adulteries, of the betrayal of friends and of partners. There is no tension in the story because we know from the start that he is going to be successful in his efforts and that no moral judgment will be passed on his failings. His death comes about, not because he is vanquished in battle, but because of his infidelity to Deianira. One might even say that he meets death by his own hand, for it is he who builds his own pyre and, still suffering from the torture of the shirt given him by Deianira, lies on the fire and dies.

In the Irish version of the story, the distinction between the nature of the enemies faced by Herakles is lost. They are called *athach* 'giant, churl' and *fomhoir* 'giant' with no apparent distinction. Both words are applied to Herakles himself, *athach* (995, 1028, 1660) and *fomoir* (1296, 1661, 2212). They are applied to humans – to the followers of Saturn and Nestor (1833, 1881) and to Antaeus (2389, 2398); to animals – *athach* to Hydra (1234), *fomoir* to Cerberus (638, 662, 710, 763) where the description of Cerberus makes him appear human; and to semi-humans – *athach* to the centaur Nessus (2270, 2292), also called *fodhmoir* (2290, 2301, 2491). *Athach* and *fomoir* were words which denoted great size and great fearsomeness without any distinction of species. Whether Uilliam Mac an Leagha was aware of the distinction between say Cerberus, who is a great dog in classical literature, and Antaeus or Lykos, who are humans, is a debatable point.

The episodic structure of the story is also tiresome. There is no logical connection between most of these episodes and they range in location from Greece to Spain and from North Africa to the country of the Hyperboreans. This is also the case with the labours and other adventures of Herakles in the *Library* of Apollodorus. In the Greek text, however, the tedium is alleviated by the presence of the many names of mythological figures and the stories about them which are adumbrated or told in full. For the Greek readers of Apollodorus, who would have been familiar with the stories, this would have made for an entertaining read; for the Irish public, however, reading the translation of Uilliam Mac an Leagha would have been a work of supererogation. It is no wonder that no second copy of his work survives.

# CHAPTER THREE

# *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* – Rewriting Hercules in Ireland

Erich Poppe

## *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* and its Cultural and Literary Setting

*Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, 'The story of Hercules and his death' (hereafter *SE*), is the title given by Gordon Quin to his edition in volume 38 of the Irish Texts Society, published in 1939, of a text preserved in a single late fifteenth-century manuscript which deals with the life, deeds, and death of the Greek hero Hercules in a medieval guise. This text, as Gordon Quin showed in his introduction, is the Irish adaptation of the relevant sections of the Middle English *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, translated almost verbatim by William Caxton from the French of Raoul Lefèvre's *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troyes* and printed by him during the last months of 1474 and the first months of 1475.[1] *Stair Ercuil* is therefore not a translation from Classical (Latin) literature, as are the Irish translations of the first phase of such translation activities, from the tenth to the thirteenth century. These resulted, for example, in the Irish versions of pseudo-Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae Historia* and of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, and also in *Imtheachta Æniasa*, the Irish version of Virgil's *Aeneid*.[2] *Stair Ercuil* rather belongs to a second phase, which probably started in the fourteenth century, and is the only example of a classical subject matter here – the other texts treating of Charlemagne and of romance matters, the latter based on English sources, the former on Latin ones.[3] The Irish versions of the romances of Guy of Warwick and of Beues of Hamtoun follow *Stair Ercuil* in the second section of Dublin, Trinity College MS 1298 (formerly H.2.7), which also contains the native tale *Stair Nuadat*

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1 Ed. Sommer (henceforth citied as *Rec.*).

2 For a discussion of this corpus, see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh's contribution to this volume.

3 For surveys, see Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations', and Poppe, 'Mittelalterliche Übersetzungsliteratur'.

*Find Femin*.[4] The scribe of this section of the manuscript, and probably also the translator of the first three texts and arguably the author of the fourth,[5] was Uilliam Mac an Leagha, a well-known and prolific scribe of the fifteenth century. His main sphere of activity, and the main interest of his patrons, would appear to have been religious, devotional literature, and in this area too he has been credited with some original translations, of the Life of Mary of Egypt, of Quiricus and his mother Iulita, of Iacobus Intercisus, and of a version of the Harrowing of Hell.[6]

For the cultural and social milieu in which Uilliam Mac an Leagha worked, the contents of some of the manuscripts associated with his name is relevant: London, British Library, Additional MS 30512, is said by Robin Flower to fall

> into two sharply contrasted parts, which may originally have been independent MSS. The first part (arts. 1-97), in verse and prose, contains, with few exceptions, texts of the pre-twelfth cent. period, the second part (arts. 98-113) [...] contains prose only, in the main of the 14th-15th cent. period, translated from Latin, and in two cases possibly from English, originals.[7]

A similar focus on translations of (near-)contemporary devotional texts is evidenced in his manuscript London, British Library, Additional MS 11809, which contains mainly Irish translations of fifteenth-century Latin and English devotional works.[8] An interest in religious subject matters is also characteristic of all other manuscripts associated with Mac an Leagha,[9] with the exception of

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4 See Robinson, 'Irish Lives', and Müller-Lisowski, 'Stair Nuadat Find Femin'. For some characteristics of these texts, see Poppe, 'Early Modern Irish Version'; idem, 'Codes of Conduct'; idem, 'Narrative Structure'; and idem, '*Stair Nuadat*'.

5 *SE*, 'Introduction', pp. xxxviii-xl.

6 See Ó Laoghaire, 'Beathaí Naomh Iasachta', and Poppe, 'Favourite Expressions'. Further devotional material has been associated with Mac an Leagha by Andrew Breeze: a prose version of the Charter of Christ (see Breeze, 'Charter', pp. 117-8), and a note on the three sorrowful tidings (see Breeze, 'Three Sorrowful Tidings', p. 142). For a religious poem attributed to Uilliam Mac an Leagha, see Mac Niocaill, 'Uilliam Mac an Leagha'.

7 *Catalogue*, pp. 473-4.

8 Ibid., p. 546.

9 For the fifteenth-century interest in devotional literature, see Ó Riain, *Beatha Bharra*, p. 41: 'Very much a product of its own time, the Book of Fermoy was compiled during a period when Irish literary taste was being set mainly in the south, and often, as in the case of the Roches, by families of Anglo-Norman descent. In 1453-5, for instance, as the compilation of the Book of Fermoy was underway, the great volume named Leabhar na Rátha (now Laud Miscellany 610) was being prepared in north Munster under the patronage of Edmund MacRichard Butler, governor of the earldom of Ormond. The taste in devotional reading then current is illustrated in the beginning of that manuscript by the inclusion of several Lives of saints, both Irish and foreign'. I wish to thank Gearóidín Uí Chatháin for bringing this reference to my attention.

the adaptations of contemporary foreign narrative texts in his section of H.2.7. Two of these texts, however, have clear Christian overtones in their presentation of the Christian warrior-knight. The question of who Mac an Leagha's patrons were is more complex, though Additional MS 30512 is conventionally connected with the Old English Butler family because four poems in it are attributed to Risteard Buitléar / Richard Butler,[10] and because it was in the possession of the Cahir Butlers by 1561, when some further texts were added to the manuscript.[11] Unfortunately, the identification of Risteard Buitléar is contested, and may remain unresolved. Mac Niocaill believes that Risteard was the father of Éamonn Mac Risteaird / Edmund Mac Richard Butler of Polestown (†1464), who had a wife from the Gaelic nobility and a strong interest in Irish literature.[12] He may have commissioned Additional MS 30512.[13] Flower thinks that the texts attributed to Risteard Buitléar are later additions to the manuscript and partly in Risteard's own hand, and 'is tempted to associate him with a man of the name [from Co. Wexford] mentioned in a letter of William Sayntloo to Cromwell, 17 March 1537'.[14] Gearóidín Uí Chathaín has kindly informed me that this Richard was granted the title Viscount Mountgarret in 1551 and died in 1571. He was the son of Piaras Rua, the 8th Earl of Ormond. Risteard's sister, Elinor, was married to the 1st Baron of Cahir, and this would tie in well with the other late additions in Additional MS 30512 associated with the Cahir Butlers.[15] If this identification of Risteard Buitléar is correct, as is likely, the poems attributed to him are not relevant to the question of the date of Mac an Leagha's activities.

The common denominator of the texts in Uilliam Mac an Leagha's section of H.2.7. – and I would also include *Stair Nuadat Find Femin*

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[10] Flower, *Catalogue*, pp. 496, 497, 498, 499-500, and Poppe, 'Codes of Conduct', p. 208, n. 44, for further references.

[11] Flower, *Catalogue*, pp. 470, 476; compare also O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, 'Three Notes', p. 145, and Mac Niocaill, 'Dhá Dhán', p. 85.

[12] Mac Niocaill, 'Dhá Dhán', p. 84; Carney, *Poems on the Butlers*, p. ix.

[13] Flower, *Catalogue*, p. 470, gives 1463, 1467, and 1473 as dates for other manuscripts written by Mac an Leagha.

[14] Ibid, pp. 496, 497, and Flower, *Irish Tradition*, p. 134. Mac Niocaill, 'Dhá Dhán', p. 84, sees no compelling reason to rule out a fifteenth-century date for the script, but in the end prefers to remain agnostic: 'ní dóigh liom, mar sin, gur féidir aon dáta deimhneach a chur ina leith'.

[15] I wish to thank Gearóidín Uí Chatháin for generously sharing with me her ideas about the Butler associations of Additional MS 30512 and the identification of Risteard Buitléar, and for allowing me to refer to her unpublished research here. For a survey of the Butlers, Earls and Dukes of Ormond, 1328-1745, and their antecedents, see Moody et al., *New History*, p. 169.

in this characterisation – is their interest in the lives of outstanding individuals.[16] Guy and Beues are Christian knights, Hercules and Nuadu pagan warriors. In an earlier article, I suggested tentatively that Nuadu shows characteristics of the heroes of romance, rather than of epic,[17] and this would also apply to Guy and Beues, even in their Irish transformations. Morton Bloomfield argues that the typical epic stresses the rational aspects of life, whereas the typical romance stresses the irrational ones:

> The characters [in romance] are more at the mercy of chance than in epic, and control over events within the framework of destiny or human limitation can become lost. The movement of the story tends to become more arbitrary. Things happen, things come to (*advenire*) one. ... The hero of the romance is then typically called, has a vocation, unlike the hero of the epic who acts because he wants fame or renown. The hero of romance fights for himself; at a lady's mysterious command; at his king's order; because he has to. The hero of the epic fights for a rational object, a tangible return.[18]

Developing these ideas further, Jill Mann sees the basic difference between romance and epic reflected in a difference between models of passive and active heroism:

> The differences between the romance hero and the 'active' model of heroism [...] could be expressed by describing romance heroism as a fundamentally *passive* heroism. The romance hero does not seek to execute a consciously developed plan; rather, he seeks 'adventures' in general, and allows chance [...] to dictate the shape they will take. His role is to respond rather than to initiate, to suffer rather than to struggle.[19]

I think that the passive aspect of Hercules' heroism is well expressed in Megara's assessment with its use of the romance term 'aue*n*ture': 'she thought yf hercules had herd speke of ony auēture he wold goo theder & put hym in deuoir to assaie hym self agayn hit' (*Rec.* 315.25-7). Since such insights into characters' thoughts are not

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[16] A different aspect of this focus on the individual, rather than on his participation in group activities, has been stressed by Miles, '*Togail Troí*', p. 91: 'Mac an Lega did not bother to translate Book III of Caxton, the account of the Trojan war proper, perhaps because this would only have duplicated the story already told in *Togail Troí*. *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, as executed by Mac an Lega, amends the earlier native corpus by providing a full acount of Hercules' career apart from his participation in Troy's destruction'.

[17] For the details of the argument, see Poppe, '*Stair Nuadat*'.

[18] *Essays*, pp. 109, 112.

[19] 'Sir Gawain', p. 107.

normally given in Irish texts, these reflections have no equivalent in *Stair Ercuil*. Another example of how 'things come to' Hercules is the beginning of the Cacus episode in both the *Recuyell* and *Stair Ercuil*. The Irish passage is at the same time a fairly typical example of the style of the adaptation whenever events are related swiftly and rhetorically unadorned, but also in its suppression of any explicit reference to Hercules' emotions.

*Recuyell*

After this conqueste as hercules entended to peple & enhabite this newe contrey / tydynges cam to hym. that in the cyte of Cartagene / A kynge and geant regned . named Cacus whiche was passyng euyll and full of tyrannye / and had slayn by his cursidnes the kynges of Aragon and of Nauerre . their wyues & their children And possessid her seignouryes and also helde in subieccion alle the contrey in to ytaly : Hercules receyuyd right Ioyously these tydynges / and sayd that by the playsir of the goddes he shall assaye yf he may take vengeance of the deth of the kynges of arragon and of nauare (415.19-30).

*Stair Ercuil*

Tanicc iarum Ercuil tar ais co cathraigh Megida isin Ghreig. Ocus ro innsidar lucht na cathrach sin d'Ercuil co roibi rí aingidhi imthnúthach isin Cartagene, 7 co torcuir ri Aragont 7 rí Nauerre cona mnaibh 7 cona cloind leis, 7 tuc sé cís in da theallach sin leis co cathraigh na hItali. Ocus is amlaidh ro buí in cathair sin 7 sliabh ard adhbulmór osa cind. Atpert Ercuil co cuirfedh sé a aithrechus sin ar Calcus (1644-52). 'Then Hercules came back to the city of Merida in Greece, and the people of that city told Hercules that there was a wicked, jealous king in Carthagena, and that the kings of Arragon and Navarre, with their wives and children, had fallen by his hand, and that he had carried off the tributes of those two households to the city of Italy. Now that city had a high, huge mountain above it. And Hercules said that he would make Cacus regret that deed'.

Diane Thompson suggests that Fortune in Lefèvre's and Caxton's *Recuyell* 'is closest to [...] change itself, and the world of the *Recyuell* changes constantly, for no particular reason'.[20] In the light of Bloomfield's and Mann's dichotomies, this would make Lefèvre's and Caxton's Hercules more of a hero of the typical romance than of

[20] 'The Greek Gods'.

the typical epic, and even though 'fame' has an important role for the motivation of the Irish Hercules – an aspect to which I will return later – he would probably qualify as a hero with many features of the hero of romance. Therefore, I am presently inclined to emphasise the differences between Mac an Leagha's modern heroes of romance and the medieval epic hero Cú Chulainn, rather than the existing similarities, despite their being all inspired by, and indebted to, a basically similar ideal of outstanding and superhuman heroism.

Hercules, as an epitome of classical heroism, received some coverage in the Irish tradition before *Stair Ercuil*, mainly in the adaptations of classical material – and Bianca Ross, who produced a sensitive book-length study of Caxton's and Mac an Leagha's versions of the story of Hercules in 1989, to which I am indebted in many respects, has correctly stressed the basic similarities between the images of Hercules and Cú Chulainn projected in this group of texts.[21] Already in the probably tenth-century compilation about Alexander, Hercules' heroic and martial qualities are extolled: *ro bo dib in cing calma curata fortren feramail is tresi tainig ar talmuin .i. Ercail mac Joip*,[22] 'the manly, very strong, brave, valiant warrior, the strongest who came to the world, namely Hercules son of Jove, belongs to them [i.e. the Greeks]', and a list of his deeds is provided. A similar assessment of the heroic qualities of Hercules is given in *Togail Troi*, which also includes a list of his deeds.[23] A brief, but interesting characterisation of Hercules is given in the report about his fight with Antaeus in *In Cath Catharda* – the probably twelfth-century Irish adaptation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* – in a passage to which I will return later:

> Rainic in clu cetna co hairm ir-raibe in t-anclund ⁊ ind ail bratha ⁊ in fer nac[h] fuilngti comlund, in milid merdana mormenmnach, in t-occlaech ard allata andiarraidh .i. Hercu[i]l mór mac Ampitrionis. O'tcuala Hercuil ieram in n-ainceis-sin icc indredh na hAffraicci, ni ro damhair do can a innsaiged, fo bith ba he a bes, gach inad isin domun i cluinedh torat[h]ar no olc difulaincc do bith tocht da saigid occus a dic[h]or ass.[24]
>
> The same fame [of Antaeus] reached the place wherein was the

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[21] Ross, *Bildungsidol*, and eadem, 'Transformation'. See Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 72-4, for some possible reflexes of Hercules in native texts, and p. 75 on the different image of Hercules in two Irish texts of the seventeenth century.

[22] Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', p. 101.

[23] Stokes, *Togail Troi*, pp. 10.372-12.472, and idem, 'Destruction of Troy', pp. 4.27-5.64.

[24] Stokes, 'In Cath Catharda', 2916-23 (henceforth cited as *CCath.*).

> champion and the rock of doom and the man whose conflict was unendurable, the furiously bold, great-spirited soldier, the high, glorious, angry warrior, to wit, Hercules the great son of Amphitryon. Now when Hercules heard of that calamity harrying Africa, he could not refrain from seeking him, for it was his custom to go and seek every place in the world where he heard there was a monster or an unendurable evil, and to cast it therefrom.

The characterisation of Hercules in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is much briefer:

> tandem vulgata cruenti
> fama mali terras monstris aequorque levantem
> magnanimum Alciden Libycas excivit in oras.[25]
> At last the rumour of the blood-stained evil spread and summoned to the shores of Libya great-hearted Alcides, who was ridding land and sea of monsters.[26]

In the probably contemporary *Togail na Tebe*, the Irish version of Statius' *Thebaid*, Hercules is described as *archu eangnuma in domuin .i. Ercoil mac Ampitriontis*, 'the slaughter-hound of the world's prowess, Hercules son of Amphitryon',[27] which has no equivalent in the *Thebaid*.[28] In the same text, Hercules is twice counted among the gods,[29] and both these references have models in the *Thebaid*.[30] In Virgil's *Aeneid*, the killing of Cacus by Hercules is narrated by Evander when he explains the origin of the Arcadian sacrifices, and the narrator adds a brief account of the deeds of Hercules.[31] This passage is omitted in the Irish *Imtheachta Æniasa*, probably because in the Irish redactor's view it did not contribute to the linear progression of the events and therefore did not fit his narrative intention.[32] In the sixteenth century, Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn still regarded Hercules as a model of martial heroism, as a *mílid*, 'soldier, champion'; this continues the image of the Hercules of *Togail Troí* and *In Cath Catharda*, and also of *Stair Ercuil*.[33] Bianca Ross has succinctly characterised the image of Hercules in Irish

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[25] Sheckleton Bailey, *Lucanus: De Bello Civili*, p. 97 = iv.609-11. 'Alcides' here refers to Hercules, a descendant of Alcaeus.
[26] Braund, *Lucan: Civil War*, p. 79.
[27] Calder, *Togail na Tebe*, p. 126.1994-5.
[28] Cf. Hill, *Statius: Thebaidos Libri XII*, v.400-2.
[29] Calder, *Togail*, pp. 204.3170-82 and 274.4257-8.
[30] Cf. Hill, *Statius: Thebaidos Libri XII*, viii.459, 491-519, and x.899-901.
[31] *Aeneid* Book 8, ll. 184-305.
[32] For discussion, see Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*', pp. 89-90.
[33] See, for example, *SE* 466-7, 523-4, and cf. Knott, *Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall*, poem 13, §§30-42.

tradition until the sixteenth century as that of 'the fighting and triumphant hero, with no reference to moral issues or the ascent and fall under the sign of *fortuna*', and has contrasted it with the image of Hercules in early modern English literature where these aspects play a major role.[34]

## A 'TALE WHICH EXCEPT FOR ITS CENTRAL THEME IS THOROUGHLY IRISH'

A 'tale which except for its central theme is thoroughly Irish'[35] – this is how Gordon Quin characterised his over-all impression of *Stair Ercuil* on the basis of a close reading and analysis of the text. Bianca Ross too identified many features of gaelicisation in her more detailed study, and she also argued for a specific modification of the image of the hero:

> Whereas Caxton's Hercules story can be described as a medieval knightly romance, Mac an Lega's version is more like a hero-tale based on the native Irish tradition. As a result the Irish Hercules resembles Cú Chulainn rather than a medieval knight or a classical hero.[36]

Among the features that she highlights are the emphasis on 'fame' as motivation and the establishment of the Olympic Games by Hercules at the age of thirteen in Caxton, but at seven in the Irish text, parallel to Cú Chulainn's age when taking arms.[37] I suggested earlier that Hercules in the *Recuyell* and in *Stair Ercuil* is closer to the romantic hero than to the classical or medieval one, and this is not meant to contradict Ross' findings – it is rather a matter of different emphases, in that I would see Hercules in both texts as conceptually a modern romantic hero, who has, however, acquired in *Stair Ercuil* some characteristics of the native medieval hero.

Effects of narrative gaelicisation in *Stair Ercuil* are immediately evident on the level of style, and particularly in Uilliam Mac an Leagha's employment of a highly ornamented, florid style, with alliterating phrases and strings of (near-)synonyms, which was used in Irish texts from the eleventh century onwards, mainly in extended rhetorical set-pieces such as descriptions of persons and battles and other passages in which narrative speed is slowed down, but also in shorter passages and even single sentences. As Gordon Quin put it: 'Although these [descriptions] are based on corresponding

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[34] 'Transformation', p. 187; see Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 65-76, for further details.
[35] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.
[36] 'Transformation', p. 187.
[37] Compare Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 77-161.

descriptions in Caxton they are purely Irish in diction and style'.[38] The combination of this style with specific favourite expressions is the hallmark of the works which have become associated with Uilliam Mac an Leagha as a creative translator.[39] A brief example is provided by the episode of the fight between Hercules and Antaeus which is quoted below.

I wish to focus here on another aspect of the narrative structure of *Stair Ercuil*, namely its division into narrative units. Gordon Quin already noted that 'Caxton's chapter-headings [...] are neatly replaced by the Irish chapter-endings beginning with *Conidh*'.[40] Such formulae with *conid* plus, typically, a meta-narrative term (i.e. a specific or generic title), are found, for example, already in Lebor na hUidre as an anaphoric closing formula for narratives, but only in interpolations supplied by H:

> conid Táin bó Flidais a scél sin anuas (*LU* 1641 H);
> Conid senchas na relec insin (*LU* 2924 H);
> Conid Cath Diarmata ⁊ Guairi Adni a scel sin anúas (*LU* 9730-1 H).

However, headings such as *Aided Nath Í ⁊ á adnacol insó* (*LU* 2783),[41] are still much more frequent in Lebor na hUidre. Headings are also used for the organisation into narrative units in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in Lebor na hUidre – with the one exception of a closing formula again in an interpolation by H, *Conid banchath Rochada insin* (*LU* 5945 H), a narrative section which H has also supplied with a heading in the margin, *Banchath Rochada inso* (*LU* 5924 H).

In the version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the Book of Leinster, such double markings of the beginnings and endings of narrative units with headings plus closing formulae have become more frequent, but closing formulae are also used on their own:

> Fiacalgleo Fintain and so innossa. [...] Conid Fiacalgleo Fintain and sain (*LL* 11250, 11273);
> Bángleo Rochada and so innossa. [...] Conid Bángleo Rochada and sain (*LL* 11299, 11329);

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[38] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxx; see also Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 178-92, and Miles, '*Togail Troí*', p. 91: 'Mac an Lega's *Stair Ercuil* does not represent a new direction in Irish prose. Mac an Lega's text is quite the opposite, a virtual homage to the medieval tradition. Traces of mannerisms pioneered in tenth- and eleventh-century texts like *Togail Troí* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge* can be found throughout *Stair Ercuil*, a tribute to the serviceability and tenacity of the tradition'.

[39] Compare Poppe, 'Favourite Expressions'.

[40] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxxi; a convenient survey of marked chapter-endings is provided by Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 127-8.

[41] Sometimes also with cataphoric *sís* 'below', as in *Fís Adomnán só sís* (*LU* 1938).

Conid Comrac Fergus and sin (*LL* 9952);
Conid Comrac Clainne Calatin connice sin (*LL* 10046).

A few marked endings of narrative units are also found in the only version of a classical narrative transmitted in the Book of Leinster, namely *Togail Troí*, the Irish version of pseudo-Dares Phrygius' *De Excidio Troiae Historia*, but in these the respective beginnings of the narrative units remain unmarked:

Conid imram na lungi Argo connici sein. ⁊ scél in chroccind órdai. ⁊ aided Iasoin ⁊ Etta ⁊ Média (*LL* 31187-8);
Conad techtairecht longsi Alaxandir connici sein (*LL* 31883);
Conid tochostul Gréc connici sein (*LL* 31975).

Chapter headings are also sometimes employed, and in these instances the respective endings remain unmarked:

Tochastul Troian so sís (*LL* 32116);
tuarascbáil Hectoir (*LL* 32333, in margin);
Aided Hectoir so sís (*LL* 32740).

A fairly consistent and explicit organisation into chapters is employed in *In Cath Catharda*. The typical pattern here consists of a chapter-heading plus a marked ending, and we also find a string of elaborate *conid*-formulae.[42]

The development and conventions of the marking of chapters in medieval Irish prose would certainly repay further detailed study; all that is intended here is to sketch briefly some of the options available in the Irish literary tradition. With these in mind, I will now look at the organisation of narrative units in *Stair Ercuil*. In the first edition of the *Recuyell*, which according to Quin was Mac an Leagha's 'main and only important source',[43] Caxton provides chapter headings and marks these with a special graphic device, an inverted capital D; paragraphs within such chapters are marked by an over-size initial stretching over three lines. Additional marking of the ending of a chapter is optional and very rare, and effected by a narrator's comment. I will therefore define as a 'chapter' in Caxton's *Recuyell* the text between one chapter-heading and the next. Conversely, a 'chapter' in *Stair Ercuil* will be defined as the text between one closing formula and the next – such closing formulae

[42] Compare *CCath.*, p. 1 with unmarked ending at 146-7, 148 with unmarked ending 202-4, 205 and 344-5, 346 and 380-1, 382 with unmarked ending 520-1, 522 and 736-40, unmarked beginning 741 and unmarked ending 816-7, 818 with unmarked ending 1082-4, 1085 and 1191, 1192 with unmarked ending 1525-7, 1528 and 1624, 1625 and 2261-2, 2263-4 and 2593-4, 2595 and 2858-9, 2860 and 3208-9, 3210 and 3247-8, 3249 and 3386-7, 3388 and 3768-9, 3770 and 3874-5, 3876 and 4304-8, 4308-12 and 6159-67.

[43] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxiv.

beginning either with *conid* or *gurub* plus noun or *amlaidh sin* plus clause. Devices for paragraphing within such chapters and for marking a switch of protagonists will not be explored here.

The content of Caxton's long first chapter that is relevant for a comparison with *Stair Ercuil*, is summarised in its heading thus:

> How Iupiter laye with Alcumena And how quene Iuno sente two serpentes for to slee hercules / And how hercules stranglid the two serpentes (*Rec.* 226.20-2).

It closes with one of the rare narrator's intrusions to mark its ending:

> [...] the false old quene Iuno wente vnto crete / of whom I shall tarye and shal come to speke of the first aduentures of hercules (*Rec. 2*45.28-30).

This refers to 'How hercules began to Olympades and how he waxe amerous of Megera' (*Rec.* 246.1-2) in the heading of the next chapter. The Irish text begins with an elaboration of the conventional formula 'there was an X (with adj.) over Y, Z his name', which is typical for the beginning of many medieval Irish texts with their introduction of a main character, *Buí rí uasal oirnide don cinel Ghregach, Ampitrionis [...]* (*SE* 1-2), 'There was a noble crowned king of the Grecian race, Amphitryon [...]' – and the same formula is also used in Mac an Leagha's adaptations of the romances of Guy of Warwick and of Beues of Hamtoun. This first chapter then comes to its end with a formula with *conidh* and a meta-narrative term much earlier than in Caxton, *Conidh e toghail cathrach na Botheme 7 geinemain Ircail connigi sin* (*SE* 68-9), 'That, then, is the destruction of the city of Boeotia (?) and the begetting of Hercules thus far'. Furthermore, this ending does not correspond exactly to any paragraphing device in Caxton,[44] and the following unit of the Irish text begins with one of Mac an Leagha's devices for a new narrative beginning, *dala* (*SE* 70), 'as for, concerning'. The next formula with *conidh* then closes the description of Hercules' fight with the snakes, *Conidh e sin cedgnimh gaisgid Ercuil* (*SE* 110), 'And so that is Hercules' first deed of valour', and would superficially appear to correspond to the end of Caxton's first chapter. However, the following chapter in the Irish text begins with Iuno revealing to Amphitryon that Hercules is not his son and Amphitryon then sending him into exile to Creon (*SE* 111-17),[45] and all this has been narrated in the last paragraph of Caxton's first chapter.[46] The initial

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[44] Compare *Rec.* 234-5.
[45] In *Rec.*, Hercules is sent to Eristeus; compare Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 86-7.
[46] Compare *Rec.* 244-5.

switch to Iuno as the new centre of narrative interest is again marked by *dala* (*SE* 111).

Caxton's second chapter then deals with the Olympic games and Hercules' falling in love with Megara (see its heading quoted above); and Mac an Leagha's closing formula for his second chapter, *Conidh amlaidh sin dorug Ercuil gell ar macraidh na Greige a n-Aenach na mBuadh* (*SE* 215-6), 'So thus it was that Hercules established his superiority over the youth of Greece at the Tournament of the Victories', corresponds to the end of Caxton's second chapter (at *Rec.* 261.31). The extent of the next two chapters available for a comparison is the same in Caxton's and Mac an Leagha's versions;[47] and accordingly the chapter on Hercules' exploits in Egypt begins with the same narrative situation in the two versions. However, their end-points differ slightly: Caxton's rhetorical comparisons of Hercules' growing fame, significantly converted to direct quotation from unspecified poets in the Irish version, form the beginning of the next chapter in the *Recuyell*, but the end of the chapter in *Stair Ercuil*, which then closes with the typical *conidh*-formula, *Conidh hi gabhail na hEgepta la hErcuil 7 agedh a righ connicc[i] sin* (*SE* 503-4), 'And that is how Hercules took Egypt and killed its king thus far'.

Adopting one of Caxton's rhetorical flourishes, 'what shall I make longe processe',[48] on whose fate in *Stair Ercuil* more anon – I will now give a survey in tabular form of Caxton's remaining chapter divisions and their equivalents, or non-equivalents, in *Stair Ercuil*:

ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS IN CAXTON'S *RECUYELL* AND IN *STAIR ERCUIL*

| *RECUYELL* | *STAIR ERCUIL* |
|---|---|
| 308-315 (Megara) | 505-555, Conidh é **macgnimartha** Ercuil 7 **tochmarc** Megera connici sin (554-5). 'And those are the youthful deeds of Hercules and the wooing of Megara thus far'. |
| 315-320 (centaurs) | 556-626, Conidh e **tochmarc** ingine righ na hIspirne 7 Pirodes mic Iasoin connicci sin (625-6). 'So that that is |

[47] *Rec.* 262.1-296.12 = *SE* 217-373; *Rec.* 297.4-302.28 = *SE* ?-430. Owing to a lacuna in the Irish manuscript, a portion of text is missing until it begins again in the chapter about Hercules' fight with the lions. There remains, of course, some uncertainty about the beginning of the latter chapter in the Irish text.

[48] *Rec.* 314.31.

| | |
|---|---|
| | the marriage of the daughter of the king of Hesperia and Pirithous son of Aeson thus far'. |
| 320-329 (Proserpyne and Orpheus, Pirothus in Hell) | 627-688 (Proserpine and Orpheus), Conidh i cuairt rí na Sisaile a n-Iferrn connici sin (688). 'So that that is the visit of the king of Sicily to Ifernus thus far'. |
| 329- 337 (Hercules in Hell) | |
| 337-342 (Andromadas) | 689-751 (Andromadas),[49] Conidh e gabhail na Teibhe 7 marbhadh rígh na Tiabhanach connicci sin (750-1). 'So that that is the taking of Thebes and the death of the king of the Thebans thus far'. |
| | 752-786 (Hercules in Hell I), Conidh i **tuarascbail** Ifirnn .i. cathrach Plutoin sin (786). 'So that that is the description of Infernus, the city of Pluto'. |
| | 787-856 (Hercules in Hell II), Conidh i **toghail** Ifirnn 7 marbhadh Plutoin 7 dicennud Ceribruis connicci sin 7 reliqua (855-6). 'So that that is the destruction of Infernus and the killing of Pluto and the beheading of Cerberus thus far'. |
| 342-346 (death of Lykos and Megara) | 859-895, Conidh amlaidh sin ro ghabh Ercuil in Teibh for Lingcus (895). 'So that it was thus that Hercules took Thebes from Lycus'. |
| 347-351 (second destruction of Troy) | 896-912, Conidh amlaidh sin ro dígail Ercuil a esanoir fa dhó ar Laimedon, uair ro toghladh in Tra(a)e fa dó les 7 do marbhadh Laimedon fein aran toghail |

[49] Compare *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxvii, on the restructuring of the two episodes about Andromadas and Hercules in Hell.

| | |
|---|---|
| | deidhinaigh (910-12). 'So that it is thus that Hercules twice avenged his dishonour on Laomedon, for he destroyed Troy twice, and Laomedon himself was killed at the second destruction'. |
| 351-355 (Echee, first battle with Antaeus) | 913-940 (Echee), Conidh e **tochmarc** Echee ingine Affeir connicci sin (939-40). 'So that that is the wooing of Echea daughter of Afer thus far'.<br>941-956 (first fight with Antaeus), Conidh e sin an ced**cath** do cuir Ercuil ar Anntenon (966). 'So that is the first battle in Hercules' campaign against Antaeus'. |
| 355-361 (Atlas and the liberal arts, preparations for the second battle with Antaeus) | 967-1035, Conidh i **echtra** Ercuil ag denum na n-eladhan connicci [sin] (1034-5). 'And that is the story of how Hercules acquired the liberal arts thus far'. |
| 361-364 (death of the king of Cotulia)<br>364-366 (second battle with Antaeus) | 1035-1108 (preparations for the second battle with Antaeus, death of the king of Cotulia, second battle with Antaeus, the statue of Antaeus), Conidh amlaidh sin do choisc Ercuil díumus ⁊ egoir Anntenoin (1107-8). 'Thus did Hercules put an end to the arrogance and injustice of Antaeus'. |
| 366-370 (the statue of Antaeus, the Scythian maidens) | 1109-1144 (the Scythains maidens), Conidh amlaidh sin doruc Ercuil buaidh forna mnaibh mercalma míleta sin ⁊ reliqua (1142-4).[50] 'Thus was Hercules victorious over those brave, warrior-like women, etc.'. |

[50] Compare *Rec.* 366: 'How hercules and Theseus fought to geder ayenst the two damoyselles of Sythye &c:'.

| | |
|---|---|
| 370-378 (Deianira, battle with Achelous) | 11445-1367 (Deianira, Achelous, Hydra), Conidh e comhruc Ercuil re Monstrae connicci sin (1367). 'And that is Hercules' fight with Monstra thus far'. |
| 378-384 (Achelous, Deianira) | |
| 384-388 (Nessus)[51] | |
| 388-394 (Hydra, Hercules' teaching in Athens and Lycia) | |
| 394-400 (first battle with Geryon) | 1367-1522 (Hercules' teaching in Athens and Lycia, the first and second battle with Geryon), Conidh e sin in dara **cath** do chuir Ercuil for Cirion connicci [sin] (1521-2). 'That is the second battle which Hercules fought against Geryon thus far'. |
| 401-407 (second battle with Geryon) | |
| 407-413 (final battle with Geryon) | 1523-1619 (final battle with Geryon, fate of Geryon's men), Gurub amlaidh sin tairnicc in cogudh sin la hErcuil arna Spainechaibh (1618-9). 'And thus ended that war waged by Hercules against the Spaniards'. |
| 413-415 (fate of Geryon's men, foundation of Corogne) | 1620-1643 (foundation of Corogne), 7 ro fhagaibh í asa haithle 7 reliqua (1643).[52] 'and [he] left it [Corogne], etc.'. |
| 415-428 (Cacus, Hercules in Spain) | 1644-2041 (Cacus, Hercules in Spain, giants of Cremona, Hercules defeats Cacus in Italy),[53] Gurub amlaidh sin do choisc Ercuil diumus 7 egoir Calcuis corphti claen-bhreathaigh (2040-1). 'So it was thus that Hercules put a stop to the pride and wrong-doing of the sinful, unjust Cacus'. |
| 428-440 (giants of Cremona) | |
| 440-454 (Hercules defeats Cacus in Italy) | |

[51] On the placement of the Nessus incident after Hercules' marriage with Iole in *Stair Ercuil*, see *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxviii.

[52] No explicit closing formula is used here, but I take the phrase *7 reliqua* as its equivalent.

[53] There is probably some internal pharagraphing with *dala* intended at *SE* 1728, 1809, 1832, 1898.

| | |
|---|---|
| 454-460 (Picus I)<br>461-468 (Picus II) | 2042-2123 (Picus I), Conidh e sin ced**cath** do chuir Hercuil for Pricus (2123 ~ *Rec.* 463). 'So that was the first battle Hercules fought against Picus.'<br>2124 (~ *Rec.* 464)-2202 (Picus II), Conidh hi **toghail** cathrach na Calidoine la hErcuil ₇ marbhadh Priccuis connici sin (2201-2). 'So that that is Hercules' destruction of the city of Calcedonia and the killing of Picus thus far'. |
| 469-476 (Iole, Diomedes I) | 2203-2263 (Iole), Conidh e **tochmarc** Yole ingine Phricuis la hErcuil connici sin (2262-3). 'So that that is Hercules' wooing of Iole daughter of Picus thus far.'<br>2264-2302 (Nessus), Conidh amlaidh sin ro marbh Ercuil in fodhmoir ₇ ro fhostoigh se a banchéile .i. Dianíra inghen righ na Cailidoine (2300-2). 'So that thus did Hercules kill the centaur and retain his wife, Deianira daughter of the king of Calydon'. |
| 476-482 (Diomedes II) | 2303-2409 (Diomedes,[54] Antaeus II[55]), Conidh [a]mlaidh sin do thoit Anntius mac Terra la hErcuil (2408-9). 'So that thus did Antaeus son of Terra fall at the hand of Hercules'. |
| 482-493 (Deianira I)<br>493-503 (Deianira II, Hercules' death) | 2410-2544 (Deianira, Hercules' death), Conidh i **stair** Ercuil ₇ a bas connicci sin. FINIT (2544). 'So that that is the story of Hercules and his death thus far. THE END'.<br>2545-2593, heading: Dichuma Dianíra ingine righ na Cailidoine fa Ercuil ann so (2545-6). 'This is the lamentation of Deianira daughter of the king of Calydon for Hercules'. |

[54] Due to some tear in the manuscript, it is not clear whether the Diomedes episode had a marked ending.

[55] On this extra episode in *Stair Ercuil*, see *SE*, 'Introduction', pp. xxvi-xxvii, and below.

The table shows that Mac an Leagha employed a consistent and explicit system of divisions into chapters, for which he had found a model in his source. However, the pattern provided by his source is significantly and creatively modified on two levels: of chapter extension and formal chapter demarcation. Only very rarely have the chapters in *Stair Ercuil* exact correspondences in the *Recuyell*, often they are shorter or longer, that is, one chapter in the source is broken up into smaller ones, or two or more chapters of the source are collapsed into a single one. Even where the extension of the chapters corresponds broadly, the exact points where they end may differ. And it has to be said that in some instances Mac an Leagha's divisions have a higher narrative smoothness than Caxton's. It should also be noted that the correspondences between chapters in the source and the adaptation respectively become somewhat looser as the text progresses. In the case of two episodes, Andromadas and Nessus, Mac an Leagha altered the position they had in the source, with no narrative consequences in the case of the first, but with some narrative awkwardness in the case of the second – and this displacement must therefore have been due, according to Quin, to the translator's oversight.[56] Furthermore, a doublet of the Antaeus episode is given on the basis of an additional source, most probably *In Cath Catharda*, to which I will return later. The second significant and consistent modification concerns the formal devices of the demarcation of the chapters, already commented on by Quin. Caxton's marked headings are converted into marked closing formula, and, as indicated earlier, Mac an Leagha had good models for this in the Irish narrative tradition. It is perhaps noteworthy that he restricted himself to closing formulae, instead of employing a double system with both headings and closing formulae – but fifteenth-century Irish conventions and fashions of chapter demarcation still require further research. A heading is only used once, *Dichuma Dianíra*, 'Deianira's Lament', a kind of (incomplete) postscript which has no parallel in Caxton's *Recuyell*.[57] The form of the closing formulae is fairly consistent, beginning either with *conidh* plus noun, 'So that this is ...', or with *conidh / gurubh amlaidh sin* plus clause, 'So it is thus that ...'. A number of the nouns used in these formulae to characterise a chapter's events are meta-narrative terms with a tradition in medieval Irish literary theory; for example, some are present in the tales-lists which attempt

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[56] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxviii, with the cautionary remark: 'unless there was an earlier MS. the possibility of a misplaced leaf is excluded'.

[57] Compare *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

a classification of narrative genres into event-types based on characteristics of their respective plots.[58] Such terms are given in bold in the table above. Furthermore, the *tuarascbail* 'description', here in the 'description of Hell', as a rhetorical set-piece has analogues, for example, in *Togail Troí* and in *In Cath Catharda*, but also as a title in the margin in Lebor na hUidre's text of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* for the 'description of Cú Cuchulainn's form', *Túarascbail delba Con Culaind so* (*LU* 6534). It should also be noted that the format of closing formulae present in *Stair Ercuil* is employed by Mac an Leagha in his translations of the Middle English verse-romances of Guy of Warwick and Beues of Hamtoun in the same manuscript (TCD MS H.2.7) to organise the narrative material.[59] Having looked in some detail into the structural and formal organisation of chapters in *Stair Ercuil*, the question of the more general methodological interest and relevance of this aspect of Mac an Leagha's technique of translation needs to be defined. I would suggest that the relation to be observed here between fidelity to the source, its plot and basic structure, on the one side and fidelity to the conventions of the receiving native literary tradition, which requires some quite drastic modifications, on the other, is typical of Mac an Leagha's overall approach.

It is no surprise, therefore, that there are some features in his source that Mac an Leagha decided not to accommodate because they had no place in his own literary culture; for example, Caxton's rhetorical flourishes of the type 'what shall I make longe rehersaylle' (*Rec.* 245.23), 'For than to come agayn to my purpoos' (*Rec.* 247.5), and 'what shall I saye' (*Rec.* 255.5-6).[60] Since the 'I' of the narrator's persona does not appear in medieval Irish narrative, it disappears in *Stair Ercuil* too, and these phrases have no equivalents. Similarly, the persona of the Irish narrator of the romances of Guy and of Beues respectively does not address the audience, nor does he explicitly comment or express emotions – very much in contrast to the English narrator's persona.[61] For the same reason, the most extended praise of Hercules by the *Recuyell*'s narrator, as I mentioned earlier, is converted into direct quotations from unspecified poets in *Stair Ercuil*, but the different emphases in the two passages also deserve some comment:

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[58] See Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*; Toner, 'Reconstructing'.
[59] Compare Poppe, 'Narrative Structure', pp. 217-20.
[60] For further examples, see *Rec.* 261.4-5, 270.28-9, 312.27, 313.30, 314.31, 315.18, 320.16.
[61] Compare Poppe, 'Narrative Structure', pp. 210-17.

*Recuyell*

In suche wise as the yonge wyne by the labour and besynes of the labourer groweth in heighte & his bowes spred a brood full of fruyte / semblably hercules by vertue labouryng in hym grewe in verdur of well doyng and in fruyt of noblesse / his werkes his bowes hys braunches than began to spreed a brood & to mounte and ryse fro royame to roiame / the secrete conspiracōns of Iuno and her cursed enuyes myght not hurte ner mynusshe the vertue of hercules / the more that she wenyd to abasshe and hurte hym . the more she was cause of his enhauncement / yf he were puyssant and stronge of body / he was yet more stronge of vertue for hit was sette in hym as the precyous stone is in gold / and as the odour is in the flour / And as the raye or sonne beme is in the sonne (308.16-30).

*Stair Ercuil*

Ro fas clú 7 alludh Ercuil de sin, 7 ro badar na filedha 7 na fellsamain aca adhmoladh sechnoin in domain. Ocus atpert fer dibh: "Mar theid in fínemhain iarna freacar ar thorudh uas chrannaibh na cruinne, is amlaidh sin docuaid Ercuil for clu 7 alludh 7 ardnós, for gaois 7 for glicus 7 for caoncomruc os fheruib in talman". Atpert alale iarum: "Amail teit baladh an arruime 7 an balsume 7 na mblathann mbaladhmar uas baladhaibh in bhetha fhreaccnairc, is amlaidh sidhe ro erigh clú Ercuil uas cach etar nert 7 niamaille, etar cert 7 caoínbescna" (493-503). 'Hercules' fame and renown grew on account of that, and the poets and sages extolled him throughout the world; and one of them said: "As the vine when cultivated excels the trees of the universe in fruit, so has Hercules excelled the men of the earth in fame and renown and great reputation, in wisdom and skill and amiability". Another said: "As the perfume of arum and balsam and of scented blossoms excels the perfumes of this world, so Hercules' fame has excelled (that of) all, both for strength and splendid beauty, both for justice and moral uprightness"'.

Iuno, as a causative force for Hercules' heroic career, and the focus on his 'vertue', as a quality that 'responds to adversity by developing even further',[62] have disappeared in *Stair Ercuil*, and 'fame' instead

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[62] Thompson, 'Greek Gods', p. 4. In another passage Hercules himself says in the *Recuyell* that he has 'labourd yet hederto for the comyn wele of many royames' and still has 'the wyll to perseuere and to do the werkes of vertu' (*Rec.* 389.21-3), whereas in *Stair Ercuil* the narrator simply states that it was Hercules' usual business and pleasure (*ba gnathdaladh 7 ba menmarc*) to destroy evil and tyranny (*SE* 1259-61). On *clú* 'fame' versus *vertu* in the two versions, see also Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 156-8.

appears as the central value and reward for Hercules' qualities and heroic endeavours. There are some other passages in *Stair Ercuil* in which a similar emphasis on Hercules' fame has no direct match in the *Recuyell*:

*RECUYELL*

Alle they that were there had passing grete meruaille of the puissance and strengthe of hercules that was so yong a chylde . And that he had foughten ayenst the serpentes / and by excessiue strengthe and myght had strangled them (243.27-31).

Whan hercules had herde the desire of kynge Eristeus / sodaynly he sayd to hym Syre ye haue desired here to haue a payr of moutons appertenyng to the doughters of Athlas by the conquest and Armes of the strong geant philotes I promyse yow here for trouth vpon my gentilesse / That fro this day thre wekes / I shall departe by water or by lande for to fecche and gete them And that I shall neuer retorne in to grece vnto the tyme that I haue founden the yle and that I shall oppose my self ayenst the geants that kepeth hit / And shall assaye yf I can gete the yle vpon them lyke as philotes hath goten hit vpon other (264.5-16).

*STAIR ERCUIL*

Ocus do moladar curaidh 7 cathmilidh na cathrach in gnimh sin dorighni Ercuil. Ocus adubhairt cách a coitcinne da mairedh in mac sin co cuirfedh a chlú fon domhun (107-10). '[...] and the warriors and soldiers of the city praised that deed which Hercules had done, and everyone said that if that boy lived he would send his fame throughout the world'.

Ro lín immorro clú Ercuil fon uili domun, 7 ro ghradhaigedar mná na Greige co hadhbulmór he (210-1). 'Indeed, the fame of Hercules spread over the whole world, and the women of Greece fell greatly in love with him'.

Is and sin immorro ro ghabh foluamain menman 7 airdi aicennta do mian na caorach corcra Ercuil, uair ro thuic se co mbeith clú 7 alludh 7 ardnós don tí no cinnfedh for Filoses 7 foran athach, 7 no benfadh na cairig-sidhe dibh (259-63). 'Then of a truth Hercules was filled with excitement and high courage through desire of the crimson sheep, for he saw that he who should vanquish Philoctetes and the giant and take those sheep from them would be famous and renowned and celebrated'.

Whan the kynge fanus sawe hercules / he dide to hym as moche honour and worship as he coude doo / ffor as moche as he had herd saie and was aduertysed of the armes that he had doo ayenst the geantes of cremone . and ayenst cacus (459.9-13).

Dorinde Fauus ilimud anora do Ercuil, uair doclos clú 7 ardnós Ercuil in gach conuir dar ghabh (2078-9). 'Faunus paid Hercules great honour, for the fame and great reputation of Hercules had been heard along every route by which he had travelled'.

I do not wish to suggest that 'fame' has no motivating force for Hercules in the *Recuyell*, witness Iuno's incitement that Hercules fights in Egypt against Busiris – and it is no surprise that the promise of 'fame throughout the world' for himself plays a prominent and even more pronounced role in her arguments in *Stair Ercuil*:

*Recuyell*

your [i.e., Hercules] comyng agayn in saefte is to me so recomendable that your name shall be put in perpetuell louyng & preisyng amonge the most worthy & beste of the world / for ye haue doon many fair enterprises & feetes [...] so than me semeth yf fortune will helpe yow for to go and conquere hym [i.e., Busiris] . that ye shold gete grete honour and worship to yow and yowres (304.26-30, 305.16-9).

*Stair Ercuil*

"[...] Ocus a Ercuil", ar Iunainn, "dia tecmadh duit in ri crodha anserg-sidhe do traethadh do rachadh do clu fon uili domhun" (451-3). ""[...] And Hercules", said Iuno, "if it should fall to thee to owerpower that brave, hostile king thy fame would spread throughout the whole world"'.

With all due caution I would consider this emphasis on 'fame' to be a bridge between the value system projected in *Stair Ercuil* and of the medieval heroic ideal, with Cú Chulainn as its Irish epitome; the modern hero of romance here fades into the medieval hero of the heroic tales.

A different aspect of Mac an Leagha's technique of adaptation and rewriting is his brevity and concentration on the plot, specifically on the hero and his activities. As Gordon Quin observed: '[T]he Irish adapter seems to have aimed above all at conciseness. This is shown by the difference in length between the Anglo-French and Irish versions, and the omission of much unimportant detail'.[63] Some general trends emerge, for example the suppression in the Irish version of the discussion and expression of emotions and

[63] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxvi; see also Ross, *Bildungsidol*, pp. 163-4.

psychological states, but it is perhaps more instructive, even if less representative, to compare the narrative progression in the two versions in just one small sample of swift narrative. In the following, I place side by side the account of the second destruction of Troy in *Stair Ercuil* and its parallels from Caxton's *Recuyell* – ten lines of printed Irish text here correspond to about 135 lines of printed English text, and this must be seen in relation to the 2594 lines of printed text of *Stair Ercuil* and the roughly 8500 lines of printed text of the *Recuyell*:

*RECUYELL*

And passyng by Licie where hercules was maad kynge / on a day they cam in to myrodonne vnto the palays of kynge Eson where Iason was. whiche had than enprised for to saile to the yle of Colcos / And maad his thynges redy / Whan hercules had be fested of Iason and of duc pelleus and that he knewe of thenterpryse that Iason wold goo & conquere the flees of gold / he vowed and promysed that he wold accompanye hym . [...] Iason and hercules made redy a right gode shippe / and wente to the See And renewed not her vitayll tyll they cam to the porte of Troyes . But yet they renewid not hem at this poort / ffor the kynge Laomedon was than in troye whiche had fortefied meruayllosly the Cyte again . And knowyng that ther was descended at his porte a shipp full of grekes / he sente doun a man that comanded them rudeli that they shold departe thens and that he was enemye vnto the grekes [...] than hercules myght no lenger tarie but sware to the troiane that yf he myght retorne from the viage that he had enprised / that he shold yet ones agayn destroye Troyes and that he shold not leue oon stone vpon another [...] Than retorned hercules in to lennos And toke the see wyth Iason and wente in to the yle of Colcos . where Iason by the lernyng and Industrie of medea conquered the sheep with the flees of gold whiche he bare with hym in to grece / Than hercules recomaunded strongly Iason amonge hys parents and

*STAIR ERCUIL*

Ocus docuaidh Ercuil leis, ⁊ do buail stoirm ⁊ ardanfadh adhbul forra, ⁊ do cuiredh a tír (a purt) isin Frigia (iat) a purt naTraee iat dia n-aimdheoin. Ocus nir lig Lamdedhon .i. rí na Troigenach aedhiacht puirt isin crich sin doib, ⁊ tuc a[th]chur ⁊ innarbadh fon muir a n-aghaidh in ardanfaidh forra. Ocus do gell Ercuil sin do dhigail for Laimedon. Ocus docuaidh iar sin roime co tir na Colach ⁊ dofuair in croicenn orda. Ocus tanic tar ais isin nGreig ⁊ dorinne sluaighedh ar Troigenaibh, ⁊ tuc cath do Laimedon, ⁊ torchair Laimedon leis ar cur air a muindtiri. Ro airg ⁊ ro innraidh in Trae ⁊ ro bris a muir ⁊ a mórclocha (899-909). 'And Hercules went with him [Jason], and they were overtaken by a storm and mighty tempest, and driven landwards to Phrygia into the harbour of Troy against their wills. And Laomedon, king of the Trojans, would not grant them harbourage in that country, but expelled and

frendes / And tolde hem of the ryght grete vnkyndenes of the kynge laomedon . And how that he had sworn for to destroye troyes for the ruydenes that the kynge laomedon had doon vnto them / They swore alle to gyder wyth hercules the destruccyon of Troyes and concluded the day of their departement and after maad redy their shippis and alle that was necessarie for them / And than hercules held so well his hand in their exercyte . that at the day concluded amonge them . they entred in to the see / And did so moche that they descended at the porte of troyes with so grete an Oost that laomedon durst not deffende hem the porte [...] At the descente of this porte / whiche was of stronge entree . hercules that nothynge doubted his enemyes . made to sowne and blowe vp trompes and tabours [...] And fyndyng there laomedon that dide there mervaylles of armes vpon the grekes / he smote hym wyth his clubbe often tymes vpon his helme in suche wyse that he myght not saue hym / And that he enbarryd his clubbe with in his heed and brayn / that with the strook he slewe hym amonge plente of grekes lyyng ded on the sand eendyng there the ende of hys lyf [...] And whan they had taken alle that they fonde good in troye . ffor fynable vengeance hercules bete doun the tours and edyfices / and put the fyre therin in suche wyse . that there abode not a stone vpon an nother &c (347.5-13, 16-24, 29-348.2, 20-349.6, 11-14, 350.8-15, 351.11-15).

banished them across the sea in the teeth of the great storm. And Hercules vowed that he would avenge that on Laomedon, and went on then to the land of the Colchians and got the Golden Fleece. And he returned to Greece and made a hosting against the Trojans, and gave battle to Laomedon. And Laomedon fell at his hand after his men had been slaughtered. He (*i.e.*, Hercules) plundered and pillaged Troy and broke down its walls and great castles'.

These two versions of the second destruction of Troy show that the *Recuyell*'s basic narrative steps are retained in *Stair Ercuil*, with a clear concentration on swift narrative development and on those deeds of the main protagonist Hercules which contribute to the progress of the story. The Irish chapter is an instance of massive condensation, even by the standards of *Stair Ercuil*, with the omission of much detail, especially of the exchange between Laomedon's messengers and Jason, the 'Capitayn of the [Greek]

Armee',[64] of a brief digression on Jason,[65] and of a longer digression on Hercules and Phyneus.[66] Furthermore, it is remarkable that Mac an Leagha did not avail of the opportunity provided by Caxton for another extended description of battle, but reduced Caxton's seventy-line account to a very laconic two-line statement. The most significant difference on the level of content is that in the *Recuyell* Hercules and his followers land in Troy in order to stock up on provisions, whereas in *Stair Ercuil* they are driven there passively by a storm and 'against their will'. This chapter of *Stair Ercuil* exemplifies, in an admittedly not fully representative nutshell, the amount of freedom that Mac an Leagha felt was permitted in the process of adopting and adapting a foreign source.

The florid and highly ornamented style used by Mac an Leagha was not the only option available for Irish authors of the early modern period, and the variation in its employment, or non-employment, requires balanced and detailed new research. Even a brief and very preliminary survey of some fourteenth- and fifteenth-century translations indicates the range of possibilities: a florid style similar to Mac an Leagha's is employed in *Eachtra Uilliam*, the Irish version of the English romance about William of Palerne, as its editor Cecile O'Rahilly noted, in words not dissimilar to the ones quoted earlier by Gordon Quin about *Stair Ercuil*:

> [The English tale] has, however, taken a completely Irish colour, and, as a good translation should, reads as if originally composed in Irish. The translator has introduced many stock epithets and similes, particularly in the passages relating to battle, and has added alliterative descriptive passages, often where there is no equivalent in the English.[67]

On the other hand, the Irish versions of the Latin *Turpini Historia* on the wars of Charlemagne in Spain and of a Latin version of the *chanson de geste* of Fierabras/Fortibras would appear to be more restrained in their employment of strings of alliterating and/or synonymous phrases. This stylistic restraint is, however, not only found in adaptations of Latin sources: Sheila Falconer stressed that the Irish translation of a lost English version of the French *Queste del Saint Graal*, *Lorgaireacht an tSoidhigh Naomhtha*, followed its source 'with a degree of closeness incompatible with the ornate literary style much in vogue with prose writers from the 12th to the

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[64] *Rec.* 347.24-28.
[65] *Rec.* 348.3-7.
[66] *Rec.* 348.7-20.
[67] O'Rahilly, *Eachtra Uilliam*, p. xviii.

17th century' and concluded: 'whatever the reason, it is particularly fortunate that the Quest, a work designed to attract in order to edify, should not have been burdened with the verbal extravagences of this style'.[68] Edification as a motivation for stylistic simplicity is an attractive suggestion, but it must not be forgotten that some of the saints' Lives attributed to Mac an Leagha also exhibit a rather ornate and florid style. Irish redactors of foreign material in the early modern period had a variety of different stylistic strategies at their disposal, and their aesthetic results differ significantly; the rationale behind the employment, or non-employment, of specific rhetoric and stylistic devices is still far from clear.

## *Stair Ercuil* and *In Cath Catharda*

Gordon Quin suggested that the second version of the fight between Hercules and Antaeus in *Stair Ercuil*, an interpolation which has no analogue in Caxton's *Recuyell*, is directly derived from the description of the same incident in the Irish *In Cath Catharda*. His main arguments are that both texts 'agree in saying that Antaeus smeared his body with oil, no mention being made of similar preparations by Hercules, whereas Lucan follows the classical tradition and says that Antaeus covered himself with sand, while Hercules smeared himself with oil'; the form of the name *Ainntius mac Terra* in *Stair Ercuil*, which would be a 'faithful enough reproduction' of *In Cath Catharda*'s *Anteus mac Terrae*; and finally 'one or two details of vocabulary'.[69] Furthermore, if one compares the narrative progression in the two episodes, the relationship between source and copy appears to be similar to the relationship between the *Recuyell* and *Stair Ercuil* noted earlier, with the account in *Stair Ercuil* again significantly briefer. In the following, I

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[68] Falconer, *Lorgaireacht*, p. xl.

[69] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxvii. As examples of these details of vocabulary 'which might lead one to suspect borrowing on the part of *SE* from *CCath.*' Quin gives: '*Ba hadma eolach Ercail isin ceird sin*, *CCath.* 2938 (in Antaeus incident) : *co haidme eolach*, *SE* 1366; *gressacht-laidiudh*, *CCath.* 2447 : *greasachtlaidiugud*, *SE* 378; *iudus*, *CCath.* (Gloss.) : *iubus*, *SE* (Gloss. [...]); *Lama ... litarrda*, *CCath.* 4029: *troighteach ... lidarrdha*, *SE* 772; *al-los nert 7 niachais*, *CCath.* 2-3 : *dichill a neirt 7 a nidechuis*, *SE* 189'. *DIL* gives a second example of the compound *gressacht-láidiudh* from *In Cath Catharda* at l. 1837 (see Mac Cana, '*Laíded*', pp. 83-4). The collocation *gresacht ocus laíded* is attested (according to *DIL* s.v. *laíded*) in *In Cath Catharda* and in *Togail na Tebe*. The combination of *nert* with *niachus* and its later variant *níadachas* is attested in a number of texts (compare *DIL* s.v. *niachus* and *níadachass*). A word *idus* of unclear meaning is also attested in a dindshenchas poem in the Book of Leinster, compare Pokorny, 'Germanisch-Irisches', p. 118, and Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, iii, pp. 142, 504.

reproduce the description of the fight from *Stair Ercuil* with relevant parallels from *In Cath Catharda*:

| *In Cath Catharda* | *Stair Ercuil* |
|---|---|
| Cien gairit bai no co toracht in tir-si ⁊ gur' sir an ferann uile [...]. Ni bai Antei i fus annsin [...]. O na fuair Ercul é, deisidh ina suide immullach na tilca-sa [...]. Nir'bo cian in urnaide dó ann intan atconnairc in coraidh seachai docom a uamha [...]. Taidbris Antei for Hercuil, ⁊ dobert da aire é, ar ba ferrdha denam an laich atconnairc. Teit iarum dia uama [...], ⁊ gabaid for ongad-comailt a cuirp do ola ⁊ do neit[h]ib inmaraib eli, ⁊ do methrad slemunrighin [...] Dorocht Antei iarum co hairm i mboi Hercuil isin tulaig-si, ⁊ foccrais cor gleaca fair. [...] Ro sinset occus ro naiscset a ndoiti rigremra romora dar braigtib occus dar muinelaibh occus dar formnaib araili. [...] O ro tadaill a taeb in talmain ro suig co hathlam a allus fo cétóir, ⁊ ro atnuauigh a briga [...] Dobeir Hercuil aicne fair 'arsin, conidh tre tadall in talman ticctis a brigha ⁊ ticced a calmattus do. [...] Frit[h]ailis Ercuil co hathlam é, occus dúinidh a dá doitrigidh imbe, ⁊ nos-toccaibh i n-airde co nar' tadaill a cosa in talmain iter [...] ⁊ faisccid iter a rightea ⁊ a taeba, co nderni smirammair da cnamaib immedhon a croicind (*CCath.* 2924-38, 2946-7, 2962-3, 2975-6, 2978-80, 2983-4). 'Soon or late he [Hercules] reached this country and searched the whole land [...]. Antaeus was not staying there [...]. Since Hercules did not find him, he sat down on the top of this hill [...]. He had not waited long, when he saw the champion passing by him towards his cave | Ocus nir cían do co facaidh in tulach ibhinn ⁊ ind locc alainn oirechtais os ur in cuain, ⁊ docuaidh ar inn na tulcha, ⁊ do bí ag féchain do gach taebh de. Ocus dochunnuic in fodmoir foirtill fírarrachta, ⁊ delbh dubh duaibsech diablaidhi fair. Ocus do féch sé co hadhuathmar for Ercuil, ⁊ do smer sé a chorp le husc esgunn ⁊ le holuibh sleabhnaigthecha ele. Ocus tanic se co prap primurrlum a comdhail Ercuil, ⁊ ro iar spairn fair. Ercuil iarum nír diultadh sin les, ⁊ ro sínedar na fir fherrda sin na lamha laechdha lancalma tar taebhuib tenna tailce tarrletna aroile, ⁊ tugadar cuir borba ⁊ snadhmanna arrachta. Ocus doronsad gleic crodha coimthenn curata re hadh ⁊ re hathaigh. Ocus ro thoguib Ercuil os inn a gualann in fodhmoir, ⁊ do thrascair co hainmín co talmain he. Iar tastill na talman do tanicc nert ced ann os cinn a neirt fein. Teora fecht ro thrascair Ercuil mar sin hé co talmain, ⁊ tanic nert ced ann le gach uair dib. Iarna aithne d'Ercuil co tabhradh in talam fuilledh neirt ⁊ calmaduis d'Anntius ro togaibh Hercuil o thalmain itir a di lamhaib é, ⁊ tug fasgudh foirtill fedmlaidir firarrachta fair etar a ucht ⁊ a ... lama innus gur chroith a dennmur ass (2385-2406). '[...] he [Hercules] saw before long a fair hill, a beautiful place of assembly above the shore of the harbour. And he went to the top of the hill and looked about him on every side. And he saw a strong, very powerful giant with a black, |

[...]. He gazed on Hercules and took heed of him, for the make of the warrior whom he beheld was manly. Then he goes to his cave [...] and began to anoint his body with oil and other smeary things, and with smooth-stiff grease [...]. Then he came to the place on this hill where Hercules was and challenged him to a wrestling match. [...] They stretched and bound their huge, thick-wristed arms over throats and necks and shoulders. [...] When his side touched the earth he promptly sucked up his sweat at once and renewed his vigour [...]. Then did Hercules recognise that his vigour and his valour came to Antaeus by contact with the earth. [...]. Hercules promptly anticipates him, clasps his arms around him, that he raises him aloft so feet did not touch the earth [...] and squeezes him between his forearms and his sides, so that he made a marrowbath of his bones amid his skin'.

gloomy, diabolical face. And he looked fearsomely at Hercules. And he smeared his body with filthy grease and other slippery oils, and came quickly and very speedily towards Hercules and demanded that he should wrestle with him. As for Hercules, he did not refuse that, and those doughty men stretched their warrior-like, brave arms round each other's stout, rough, broad-stomached sides, and threw and gripped roughly and powerfully. And they fought bravely and stoutly and valiantly for a long time, and Hercules raised the giant above his shoulder and threw him violently to the ground. When he touched the ground he received the strength of a hundred over and above his own strength. Three times did Hercules throw him thus, and he received the strength of a hundred every time. When Hercules perceived that the earth gave Antaeus fresh strength and courage he lifted him from the earth between his two arms and crushed him strongly, forcefully and powerfully between his breast and his arms so that he shook the excrement out of him'.

The account in *Stair Ercuil* is significantly shorter than in *In Cath Catharda*, thirty lines of printed text in the former against seventy lines in the latter, but the basic narrative steps are retained. If the passage from *In Cath Catharda* was indeed Mac an Leagha's source here, as seems likely, then this is important evidence for the freedom which he felt was permitted in the process of adopting and adapting Irish language sources for his own purposes, and this is similar to the freedom he permitted himself in the process of adapting foreign sources. However, it is exactly this freedom which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to approach the question of whether *In Cath Catharda* and its style may have served as a possible literary model

for Mac an Leagha beyond this particular episode. Significant and recurring similarities in phraseology, which would be a good indication of stylistic influence, are not necessarily to be expected, though of course detailed lexicological research might unearth more correspondences than the few instances pointed out by Quin.[70] Given the distance observed above between source and adaptation, it is also possible that the inspiration for the comparison in *Stair Ercuil* of streams of blood with mountain-streams, which has no analogue in the *Recuyell* at this specific point of the narrative,[71] is ultimately derived from the same comparison in *In Cath Catharda*. However, the basic image probably had a wider currency in the Irish tradition; Brent Miles has observed that '[t]his passage, recalling similar evocations of post-battle gore in the native sagas, can be compared with the epic simile of Achilles' rage from *Togail Troí*',[72] and Uáitéar Mac Gearailt has drawn attention to very similar images in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[73]

*IN CATH CATHARDA*

Ba samalta re sruithlinntip abannshleibi ic siledh tre caraidh cloch srotha ₇ srebana na fola flannruaidhe ic tepersin tre drolaib na luirech a cnescorpaib na curad isin cath (*CCath.* 5901-3). 'Likened to the stream-pools of a river-yielding mountain dripping through a weir of stones were the streams and rills of the crimson blood flowing through the links of the hauberks out of the bodyskins of the champions in the battle'.

*STAIR ERCUIL*

Ocus nir luaithi sruth sanntach síradhbul sleibhi ag dul re fantaibh naid srotha falcmara foirrderga fola in la sin isin cathraigh (890-3). 'And not swifter were an impetuous, mighty mountain-stream flowing down slopes than (the) copious, crimson streams of blood in the city that day'.

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[70] Ibid. The phrase *dia friss* plus clause, 'God is witness that ...', occurs (according to *DIL*) only in *In Cath Catharda*, but is also found at least twice in *Stair Ercuil* (*SE* 1281, 1337); it does not seem to occur in Mac an Leagha's version of the romances of Guy and of Beues. Kevin Murray kindly pointed out to me an example in *LU* 4232-4: *Tuca Día friss or Mairend corot imdergthar ind i fiadnaisi fer nErend*. It is thus not confined to *In Cath Catharda* and *Stair Ercuil*.

[71] Compare *Rec.* 351.

[72] '*Togail Troí*', p. 90.

[73] 'Change and Innovation', pp. 487-8. However, the two closest parallels at *Aenid* Book 2, ll. 305-6 and Book 12 ll. 523-4 have no equivalent in *Imtheachta Æniasa*.

*Togail Troí*

Tanic codíumsach dásachtach amal tic banni dían dílend a hucht airshlébi co trascrand feda 7 fidbada remi cona[s]scailend i fánaib 7 i fánglentaib na ferand.[74]
'He [Achilles] came haughtily, furiously, as a vehement burst of a flood comes from the breast of a mountain-side, and lays low woods and forests before it, and scatters them on the slopes and the sloping glens of the lands'.

The potential of *In Cath Catharda* as a powerful literary model is otherwise evidenced by the influence it had on the fourteenth-century depiction of civil war in County Clare in *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, 'The Triumph of Turlough'.[75]

## Rewriting Hercules in Ireland

From my brief discussion, *Stair Ercuil* emerges as both a free *and* faithful rendering of Caxton's *Recuyell*. This paradox can be resolved by reference to two different aspects of the narrative, its plot and its form. In earlier discussions of Mac an Leagha's adaptions of the romances of Guy and of Beues, I stressed the wholesale transformation of the source texts in accordance with native Irish narrative and stylistic norms, their sweeping acculturation and assimilation,[76] and this would also hold true for *Stair Ercuil*; to repeat once again Gordon Quin's phrase: a 'tale which except for its central theme is thoroughly Irish'. On the other hand, it also needs to be emphasised that the Irish versions remain faithful to the plot of their sources and reproduce them without significant changes, and this allows us to identify them as translations, or adaptations, whichever term one prefers. I have attempted here to exemplify some aspects of this tension between retention and accommodation in my analysis of the demarcation of chapters in *Stair Ercuil*. The trends towards acculturation and assimilation are sometimes captured in the concept of 'gaelicisation'; another and more general concept is that of 'rewriting'. Michael Cronin has used the latter to characterise the processes that shape the majority of medieval translations into Irish, and thereby transcend the dichotomy of 'free' versus 'literal':

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[74] Stokes, *Togail Troi*, 1987-9.
[75] See above, Ní Mhaonaigh, p. 9.
[76] Poppe, 'Early Modern Irish Version'; idem, 'Narrative Structure'.

> If we consider the different translation strategies of fidelity, expansion, contraction, naturalisation and paraphrase, what is most striking in medieval Irish translation is the prevalence of rewriting. [...] The Alexander translation in the Book of Ballymote, the *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Eachtra Uilliam* [– examples of closeness and fidelity in the view of their editors –] bear multiple traces of modification, omission and elaboration. On the other hand, the freer non-pragmatic translations of the period contain many passages that are recognisably close to the original source text. If this was not the case, it would be difficult to identify them as translations in the first place. What we have in effect is translation as a form of [...] 'rewriting'. These target-oriented, prospective translations were source texts rewritten for an Irish audience, initially for the Gaelic chieftains and Anglo-Norman lords, monasteries and native schools of learning, and violated free / literal distinctions. It was less a case of either / or than of both / and. [...] The central concern of literary translators in the period was to provide translations that would be wholly acceptable to the native reader and which would function within the native literature.[77]

The typical medieval Irish translator intended to displace his source, rather than to replicate it;[78] and in this sense Uilliam Mac an Leagha, if he was indeed the redactor of *Stair Ercuil*, successfully displaced Caxton's *Recuyell* by rewriting it for a new Irish audience. Similar observations have, of course, also been made with regard to medieval Scandinavian, German, and English translators.[79] Their confidence in their own culture and their immersion in a thriving native literary tradition are among the reasons which have been adduced for this approach. Even more important, however, would appear to be the medieval attitude towards the authority of texts. Recent discussions of the status of medieval texts informed by the insights of 'New Philology' stress that the manuscript exemplar did not automatically have canonical status which guaranteed its unchanged and fixed transmission while 'variance' and 'fluidity' have become key concepts.[80] In an Irish context, Catherine McKenna's intriguing suggestion concerning *Aislinge Meic Con*

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[77] *Translating Ireland*, pp. 21-2.

[78] Compare Ellis, 'Introduction', p. 2 (enlarging on Copeland, 'Fortunes').

[79] For example, Kraß, 'Spielräume'; Würth, '*Alexanders Saga*'; Burnley, 'Late Medieval English Translation'.

[80] See, for example, Glauser, 'Textüberlieferung' and Schubert, 'Versuch'. For some thoughts on the Irish situation, see now Bronner, 'Überlieferung'.

*Glinne* is relevant here, namely that the different acounts of Mac Con Glinne's vision in the *Leabhar Breac* version of this tale are a narrative vindication of textual fluidity in a story's transmission:

> *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* maps the trajectory of the *aislinge* as it is transformed from private experience, into narration for the benefit of the narrator, into ritual narration for the benefit of a specific audience, into narration for the sake of sheer entertainment. Each version is a new organization and elaboration of the stuff of the vision, from a textual point of view.[81]

In application to the genre of 'translations', I would finally suggest that the typical medieval attitude towards a foreign-language source in the process of trans-linguistic and trans-cultural rewriting is conceptually the same as, or at least very similar to, the one towards the exemplar in the manuscript transmission of a text – and this would go a long way towards explaining the freedom with which medieval translators, not only in Ireland, treated their sources. For medieval French literature, Douglas Kelly has highlighted that there are 'three prominent modes of *translatio* [...]: translation as such, including scribal transmission; adaptation; and allegorical or extended metaphorical discourse'.[82] The freedom with which Mac an Leagha adopted the Antaeus episode of *In Cath Catharda* for his own purposes is methodologically highly instructive in this respect too.[83]

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81 'Vision', p. 279.

82 '*Translatio Studii*', p. 291. For a similar statement with regard to medieval German literature, see Wehrli, *Literatur*, p. 34, who suggests that this literature is in some form or other translation, adaptation, rephrasing or commentary.

83 It would be an interesting exercise, but beyond the scope of my paper, to study Mac an Leagha's performance as a scribe in this light, but it is of course possible that by the fifteenth century attitudes of scribes and translators had developed in different directions. The texts of the Irish Life of Colum Cille, which are found in two manuscripts associated with Uilliam / Illann Mac an Leagha (London, British Library, Egerton 91, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Celtiques et Basques No. 1), show no major innovations or differences in comparison with this Life's other manuscript versions, except that the former occasionally show independent readings in the Latin passages. Herbert (*Iona*, p. 215), suggests that these 'may result from rewriting of very abbreviated or doubtful Latin phrases by a Mac an Lega scribe' (I wish to thank Máire Herbert for the reference and helpful discussions). An analysis of the Life of St James Intercisus in British Library, Egerton 1781 and in Mac an Leagha's Additional MS 30512 would also be instructive, since Flower (*Catalogue*, p. 500), has noted that the latter 'is of the same translation as the Egerton version, but it has been expanded by the introduction of a quantity of formal phraseology imitated from the later romantic tales' and Ó Laoghaire, 'Beathaí Naomh Iasachta', pp. 88-90, has identified a number of Mac an Leagha's favourite expressions in it.

I close with the observation that the study of medieval and early modern Irish adaptations, a genre often neglected and under-rated, has a lot to offer which is of immediate interest and relevance to the student of Irish textual culture.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## VIRGILIAN TRANSFORMATIONS – THE *AENEID* IN THE HISTORY OF TRANSLATION

FIONA COX

George Steiner has claimed that 'a suggestive history of Western moral, literary and political sensibility could be written in terms of the relative status, at given periods and in different societies, of Homer and Virgil'.[1] Defining a national identity by examining the way in which a nation sees its image filtered through the words of Homer or Virgil is to return to the problem Virgil set himself when writing the episode in which Aeneas's mother, Venus, presents him with a magical shield that has the history of the future Rome chased upon it. Although Virgil borrows the image of the shield from Homer, by the time he has shown us Aeneas gazing in wonder at the different angles of Roman history revealed to him by twisting the shield through different tonalities of light, the image is inextricably associated with the myth of Rome. Indeed, it is where the myth of Rome begins, as its founder gazes upon the kaleidoscope of its images and allows his hopes and his imagination to soar. It is a quintessentially Virgilian moment – the glorious vision of the triumphing Roman empire is countered, for the reader at least, by an awareness of the cost of empire, a cost to which Aeneas is, for the moment, oblivious. In picking up the shield, he picks up the fame and fate of his descendants and admires and rejoices in the image, though ignorant of its content.[2] James Zetzel observes that:

> as with every ecphrasis in the poem, what the immediate viewer sees is not what the reader sees: comprehension and understanding require time, distance, interpretation. And, as

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1 'Homer and Virgil and Broch', p. 10.

2 *Aeneid* Book 8, ll. 730-1: *Ignarus imagine gaudet / attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum*, 'Knowing not the deeds he rejoices in their image as he raises on his shoulders the fame and fate of his descendants'. All translations are my own except where otherwise indicated.

Virgil shows in other passages (notably the scenes on the temple of Juno in Book 1), the viewer sees what he or she wants to see.[3]

Likewise, each new generation forges for itself a new image of Homer and Virgil that helps them to articulate their own contexts and preoccupations.

Responses to Virgil, broadly speaking, have fallen into two main categories, identified by Adam Parry in a highly influential article published in 1963.[4] These two voices are the voice of triumph, celebrating empire, in counterpoint to the voice of melancholy, bewailing the human cost of empire, reminding us that empire-building entails oppression and refugees, that it is built upon exile. The *Aeneid* is the ultimate foundation epic, describing the foundation of the heart of Western civilisation, the city and the world. Its power, of course, has been that each nation, each civilisation, has appropriated it in their own bid to establish a national identity. Of all ancient epics, it conforms most strongly to Bakhtin's three constitutive features of the epic genre: 'a national epic past / national tradition and an absolute epic distance separating the epic world from contemporary reality'.[5] But its power lies equally in the fact that it speaks to refugees and the dispossessed as forcefully as it speaks to dictators and empire-builders. This is because it establishes Rome every bit as much as an absence as a glorious reality that will survive the ravages of time. Rome, the eternal city, is asserted – in the very first book Jupiter declares *imperium sine fine dedi*[6] – but neither Aeneas nor the reader sees Rome as a living reality in the *Aeneid*. There is no depiction of an actual city to correspond to the visions shown to Aeneas by his father in the Underworld, or by Evander as he takes Aeneas on a tour of future Rome in Book 8, or the Roman images chased onto the magical shield given to Aeneas, also in Book 8. The book ends on a moment of human vengeance – Aeneas' adversary Turnus is lying on the ground, pleading for his life – the magnanimous Aeneas is about to grant him his wish when his eye is caught by a flash of light off Turnus' sword belt. The moment is fatal, since it is the very belt that Turnus snatched from the body of Aeneas' young friend, Pallas, after he had killed him. In a moment of blind fury and grief, Aeneas drives his sword through Turnus whose soul flees off, groaning, into the Underworld. The ultimate Roman

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3 'Rome and its Traditions', p. 201.
4 'The Two Voices'.
5 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 14.
6 *Aeneid* Book 1, l. 279: 'I have granted an empire without boundaries'.

epic, the epic of the city and of the world, closes with the word *umbras*,[7] leaving protagonist and reader in the shadowlands of human grief and uncertainty.

It is precisely these shadowlands that facilitated the christianisation of Virgil. This christianisation originated in the Middle Ages, and led to Virgil being hailed as 'The Father of the West'.[8] His status as Christian prophet was achieved in part through his fourth *Eclogue*, known as the Messianic eclogue, since it foretold the birth of a child who would restore a new golden age of peace upon earth. But it is more important that the Eternal City is presented through presentiments of its future, something that can only be perceived as through a glass, dimly. And nowhere is this Virgilian sense of exile more potently and poignantly evoked than in Dante's *Commedia*. This work, which presents Virgil as one of the prophets of Christianity, condemns the figure of Virgil to perpetual exile amongst the shades in limbo. Born too early to be a Christian, he could only offer intimations of Christ's birth and so is unable to enter Paradise. As Dante's Statius so beautifully puts it 'you were like one who, travelling by night, / Carries the torch behind – no help to him – But he makes those who follow him the wiser'.[9] Dante leaves his lord and master in exile, in limbo. These Dantean shadowlands perpetuate the Virgilian themes of uncertain hope and perpetual insecurity, and are largely responsible for the way in which Virgil has been perceived ever since.

Since the *Aeneid* closes before the city of Rome is founded, throughout the work Virgil's characters are suspended between two cities, two nations, and all we are shown of Rome is her evocation through ghost cities, and the depiction of promised dreams. Within the *Aeneid* itself, Aeneas and his men are perpetual refugees. It is no accident that the history of Virgilian transformations has been undertaken for the most part by writers who are on the edge of a dominant culture. Susan Bassnett remarks of translations in general that 'cultures uneasy about their own status are more likely to

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[7] *Aeneid* Book 12, l. 952: *vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras*, 'and with a groan his outraged life fled into the shadows'.

[8] The status of Virgil as Father of the West was explored most thoroughly and resonantly by Haecker, *Virgil, Father of the West*; see also Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.

[9] Sinclair, *Dante: Purgatorio* 22, 67-9.

produce translations than those confident about the strength of their native literature',[10] but, in an essay examining translations into English of the *Aeneid*, Colin Burrow extends this point to make of this liminality an essential feature of Virgilian translation:

> most English translators of Virgil are anxious about their own standing and usually they support losing political causes. Virgil tends to be adopted into English by poets who need the consolation of his authority or the sustaining dream of his imperial vision (...) The act of translating Virgil gives (English) writers the sense of writing an empire even if they could themselves not participate in one (...) writers on the margins of England have turned to Virgil to persuade themselves that they are at the nation's centre.[11]

We wouldn't have to look far in contemporary Ireland to find writers using Virgil to articulate a sense of exile, of loss. Séamus Heaney frames his 1991 anthology *Seeing Things* with, at the beginning, a translation of the passage where Aeneas meets with the Sibyl and finds the golden bough and, at the end, a translation of Dante's meeting with Charon in Canto 3 of the *Inferno*. Heaney's selection of these passages marks his intention to become the latest in the procession of poets who use the image of the Underworld to depict the journeys they must take to recover their memories, their images of the dead. This anthology is underpinned by Heaney's need to find once again his dead father and, like Aeneas, he must descend into the Underworld of the self to do so. On his journey, he invokes the shades of others who were important to him – the painter Edward Maguire, the archaeologist Tom Delaney, the biographer Richard Ellmann and the poets Philip Larkin, John Hewitt and W.B. Yeats. Just as Dante pursued a poetic career by encountering the shades of Ovid, Lucan, Homer and Horace in the Underworld, so Heaney embarks on his own poetic journey in the footsteps of Hewitt and Larkin, and it is significant that their ghosts should appear to him as Dantean shades. The first poem, entitled 'The Journey Back', recalls the Sibyl's warning that 'the way down to Avernus is easy. Day and

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[10] *Translation Studies*, p. 12. However, translations and adaptations into Irish in the medieval period are often taken as an indication of the cultural confidence of Ireland's *literati*; in the stories so adapted, the 'characters and settings are classical but in narrative style and ornamentation they are fully adapted to Irish literary and oral tradition' (Mac Gearailt, 'On Textual Correspondences', p. 351). See above, Ní Mhaonaigh, p. 7; Poppe, p. 66.

[11] 'Virgil in English Translation', pp. 21, 23-4.

night black Pluto's door stands open. But to retrace your steps and get back to upper air, This is the real task and the real undertaking'.[12] Larkin's shade quotes Dante at Heaney, and expresses surprise that his own journey should have led him back to the place he started from:

> It felt more like the forewarned journey back
> Into the heartland of the ordinary.
> Still my old self. Ready to knock one back.
> A nine-to-five man who had seen poetry.[13]

In 'The School Bag' (in memoriam John Hewitt), Heaney pays homage to the poet who could almost be seen as a poetic father figure here: 'My handsewn leather schoolbag. Forty years / Poet, you were *nel mezzo del cammin* / When I shouldered it'.[14] At the same time as Heaney is attempting to recover his past through 'undrowning' his father, he is also, as Charles Martindale puts it, 'coming home to some of the most influential traditions of Western poetry'.[15] The second half of the volume celebrates Heaney's return to life, his openness to epiphanies, his determination to experience luminous moments. In a reversal of the Virgilian trope, such experiences constitute a golden bough leading him out of the Underworld.

Eavan Boland also makes extensive reference to Virgil in her collection *Outside History* in which she explores both individual and collective 'emigrant grief'[16] as she describes the difficulties of carving out her poetic identity having been exiled on two counts – as an Irish emigrant who was brought up in England and as a woman. Both versions of exile correspond to Burrow's observation, noted above, that it is predominantly writers who perceive themselves as being on the margins of a dominant culture who turn to Virgil. Again and again, Boland returns to her exiled childhood, evoking the homesickness of being unable to speak the right language:

> in a strange city, in another country,
> on nights in a north-facing bedroom,
> waiting for the sleep that never did
> restore me as I'd hoped to what I'd lost –
>
> let the world I knew become the space
> between the words that I had by heart

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[12] Heaney, *Seeing Things*: 'The Golden Bough', pp. 1-3, at p. 2 (Heaney's translation).
[13] Ibid., 'The Journey Back', p. 7.
[14] Ibid., p. 30.
[15] 'Introduction', p. 1.
[16] *Outside History*, p. 69.

and all the other speech that always was
becoming the language of the country that

I came to in nineteen fifty-one:
barely gelled, a freckled six-year-old,
overdressed and sick on the plane,
when all of England to an Irish child

was nothing more than what you'd lost and how:
was the teacher in the London convent who,
when I produced 'I amn't' in the classroom
turned and said – 'you're not in Ireland now.[17]

This theme surfaces also in 'In Exile', where Boland expresses retrospective empathy with the German girls who:

spoke no English, understood no French. They were
sisters from a ruined city and they spoke rapidly
in their own tongue: syllables in which pain was
radical, integral; and with what sense of injury

the language angled for an unhurt kingdom.[18]

And it is Virgil who is her muse as she travels back to recover this past. In 'The Bottle Garden', she ponders on the direction her life has taken in significantly Dantean tones:

And in my late thirties, past the middle way,
I can say how did I get here?
I hardly know the way back, still less forward
Still if you look for them there are signs.[19]

As she follows these signs they take her back to herself as:

a gangling schoolgirl
in the convent library, the April evening outside,
reading *The Aeneid* as the room darkens
to the Underworld of the sixth book –

the Styx, the damned, the pity and
the improvised poetic of imprisoned meanings;
only half aware of the open weave of harbour lights
and my school blouse riding up at the sleeves.[20]

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17 Ibid., 'An Irish Childhood in England: 1951', pp. 106-7.
18 Ibid., p. 46.
19 Ibid., p. 101.
20 Ibid.; see also 'The Latin Lesson', pp. 53-4.

These poems take us on several journeys at once – through Boland's memories we are taken back to her past, a past scarred by her family's journeys of emigration, and a past from which her journey as a poet is just taking place. Boland is one of the first women poets to call upon Virgil for help in writing herself into a patriarchal tradition where she feels an outsider. Her poem 'The Journey' is a retelling of Dante's journey to the Underworld accompanied by Virgil, except that she borrows all the Virgilian imagery and takes Sappho as her guide. Her Underworld is full of the unwritten domestic concerns of sick or errant children, and the house that still needs tidying, a version of the 'pram in the hall' that Cyril Connolly said was death to creativity:

> down down down without so much as
> ever touching down but always, always
> with a sense of mulch beneath us,
> the way of stairs winding down to a river (...)
>
> My eyes got slowly used to the bad light.
> At first I saw shadows, only shadows.
> Then I could make out women and children
> and, in the way they were, the grace of love. (...)
>
> But these are women who went out like you
> when dusk became a dark sweet with leaves,
> recovering the day, stooping, picking up
> teddy bears and rag dolls and tricycles and buckets' (...)
>
> I whispered, "let me be
> let me at least be their witness", but she said
> "what you have seen is beyond speech,
> beyond song, only not beyond love;
>
> remember it, you will remember it"
> and I heard her say but she was fading fast
> as we emerged under the stars of heaven
> there are not many of us; you are dear
>
> and stand beside me as my own daughter
> I have brought you here so you will know forever
> the silences in which are our beginnings,
> in which we have an origin like water.[21]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 94-6.

Virgilian allusions accompany Boland both on her quest for a poetic identity, that can include the everyday details of her life as a wife and mother, and in her realisation that the mission has been accomplished:

> I want to find her,
> The woman I once was, who came out of that reading room
> in a hard January, after studying
> Aeneas in the underworld
> how his old battle foes spotted him there –
>
> how they called and called and called
> only to have it be
> a yell of shadows, an O vanishing in
> the polished waters
> and the topsy-turvy seasons of hell;
>
> her mind so frail her body was its ghost.
>
> I want to tell her she can rest
> she is embodied now.[22]

This fear of the young poet, of being unable to find a voice that will carry, that can bear the weight of all the unwritten female experiences she has made it her mission to chart, is further explored in Boland's critical work:

> The moment was deep in the Sixth Book. Aeneas has endured the foulness of hell. He has crossed the polished waters, heard the wingbeats of the doves, seen the furious expression on the face of Dido. Now at last he has reached the place where his old companions and rivals in war are clustered. All the names of heroes, the meaningless, difficult Latin names, are recorded at this point. Glaucus. Medon. Thersilichus. I hated the names and found them difficult to remember and unlocated in any adventure I understood. And yet here was Aeneas pressing on again, surrounded by old friends, old rivals. The names, the difficulties of the text fell away. Here were his old adversaries, both pleased and terrified to see him, ready to make a run for the ships, but also ready to hail him. But as they did, the moment happened: They raised *exiguam vocem* – a feeble voice. In the words of the Latin, the cry they attempted mocked them. (...)

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[22] Ibid., 'A False Spring', p. 37.

> For that moment I could make a single experience out of the fractures of language, country and womanhood that had brought me here. The old place of power and heroism – the stairs and bricks of an alien building, the sting of exile – were gathered into a hell with old inscriptions and immediate force.
>
> In the face of that underworld, and by the force of poetry itself, language had been shown to be fallible. The heroes had spoken, and their voices had not carried. Memory was a whisper, a sound that died in your throat. Amidst the triumphs of language and civilization it was a moment of sheer powerlessness. It was something I would look back to when I became a poet.[23]

In the last paragraph Boland negotiates with precisely the tension that has characterised Virgilian translation and, more generally, Virgilian reception almost from the moment the *Aeneid* first appeared. The heroes of old have attempted to speak but their voices have not carried. As well as evoking anxieties about the survival of poetry, Virgil is also commemorating the countless victims of empire-building, outsiders from mainstream history whose voices go unheard. The Virgils of imperial triumphalists such as the English John Boys[24] to the French André Bellessort[25] and Robert Brasillach,[26] as well as Hitler and Mussolini, have always been accompanied by the Virgilian followers who remind us of the human fragility and loss that underpin these visions of empire. As early as 15 AD, during Nero's regime, Lucan was undermining Virgil's vision of Rome and adding, as a counterpoint to Virgil's glorious vision, his account of what it was like to live in terror through a dictatorship.[27]

One of the most striking aspects of the Irish *Aeneid*, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, is the removal of this uncertainty. The work opens with a counsel of the Greek kings who must decide how to deal with those Greeks who betrayed their country during the sack of Troy. It closes with the death of Turnus, and then with a neat concluding section that gives a brief account of the last years of Aeneas, and elliptically shows how Roman history has fed into universal history, world history:

> And Æneas then entered into peace and a marriage alliance with Latinus, and married Lavinia; and he was in the sovereignty of Italy for three years. And after that Æneas died; and Lavinia bore to Æneas, after his death, a son called Silvius. Now, Ascanius

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[23] Boland, *Object Lessons*, pp. 86-7.
[24] *Aeneas his Errours*.
[25] *Virgile: Son Œuvre et son Temps*.
[26] *Présence de Virgile*.
[27] Duff, *Lucan: Bellum Civile*.

> obtained after Æneas the sovereignty of Italy for the space of thirty-eight years; and Ascanius married Lavinia, and by him a town was built for her, to wit, Alba Longa; and Lavinia bore a son to Ascanius, named Julus. And from the seed of Æneas, Ascanius, and Lavinia have sprung Roman lords, and king-folk, and rulers of the world from thenceforward till the judgment-day shall come. So that these are the wanderings of Æneas, son of Anchises, as above.[28]

This last section appears to indicate much of the author's ambivalence towards the *Aeneid*'s authority as a source text. The power of Rome is diluted as it is transferred to Italy, and by removing the foundation of Rome as the epic's *telos*, the author has made of the account simply a version of the wanderings of Aeneas – little more than an Italian *Odyssey*. Furthermore, this Irish author credits Lavinia and Ascanius as well as Aeneas with the founding of this race of Italian kings, thus fulfilling Latinus' prophecies about his daughter's fate halfway through the book: '"To a foreign husband, it is fated and promised she should be given, and with him is her happiness; and from them will spring the kings of Italy, and the emperors of all the world from east to west"'.[29] On this reading it is all too easy to forget the power of Aeneas plumbing the depths of hell, that he was viewed as an avatar of Christ, Saint Paul and Dante, for doing so. The author christianises the work by indicating that emperors of this stock will continue to be born until Judgement Day but the tension of the original, the power in the idea that Virgil was writing of far more than he could understand, is lost.

In his new Introduction to *Imtheachta Æniasa*, Erich Poppe highlights the absence of Rome as this *Aeneid*'s teleology, pointing out that it:

> narrates the history of an individual firmly set in a definite past, with no implications of a teleological view of Roman history. This does not contradict the wider historical perspective opened up in the prologue and the epilogue. These sections are concerned with world-history rather than specific Roman issues.[30]

It is significant that *Imtheachta Æniasa* was produced at a time when many countries in Europe were rewriting classical epics in order to assert the supremacy of their own native culture. In France, the *Roman de Troie* and the *Roman d'Enéas* both adapt Virgil's work, diminishing the influence of Rome, so as to facilitate a new teleology

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[28] Calder, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, p. 201.
[29] Ibid., p. 101.
[30] *A New Introduction*, p. 11.

with France at its end. This is made clear at the start of Chrétien de Troyes' *Cligés*:

> This is what our books have told us, that Greece had chivalry, of the highest order, and scholarship. Then chivalry came to Rome, and the sum-total of scholarship, which has now come into France. God grant that it be maintained and embellished in this place, so that the honour which has rested here may never leave France.[31]

In Britain also, Geoffrey of Monmouth was busy writing his History of the kings of Britain in which Aeneas and Rome are sidelined to appear only as the precursors of Brutus and the empire that he will found in Britain, Geoffrey's world.[32] The projection of the tensions and needs of one's own civilisation into a reading of the *Aeneid* has been a feature of the ever-changing images and reflections of Homer and Virgil that George Steiner evokes. At the very start of his Introduction, Poppe indicates the ways in which the *Aeneid* was adapted to suit the preoccupations of medieval Ireland, proposing the thesis that *Imtheachta Æniasa* was seen as a historical narrative, rather than as literary epic or mere entertainment, and reminding us that the adaptation / transposition / translation of classical works into the vernacular was an 'integral and substantial element of the intellectual preoccupations of the medieval Irish *literati* and may even have had some influence on the formation of the so-called native tradition itself'.[33]

It was part of the trend of adapting classical narratives that helped medieval Irish *literati* negotiate their own past, as Poppe observes:

> The interest of Irish *literati* in the heroes of their own pagan past, and the obvious parallels between the heroic milieu of their lives and of the heroes of classical antiquity would have been one reason to adapt classical texts into Irish, with the high status of their authors, for instance pseudo-Dares and Virgil as a further incentive.[34]

It is interesting, then, that Aeneas should appear to be so unheroic, so ungallant, in *Imtheachta Æniasa*. Again, Poppe points out that the presentation of Aeneas and Antenor as traitors (*lucht in braith*, l. 39) contrasts sharply with the former's characterisation by Virgil as *pius Aeneas*.[35] I would argue, further, that the emotionally-charged parting scenes between Dido and Aeneas, scenes which give him a human

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[31] Micha, *Chrétien de Troyes: Cligés*, ll. 28-36; I am indebted to Dick Collins for this translation and for his immense help in explaining medieval mindsets.

[32] Wright and Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie*.

[33] *A New Introduction*, p. 2.

[34] Ibid., p. 29.

[35] See, for example, *Aeneid* Book 4, l. 393: *at pius Aeneas*, 'but the god-fearing Aeneas'.

dimension, lose much of their poignancy and power in *Imtheachta Æniasa*, where Aeneas is portrayed as being far more controlled and calculating than in the original: 'he told them to get ready the fleet, and to get under way, and to summon all the comrades to their ships, and to have everything in readiness and [to] "inform me" when every detail shall have been completed by them in the proper way'.[36] This is the efficient army-general with a clear sense of his mission far more than the emotionally-wracked Aeneas, torn between his love and his divine mission to restore and fortify his race. Furthermore, *Imtheachta Æniasa* also undermines the import and significance of Aeneas' mission. In this version, when Ilioneus asks for land from Latinus he speaks of Aeneas as one who 'brought us to you to ask the little site where we shall build us a little city on the shore of Italy here with you'.[37] In part, this is the language of a diffident immigrant, not wanting to push his luck, but it is also a subtle undermining of the mission of the *Aeneid* and thereby the status of the *Aeneid*. Ilioneus' request is typical of *Imtheachta Æniasa* in that he manages to avoid any direct reference to Rome at all. In fact, apart from the Epilogue, there is only one reference to Rome in the whole book, which is when Anchises is pointing out the future of Aeneas' line to him and indicates Romulus: 'The man yonder whom you see with the crested helm upon his head, is Romulus; and by him will the city of Rome be built, and from him will the Romans be named'.[38] It is almost as if this is a by-product of Aeneas' mission, and once again his role as the founder of the eternal city of Rome is seriously compromised.

There are certain set pieces from the *Aeneid* that have resonated from generation to generation. Our responses to these tell us as much as do our responses to the *Aeneid* as a whole. For instance, writers from the late twentieth century have tended to privilege the sibylline qualities of the work, our postmodern sensibilities enjoying the image of the prophetess who enjoys the blurring of her messages so that supplicants who come seeking guidance are unable to receive any kind of coherent direction. Other such episodes include the last night in Troy (Book 2), the tragedy of Dido and Aeneas (Book 4), Aeneas' vision of his future (Book 6), the image of Rome and her histories chased onto a magical shield (Book 8) and the pilgrimage around the future Rome (Book 8). These episodes seem almost to have selected themselves as ones that proclaim the glory of the Roman empire and validate the city as having been born by the will

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[36] Calder, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, p. 51.
[37] Ibid., p. 101.
[38] Ibid., p. 91.

of the gods. By now, it is perhaps not surprising that each of these episodes is diminished in *Imtheachta Æniasa*, either by presenting Aeneas in a shabbier light, or by undermining the power of Rome as the driving force behind the poem. A case in point is the shield episode: Virgil creates of this scene one of the most glorious and terrible of the poem. Aeneas gazes in awe at the images of his future, images that justify the appalling cost of war, and 'knowing not the deeds he rejoices in their image as he raises on his shoulders the fame and fate of his descendants'.[39]

He is able to rejoice, precisely because he is ignorant, because he cannot know, cannot see the many tragedies woven into the grand narrative of Rome. Auden responds to this dilemma in his poem 'Secondary Epic':

> No, Virgil, no.
> Not even the first of the Romans can learn
> His Roman history in the future tense.
> Not even to serve your political turn.
> Hindsight as foresight makes no sense.[40]

But the author of *Imtheachta Æniasa* almost dismisses the episode in four lines, removing once again any reference to Rome and thereby opening the narrative up, as Poppe points out (see above), to world history rather than specific Roman issues: 'There were carved on that shield the form and name of every king, and every chieftain, and every lord, of the seed of Æneas, that would obtain the lordship of Italy, and the supremacy of the world'.[41] The shell of the *Aeneid* has survived, and yet its resonances are being quelled as the author moves towards his own version of the sack of Rome.

The author of *Imtheachta Æniasa* does not situate the new work in Ireland. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on sacking Rome in terms of her influence and power. Paradoxically, the excision of Rome also obliterates all the Virgilian elements of uncertainty and doubt. This leads to a far more confident work – *Imtheachta Æniasa* has a far less ambivalent sense of its history and of its mission. The troubled, blurred opening and ending of the *Aeneid* are tidied up and restored to a traditional prologue and epilogue. The author also expands certain episodes that lend a sense of confidence – such as the Funeral Games from Book 5 which occupy a proportionally greater section

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[39] For quotation, see above n. 2.
[40] *Collected Shorter Poems*, pp. 296-7.
[41] *Imtheachta Æniasa*, p. 125.

of the new work than the Underworld or the Shield. The emphasis is on promoting a vision of a race of athletic, strong-bodied men who are the heroes of the future. That these heroes have a Northern / Irish rather than a Trojan / Italian background is illustrated by the description of them: 'Comely was the youth that was in their midst. Golden hair upon him, slightly curling; a clear blue eye in his head; like the prime of the wood in May, or like the purple foxglove was each of his two cheeks'.[42] Rome is excised precisely so that an Irish angle can be grafted onto the narrative, so that *Imtheachta Æniasa* can confirm the visions of Ireland offered by works such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Lebor Gabála Érenn*.

Slotkin argues that 'the Irish Aeneid is paraphrastic. Words are not fixed, but nothing essential is omitted'.[43] It is quite true that we have the bones of the *Aeneid*. But the removal of Rome is the removal of the work's identity, its *raison d'être*. Teleology not only gives a narrative its driving force, but also retrospectively confers the status of divine ordination upon that work. Its removal enables writers to change the face of Western civilisation because, of course, it is not a question merely of emasculating the *Aeneid* alone but all subsequent works that have continued the *Aeneid*'s work and have promoted the same vision. To clear Rome from the narrative is to clear an imaginative and political space into which a new nation can be inserted and a new national tradition validated. Writers such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and the author of *Imtheachta Æniasa* are not only ensuring that Roman history is no longer equated with world history, but are replacing Roman history with histories that have a variety of different centres, whether these be in France or Britain or Ireland. By a paradoxical twist of literary history, these medieval rewritings of the *Aeneid* that appear so atypical, so anti-Virgilian, conform absolutely to, and are an essential element of, a tradition of turning to Virgil in order to counter a feeling of marginality by changing the centres of civilisation.

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[42] Ibid., p. 121.

[43] 'Medieval Irish Scribes', p. 447 (reference from Poppe, *A New Introduction*, p. 17).

# CHAPTER FIVE

# Translation Theory and Medieval Translation

Diana Luft

The prospect of presenting a paper on the topic of 'Translation Theory and Medieval Translation' with reference to *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* at the seventh annual UCC / Irish Texts Society Seminar in November 2005, while exciting, was also the cause of no inconsiderable trepidation. The first part of the title, 'Translation Theory', is an unfortunate combination of elements that are both difficult to deal with, and distasteful to many. The difficulty lies in the multitude of issues raised by translation and the vastness of the field of the theory that treats it. Ivor Armstrong Richards famously said of the process of translation, it 'may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos'.[1] Given the amount of text that the study of translation has produced since Richards made that pronouncement in 1953, it is difficult to disagree with him. At the same time, distaste for the impenetrable language of theory has become commonplace amongst both scholars and the wider reading public, combined with impatience at the spread of such language from the world of theory into all areas of professional life. There is no point in ignoring or dismissing the resistance to theory which many scholars evince: such resistance is often the product of a deep mistrust in a field of inquiry which can seem inward looking, uniquely unsuited to actual application to texts, and not worth the Herculean effort it takes to get through it given the specialised vocabulary and opaque writing style employed.

The second part of the title, 'Medieval Translation', introduces a host of new complications for there exists no consensus amongst medievalists as to the applicability of modern theories or, for that matter, modern categories such as translation itself, to pre-modern literatures. The application of modern theory to pre-modern texts is

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[1] 'Towards a Theory of Translating', p. 250.

an intrinsically anti-historicist activity. Historicist and anti-historicist trends in medieval studies, which once seemed to alternate in acceptability as points on a constantly spinning wheel of fortune, now coexist, dynamically if not peacefully. In the sub-field of studies dealing with medieval translation, a similar range of historicist and anti-historicist tendencies are to be found side by side. There is no agreement as to the appropriateness of the application of modern translation theory in general to medieval literature, nor as to which types of theory might be most useful to readers and critics. J.D. Burnley, for example, takes a historicist stance against the applicability of modern theories of translation to medieval texts in his article from the first Cardiff Conference on the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages held in 1987. This is his assessment of late medieval English translators' familiarity with the demands of their craft:

> I do not think that in general the attitude to translation is dependent on a spirit of *aemulatio*, but rather on a widespread obliviousness to the process and problems of translation, which turns the source text into nothing more than a source for literary exploitation by the devices of amplification proper to the literary tradition and idiom of the target language.[2]

For Burnley, the process of translation in the Middle Ages was largely unproblematic, medieval translators' successful transformation of diverse materials into written works appropriate to their own native literary cultures apparently the natural end result of an unconsidered translation strategy rather than of a sustained and measured effort. The process of 'literary exploitation' is as uncomplicated in purpose as it is in execution. Michael Cronin quotes Burnley's assessment of the theoretical awareness of late medieval English translators in the context of his discussion of medieval Irish translations, seemingly with approval.[3] Jeanette Beer takes a similarly historicist stance, throwing doubt on the relevance of the category of translation itself, in discussions of medieval literature:

> translation in the Middle Ages was not a literary sub-species, obeying (or *not* obeying!) certain presupposed requirements. It was not, in fact, and is not now a literary genre at all and medieval translators never classified it as such, despite their strong generic awareness.[4]

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2 Burnley, 'Late Medieval English Translation', p. 46.
3 *Translating Ireland*, p. 17.
4 'Introduction', p. 1.

Burnley and Beer raise important questions: what can modern translation theory add to any discussion of medieval translation, when such a branch of theory did not exist when medieval translators were active, and when they were not necessarily aware of the operation of any sort of theory at all in their works? How can modern translation theory add to an understanding of medieval translated texts, without introducing an inexcusable degree of anachronism into the discussion?

It is important to recognise that in looking at works like *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* together as elements in a larger set comprising translations, we have already taken them out of their medieval categories and placed them into a modern category, thus imposing modern expectations upon them. Looking at the reception of these two texts in a historicist fashion, it seems unlikely that contemporary audiences would have drawn generic similarities between them, and placed them in the same category simply because both are versions of works originally written in other languages. The differences between them outweigh their similarities and mitigate against audiences not interested in translation considering them in a similar light. *Imtheachta Æniasa* is a medieval adaptation[5] of originally Latin material and is found in three manuscripts dating to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[6] It was adapted from a work that would have been widely known in its original form and that possessed a great deal of authority. Poppe suggests that the translator of *Imtheachta Æniasa* was interested in the *Aeneid* as a historical document rather than a strictly literary one, and describes it as 'the work of a historian whose intention, in the words of Bernardus Silvestris, was both to instruct and to please'.[7] The work's subsequent copying shows that it enjoyed enough popularity to be distributed to a wider audience. *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, on the other hand, is a late fifteenth-century adaptation[8] of

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[5] Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 32-3, gives a summary of the various suggestions for the dating of the text, from Murphy's proposal of an early twelfth-century date to Diego Poli's idea of a late eleventh- or early twelfth-century date, but concludes that an exact dating is currently not available.

[6] These are the fourteenth-century Book of Ballymote (Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, MS 23 P 12), the incomplete fifteenth-century Franciscan House of Studies, Killiney, MS A 11, and the incomplete fifteenth-century King's Inn Library, Dublin, MS 13 (Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 30-1).

[7] 'A New Introduction', p. 14.

[8] *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxv.

originally English material[9] found in a single sixteenth-century manuscript.[10] It was adapted from a cheap and widely available work, though one which possessed little in the way of authority. Erich Poppe suggested, in his paper read at this conference, that the motive behind the translation was to produce a text about an individual with a notable life story, a *vita*, though not necessarily a religious one.[11] The single copy seems to be in the hand of the actual translator and was most likely produced for a single patron.[12] Indeed, Prof. Poppe suggested at the conference, perhaps facetiously, that the text enjoyed a contemporary audience of only one, while Prof. Mac Eoin suggested, also perhaps facetiously, that this is the only audience it deserved! Given the variation in time period in which the two works were produced, the differences in sources and manuscript transmission, and the disparity in function and genre between the two, it is entirely possible that *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* have never shared an audience before today.

It is impossible to escape the fact that we are introducing an element of anachronism into the debate through looking at texts as translations rather than strictly as products of the target-language literary culture. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it is not worthwhile to do so. The fact that translators do not discuss the mechanisms at work in their translations does not mean that they are unaware of the operation of those mechanisms, or that they are producing less sophisticated renderings because of it. The fact that a translation does not seem the be the product of a sustained effort does not mean that it is so. While scholars may have been interested in instances of disjuncture and discord in texts as sites of meaning, the congruity of those texts can be just as telling, for it is the product of a great deal of effort, skill, education, and desire. And while historicist enquiry may provide the tools to model the conditions of the production and initial reception of literary works, this does not

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[9] Quin concludes that Caxton's English translation of Lefevre's *Recueil des Histoires de Troyes* is the source for *Stair Ercuil* based on the forms of the names in the text (*SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxi), and that it is the first edition of that text that served as the main source (*SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxiv).

[10] Trinity College, Dublin, MS H.2.7.

[11] He suggested, based on the nature of the other works by the same translator, that the translator was interested in producing, or was commissioned to produce, translations about individuals with remarkable lives. See above pp. 38-42.

[12] Quin conjectures that *Stair Ercuil* was translated by the scribe of the manuscript, Uilliam Mac an Leagha, along with the text that immediately follows it in the manuscript (The Irish Lives of Guy and Beues), and another text in the same hand (*Betha Mhuire Eigiptacdha*) for an unknown patron (*SE*, 'Introduction', p. xl).

have to be the end result of scholarly inquiry. For just as the perfect translation, which replicates exactly the sound, syntax, metre, and meaning of the source text including every possible connotation of each word, cultural reference, and proper name is impossible, so perfect historicism in textual criticism is impossible. It is more dangerous to fool ourselves that we are engaging works from a perfectly historicist viewpoint than to admit to our anachronisms. It is also worth considering that thanks to the good offices of the Irish Texts Society, a great deal more twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers have had access to these medieval texts than contemporary readers did. Perhaps we should not be so quick to dismiss our own experience of these works as an object of study in the pursuit of a historicism we cannot hope to achieve.

## Translation theory

What exactly is translation theory? Maria Tymoczko, in her study of English translations of Irish texts describes it in terms of a mathematical proof, which must be applicable to any data:

> Translation theory ... should apply to practice in general, and it should cover translation of Western and non-Western literature, oral and written, ancient and modern. It should apply to the translation of living and dead languages, translation between closely related languages and unrelated languages equally.[13]

While it is possible to refer to a neat entity called 'translation theory' in the title of a paper, for example, in reality there are hundreds of individual theories, propounded in tens of journals both online and in print, all of which serve to make up translation theory. The type of translation referred to in 'translation theory' is not just literary: translation theorists are equally interested in the everyday acts of linguistic transfer undertaken by simultaneous interpreters, as well as the continually developing and often hilarious attempts to produce accurate automatic and machine translations.[14] This large range of activities covered means that an equally large range of theory is

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[13] *Translation in a Postcolonial Context*, p. 33.

[14] The products of machine translation are still immediately recognisable as such, including recently a road sign between Penarth and Cardiff which in English says 'Cyclists dismount' but in Welsh became *llid y bledren dymchwelyd*, literally 'bladder inflammation upset'; the translation programme seems to have substituted 'cystitis' for 'cyclists'!

produced. Thus, types of works which are considered to make up translation theory include:[15]

- manuals on how to translate in specific situations, such as Geoffrey Sameulsson-Brown's *A Practical Guide for Translators* (now in its third edition), and the *Handbook for Literary Translators* prepared by the Translation Committee of 'PEN American Center' and available on their website;[16]
- textbooks written for specific degree courses in translation which combine theory with practical exercises for the student to try, such as Peter Newmark's *Textbook of Translation*, Douglas Robinson's *Becoming a Translator,* and Mona Baker's *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*;
- journals dedicated to the field of translation studies, such as *Babel*, the journal of the International Federation of Translators, and *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*;
- works dealing with all aspects of machine translation;
- the reminiscences of translators reflecting on their work such as Willis Barnstone's *The Poetics of Translation,* and Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation*;
- descriptions of new theories of translation based on study or experience such as works by Biblical translator and dynamic-equivalence theorist Eugene Nida (*Toward a Science of Translating* and *The Theory and Practice of Translation*), relevance theorist Ernst-August Gutt (*Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*), and Descriptive Translation Studies pioneer Gideon Toury (*Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*);
- meta-critical works which sum up the development of ideas thus far in the field, such as Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies,* and Edwin Gentzler's *Contemporary Translation Theory*;
- re-assessments of the place of translation in literature such as Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility,* and André

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[15] It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an exhaustive bibliography of the all the different types of translation theory available, rather the purpose of this list is to indicate the variety of types of theory. Full bibliographies can be found in introductory and reference works such as Baker, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*; Hatim and Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book*; Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*; Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader*. The field is constantly growing and quickly developing, hence online bibliographies will be of more use for tracking new work than printed sources.

[16] http://www.pen.org/page.php/prmID/271

Lefevere's *Translation, Re-Writing and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*;

- histories of translation such as Rita Copeland's *Rhetoric Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages,* and Louis Kelly's *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West*;
- studies which make use of this theory in considerations of actual translations, such as the papers collected in the series *The Medieval Translator* and others due to be read at the 10th Annual Cardiff Conference on the Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages to be held in Lausanne in July 2007 or, indeed, the papers read at the UCC / Irish Texts Society seminar and published in this volume.

Translation theory is comprised of a mix of very different types of works, many of which have a decidedly pragmatic bent, rather than a philosophical one. Translation theorists are themselves not all in agreement when it comes to describing their field. Peter Newmark claims that 'translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods'.[17] Susan Bassnett argues that:

> the purpose of translation theory ... is to reach an understanding of the processes undertaken in the act of translation and, not, as is so commonly misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation.[18]

In fact, definitions of translation theory which try to draw the limits of the field succeed in doing so only through ignoring those elements of it with which the person responsible for the definition is reluctant to engage. Translation theory, as it exists today, is not a universally applicable unified formulation along the lines of a mathematical proof as Maria Tymoczko describes it (and it is very unlikely that it will morph into this in the near future): what it is, is a motley collection of pedagogical and practical aids, personal views, and meta-criticism, as well as linguistic and cultural studies of translated texts. Not all of this vast and varied accumulation of ideas will be of use to scholars looking exclusively at literary adaptation. In fact, much of it will be of no use to us whatsoever, not because it is inherently useless, but because it is aimed at translators working within specific fields, with the explicit purpose of teaching them how to practise more effectively.

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[17] *Approaches to Translation*, p. 19.
[18] *Translation Studies*, p. 43.

While statements about the nature of translation are as old as the act itself,[19] it is in the twentieth century that translation theory as an independent area of study really began to develop. Romantic ideas about the status of the author as the ultimate shaper and hence controller of meaning in his works, coupled with New Critical ideas about the inviolability of the text, served to perpetuate an author-centric view of literary production. The primacy of the author's unique utterance had a profound effect on ideas about the translatability of texts, or lack thereof.[20] From this standpoint, the translator can only be viewed as the poor relation of the author, having no more access to, or special rights over, meaning than anyone else: the translator's only role is as a servant to the text, not an interpreter.[21] Henry Longfellow claimed that: '[t]he business of the translator is to report what the author says, not to explain what he means'.[22] The translation theorist and instructor, Basil Hatim, describes early translation theory as 'source-oriented', that is, it considered the only determinant of meaning for the translation to be the source text itself, the author's word.[23] Linguistic formulations which tried to work out how the language of the original work was reflected in that of the translation were developed in the early 1960s. The relationship between source and translation, in which the translation consists of a simple linguistic transfer, was called 'translation equivalence' by linguist and theorist J.C. Catford who formulated this model, but would be called 'formal equivalence' by later scholars.[24] This notion of formal equivalence was challenged by the Biblical translator and theorist, Eugene Nida, who argued that translation worked through a process which he called 'dynamic equivalence', in which the message of the original text is transferred through elements which would have an equivalent function in the

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[19] A comprehensive history of modern translation studies is beyond the scope of this paper. A good, if slightly dated, explanation of the rise of some of the modern schools of thought can be found in Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*.

[20] Walter Benjamin, in his classic article 'The Task of the Translator', celebrates the function of translations as agents for the continuing development of the original text, while still making a claim for the untranslatability of certain aspects of that text: 'no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original' (p. 77).

[21] See Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* and *Scandals of Translation*, for a history of the translator's low status in the eyes of authors and critics, and the effect this has had on their translation strategies.

[22] Quoted in Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, p. 196.

[23] *Teaching*, p. 12.

[24] For Catford's theory of 'translation equivalence', see his *Linguistic Theory of Translation*.

target language, though they might be formally, i.e. linguistically, different.[25]

In the 1980s, the trend shifted towards a more target-oriented type of theory, with the development of Descriptive Translation Studies. For translation theorist Gideon Toury, the needs and desires of the literary system of the language into which the text is translated are the determining factors in the outcome of any translation activity. He believes that 'translations always come into being within a certain cultural environment and are designed to meet certain needs of, and / or occupy certain "slots" in it'.[26] Toury is interested, as the title of his book *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* suggests, in describing translation within the target-language literary system: he makes no larger claims than this. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, theorists did begin to make larger claims, moving beyond simple description to attempts to formulate the ethics, politics, and ideologies behind different translation strategies and products. This is known as the 'cultural turn'. For these scholars, the target-language literary system or 'Universe of Discourse' is not a neutral background to translation activities: it is a receptacle for, and a root of, power and they are interested in tracing the movements of power through translation.[27]

The debt owed by the types of theories described above to contemporary developments in the fields of literary and cultural studies will be obvious. But this does not mean that there was no translation theory before the advent of these twentieth-century ideas. Indeed, George Steiner argued in 1975 that the issues raised by modern-day translation theorists have developed very little from those raised by Roman authors:

> Over two thousand years of arguments and precepts, the beliefs and disagreements voiced about the nature of translation have been almost the same. Identical theses, familiar moves and refutations in debate recur, nearly without exception, from Cicero and Quintilian to the present day.[28]

The beginnings of Western translation theory are often traced back to the Romans,[29] who used translation as a means of appropriating

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[25] For Nida's theory of 'dynamic equivalence', see his *Toward a Science of Translating* and *The Theory and Practice of Translation*.

[26] Toury, *Descriptive*, p. 12.

[27] For an example of discourse-centred translation studies, see Lefevere, *Translating, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*.

[28] *After Babel*, p. 251.

[29] For a comprehensive look at theories about translation from the Classical and Late Antique world, see Copeland, *Rhetoric Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*.

Greek literature and Greek culture, in order to create a literature in Latin which could rival the qualities of the Greek originals.[30] School treatises such as Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* advise that masters use translation exercises as a type of *imitatio* to instruct their pupils in the arts of eloquence.[31] The main issue in the brief comments on translation that pepper the rhetorical works of the period is that of fidelity to the source text, and how best to achieve it. Statements by Cicero[32] and Horace[33] repeat the commonplace '*non verbum pro verbo*' indicating that for them, the most faithful adaptation is not necessarily the word for word one. This statement was taken up by Saint Jerome, in word if not in spirit, when he claimed paradoxically to be committed to translating the mysteries of the Bible through sticking as closely as possible to the actual wording and syntax of the original Hebrew and Greek originals, while at the same time translating sense for sense instead of word for word.[34]

In the medieval west, direct statements about translation are mostly confined to short colophons stating the translator's name, the language of the source text, and occasionally some reference to his intention to translate according to the meaning of the text as opposed to sticking very closely to the original wording, in what seems to be a trope based on the statements of earlier authorities like Cicero and Jerome. The introduction to the Anglo-Saxon version of Boethius attributed to Alfred repeats the Latin formula:

> Hwilum he sette word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgit, swa swa he hit þa sweotolost ond andgitfullicast gereccan mihte.[35]
>
> Sometimes he set word for word, sometimes meaning for meaning, as sweetly and eloquently as he could make it.

Gruffudd Bola, in the introduction to his adaptation of the Athanasian Creed, explains to his patroness Eua ferch Maredudd:

> Vn peth hagen a dylyy ti wybot ar y dechreu, pan trosser ieith yn y llall, megys Lladin yg Kemraec, na ellir yn wastat symut y geir yn y gilyd, a chyt a hynny kynnal priodolder yr ieith a synnwyr yr ymadravd yn tec. Vrth hynny y tro[e]is i weitheu y geir yn y

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30 Ibid., p. 35.

31 Ibid., p. 23.

32 *non verbum pro verbo*, 'not word for word': *De Optime Genere Oratorum*, quoted in Copeland, *Rhetoric*, p. 2.

33 *nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus interpres*, 'and if you do not try to render word for word like a faithful translator': *Ars Poetica*, quoted in Copeland, *Rhetoric*, p. 29, along with Copeland's translation.

34 *non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensum*: St. Jerome (Letter 57 to Pammachius), quoted in Copeland, *Rhetoric*, p. 48.

35 Sweet, *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, p. 9.

> gilydd, a gveith ereill y dodeis synnvyr yn lle y synnvyr heruyd mod a phriodolder yn ieith ni.[36]
>
> There is one thing however that you should know from the beginning, when one language is translated into another, such as Latin into Welsh, one cannot always exchange one word for another, and in such a way keep the propriety of the language and the sense of the expression well. For this reason, I translated sometimes word for word, and other times put sense in the place of sense according to the manner and propriety of our language.

The colophons left by medieval translators do not tend to give a great deal of insight into how they practised their craft, but this does not mean that they did not have any such insights. Medieval translators, obviously, had no access to the vast field of modern translation studies, but this does not necessarily mean that they were oblivious to the demands of translation, or to many of the issues raised by such studies. They may not have produced volumes of text detailing their personal or institutionalised theories on how best to translate their works for their specific audiences and / or patrons, but this does not mean that they did not possess such theories. They may not have produced course books and instructional materials in order to train translators to produce acceptable and pleasing adaptations, but this does not mean they were not trained in their art. Ideas about the nature of translation raised by modern translation theorists may help us to understand some of the motivations and methodologies behind the choices made by medieval translators in their works.

## Translation Theory and *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*

What can the field of translation studies offer the student of medieval Irish translated works such as *Imtheachta Æniasa* and *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*? Ruth Evans argues that medievalists must move beyond what she refers to as an 'arid formalist and evaluative approach' in which translations are compared with source texts in what Susan Bassnett called a 'formalist vacuum'.[37] Instead, Evans is interested in using translation as a starting point 'for a study of the dialogue between cultures in the Middle Ages' in order to 'rewrite other socio-political histories, such as those of women and heresy'.[38]

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[36] Lewis, 'Credo Athanasius', p. 196.
[37] Quoted in Evans, 'Translating Past Cultures', p. 25.
[38] Ibid., p. 33.

These are perfectly valid aims, but there is much to be gained from looking at translation in and of itself as well. There may not be a need for the stark dichotomy between the 'arid formalism' Evans sees in the close study of texts and the type of historical rewriting she advocates. Questions of style and the use of rhetoric do not necessarily inhabit a 'formalist vacuum'. Methods of translation do not arise on their own: they are subject to the same types of power structures Evans is interested in exposing, and have just as much cultural significance. Indeed, the normative forces that arbitrate literary taste and fashion are the more powerful for being unspoken.

It is a commonplace in critical assessments of Medieval Irish translations that they seem to be versions, loose adaptations, or paraphrases of the source text rather than close translations. W.B. Stanford asserts that '[t]he most striking feature of these Irish versions is the freedom with which the translator adapts or supplements his classical text to suit Irish taste'.[39] Nessa Ní Shéaghdha agrees with this assessment claiming:

> Straightforward or literal translation was not the practice in these early days in Ireland; neither, for that matter, was it the practice on the continent of Europe, where vernacular paraphrases and summaries generally preceded full translations.[40]

George Calder claims that the 'main purpose' of the translator of *Imtheachta Æniasa* 'was to produce a scél',[41] while for Quin the result of the efforts of the translator of *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* 'is a tale which except for its central theme is thoroughly Irish'.[42] The question remains as to how the translator goes about creating this Irish tale out of an English translation of a French version of originally Latin source material.

Turning to *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* specifically, Quin tells us that the translator, whom he identifies as Uilliam Mac an Leagha, 'adopt[s] a peculiarly Irish phraseology and make[s] free use of the commonplaces of the native literature'.[43] Quin is referring here to the heightened rhetorical style featuring lists of alliterating compound adjectives which are prevalent in *Stair Ercuil*. He uses material from other sources, and abridges the material, sometimes drastically: 'the Irish adapter seems to have aimed above all at conciseness'.[44] While

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39 'Towards a History', p. 36.
40 'Translations', p. 107.
41 *Imtheachta Æniasa*, p. xv.
42 *SE*, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.
43 Ibid., p. xxv.
44 Ibid., p. xxvi.

Quin mentions Mac an Leagha's addition of 'full and picturesque details'[45] in descriptions of characters and battles, he does not mention the amount of material that is added to the text in these descriptions, which is substantial. While critics are agreed on the Irish translators' methods, they do not dwell on the mechanics of these methods. Questions remain as to, for example, what is the unit of translation? Is the translator starting with a sentence and adapting that material, or is he beginning at the level of the episode? Or does his technique vary throughout the work and, if so, why? What triggers this variation? Which elements of the original are left out of any particular passage, which elements are retained and which elements are substituted for target-language elements and why? These are the types of questions that are raised by the different branches of translation theory dealing with equivalence, which seeks to understand how elements in the source text come to be represented (or not represented) in the end product, while Descriptive Translation Studies provides a model which seeks reasons for the shifts that occur in translation in the target language as opposed to the original text. While these may not be the most recent or fashionable ideas to come out of translation theory, in the case of the Irish translations they offer tools and ways of thinking which could add a further level of specificity and detail to discussion of these texts.

Erich Poppe remarked in his paper read at this conference that we still do not know, for example, if the translator of this work took a consistent line with elements of the source text like the section titles that appear in Caxton's published version: did he treat them as decorative or were they part of the whole of the matter for him? Certainly he did not simply ignore them (see above, pp. 45-54). In the episode dealing with Hercules' meeting with and subsequent love for Megara, the daughter of king Creon of Greece, the Irish version begins with the straightforward statement: *[t]anic Ercuil iar sin isin nGreicc*, '[a]fter that Hercules came to Greece'. There is no similar statement in the English source, Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*,[46] at this point, rather the information in this sentence can be found in the section title, which reads: 'How hercules espowsed megera and how he was made kynghte in thebes etc.'.[47] Logically, he must have returned to Greece at this point in order to be made a knight in Thebes, as the previous episode takes place in Egypt. But

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[45] Ibid., p. xxx.

[46] Quotations are from Caxton's 1473 reprinting of the text, found on the Early English Books Online website.

[47] Caxton, *Recuyell*, image 155.

is this a rendering of the paragraph title, a substitution of it as it were, or is it a case of the Irish translator adding information in order to make the story clearer to his audience? If the former, then the translator has taken a view of the whole work that is different from that laid out in his source text: he has used an element of the original that is there treated as extra-textual or decorative, ignored the information provided by this decoration (i.e., that this is a title and not part of the text), and treated it as an integral part of the story material. The translator has taken a different view of the meaning of elements such as layout and decoration, or perhaps he has recreated them in a different way in his version, with the temporal phrase, *iar sin*, 'after that', acting as the marker for the beginning of a new section. Whatever our conclusions about the translator's treatment of Caxton's section titles, there is no doubt that he took an independent view of what constituted the text than that presented in his source.

The description of Megara that appears in this same passage in *Stair Ercuil* is a wonderful example of the type of rhetorical description which Quin refers to as being 'peculiarly Irish':

> Uair ro buí si seda segaind suilbir soghradach, milla malachdubh mongorniamae, taebthrom tlaithmin taithnemach, salchruinn síthamail sengremar, roscgorm righnaigi roalainn, buadach bélcorcra banamail, de[gh]dhelbha dellraighthech donningnech.[48]
>
> for she was slender, graceful(?), affable and lovable; gentle, dark-browed, and with radiant fair hair; stately, soft and pleasing; round-heeled, peaceful and shapely; blue-eyed, queenly and very beautiful; gifted, red-lipped and womanly; fair, resplendent and pink-nailed.

This passage has been added in its entirety by the Irish translator, but what triggered this flight of rhetorical fancy and what does it add to the finished product?[49] There is no description of the woman at all in Caxton's version, which begins with a sustained metaphor comparing Hercules' increase in strength and influence to the growth of a mighty tree, and moves on to tell how greatly he was loved by others, rather than how greatly he loved:

> And as the raye or sonne beme is in the sonne he was belouyd of kynges, of prynces, of ladyes, of daymoyselles, of nobles and of

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[48] *SE* 509-13.

[49] Similar descriptions are present in medieval Irish literature; compare the elaborate detailing of Deirdre's beauty in *Longes mac nUislenn* (Hull, *Longes*, pp. 43-4 §4).

> villaines, en especial megera the doughter of kyngt Creon louyd hym.[50]

The next section in Caxton's text, a highly charged description of Hercules' growing love for Megara[51] does not feature at all in the Irish version. Caxton's next sentence, 'For on a morrow tyde as hercules was goon vnto the wood for to take a wylde beste he remembrid hym of his lady'[52] is rendered relatively closely in the Irish:

> Ocus boi arole lá didiu ac fiadhach a ndithreabh na Tiabhanach, 7 ro smuain Ercuil an la sin ar inghin rí na Tiabhanach.[53]
>
> And moreover he was hunting one day in the wild near Thebes, and Hercules thought that day on the daughter of the king of the Thebans.

Mac an Leagha inserts the name of this daughter here, as he has left out the passage in which it first occurs. Next in the English version, Hercules has a long conversation with himself concerning his love. The Irish version omits this soliloquy and inserts the description of Megara quoted above. There is no similar account in the English version: there isn't even the hint of one. The description is motivated by something else which we can seek in the target-language literary system: the portrayal of Megara's beauty serves to replace unfamiliar and perhaps slightly overwrought depiction by Hercules of his 'languysshyng in loue' in a literary tradition, or discourse if you will, that deemed such whining to be unattractive in a hero. A different sort of source-based analysis might attempt to show that Mac an Leagha is substituting the rhetorical passages he leaves out of the source text with a piece of his own rhetoric, substituting like for like as it were. Through examining the equivalencies and shifts in this translation, we can begin to gain an idea of how it works. This is just one instance of the translator perhaps replacing the inappropriate rhetoric of his original with something, not just more to his taste, but more to his audience's taste.

In Descriptive Translation Studies, translation is firmly located in the target-language system. Or, to put it another way, translators do not work in a vacuum: they are part of a literary tradition, both as shapers and as receptors of that tradition. They are not free to translate in any way they choose, rather their choices are controlled

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[50] Caxton, *Reycuell*, image 155.

[51] Caxton, *Reycuell*, image 155: 'Shall I be alleway in payne Shall myn herte neuer be eassed but always languysshyng in loue' etc.

[52] Caxton, *Reycuell*, image 155.

[53] *SE* 505-7.

by outside forces. Translators are involved in the production of a system of discourse, which is both controlled and controlling. André Lefevere identifies translation as a form of what he calls 'rewriting', along with the production of editions, anthologies, historiography and criticism itself. Rewriters, he says, 'adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time'.[54] For Lefevere, ideology and poetics, themselves formed and constrained by the workings of patronage and professionalism, are the two major forces which serve to constrain translators: that is, patrons are often responsible for supplying or, at least, heavily influencing the ideology of a translation, while the translator censors himself through belonging to a group of professionals whose standards he is concerned to uphold. Quin has identified the dominant poetics of *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, which dictated Mac an Leagha's use of style and rhetoric as well as his rendering of the plot, as that of the *scél*, and evidence seems to bear that out. Following Lefevere's model for translation, we are not to believe that Mac an Leagha had an unlimited choice in the matter of his poetics: they were already chosen for him. The lack of a specific patron[55] does not necessarily lend more freedom to the translator to choose his methods: Lefevere argues that, in fact, systems where the translator is not necessarily dependent on a single patron can actually be more normative: 'readers' expectations are more restricted in scope and the 'right' interpretation of various works tends to be emphasised by means of various types of rewriting'.[56] Lefevere does not consider this himself, but the compilation and copying of manuscripts is a form of rewriting at the most basic level.

The translator of *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás* has substantially re-written his source: more than simply using *scél* elements to make his version more palatable to his audience, whoever we imagine that might be, Uilliam Mac an Leagha has replaced the rhetoric of his original text with a system of rhetoric more suited to the target-language literary system. This is a translation program that is carried on consistently throughout the text. It tells us that the translator did not just bumble along translating as he saw fit, 'oblivious ... to the process and problems of translation ... turn[ing] the source text into nothing more than a source for literary exploitation' as Burnley

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[54] Lefevere, *Translating*, p. 8.

[55] The question of who might have been Mac an Leagha's patron is discussed above by Poppe, p. 39.

[56] Ibid., p. 23.

would have it (above n. 2): this translator must have had an image of what the end product should be and where it should fit in to his literary system. He did not simply begin at the beginning and translate each element as it came along: he began with a re-imagining of the whole text and consistently worked to bring that re-imagining into being. If it does nothing else, translation theory can make us aware of the work that goes into translation, of the possibilities that have been rejected and of the choices that have been made: it can stop us from thinking that it is an activity that simply happens and that it is a happy coincidence that we find the products of these translators to our liking.

Translation theory is the sum of its parts. As Gideon Toury says: 'well-performed studies always bear on their underlying theories'.[57] Through using translation theory in the study of Early and Medieval Irish texts, we can add to that theory, challenge some of its assumptions and, if we do not find it to be entirely to our liking, shape it in such a way that it becomes more useful to us. In the context of *Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, I have mentioned André Lefevere's idea of translation as re-writing. I would like now to turn to *Imtheachta Æniasa*, which has so much potential for being looked at as a re-writing of the *Aeneid*. George Calder and Edgar Slotkin have noted the translator's major changes to the source text, most notably the loss of references to the gods, fate, and destiny, and the addition of explanatory material, suggesting that these changes served to make the work more acceptable to an Irish audience.[58] Erich Poppe introduces a much more radical suggestion in his new introduction to the *Imtheachta*: that the translator has re-written Virgil as history. Poppe produces a host of compelling evidence in support of this theory, including linguistic parallels with other historical texts which serve to locate the *Imtheachta* within the discourse of history. He also uses evidence of the work's position in the Book of Ballymote to make his point. For Poppe, the contents of this manuscript 'reflect scholarly and perhaps mainly historical and antiquarian interest'.[59] Therein, the *Imtheachta* is found in a group of texts all of which are translations or adaptations from Classical sources, and which are laid out in a chronological sequence. Poppe uses the manuscript context of this text as its most immediate

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[57] *Descriptive*, p. 15.
[58] Calder, *Imtheachta Æniasa*, pp. iv-xviii, and Slotkin, 'Medieval Irish Scribes', pp. 444-7.
[59] *A New Introduction*, p. 4.

'universe of discourse' in order to better understand the function of the translation. He shows that the anthologising of works in manuscript is also a form of re-writing, which has consequences for the text and for our understanding of it, but is a form of re-writing which does not feature in Lefevere's model. Perhaps it should. Through his consideration of the manuscript context of *Imtheachta Æniasa*, Poppe adds an element to Lefevere's concept of re-writing which makes it more relevant to those of us interested in medieval literatures, and shows how our work can add to theory, making it more relevant to us.

Scholars have been using the ideas now set down in the field of inquiry known as translation theory since the study of medieval translations began, without the need to draw on it or refer directly to it. Quin and Calder had already pointed out the translations' debt to target-language values as opposed to source-language ones. If it is the case that the studies that scholars are engaged upon now are already making use of many of the ideas coming out of translation theory, without directly referring to it, it is not unfair to ask about the its usefulness: what is the use of engaging with translation theory? Is there any point in underpinning our work with this type of theory when we are seemingly already using the ideas generated by it independently? Wouldn't we be guilty of simply replacing the straightforward language of our studies with a complicated and specialised vocabulary which would serve to make our work inaccessible and unpalatable to many readers, without actually adding anything meaningful to it? Rather than making our jobs harder, theory can make it easier for us, for example, to access studies in languages and fields that we would otherwise be unaware of, but which may offer useful comparisons to our own work. It can tell us what questions other people have asked of translation and how they have gone about answering them, providing us, if not with a programme for working, then with ideas that we can play with to develop such a programme ourselves. While the vocabulary of theory can be specialised, that specialisation means that it can also be more specific. This specificity can serve not just to hone our language when we talk about translation, but to hone our thinking about translation as well. Most importantly, through engaging with theory we have the opportunity to add to it, to change it to our liking. Not only can theory inform our work, our work can inform theory, and this is perhaps the more significant part of our engagement with it.

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