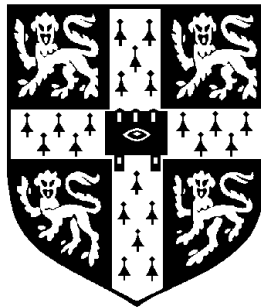E. C. QUIGGIN MEMORIAL LECTURES 9

ERICH POPPE

Of Cycles and Other Critical Matters.
Some Issues in Medieval Irish Literary History
and Criticism

DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Edmund Crosby Quiggin (1875-1920) was the first teacher of Celtic in the University of Cambridge, as well as being a Germanist. His extraordinarily comprehensive vision of Celtic studies offered an integrated approach to the subject: his combination of philological, literary, and historical approaches paralleled those which his older contemporary, H.M. Chadwick, had already demonstrated in his studies of Anglo-Saxon England and which the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic continues to seek to emulate. The Department has wished to commemorate Dr Quiggin's contribution by establishing in his name, and with the support of his family, an annual lecture and a series of pamphlets. The focus initially was on the sources for Mediaeval Gaelic History. Since 2006 the Quiggin Memorial Lecture is on any aspect of Celtic and/or Germanic textual culture taught in the Department.

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ERICH POPPE

In this paper I want to explore some 'critical' issues, in the two senses of 'problematic' and 'pertaining to literary history and criticism', which relate to the notion of the literary cycle in three of the island, or Insular, literatures[1] covered by the Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic Tripos, namely Irish, Welsh, and Norse, with a focus on the first of these. My interest in the generic perception and classification of medieval Irish narratives and in their cyclification dates back to my time in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic in the early 1990s, and I therefore offer the following observations on some larger interpretative concepts as a tribute to the intellectually stimulating atmosphere of that Department where it all started.

1. Edmund Crosby Quiggin and the Literary Cycle

I will begin my survey of concepts of literary cycles with a contribution by Edmund Crosby Quiggin, his 'justly celebrated' article 'Celt' in the eleventh, or Cambridge, edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1910/11.[2] In his discussion of Irish literature Quiggin used 'cycle' as a category of generic literary classification:

> The best medieval romances form by far the most attractive part of Irish literature [...]. Two main groups of stories have to be distinguished. The one is the Ulster cycle, with Conchobar and Cúchulinn as central figures. The other is the Southern or Leinster-Munster cycle, revolving round Finn and Ossian. Further stories dealing with mythological and historical personages will be mentioned in their turn.[3]

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[1] For the concept of 'island/Insular literatures' see H. Munro Chadwick & N. Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, vol. I, *The Ancient Literatures of Europe* (Cambridge, 1932, reprint 1968), pp. 1-5, and also Hildegard L.C. Tristram, 'Introduction', in *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiograph*, ed. Erich Poppe & Bianca Ross (Blackrock, 1996), pp. 1-17.

[2] Edmund Crosby Quiggin, 'Celt', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, 29 vols (Cambridge, 1910-11), vol. 5, pp. 611-652. For the characterisation 'justly celebrated' see David N. Dumville, 'Edmund Crosby Quiggin (1875-1920)', in John Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History, 1 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. iii-xv: p. iv.

[3] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 625.

The main criteria for an individual text's membership in a literary cycle therefore is its geographical setting, as well as its narrative core personnel, both of which it shares with other texts of the same cycle. The importance of a defined stock of personnel is indicated here by the phrases 'central figures', a cycle's 'revolving round' specific characters, and 'personages'. The defining geographical settings are described in terms of Irish regions, 'Ulster' and 'Leinster-Munster'. With regard to the necessary consistent chronological and thematic setting Quiggin points out the following:

> These persons [i.e., Conchobar, Cú Chulainn, Ailill and Medb, and Fergus] may or may not have actually lived, but the Irish annalists and synchronists agree in placing them about the beginning of the Christian era. [...] The *Táin Bó Cualnge* formed a kind of nucleus round which a number of other tales clustered. A number of these are called *remscéla* or introductory stories to the *Táin*. [...] Other stories form a kind of continuation of the *Táin*.[4]

Two further groups of stories, which are not given labels, are defined by Quiggin with reference to their contents ('Irish mythology'), to their core personnel ('Tuatha Dé Danann personages'), and to their chronological and historical setting ('events which are represented as having taken place before the Christian era' or which 'claim to be founded on historical events'). *Cath Maige Tuired*, *Oidheadh Chloinne Tuireann*, and *Tochmarc Étaíne* are his examples for texts belonging to the first group; *Orgain Denna Ríg*, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, *Fingal Rónáin*, and *Cath Maighe Léana* are among his examples for the second.[5] A further group of stories is described in terms of its typical event structure, 'visits of mortals to the Irish Elysium',[6] that is *Echtra Connla*, *Immram Brain*, and *Echtra Cormaic*. It is said to be 'almost entirely pagan in character',[7] but a sub-class, a 'kindred class of story shows us how the old ideas were transformed under the influence of Christianity',[8] which includes *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin*, *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, and *Immram Curaig Úa Corra*. Finally Quiggin drew a conceptually important distinction between 'pure literature', which would embrace these five groups in his view, against the 'various productions of the professional

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[4] Quiggin, 'Celt', pp. 626-627.
[5] See Quiggin, 'Celt', pp. 627-628. For the form of titles of Irish texts outside of quotations I follow, as far as possible, the conventions of Rolf Baumgarten, *Bibliography of Irish Linguistics and Literature 1942-71* (Dublin, 1986), pp. 730-743, and of R.I. Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature. Publications 1913-1941* (Dublin, 1942), pp. 218-251.
[6] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 628.
[7] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 628.
[8] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 628.

learned classes of Ireland [...] comprising history, genealogies, hagiology, topography, grammar, lexicography and metre, law and medicine'.[9]

For further analysis of genres of Irish literature not discussed by him, Quiggin refers the reader to a survey article by Kuno Meyer about medieval Irish literature.[10] Although Quiggin's classification of Irish 'pure literature' appears to be largely independent of Meyer's system, it is useful to summarise the latter here as it represents a somewhat different approach to the generic classification of medieval Irish narrative. Meyer's equivalent for Quiggin's 'pure literature' is 'epic literature' ('epische Literatur'). On the basis of the time-depth of their presumed ultimate origins, Meyer distinguished between a cycle of mythological tales ('der mythologische Sagenkreis'), which date back to the Common Celtic period, and heroic tales ('Heldensage') of Irish origins. The corpus of heroic tales is itself made up of a number of individual cycles ('Sagenkreise'), namely the Ulster Cycle, the Finn Cycle, minor cycles dealing with historical characters of different periods, and finally the adaptations of foreign subject-matter.[11] On the same level with this epic literature, for which their authors claimed some historical foundation,[12] Meyer treats of semi-historical and historical literature ('halbhistorische Literatur' and 'rein historische Aufzeichnungen'), as well as of legal, religious, learned, and gnomic literature, and of secular poetry.[13]

2. 'Cycle' as a Category for the Classification of Medieval Irish Literature

With his use of 'cycle' Quiggin partook in a tradition that at his time was well-established not only for the classification of medieval Irish literature, albeit somewhat fluid with regard to its constituent elements, but also for medieval romance more generally. David Staines has located the emergence of the critical concept 'cycle' in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[14] The earliest attestation he quotes dates from 1808, and

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[9] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 630; according to Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 632, the Irish adaptations of classical stories and of the medieval literature of western Europe also formed part of these productions of the professional learned classes.

[10] Kuno Meyer, 'Die irisch-gälische Literatur', in Heinrich Zimmer et al., *Die Romanischen Literaturen und Sprachen mit Einschluß des Keltischen*, Die Kultur der Gegenwart, Teil I, Abteilung XI, I (Berlin & Leipzig, 1909), pp. 78-95.

[11] Meyer, 'Die irisch-gälische Literatur', pp. 82-85.

[12] Meyer, 'Die irisch-gälische Literatur', p. 85: 'Wenn auch die Heldensage einen historischen Boden hat und die Erzähler in ihr Geschichte zu überliefern meinten, so überwiegt doch durchaus das sagenhafte Element.'

[13] See Meyer, 'Die irisch-gälische Literatur', p. 85, and pp. 85-95.

[14] David Staines, 'The Medieval Cycle: Mapping a Trope', in *Transtextualities. Of Cycles and Cyclicity in Medieval French Literature*, ed. Sara Sturm-Maddox & Donald Maddox, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 149 (Binghamton, 1996), pp. 15-37: pp. 25-29; see also David Staines, 'Cycle: The Misreading of a Trope', in *Cyclification. The Development of Narrative Cycles in the Chansons de Geste*

is found in a work on medieval German literary history.[15] This usage was received in English critical writings from 1810 onwards, denoting 'both a class of romances centering, however remotely, around one person, and a particular kind of long romance: a collection of stories seemingly ordered solely according to chronology.'[16] The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first attestation for a 'series of poems or prose romances, collected round or relating to a central event or epoch of mythic history and forming a continuous narrative' is for 1837: 'Those cycles of metrical romances which have for their subjects the exploits of Alexander the Great, King Arthur, and other heroes';[17] note again the collocation 'cycle' and 'romance'. In the Grimms' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* the first attestation of 'Zyklus' as a critical term – 'im bereiche der literatur und kunst, wo sich einzeldarstellungen zu einem ganzen zusammenschlieszen' – is for 1834; the term 'sagenkreis' is more specifically explained as 'gruppe von sagen, die sich um einen gemeinsamen mittelpunkt zusammenschlieszen' and exemplified with 'der trojanische, burgundische sagenkreis', but without a date of attestation.[18] In French literary criticism the term 'cycle' was introduced by Claude Charles Fauriel in 1832, inspired by the use of the concept in Homeric criticism:[19]

> Following the earlier accepted divisions of romance into those relating to Arthur and those relating to Charlemagne, he [i.e., Fauriel] concludes: 'In a word, the romances of each class revolve, so to speak, in a similar circle ['cercle'], around a common, fixed point. In this sense, they can be regarded as distinct parts, as isolated episodes of a

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and the Arthurian Romances, ed. Bart Besamusca et al., Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, N.R. d. 159 (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 108-110; and Douglas Kelly, 'Recurrent Phenomena and Difference in the Prose Romance Cycle', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 97-98.

[15] This is Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen & Johann Gustav Büsching, *Deutsche Gedichte des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1808), who suggest a classification of the more substantive Medieval German narrative poems into three 'Fabelkreise' (p. ii), which are the 'Fabelkreis des Heldenbuches und der Nibelungen' (p. iii), the 'Fabelkreis Karls des Großen' (p. vi), and the 'Fabelkreis des Grales und der Tafelrunde' (p. ix), with the latter also found merged in a cyclic adaptation, 'einer cyclischen Bearbeitung aller dieser Romane vom Gral und der Tafelrunde, durch Ulrich Fütterer' (p. xiii). Their differentiation between 'Fabelkreis' and 'cyclischer Bearbeitung' already establishes two basic concepts of literary cycles.

[16] Staines, 'The Medieval Cycle', p. 26.

[17] *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1933), p. 1298, s.v. 'cycle'.

[18] Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 16 (Leipzig, 1954), p. 1452, s.v. 'Zyklus', and Grimm & Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 8 (Leipzig, 1893), p. 1660, s.v. 'SAGENKREIS'; in the following I will render German 'sagenkreis' by 'cycle (of sagas)'.

[19] The epic cycle of Homeric criticism consists of six poems, now lost, see Staines, 'The Medieval Cycle', p. 21: 'the *Cypria*, *Aithiopis*, *Little Iliad*, and *Sack of Ilion*, four poems that focused primarily on events related to the Trojan War and the subsequent wanderings of Odysseus; *Nostoi* or *Returns*, which recounted the various fortunes of some survivors from the fall of Troy; and *Telegonia*, the story of Telegonos, the son of Odysseus by Circe'.

single and similar action. It is in this sense that it is said that they make up cycles ['cycles'], and that they can be spoken of as romances of the cycle of the Round Table and those of the cycle of Charlemagne.' [...] In Fauriel's criticism there are two separate though related meanings of cycle. On the one hand, cycle designates the classification or group of all romances that treat in any way the realm of Arthur or Charlemagne. At the same time, cycle also refers to those extended romances that bring together a variety of episodes from earlier and shorter romances [...]. Fauriel's introduction of cycle into French criticism of the romance met with immediate and wide acceptance.[20]

In the field of Celtic literature, Lady Charlotte Guest, the first editor and translator of the corpus of Medieval Welsh prose, distinguished in 1838 between a group of texts 'which generally celebrates heroes of the Arthurian Cyclus' and another group which 'refers to personages and events of an earlier period'.[21]

The first author of whom I am currently aware to employ the concept of 'cycle' for the classification of medieval Irish tales was the French Celticist Henry d'Arbois de Jubainville. In his *Introduction a l'étude de la littérature celtique* of 1883 he adduced thematic and chronological criteria to distinguish three main cycles, the mythological cycle, dealing with the origins of gods and men, the heroic cycle of Conchobor and Cú Chulainn, and the cycle of Finn and Oisín, set in the second and third centuries – other pieces of Irish epic literature are said to deal with later events.[22] In his *L'épopée celtique en Irlande* of 1892 he also used the terms 'cycle d'Ulster' and 'cycle de Leinster', the latter for the Finn cycle.[23]

The history of the English term 'cycle' in order to classify parts of the corpus of medieval Irish texts still needs to be written, and in the following I will trace some developments.[24] Douglas Hyde employed the

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[20] Staines, 'The Medieval Cycle', pp. 26-28.

[21] Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion from the Llyfr Coch o Hergest, and other Ancient Welsh Manuscripts, with an English Translation and Notes*, part 1, *The Lady of the Fountain* (London, 1838), p. v; she extends the term 'romance', p. xvii, to the 'prose romances known as Mabinogion', i.e., including the native tales.

[22] See Henry d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Introduction a l'étude de la littérature celtique.* Cours de littérature celtique, 1 (Paris, 1883), pp. 44-45: '[...] trois cycles: le premier cycle est le cycle mythologique [...]; le second est le cycle héroïque de Conchobar et de Cùchulainn. [...] Le troisième cycle a pour sujet principal les exploits de Finn et d'Ossin [...]. Outre ces trois grands cycles, la littérature épique irlandaise comprend quelques morceaux relatifs à des événements postérieurs.'

[23] See Henry d'Arbois de Jubainville, *L'Épopée celtique en Irlande,* vol. 1, Cours de littérature celtique, 5 (Paris, 1892), for example, pp. 4, 375.

[24] For a summary of the various classifications of literary cycles in chronological order see Table below, p. 13.

term 'cycle' in his *Literary History of Ireland* first published in 1899, and in a footnote he also acknowledged the terms Ulster and Leinster Cycle respectively of Arbois de Jubainville,[25] although I am not quite clear to what extent Arbois de Jubainville was Hyde's sole inspiration. Hyde's criteria for the establishment of a literary cycle were a shared and interconnected stock of narrative personnel and a significant number of texts dealing with it, and on grounds of both quantity and subject-matter Hyde then argued for the existence of three cycles:

> [...] the Mythological Cycle concerning the Tuatha De Danann and the Pre-Milesians; the Heroic, Ultonian, or Red-Branch Cycle, in which Cuchulain is the dominating figure; and the Cycle of Finn mac Cúmhail [*sic*], Ossian, Oscar, and the High-kings of Ireland who were their contemporaries – this cycle may be denominated the Fenian or Ossianic.[26]

Eleanor Hull in her *Text Book of Irish Literature* of 1906 similarly speaks of 'three great cycles of romance' that came 'down to us from the past in Ireland',[27] and the defining criteria are again core personnel and temporal setting:

> [three great cycles of romance:] that relating to the early prehistoric gods, who are called the Tuatha Dé Danann; that relating to Cuchulain, who was supposed to have lived in the first century; and the legends of Fionn and Oisín, heroes who were believed to have existed in the third century of our era.[28]

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[25] Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, new edition with introduction by Brian Ó Cuív (London, 1967), p. 280. Eugene O'Curry in his ground-breaking *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials for Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861) was primarily interested in the medieval texts as sources for Irish history and for the 'life and institutions of our ancestors' (p. 296). He employs the generic classification into event-types of the medieval Irish tale-lists, for which see Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1980). O'Curry's group of 'Imaginative Tales and Poems' comprises mainly the Fenian poems and tales, but also *Echtra Connla*, *Echtra Cormaic*, *Brislech mór Maige Murthemni*, and *Dergruathar Conaill Cernaig*: see O'Curry, *Lectures*, pp. 296-319. To the best of my knowledge, he did not employ the term 'cycle'.

[26] Hyde, *A Literary History*, p. 280, see also p. 293. Texts which for reasons of quantity do not qualify as cycles concern, for example, Tuathal and the Bóruma or Conaire Mór: see Hyde, *A Literary History*, p. 280.

[27] Eleanor Hull, *A Text Book of Irish Literature*, part I (Dublin & London, 1906), p. 2; note once more the collocation of 'cycle' and 'romance'.

[28] Hull, *Text Book of Irish Literature*, p. 2. This tripartite division of a core-corpus of texts continued to be employed in other works with a popular appeal: see Joseph Dunn, *The Ancient Irish Epic Tale Táin Bó Cúalnge "The Cualnge Cattle-Raid"* (London, 1914), p. xi; Tom Peete Cross & Clark Harris Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, reprinted with a revised bibliography by Charles W. Dunn (New York, 1969 [first edition 1936]), p. vi; and Aodh de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, with an additional chapter by Eoghan Ó hAnluain (Dublin, 1973 [first edition 1929]), pp. 19, 29, 57.

Two further categories beyond the immediate material 'belonging to the earlier Epic and Romance literature of Ireland'[29] she established are the 'King-Stories' (note the plural) – 'a large number of legends relating to the early settlements of the inhabitants in Ireland, and to the kings who ruled the country from ancient times'[30] – and the 'Literature of Vision'.[31]

In a strictly chronological scheme, this would have been the place to discuss Quiggin's generic classification of 1910/11. As seen above, he restricted the use of the term 'cycle' to the Ulster Cycle and the Finn Cycle and did not accord the mythological narratives about the pre-Christian era the term 'cycle', as Arbois de Jubainville, Hyde, and Hull had done. However, he established further classes of 'literature' which he did not call 'cycles', namely mythological narratives, historical narratives, and narratives about visits to the Otherworld – and the latter class is, of course, based on categories of the medieval Irish tale-lists, namely *echtrai* 'expeditions, journeys' and *immrama* 'sea-voyages'. These tale-lists – the major theoretical achievement of the medieval Irish *literati* with regard to a generic classification of narrative material – employ event-types which include, apart from the *echtrai* and *immrama*, for example, *togla* 'destructions', *tána* 'cattle-raids', *tochmarca* 'wooings', and *catha* 'battles'.[32]

R.I. Best in his bibliographies of Irish philology and literature of 1913 and 1942 conflated a model of cycles and native categories and developed a system of four cycles by the introduction of 'other cycles' (note the plural) which centre on specific periods and individuals, namely the Irish kings from Eogan Mór to Domnall mac Muirchertaig, and consist of only a few texts each.[33] Conceptually similar to Quiggin, but different in detail, Best then added three further categories based on event structure or contents to his generic classification, the *immrama* or voyage literature, the 'adaptations of Classical and Mediæval Legend', and the 'modern Romantic Tales which have no historical background'.[34] In the body of his bibliography we find one further category still, 'Minor Tales', which includes, for example, *Cóir Anmann*, and the stories about the abbot of

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[29] Hull, *Text Book of Irish Literature*, p. 90.

[30] Hull, *Text Book of Irish Literature*, p. 100.

[31] Hull, *Text Book of Irish Literature*, p. 119.

[32] Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, provides the texts of these lists (pp. 41-65), as well as a detailed discussion of their place in the medieval Irish learned tradition.

[33] [R.I. Best], *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature* (Dublin, 1913), p. vi, for the terms for the other three cycles see p. x; compare also Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature*, pp. viii-ix.

[34] [Best], *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature*, p. vi.

Drimnagh who was changed into a woman, and concerning the birth of Áed Allán.[35]

Rudolf Thurneysen's *Irische Helden- und Königsage* of 1921 provided another influential model for the writing of medieval Irish literary history. He explicitly defended the presentation of secular narratives, 'der weltlichen Helden- und Königsage (Geschichte)',[36] on the basis of their subject-matter, i.e., the 'stoffliche Anordnung', rather than of their dates of composition.[37] Thurneysen distinguished four groups of secular narratives, for three of which he used either the term 'Sage' as a collective noun, as in 'die Ulter Sage', or the term 'Sagenkreis' ('cycle of sagas'), and in the case of the fourth he simply defined it in terms of the subject-matter, 'Stoffe':

– the Ulster saga (to which the sagas about Étaín and Conaire, which in Thurneysen's view were originally independent tales and belonging to the sagas of the kings, have been attached);
– the Finn saga (in the context of which the narratives about Cormac mac Airt, Art Óenfer, and Conn Cétchathach should be treated in his view, as well as the 'Schiffahrtsagen');
– the mythological cycle of sagas, the kings' sagas, and the genuinely historical texts;
– foreign subject-matter (adaptations and translations).[38]

The defining criteria for the first two groups are the narrative personnel and the temporal background that is specific to each of them. The third group comprises (pseudo-)historical material relating to Irish prehistory and history, as well as all native narratives which do not fit comfortably into the first or second group. The common denominator of the fourth group is their non-Irish narrative personnel and background – note that Thurneysen did not apply the unifying term 'cycle' ('Sagenkreis') to it. Thurneysen also points out some overlap between his groups, in that supernatural beings are present in many texts of the first and second group.[39]

Myles Dillon in his *Early Irish Literature* of 1948 followed to some extent Best's model, with four cycles – the Ulster Cycle, the Finn Cycle,

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[35] See [Best], *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature*, p. xi and pp. 117-122.

[36] Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert. Teil I und II* (Halle, 1921), p. 3.

[37] Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 3-4; he argued that a chronological format would not only be impossible, because many dates of composition were not established, but also methodologically inappropriate, because many narratives had been rewritten and revised in successive centuries, and the chronological format, even if it were possible, would separate narratives that intimately belong together on the basis of theme and subject-matter.

[38] See Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 4-5.

[39] See Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 5: 'Aber natürlich kommen die überirdischen Wesen (Elfen und Feen) in Texten jeder Art vor'.

the Mythological Cycle, and the Historical Cycles (note again the plural here) – defined by narrative personnel and background, but with three additional categories based on the medieval classification of the tale-lists, namely adventures, voyages, and visions.[40] Best's 'Voyages' were derived from a concept available in the medieval Irish tale-lists, as are Dillon's 'adventures'/*echtrai* and 'visions'/*físi*. The latter heading embraces a 'group of texts which derive from Christian and Jewish originals and describe such visions [of hell and heaven] as experienced by one or another of the Irish saints'.[41] The boundaries of Dillon's generic categories are to some extent permeable depending on the criteria applied; *Serglige Con Culainn ocus Óenét Emire* is classified by Dillon as an 'adventure'/*echtrae*, since the 'hero of the Ulster Cycle is here the hero of an Adventure' in which a journey to the Otherworld is the chief motif.[42] The criterion 'event structure' overrides 'narrative personnel'.

For a number of later literary historians, such as Gerard Murphy, James Carney,[43] Proinsias Mac Cana,[44] and Rolf Baumgarten,[45] the concept of the cycle appears to have lost some of its normative appeal. Murphy, for example, based his discussion of 'saga and myth in Ancient Ireland' on a modern classification 'partly according to their [the medieval stories'] subject-matter and partly according to their spirit into Mythological tales, Heroic tales, King tales, Finn tales, and Romantic tales'.[46] Besides the term 'tales' with defining qualifiers he also uses the term 'cycle',[47] as in the following quotation in which Murphy emphasises the inherent fluidity of the categorisation:

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[40] See Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (Chicago & London, 1948), pp. vii, 1-3, 32-34, 51-52, 73-74, 101, 124, 132-133.

[41] Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 132.

[42] Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 118. Both Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature*, p. 77, and Baumgarten, *Bibliography*, pp. 360-1, assign this text to the Ulster cycle.

[43] See James Carney, 'Introduction', in Eleanor Knott & Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature* (London, 1966), pp. 1-17: pp. 12-13.

[44] See Proinsias Mac Cana, *Literature in Irish* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 21-37, who includes 'among the mythological tales those which tell of the Otherworld as experienced by those exceptional mortals who penetrate by chance or design within its psychic confines': p. 24.

[45] See Baumgarten, *Bibliography*, pp. x-xi, who prefers 'Mythology' and 'Ossianic literature' in place of Best's 'Mythological and Tuatha Dé Danann Cycle' and 'Finn or Ossianic Cycle' respectively. For a recent qualified endorsement of the critical category 'cycle' as a useful descriptive tool see Peter Smith et al., 'Irish Literature [1] Early Prose (c. 700 – c. 1600/1650)' in *Celtic Culture. A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford, 2006), vol. 3, pp. 993-997, p. 994: 'most modern Celtic scholarship is based on a largely imposed modern system of classification [into four cycles and a class of romances showing inspiration from popular Continental and English tales of the High Middle Ages], which has proved useful, but for which we would do well to bear in mind that the writers and readers of early Ireland did not necessarily view their literary tradition in anything like these terms'.

[46] Knott & Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 104.

[47] Compare, for example, Knott & Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 106 ('tales of the Irish Mythological cycle'), p. 114 ('Tales of the Heroic cycle'), p. 116 ('warriors of the Ulidian cycle of tales'), p. 145 ('The Fionn cycle'), p. 178 ('further development of the Romantic cycle').

In many of the tales connected with the [Ulidian or Heroic] cycle the historical element may be of very slight importance indeed. These tales are classified with the Heroic cycle merely for reasons of convenience, and may equally well be assigned to other cycles. *Serglige Con Culainn ocus Óenét Emire*, is a case in point. It has already been mentioned above among the Mythological tales. *Tochmarc Emire* (The Wooing of Emer) is another example. [...] *Tochmarc Emire* tells how Cú Chulainn [...] was tested first by Emer herself in a riddle-contest, and secondly by Emer's father [...] by means of an overseas expedition, which in origin was probably an expedition to the other-world.[48]

Although the notion of the 'cycle' for a generic classification of medieval Irish narratives is a modern one, the fact that there exists an 'overlap between individual sagas which share the same *locus*, *tempus*, and *dramatis personae*'[49] has important conceptual implications for medieval authors, scribes, and audiences. In his study of Cú Chulainn's heroic biography of 1900, Alfred Nutt perceptively described some significant characteristics. He was interested in constructing a narrative and unified biography of Cú Chulainn on the basis of independently transmitted texts – about Cú Chulainn's birth, his boyhood deeds, his wooing of Emer, his defence of Ulster during the *Táin* and his death – and therefore identified the relevant intertextual chronological links between the various events:

The foregoing incidents are […] taken from tales independent in themselves, but which allow of a chronological classification, and which fall into their place as component parts of a cycle. There are also other tales which, whilst they cannot so definitely be assigned to

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[48] Knott & Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, pp. 127-128; for similar comments see also p. 113, on the *echtrai*, which though 'essentially mythological', 'may be connected with any cycle by reason of their human hero', and pp. 139-142, on *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, which is classified as a King tale, but also 'linked to the Ulidian cycle both by its heroic spirit and by the presence in it of some of the warriors who normally appear only in that cycle' (p. 140). Murphy, pp. 128-129, also comments on the status within this classification of the *remscéla* 'foretales', which will be discussed below, §4.1: 'A number of stories, most of them more or less unheroic in tone, yet loosely connected with the Heroic cycle [...], used to be grouped by the medieval Irish under the heading *Remscéla* or 'Foretales' to Táin Bó Cúailnge, because they describe episodes which lead up to or explain something about the Táin.'

[49] Barbara Hillers, 'The Heroes of the Ulster Cycle', in *Ulidia. Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales*, ed. J.P. Mallory & G. Stockman (Belfast, 1994), pp. 99-106: p. 99. Despite its title, Seán Ó Coileáin, 'The Structure of a Literary Cycle', *Ériu,* 25 (1974), 88-125, does not provide a general discussion of features of literary cycles, but concentrates on one character belonging to the Historical Cycles, Guaire Aidni, and the various traditions and sources attached to him.

a particular period of the hero's life, are obviously of a cyclic character.[50]

The focus on one protagaonist and on the biography of this central hero is the organising principle of Nutt's concept of a cycle, in which he followed the critical conventions established in the nineteenth century. Nutt concedes that there

> also exist a number of episodic tales of which Cuchualinn is the hero. I imply by this that they have no assigned place in the chronological sequence of the tales and that they might be removed without mutilating the saga as a whole, although their loss would greatly impoverish it. They may very possibly represent an earlier stage of the saga before it has been thrown into cyclic form.[51]

His suggestion that 'the *Tain* obviously belongs to a late stage of development of the saga; it gathers up and throws into cyclic form a vast amount of older episodic material',[52] prefigures more recent ideas about the growth of a narrative macro-forms on the basis of originally self-contained episodes. Hull's insights into the importance of the cental hero's biography as the organising chronological principle of a literary cycle should be supplemented by Barbara Hillers' reminder in the context of her discussion of the heroic personnel of the Ulster cycle, that in this 'body of interrelated narritives' a 'circle of Ulster heroes remains constant from saga to saga'.[53] She suggests that the presence of these heroes seems 'less a requirement of plot than in invocation of the heroic world of Emain Macha'.[54]

Conceptually important is Hillers' suggestion that this 'make-believe world of the Ulster Cycle seems to have been a collaborative effort, involving a large number of narrators, redactors, and copyists' over time.[55] In other words, the intertextual cohesion between the members of a cycle is virtual; it resides in the minds of those who produced and, by listening or reading, received the texts and who in these processes mentally reconnected the individual texts to the narrative universe of the overarching

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[50] Alfred Nutt, *Cuchulainn, the Irish Achilles*, Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance & Folklore, 8 (London, 1900), p. 23. I wish to thank Stefanie Gropper and Thomas Hilberer for kindly and efficiently supplying me with a copy of Nutt's text.

[51] Nutt, *Cuchulainn*, p. 25; *Serglige Con Culainn* and *Fled Bricrenn* belong to this group.

[52] Nutt, *Cuchulainn*, p. 29.

[53] Hillers, 'The Heroes', p. 99.

[54] Hillers, 'The Heroes', p. 101; she also rightly insists, p. 101, that its heroes 'appear to have had very much a life of their own' and thus a potential for individual narrative developments.

[55] Hillers, 'The Heroes', p. 101, see also p. 106: 'By invoking the names of a selection of the most famous heroes, the narrator conjures up not merely individual warriors, but the heroic circle in its entirety, and with it the heroic world of Ulster.'

literary cycle. *Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair* nicely, but tenuously exemplifies how this universe of reference can be exploited: it assumes the story about the death of Cú Roí, *Aided Chon Roí*, whose death is avenged on Ulster in *Aided Cheltchair* by his brother Conganchnes,[56] and Celtchar's hound Dóelchú is said to be of the same litter as the hounds of Mac Da Thó and Culann of *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge* respectively.[57] Although *Aided Cheltchair* has a self-contained plot-line, it clearly functions within the larger universe of the Ulster Cycle. Chronological complications arguably arising from these connections are picked up by scribe M of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the manuscript Lebor na hUidre, however, who argues in a marginal note that Conganchnes took revenge for his brother's death on Ulster 'long after the *Táin*' ('fota a haithli na Tána'),[58] and this impressively indicates a critical scribe's awareness of the Ulster Cycle's sometimes precarious chronological system.

From this brief and necessarily preliminary historical survey it emerges that a critical concept of 'cycle' has existed for a long time in medieval Irish literary studies. It is used as a generic classification of groups of texts and is based on a set of parameters of intratextual cohesion, namely their setting at a particular time and the overlap of their narrative personnel and geographical focus. The texts in each group ideally cluster around a common, fixed point of reference.[59] The relationship between the texts is virtual and rests on mental connections made by medieval authors, scribes, and audiences – as well as by modern literary historians and critics. Even though the basic notion of a cycle in Irish literary history appears to be fairly clear and uncontroversial, the actual classification of cycles has been somewhat more fluid. Core members in the critical tradition are the Ulster Cycle, the Finn Cycle, and the Mythological Cycle, though the latter

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[56] See Kuno Meyer, *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, Todd Lecture Series, XIV (Dublin, 1906, reprint 1993), pp. 26-27. For the contents and versions of *Aided Chon Roí* compare Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 431-444.

[57] See Meyer, *Death-Tales*, pp. 28-31. For a discussion of the intertextuality between the three texts see Kim McCone, '*Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair*: Hounds, Heroes and Hospitallers in Early Irish Myth and Story', *Ériu*, 35 (1984), 1-30. McCone, '*Aided Cheltchair*', p. 2, also observes that in two manuscript texts of *Scéla Muicce*, namely the Book of Leinster, which also contains a text of *Aided Cheltchair*, and Dublin, Trinity College 1337, formerly H.3.18, *Aided Cheltchair*'s Blaí Briugu is added to the list of the (originally five) owners of hostels of Ireland, and that thus a connection between the two tales is established within *Scéla Muicce*. Furthermore, Celtchar mac Uthechair appears in *Scéla Muicce*, see Rudolf Thurneysen, *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series, VI (Dublin, 1935), pp. 8, 12-13. Note that *Scéla Muicce* is cross-referenced in *Scéla Conchobair* which is also contained in the Book the Leinster, thus establishing intertextual and intracodicological cohesion: see Whitley Stokes, 'Tidings of Conchobar Mac Nessa', *Ériu,* 4 (1908-10), pp. 18-38: p. 28.

[58] See Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge. Recension I* (Dublin, 1976), pp. 19, 141.

[59] The exception here being what, for example, Dillon termed the 'historical cycles', miniature cycles revolving around individual characters as their points of reference, whose overarching common denominator is the traditional chronological sequence of Irish rulers.

is not always granted the title 'cycle'. To these was added a super-cycle made up of smaller cycles centring around individual kings, termed either the Historical Cycle(s) or the Cycle(s) of the Kings. Further narratives are classified not in terms of cycles, but formally in terms of similarities in their event-structure, and these continue to be designated by descriptive labels already used in medieval tale-lists, such as 'adventures' and 'voyages'.

Table: Summary of Classifications into Cycles of Medieval Irish Literature in Chronological Order

Arbois de Jubainville (1883): 'epic literature'	1. The Mythological Cycle 2. The Heroic Cycle 3. The Cycle of Finn and Ossin 4. Narratives dealing with later events
Hyde (1899): 'saga'	1. The Mythological Cycle 2. The Heroic or Ultonian Cycle 3. The Fenian or Ossianic Cycle 4. Sagas centring around individuals with only one or two stories pertaining to them
Hull (1906): 'prose romances'	1. The Cycle relating to the early prehistoric gods 2. The Cycle relating to Cuchulain 3. The Cycle of Fionn and Oisín

Meyer (1909): 'epic literature'	1. The Mythological Cycle
	2. Heroic Tales →
	    2.1. Ulster Cycle
	    2.2. Finn Cycle
	    2.3. Minor Cycles dealing with historical characters of different periods
	    2.4. Adaptations of foreign subject-matter

Quiggin (1910-11): 'pure literature'	1. The Ulster Cycle 2. The Southern (or Finn) Cycle 3. The Mythology of the pre-Christian era 4. Narratives claimed to be founded on historical events 5. Narratives about visits of mortals to the Otherworld
Best (1913 & 1942): '(epic) tales/sagas'	1. The Mythological and Tuatha Dé Danann Cycle 2. The Conchobar-Cuchulinn Cycle 3. The Finn or Ossianic Cycle 4. Other Cycles 5. Voyages 6. Minor Tales 7. Modern Romantic Tales 8. Classical and Mediaeval Adaptations
Thurneysen (1921): secular heroic and kings' narratives	1. Ulster sagas 2. Finn sagas 3. The Mythological Cycle of sagas, the Kings' saga, and the genuinely historical texts 4. Foreign subject-matter (adaptations and translations)
Dillon (1948): 'imaginative literature of Ireland'	1. The Ulster Cycle 2. The Fenian Cycle 3. The Mythological Cycle 4. The Historical Cycles 5. The Adventures 6. The Voyages 7. The Visions

This survey is not intended to cast doubt on the general methodological validity and the potential usefulness for literary history of the criteria of texts' shared narrative personnel and common temporal and geographical settings. Similar criteria have been successfully applied, for example, in Old Norse scholarship for the different sub-genres of 'saga'.

Thus *Íslendingasögur* 'sagas of Icelanders' is used for 'tales of considerable length which centre on the lives of people from a relatively small group of Icelandic families. The important part of the action in such tales takes place during the century of the Icelandic Commonwealth, from c. 930 to c. 1030'.[60] Their common, fixed focus of reference is a small group of Icelandic families of a specific historical period. Similarly, *Konungasögur* or 'Kings' sagas' are 'historical and biographical works concerning Norwegian and Danish kings of what, at their time of writing [c. 1180-1280], was the relatively recent past (c. 850-1280)'.[61] The 'Sagas of Contemporary (Secular) History' are 'differentiated by the period of their events [the twelfth and thirteenth centuries], and by their secular content, from other sagas set in Iceland'.[62] Similar definitions have been advanced for the *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* or 'tales of the Nordic countries in ancient times', the 'translated *riddarasögur*', and the *lygisögur* or 'indigenous *riddarasögur*'. Although chronological and geographical setting are the main distinguishing criteria used here, some further additional criteria, such as time of composition and thematic concerns, also play a role. Such generic distinctions used for Medieval Irish and Old Norse literary history are, of course, quite closely related to the medieval (and modern) notion of the 'matière de .../matter of ... – as the late twelfth-century poet Jehan Bodel says: 'N'en sont que trois materes a nul home vivant: / De France et de Bretaigne et de Ronme la grant'.[63]

As I introduce in the following a different concept of 'cycle' which is not defined by an overlap of narrative personnel and setting, I will suggest a short-hand term for this first type of cycle, namely 'immanent cycle',[64] which is indebted to Carol Clover's 'immanent epic', or more generally 'immanent wholes'. In her words, 'there can exist a "whole" epic in the

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[60] Vésteinn Ólason, 'Family Sagas', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. Rory McTurk (Oxford, 2005), pp. 101-118: p. 101.

[61] Ármann Jakobsson, 'Royal Biography', in *Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. McTurk, pp. 388-402: p. 388.

[62] Úlfar Bragason, 'Sagas of Contemporary History (*Sturlunga saga*): Texts and Research', in *Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. McTurk, pp. 427-446: p. 427.

[63] Jean Bodel, *La Chanson des Saisnes*, vol. 1, *Texte*, ed. Annette Brasseur (Geneva, 1989), p. 2.

[64] An alternative, but less attractive option could be 'cycle-by-personnel'; 'Sagenkreis' would seem to be an appropriate German term.

minds of performers and audiences alike even though it never be performed as such':[65]

> The principle is well known to churchgoers, who may hear the story of the Last Supper related one Sunday and the story of the Sermon of the Mount the next, but who know full well how each story relates to the other and both to the larger life of Christ, though they may never have actually heard or read it consecutively from beginning to end.[66]

I want to stress that in contrast to Clover's model, I use the concept 'immanent cycle' without reference to, or implication of, orality, since the immanent cycles of medieval Irish textual culture are for us only reflected in the narrative universes and the cross-references of written manuscript transmission. Indeed a second type of literary cycle to which I now wish to turn is defined by the texts' actual written transmission. Their association as a physical sequence in at least one manuscript is the main unifying criterion, and I therefore suggest calling such cycles 'cycles-by-transmission'.

3. Cycles-by-transmission
3.1. <u>Cycles about Charlemagne</u>
As my first example of a 'cycle-by-transmission' I will take narrative cycles about Charlemagne, which are conveniently attested in Norse, Welsh, and Irish. To the formal characteristics and previous critical

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[65] Carol J. Clover, 'The Long Prose Form', *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, 101 (1986), 10-39; p. 24; see p. 26 for 'immanent wholes'. For the possible explicative potential of the concept of the immanent whole for the genesis of Old Norse and medieval Irish long prose narratives respectively see Clover, 'Long Prose Form', pp. 34-39; Hildegard L.C. Tristram, 'Aspects of Tradition and Innovation in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*', in *Papers on Language and Mediaeval Studies Presented to Alfred Schopf*, ed. Richard Matthews & Joachim Schmole-Rostosky (Frankfurt, 1988), pp. 19-38; and Doris Edel, '*Táin Bó Cúailnge* and the Dynamics of the Matter of Ulster', *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 161-170. Note that Edel employs 'matter of Ulster'/'matière d'Ulster' – in analogy to, for example, *matière de Bretagne* – as an attractive terminological alternative to the 'Ulster cycle'.

[66] Clover, 'Long Prose Form', p. 24. For an application to the development of the written form of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* see Hildegard L.C. Tristram, 'Die Langzeitüberlieferung der Táin Bó Cúailnge: Probleme und Desiderate', in *Kelten-Einfälle an der Donau. Akten des Vierten Symposiums deutschsprachiger Keltologinnen und Keltologen*, ed. Helmut Birkhan unter Mitwirkung von Hannes Tauber, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 345 (Wien, 2007), pp. 583-593, p. 585: 'Aufgrund interkultureller Evidenz ist anzunehmen, dass die *Táin* als sog. immanentes Epos ("immanent epic") in der Vorschriftlichkeit existierte und von speziellen Wortkünstlern vorgetragen wurde. [...] Die Erzählungen des sog. "Ulsterzyklus" [...] bilden einen inhaltlich einigermaßen zusammenhängenden Themenkomplex, der jedoch vermutlich nie insgesamt in einer einzigen Vortragssituation vorgetragen wurde. Der gesamte epische Stoff war sowohl den Vortragenden als auch den Zuhörern bekannt, vorgetragen wurden jedoch nur der jeweiligen Situation entsprechende einzelne Teile'; compare similarly Hildegard L.C. Tristram., 'What is the Purpose of Táin Bó Cúailnge?', in *Ulidia*, ed. Mallory & Stockman, pp. 11-21, p. 11: 'I take these oral and written sources [of a full written *Táin Bó Cúailnge*] to have been short narrative units or episodes gravitating around a narrative nucleus, but never fully written up. The audience knew the basic storyline and each unit or episode elaborated specific points in the storyline.'

assessments of such cycles I will return in greater detail below (§ 3.2.), suffice to reiterate here that these cycles form organised sequences of thematically closely related narratives in at least one manuscript.

The Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga ok kappa hans* is a prose compilation derived from a variety of sources, mainly Old French/Anglo-Norman verse texts about Charlemagne and the Latin *Turpini Historia*.[67] The beginning and the original ending may belong to a translation of a lost (and hypothetical) *Vie romancée de Charlemagne* in Old French, or they may be based on lost versions of various different *chansons de geste*. Between these two parts a compiler placed originally independent translations of other texts about Charlemagne, including the Latin *Turpini Historia* and the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, and *Otinel*. The source texts came (mostly) via Britain and were translated in the thirteenth century, the *Historia* may have been translated before 1200. The older α-version of *Karlamagnús saga* in its entirety is associated with the reign of Hákon IV Hákonarson, who ruled Norway from 1217 to 1263.

The Middle Welsh Charlemagne cycle, sometimes called *Chwedlau Siarlymaen* 'Stories about Charlemagne' in the absence of an authoritative medieval title, consists in its fullest form of the Welsh adaptation of the Latin *Turpini Historia* and of the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, and *Otinel*. Somewhat simplified, and ignoring minor additional matters such as colophons, three cyclic arrangements of these texts are transmitted in eight medieval manuscripts. All of these now contain the Welsh versions of the *Historia*, of the *Chanson*, and of the *Pèlerinage*, but in the arrangement of the Red Book of Hergest (= Oxford, Jesus College Manuscript 111) the *Pèlerinage* (in hand A) is separated from the other *Chwedlau Siarlymaen* (also in hand A) by miscellaneous texts in a different hand; the Welsh *Otinel* is included in only three manuscripts:[68]

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[67] For helpful introductions to *Karlamagnús saga*, its constituent elements, their sources, questions of its dating and literary intention, see Susanne Kramarz-Bein, 'Die altnordische Karlsdichtung: Das Beispiel der "Karlamagnús saga ok kappa hans"', in *Karl der Große in den europäischen Literaturen des Mittelalters. Konstruktion eines Mythos*, ed. Bernd Bastert (Tübingen, 2004), pp. 149-161; Daniel W. Lacroix, 'La chanson de geste française au contact du genre de la saga norroise: l'exemple de la *Karlamagnús Saga*', in *Les Chansons de Geste. Actes du XVIe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals, pour l'Étude des Épopées Romanes. Granada, 21-25 juillet 2003*, ed. Carlos Alvar & Juan Paredes (Granada, 2005), pp. 379-389; and Povl Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions: *Karlamagnús saga*', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 74-81.

[68] My summary is based on Annalee C. Rejhon, *Cân Rolant: The Medieval Welsh Version of the Song of Roland*, University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 113 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1984), pp. 1-25, especially Table 1, pp. 22-23.

Pèlerinage - Historia (a) - *Chanson - Historia* (b)   (5 MSS)
Historia (a) - *Otinel - Pèlerinage - Chanson - Historia* (b)   (2 MSS)
Historia (a) - *Otinel - Chanson - Historia* (b) - [other texts] - *Pèlerinage* (1 MS)

This table shows that in what would appear to be a standard arrangement of *Chwedlau Siarlymaen*, the Welsh *Pèlerinage* precedes the first part of the *Historia*, then a truncated version of a probably originally complete translation of the *Chanson* is inserted in place of the *Historia's* chapter 22, which covers the events of the *Chanson* up to the beginning of the Battle of Roncevaux, and then the *Historia's* narrative is resumed. The Welsh *Otinel* follows the first part of the *Historia* and precedes the *Pèlerinage* in two manuscripts, but in the Red Book it follows the *Chanson*, and the *Pèlerinage* is separated from the rest of the cycle. Brynley Roberts has drawn attention to the existence of links between the texts: 'all the translators provided linking passages or edited the closing or opening sentences of existing texts so that the joins might be as unobtrusive as possible'.[69] The original translations of the Welsh *Chanson* and *Pèlerinage* have been dated to the first half of the thirteenth century – and tentatively associated with Reginald, king of Man and the Western Isles from 1188 to 1226, whose daughter was married to Rhodri ap Owain Gwynedd. Pseudo-Turpin's *Historia* was probably translated into Welsh for Gruffydd ap Maredudd sometime before 1282 by Madog ap Selyf, who was also responsible for the Welsh version of *Transitus Marie*. Thus, the Welsh versions of the *Chanson*, the *Pèlerinage*, and of the *Historia* may be roughly contemporary with the α-version of the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga*, which is dated to about 1250. The Welsh *Otinel* is probably later, necessarily pre-dating its earliest attested fourteenth-century manuscript version. The cyclic compilation of *Chwedlau Siarlymaen* is thought to date from the beginning of the fourteenth century.[70]

No such large-scale compilations about Charlemagne exist in Ireland. There is a (probably fourteenth- or fifteenth-century) Irish adaptation of a Latin version of the *chanson de geste* about Fierabras or Fortibras, who stole the relics of the passion which Charlemagne then recovers in the course of the narrative.[71] In the five fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts in which the complete text is transmitted together with a preceding text, this preceding text is always the Irish version of the *Inventio*

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[69] Brynley F. Roberts, 'Tales and Romances', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, vol. 1, ed. A.O.H. Jarman & Gwilym Rees Hughes (Cardiff, 1992), pp. 203-243: p. 237. For a detailed discussion of the beginning sections of the Welsh *Chanson*, see Rejhon, *Cân Rolant*, pp. 49-58.

[70] For a discussion of the dating, see Rejhon, *Cân Rolant*, pp. 71-75.

[71] Whitley Stokes, 'The Irish Version of *Fierabras*', *Revue Celtique,* 19 (1898), 14-57, 118-167, 252-291, 364-393.

Sanctae Crucis, the story of the Finding of the Holy Cross.[72] Robin Flower has pointed out that it is 'an integral part of the text',[73] because of an explicit and immediate reference in the Irish (and the Latin) *Fierabras* to the mother of the emperor Constantine, Helen, who is said to have 'brought the Holy Cross from the Jews to the city of Helena',[74] and who in the Middle Ages was believed to have been instrumental in the finding of Christ's cross and its establishment as a relic. The two narratives thus constitute a minimal cycle of two interconnected texts in which the *Inventio* functions as a *remscél* 'prefatory tale' (a medieval Irish category of intertextuality to which I will return) to the *Fierabras*. This prefatory tale places the *Fierabras* and its depiction of Charlemagne in a Christian framework, which is set forth in the summary of its contents in the final sentence as 'sdair Serluis moir ag lenmainn coroine Crist 7 taissi na naemh' ('the story of Charlemagne pursuing Christ's crown and the saints' relics').[75] In three fifteenth-century manuscripts, this minimal cycle is further expanded by a chronological sequel, the Irish version of Pseudo-Turpin's *Historia*, which is elsewhere transmitted separately.[76] Texts of the Latin *Fierabras* and *Inventio*, as well as of the *Historia*, are found as individual items, and not in a cyclic sequence, in a manuscript from the second half of the fifteenth century written in a Franciscan monastery in Ireland, now Dublin, Trinity College 667 (formerly F.5.3).[77]

Cycles about Charlemagne are, of course, not confined to medieval Norse and Celtic literatures; other large-scale examples include Girart d'Amiens' French *Charlemagne*-compilation in over 23000 alexandrines, a complete legendary biography of Charlemagne composed probably between 1303

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[72] These manuscripts are London, British Library, Egerton 1781; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 610; Dublin, Trinity College, 1298, formerly H.2.7; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 O 48 (MS 476) and 24 P 25 (MS 475); compare Robin Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library [formerly British Museum]*, vol. II (London, 1926, reprint Dublin, 1992), p. 527.

[73] Flower, *Catalogue*, p. 527.

[74] 'Elena máthair Constantín impir neoch tuc in croch naom o Iubalaibh a cathraigh Elena': Stokes, 'The Irish Version of *Fierabras*', p. 16.

[75] Stokes, 'The Irish Version of *Fierabras*', p. 380.

[76] These are London, British Library Egerton 1781; Dublin, King's Inns 10 and Dublin, Trinity College 1304, formerly H.2.12. For the Irish version of Pseudo-Turpin's *Historia*, see Douglas Hyde, *Gabháltais Shearluis Mhóir. The Conquest of Charlemagne*, Irish Texts Society, 19 (London, 1917); for the chronological relation between the *Fierabras* and Charlemagne's conquest of Spain described in the *Historia*, compare Michael Heintze, 'Les techniques de la formation des cycles dans les chansons de geste', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 21-58: pp. 35-36; and Stokes, 'The Irish Version of *Fierabras*', p. 268, §187 and p. 380, §258.

[77] See Marvin L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin: Descriptive Catalogue of the Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts*, vol. II (Dublin, 1991), pp. 1123-1164, for a description of the manuscript, and pp. 1134, 1139, and 1141 for details about the three texts. The *Inventio* is found on pp. 68-71 of the manuscript, the Latin *Fierabras* on pp. 85-100, and the *Historia* on pp. 107-130.

and 1306,[78] the medieval German compilation *Karlmeinet*, originating in the area around Aachen and dated to the fourteenth century, a biography of Charlemagne based on six different sources, and possibly a German response to Girart's compilation,[79] and the Franco-Venetian compilation *Geste Francor*, dated to the fourteenth century, which is based on six epic poems (including *Beuve de Hanstone*) and centres around Charlemagne's legendary private biography.[80]

3.2. Some Critical Background

On the basis of an analysis of the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga* as a cycle of texts, Povl Skårup has advanced a concept of a literary cycle significantly different from the 'immanent cycles' described above. Skårup has based his proposal on a set of five features of codicological and intertextual cohesion which rely on formal characteristics of the texts' serial manuscript transmission, which I here quote from the editors' English summary:

> there should be at least two texts involved; their inclusion in one manuscript should be determined by the order of the narrated events; throughout the cycle the principal characters should be the same or should be linked to each other by bonds of kinship; there should be 'cyclic signals' between the texts; and inside the texts there should be 'cyclic signals' in the form of allusions or adaptations.[81]

For Skårup, the notion of the series, of the actual linear sequence of texts in transmission is central for his concept of a cycle: 'La notion fondamentale de cette étude [de la formation de cycles narratifs] me semble en effet être la notion de série'.[82] At least two texts are needed to make up a cycle; and in order to qualify as cyclic, the texts have to belong to stage (b) on a scale

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[78] Compare, for example, Jane H.M. Taylor, 'Order from Accident: Cyclic Consciousness at the End of the Middle Ages', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 59-73: p. 61.

[79] Compare Bernd Bastert, '"der Christenheyt als nücz als kein czelffbott": Karl der Große in der deutschen erzählenden Literatur des Mittelalters", in *Karl der Große*, ed. Bastert, pp. 127-147: pp. 142-143; Hartmut Beckers, 'Die *Karlmeinet*-Kompilation: Eine deutsche *vita poetica Karoli Magni* aus dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 113-117; and Hartmut Beckers, 'Karlmeinet-Kompilation', in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 4, second edition, ed. Kurt Ruh (Berlin, 1983), cols 1012-28.

[80] Compare Stefan Hartung, 'Karl der Große in der italienischen und frankovenetischen Literatur des Mittelalters', in *Karl der Große*, ed. Bastert, pp. 53-78: pp. 65-66.

[81] Bart Besamusca et al., 'Introduction', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 1-3: p. 2. For Skårup's original wording see Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', pp. 75-76: 'Voici les critères que je propose d'inclure dans la définition du terme 'cycle': 1. Au moins deux textes. 2. Même manuscrit, dans l'ordre des événements. 3. Identité ou parenté des personnages principaux. 4. Signaux cycliques entre les textes. 5. Signaux cycliques dans les texts: (a) allusions, (b) adaptations'.

[82] Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 75.

of cohesion between texts: '(a) textes indépendants, (b) cycle de textes, (c) un seul texte'.[83] Texts at stage (b) are connected by cyclic signals, but still retain their independence as discrete entities.[84] A consequence of their relative independence for editorial practice are separate editions of the individual texts which ignore their cyclicity,[85] and I think it is important to stress that for literary analyses the implications of the cyclic transmission of such texts need to be taken seriously. Skårup's second criterion is the cyclic texts' occurrence in one manuscript and in the chronological order of the events, which need not be identical with the chronological order of their composition.[86] His focus is on 'cyclic manuscripts' which contain a single cycle of texts, but one may also have to reckon with self-contained cyclified sequences within manuscripts.[87] Degrees of stability and fluidity of such cycles may additionally have to be considered: a cyclic compilation may be found in one manuscript only, or individual texts may be inserted into larger cyclic arrangements in one manuscript, but not in another. Cases in point are the Middle Welsh *Chwedlau Siarlymaen*, in which the Welsh version of *Otinel* is included in only three of the eight medieval manuscript witnesses, and also the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga*, the β-recension of which contains a *þáttr* or branch which is not part of the older α-recension, namely 'Olif and Landres'.[88]

Skårup's third criterion concerns the identity or close familial kinship of a cycle's principal protagonists.[89] Besamusca points out some methodologically interesting complications with regard to its applicability to the Middle Dutch *Lancelot* Compilation, in that in two romances 'we encounter protagonists who do not feature in any of the other texts of the compilation. Nor are its main characters in any way related to other, better-known Arthurian knights'.[90] Besamusca here sees a 'technique of decentralisation' at work, the inclusion of adventures of other knights beyond Arthur's best-known knights who are the core characters of the

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[83] Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 76.

[84] Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 76: 'Pour parler de cycle, il ne faut donc pas seulement s'intéresser aux critères qui réunissent les textes dans un seul cycle, mais également aux critères qui montrent qu'il s'agit toujours de textes différents'. See also Bart Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot. The Middle Dutch* Lancelot *Compilation and the Medieval Tradition of Narrative Cycles* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 140.

[85] See Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 140. Irish examples are Stokes, 'The Irish Version of *Fierabras*' and P. Considine, 'Irish Versions of the Abgar Legend', *Celtica*, 10 (1973), 237-257, one version of which is part of the Gospel History (see below, §3.3.).

[86] Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 76; see also Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, pp. 140-141.

[87] See Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 76 and Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, pp. 150-154, for a discussion of three French cyclic manuscripts.

[88] See Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 74 and Kramarz-Bein, 'Die altnordische Karlsdichtung', p. 152.

[89] See Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 77: 'Identité ou parenté des personnages principaux'.

[90] Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 141.

cycle.[91] It may also become necessary to allow under this criterion coherent annalistic sequences of generations or dynasties, if one wishes to describe some larger historical compilations as cyclic which exhibit other core characteristics of cycles, such as linear sequence and formal signals of cohesion and cyclification. Further problems are posed by the Irish Charlemagne cycle consisting of the *Inventio* and the *Fierabras* mentioned above. No kinship relation exists between Helen mother of Constantine and any of the protagonists of the *Fierabras* – rather the two texts are connected by the relics of the passion which play a central role in both. One may therefore wish to adapt Skårup's third criterion, or to allow some leniency with regard to the necessary presence of all five of his criteria.[92]

As Besamusca has pointed out, Skårup's criteria may not characterise narrative cycles exhaustively, and he adds a further possible feature 'thematic unity, [...] an overriding concept'.[93] Thematic concerns and explicative relationships are certainly worth taking into account: the combination of the *Inventio* with the *Fierabras* in Irish manuscripts adds an extra dimension to the latter's preoccupation with standard themes of Christian chivalric romance – the confrontation between Christendom and heathendom, the ethos of fighting, and the love between a Christian hero and a pagan woman – and also helps to explain the predominant manuscript transmission of this cycle together with other religious texts.[94]

Skårup's 'signaux cycliques', his cyclic signals or markers of cyclification, appear either at the beginning or end of a text within a cycle or inside it.[95] At the beginning or end they function as linking elements, which in the words of Bart Besamusca 'indicate that the works in the

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[91] See Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 142.

[92] Skårup's concept of a literary cycle based on formal features of intertextual cohesion is of course not the only one available, compare, for example, Philippe Ménard, 'Problèmes de 'cycle' arthurien', in *Cyclification*, ed. Besamusca et al., pp. 191-194, p. 191: 'On pourrait penser que dans la notion de cycle doivent entrer a) une idée d'ampleur (un cycle est un ensemble vaste, qui englobe plusieurs oeuvres ou plusieurs livres de la même oeuvre), b) de continuité chronologique (avec des phases successives qui vont de la jeunesse d'un héros, de son accession au pouvoir ou de sa conquête de la gloire par des prouesses, jusqu'aux conflits et aux combats de la maturité, plus rarement jusqu'à sa disparition), c) d'unité thématique (malgré la diversité des aventures romanesques il doit y avoir des points de ressemblance, voire de convergence entre les récits, mieux encore un mouvement d'ensemble, un fil directeur dessiné par les divers textes), d) d'enchaînement, d'arrangement dans les manuscrits'. For a somewhat different approach, compare Taylor, 'Order from accident'. However, Skårup's definition appears to be particularly explicit and comprehensive; see also Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 146: 'I am convinced that anyone interested in the formative aspects of narrative cycles must end up with a list of typical aspects which gives Skårup's criteria pride of place'.

[93] Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 146.

[94] Note in this context that Janet M. Cowen, 'Die mittelenglischen Romane um Karl den Großen', in *Karl der Große*, ed. Bastert, pp. 163-182: p. 164, has suggested that the Middle English Charlemagne texts form part of a larger textual complex which centres on the crusades and the veneration of the relics of the passion.

[95] See Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', pp. 78-80.

collection are sequential', but also 'prevent constituent elements from merging to form one undivided story';[96] inside a text they are realized as allusions, cross-references, and adaptations, which either 'point forward to, or are reminiscent of events in other works' of the cycle[97] or consist of changes to a source text in order to avoid contradictions within the cycle. The examples for linking elements Skårup supplies from the Old Norse *Karlamagnús saga* are instructive:[98] phrases such as 'lykzt her nu jn fyrsti hlutr saugu Karlamagnus kongs' ('here ends the first part of the saga of king Charlemagne'), indications of the length of the main hero's rest at the end of a branch, titles such as *Oddgeirs þáttr danska* '*þáttr* of Ogier the Dane', which use the term *þáttr* 'part' rather than *saga*, and temporal adverbs in the first sentence of a new branch which chronologically connect its events with the events of the preceding branch.[99] Besamusca stresses, quite rightly in my view, that 'the importance of Skårup's *signaux cycliques* for the study of narrative cycles can hardly be overrated'.[100]

In order to distinguish Skårup's formal, transmission-based concept of a textual cycle from what I have called the 'immanent cycle', I tentatively propose to use the term 'cycle-by-transmission' for it, as mentioned above. Of course, immanent cycles and cycles-by-transmission have at least two features in common, namely that they consist of more than one text and share a common, fixed focus of reference. The central differentiating feature is the sequential transmission in one manuscript; cyclic signals in the form of cross-references may also occur in texts belonging to immanent cycles – the references to *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in *Aided Cheltchair* mentioned above being cases in point. Skårup's list of features is probably not exhaustive (witness Besamusca's tentative addition of a feature 'thematic unity'), but it provides explicit and central formal criteria for an empirical analysis of cyclic arrangements of texts. However, it may prove useful for literary studies of intertextual cohesion in different textual cultures to allow some

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[96] Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 142.

[97] Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 145.

[98] For examples from the Middle Dutch compilation about Lancelot see Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, pp. 142-146.

[99] See Skårup, 'Un cycle de traductions', p. 78, and *Karlamagnús saga. Branches I, III, VII et IX*, édition bilingue projetée par Knud Togeby et Pierre Halleux, text norrois édité par Agnete Loth, traduction française par Annette Patron-Godefroit, avec une étude par Povl Skårup (Copenhagen, 1980), pp. 104, 105, for the Old Norse passages . Note that the term *saga* is used in the last sentence of the first branch (p. 104), and similarly in the last sentence of the seventh branch (p. 301); but compare the last sentence of the third branch (p. 232) where one manuscript uses *saga* and another *þáttr*. For illuminating discussions of the Old Norse notion of *þáttr* see, for example, Stefanie Würth, *Elemente des Erzählens. Die þættir der Flateyjarbók* (Basel & Frankfurt, 1991), and John Lindow, 'Old Icelandic *þáttr*: Early Usage and Semantic History', *Scripta Islandica*, 29 (1978), 3-44.

[100] Besamusca, *The Book of Lancelot*, p. 142.

leniency in their application and to define as cyclic some compilations which do not fulfil all his criteria. Alternatively, one may wish to reserve the term 'cycle-by-transmission' for compilations which fulfil all five of Skårup's criteria, and use '(thematic) cluster' for looser sequential arrangements, regardless of whether they are transmitted in one manuscript only or in more than one manuscript.[101] 'Cycle-by-transmission', 'thematic cluster', and 'immanent cycle' broadly correspond to the threefold categorization proposed by Bernd Bastert, who uses the terms 'organic cyclicity' for sequences characterised by foresighted planning and levelling-out of contradictions between the texts, 'sequential cyclicity' for sequences of texts without full logical connection, and 'transtextual or pre-sequential cyclicity' for texts which are linked without forming an actual sequence. Bastert furthermore stresses that the difference between sequential and organic cyclicity is not discrete, but scalar.[102] In a developmental perspective, cyclification-by-transmission would typically presuppose the prior existence of a cycle's component parts as individual entities as well the creative activity of a scribe/compiler as author, and thus represent a secondary development within a textual culture.

3.3. Irish Examples

After these theoretical preliminaries I will now proceed to some textual and philological considerations of Irish cycles and clusters. My first promising candidate for an Irish cycle-by-transmission is a lengthy compilation on the history of the Biblical period. Of course, Biblical History lends itself to cyclification, since the components of the Bible already form an immanent whole and are furthermore arranged in a chronological sequence. In its

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[101] The term 'cluster' has already been used in this loose sense by other critics, see, for example, Cornelius G. Buttimer, '*Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*: A Reappraisal', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 2 (1982), 61-73, p. 70: 'the manuscript [i.e., Rawlinson B 502] as now constituted preserves a cluster of prose works relating to Leinster matters under the title *Scélshenchas Lagen*', or Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 627: 'The *Táin Bó Cualnge* formed a kind of nucleus round which a number of other tales clustered'. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland, 800-1200: From the Vikings to the Normans', in *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, *To 1890*, ed. Margaret Kelleher & Philip O'Leary (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 32-73, p. 35, has stressed the importance of the manuscript context and of thematic clusters for the light they shed on the intended meaning of texts: 'Their [i.e., the scribes'] placing of particular narratives adjacent to one another on the manuscript page was an act of textual interpretation, designed to ensure that certain groups of narratives were read and assessed collectively'.

[102] Bernd Bastert, 'Sequentielle und organische Zyklizität. Überlegungen zur deutschen Karlsepik des 12. bis 15. Jahrhunderts', in *"Chanson de Roland" und "Rolandslied". Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Études Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie Jules Verne 11 et 12 Janvier 1996*, Wodan. Greifswalder Beiträge zum Mittelalter, 70 (Greifswald, 1997), pp. 1-13: p. 2. For further useful discussions of cycles and cyclicity see Sara Sturm-Maddox & Donald Maddox, 'Cyclicity and Medieval Literary Cycles', in *Transtextualities*, ed. Sturm-Maddox & Maddox, pp. 1-14; and D.H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance. Fact and Fiction, 1150-1220* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 55-58, on 'the 'interfictive world' of the Arthurian romances (certain names, of people and of places, and certain events are common to, or presupposed in, a number of works)'.

fullest version, in the early-fifteenth-century Leabhar Breac, the Irish compilation covers events of the Old and the New Testament from the Creation to the siege of Jerusalem and the lives of the apostles.[103] The Old Testament section, as well as some of its component parts, are also transmitted separately.[104] The New Testament section in its entirety has been called 'Gospel History' by modern scholars, probably influenced by the heading 'Incipit do scélaib na soscél' ('The beginning of the gospel stories'), which introduces in the manuscripts its third part, namely the journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Christ.[105] Two of the major components of the 'Gospel History', the 'Infancy Narrative' and *Dígal fola Críst* 'The Avenging of Christ's Blood', also occur as separate items.[106] Furthermore, there is some variation in the number of sections of the 'Gospel History' in its different manuscripts,[107] which would seem to indicate that the compilation was understood as being made up of individual narrative units some of which could be left out without structural damage to the remaining whole – an indication that we are dealing with a cycle of closely interrelated texts, Skårup's stage (b), rather than with a single unified text, Skårup's stage (c). Turning now to the text in Leabhar Breac, we find that most of the component parts of the Gospel History also carry special headings, namely the seventeen wonders on the night of Christ's birth (part 2),[108] the story of the shepherds (part 4),[109] the story of

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[103] For a survey of this compilation see *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, ed. Martin McNamara et al., Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum, 13 (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 255-256. It is not quite clear 'whether the conjoining of the Old and New Testament sections [in the Leabhar Breac] is due to Ó Cuindlis [the scribe of the manuscript] or was found by him in his sources', *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 255. The history of the Biblical period in the Leabhar Breac is an example of a cyclified section in a non-cyclic manuscript.

[104] For the component elements of the Old Testament sections and their manuscript transmission see Myles Dillon, 'Scél Saltrach na Rann', *Celtica*, 4 (1958), 1-43: pp. 1-4; and Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 16-20.

[105] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 250, 299.

[106] The 'Infancy Narrative' forms an individual text in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy 24 P 25 (MS 475), Leabhar Chloinne Suibhne, see McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 260-261; for the independent transmission of *Dígal fola Críst* see McNamara, *Apocrypha*, p. 80, and McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 251.

[107] See McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 252-253.

[108] *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. II, ed. Martin McNamara et al., Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum, 14 (Turnhout, 2001), p. 583: 'Do secht n-ingantaib déc in domain in adaig re génir Críst indister budesta' ('Here is related about the seventeen wonders of the world on the night on which Crist was born').

[109] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 329: 'Do scélaib na mbuachalla inso' ('Of the tidings of the shepherds here'). This title is not found in two other manuscripts of the Gospel History, London, British Library, Egerton 1781, and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 E 29 (MS 1134), the Book of Fermoy.

the Magi (part 5),[110] the slaughter of the infants (part 6),[111] the death of Herod (part 8)[112] and the death of Zacharias (part 9).[113] The section on the household of Christ (part 12), which also contains the Abgar Legend, has the title 'Do áirem muinntiri Críst inso' ('Of the enumeration of the household of Christ here') and ends with the comment 'Ár scél bunaid innossa uair tánic scél Éuagair etraind 7 sé'[114] ('Our original story now, because the story of Abgar came between us and it'), which shows a clear awareness of the different strands of the composition. The 'original story' which is then resumed, contains a list of 'pairs' in the New Testament – two Caiaphases, two Philips etc.[115] – and thus continues the list of apostles sharing the same names with which the section on the household of Christ began.

Intertextual coherence between the Gospel History's component parts is provided on the level of contents by the overarching thematic and chronological framework of Biblical History, the immanent whole of the Biblical story to which Carol Clover referred. Decisive formal signals of cyclification are cross-references across a cycle's component parts, as pointed out by Skårup, and some relevant examples occur in the two already published sections of the Gospel History, namely in the Infancy Narrative (parts 3-9) and in the section on the household of Christ and the Abgar legend (part 12). The latter section begins with a reference to the twelve apostles, 'Do áirem muinntiri Críst inso .i. in XII apstal, amal atrubramar riam' ('Of the enumeration of the followers of Christ here, i.e. of the twelve apostles, as we said above'),[116] namely in the immediately preceding (unpublished) section 'Airecc na n-apstal' ('The Finding of the Apostles').[117] Similar cross-referencing occurs in the 'Infancy Narrative'. Thus, a mention of Julius Caesar is followed by the comment: 'Ar ba héside didiu ro gab ardrígi in domain ar tús do Rómánchaib amal atrubramar romainn' ('For he, indeed, was the first of the Romans who

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[110] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 343: 'Incipit do scélaib na ndruad' ('Here begin the stories of the Magi'), the title is also in Egerton 1781 and 23 E 29.

[111] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 375: 'Oided na macraide inso' ('The slaughter of the infants here'), there is a similar title in Egerton 1781 but no title in 23 E 29.

[112] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 413: 'De ord Hiruaith inso' ('Of the death of Herod here'), the title is also in 23 E 29, but not in Egerton 1781.

[113] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 433: 'Oided Zacarias .i. athar Eoin Pauptaist' ('The slaying of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist'), there are no titles in Egerton 1781 and 23 E 29.

[114] Considine, 'Irish Versions', pp. 246, 247.

[115] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 256.

[116] Considine, 'Irish Versions', pp. 246, 247.

[117] This section presents the Apostles' 'names, occupations, tribes, manner in which they were called, and the fulfilment of prophecies': McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 255.

assumed the high-kingship of the world, as we have already related').[118] That Julius Caesar was the first high-king of the Romans, 'Iúil Cesair uero in cétna ardrig na Rómánach',[119] is stated in the first part of the Gospel History, introductory material which consists of six items of 'a historical type on synchronisms and events at the birth of Christ'.[120] The genealogy of Alexander son of Phaleg in part 8, on the death of Herod, is cross-referenced to part 6, on the slaughter of the infants.[121] The narrator also claims that the miracles which took place at the birth of Christ have already been mentioned: 'Is annsin ruc Muiri a mac 7 do-rónta na huli mírbuli at-rubramar remainn' ('Then, Mary brought forth her Son, and all the miracles which we have already related took place'),[122] but, as the editors point out, the point of reference is not exactly clear: 'These 'miracles' are either the silence of nature and the bright shining cloud [mentioned in the immediately preceding paragraph], or the sixteen/seventeen wonders at the birth of Christ inserted earlier in the 'Gospel History' [i.e., in the second part].'[123] Cross-references need not range across the component parts of the Gospel History, but may refer to immediately preceding material. Another such case is the reference to Octavian having reigned for seven years when Tiberius assumed sovereignty, 'amal at-rubramar romainn' ('as we said before'),[124] which probably refers to the immediately preceding paragraph.[125]

The unpublished part 13 of the Gospel History entitled 'Cétproicept Ísu sund'[126] ('Christ's first teaching here') begins with a reference to John the Baptist's incarceration by Herod which is said to have been mentioned previously, 'Íar cur trá Eoin Bauptaist hi carcair la Hiruaith amal

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[118] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 376, 377.

[119] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. II, p. 569.

[120] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 250, and p. 376 with footnote 135.

[121] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 429, 431, 430 with footnote 218, and p. 379.

[122] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 318, 319.

[123] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 318.

[124] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 430, 431, 'Iar mbeth trá Octáuin Áuguist secht mbliadna i rígi amal at-rubramar romainn, ro gab Tibir Céssair iar sin in flaith' ('When Octavian Augustus had reigned for seven years, as we said before, Tiberius Caesar then assumed sovereignty').

[125] McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 430, 431, 'A cind secht mbliadna iar n-éc Hiruaith ba marb Octáuin Áuguist. Tibir Césair iar sin dá bliadain tríchat' ('At the end of seven years after the death of Herod Octavian Augustus died. Tiberius Caesar thirty-two years afterwards'). See similarly *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, p. 343 (Joseph, Mary, and Christ supplied by shepherds with food) with reference to p. 342, p. 383 (Herod as the first foreign king of the Israelites) with reference to p. 375, and p. 431 (the four sons of Antipater) with reference to p. 427. In another instance a cross-reference (Cassius granted the kingship to Herod by treachery), is empty, as the editors observe, see *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. I, pp. 383, 382 with footnote 144.

[126] Leabhar Breac 147ᵇ; I am currently preparing an edition of this part of the Gospel History for the Irish Editorial Board for Publication of Irish New Testament Apocrypha.

atrubramar romainn'[127] ('after John the Baptist had been jailed by Herod, as we related earlier'), but so far I have not been able to identify the point of reference in the preceding text. The fourteen years' overlap of the life of Christ with the reign of Octavian Augustus is also cross-referenced, 'Octauin forsin domun 7 cethri bliadna déc tarrasair Críst dia fhlathius amal atrubramar romainn'[128] ('Octavian [was king] over the world, and Christ lived for fourteen years of his reign, as we have related earlier'), and the reference is again to the synchronisms of the first part of the Gospel History.[129] Furthermore, there is a reference forward to the final section of the Gospel History, *Dígal fola Críst*, on the siege and destruction of Jerusalem: 'co scaíled 7 co dóerad na nIudaide i ndígail fhola Críst amal atbérum inar ndiaid' ('until the scattering and the enslavement of the Jews in punishment for Christ's blood, as we will tell afterwards').[130]

A comprehensive analysis of formal signals of intracyclical cohesion in the Leabhar Breac's Gospel History, or in its Bible History in its entirety, is beyond the scope of this discussion, not least because the full cycle has not yet been published. The few examples just given indicate the methodological validity and the critical potential of the concept of cycle-by-transmission. However, the transmission of the Bible History and of its component parts in the manuscripts is an important methodological reminder that such a cycle may remain fluid. Furthermore it cannot be ruled out that Irish translations and adaptations of foreign apocryphal material may replicate their already cyclified sources.

Whereas the Leabhar Breac's cycle of texts on Biblical History would seem to fulfil all of Skårup's criteria, my next example, the 'classical cycle' in the fourteenth-century Book of Ballymote, is somewhat more problematic.[131] It consists of *Togail Troí* ('The Destruction of Troy', the Irish version of *De excidio Troiae historia* of Dares Phrygius), *Merugud Uilixis* ('The Wandering of Ulysses'), *Imtheachta Aeniasa* ('The Wanderings of Aeneas', the Irish version of Vergil's *Aeneid*), and the

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[127] Leabhar Breac 147[b].

[128] Leabhar Breac 149[a].

[129] See McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I. Evangelia Infantiae*, vol. II, p. 565.

[130] Leabhar Breac 149[a].

[131] This is the 'incipient cycle' that originally sparked off my interest in textual cyclification, see Erich Poppe, *A New Introduction to Imtheachta Aeniasa, the Irish Aeneid: The Classical Epic from an Irish Perspective*, Irish Texts Society, Subsidiary Series, 3 (London, 1995), p. 5 with footnote 5. Here I experimented with a less formal and refined concept of 'cycle' than Skårup's, namely an arrangement of texts 'so as to present a single vast chronologically ordered narrative', derived from Jerome E. Singerman, *Under Clouds of Poesy. Poetry and Truth in French and English Reworkings of the Aeneid, 1160-1513* (New York & London, 1986), p. 134. For a discussion of the status of the *matière de Rome* in twelfth-century French and German literature see Green, *Beginnings*, pp. 153-168, who argues for its 'incipient or episodic fictionality'.

compilation about Alexander the Great.[132] The destruction of Troy is made the chronological point of departure in both *Merugud Uilixis* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, and it is also referred to in the historical prologue to the Alexander-compilation:

> Iar n-indrad 7 discaíled Troíana [...].[133]
> ('After the raiding and the scattering of the Trojans [...]').
> O THAIRNIC tra do Grecaib slad 7 inrad 7 dithlaithriuguid rig cathrach na Frigia .i. in Træ [...].[134]
> ('Now when the Greeks had accomplished the plunder, sacking, and demolition of Phrygia's royal city, namely Troy [...]').
> Is iat ro toghail ardchatair na Frigia .i. Trae Troianda co torcratar taisig 7 flaithi 7 rígraid na hAissia huile.[135]
> ('They [i.e., the Greeks] destroyed Phrygia's capital, namely Troy of the Trojans, so that the leaders and rulers and kings of all of Asia were killed').

The texts thus share a common chronological frame of reference. The protagonists of *Merugud Uilixis* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, Ulysses and Aeneas, have roles to play in *Togail Troí*, and the Achaemenides episode in *Imtheachta Aeniasa* is cross-referenced in *Merugud Uilixis*.[136] There is, however, considerable disagreement in detail with regard to the presentation of Ulysses' adventures with the Cyclops in *Merugud Uilixis* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*,[137] and to the characterisation of Aeneas, both within *Imtheachta Aeniasa* and between it and *Togail Troí*.[138] Furthermore,

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[132] See Robert Atkinson, *The Book of Ballymote [...] with Introduction, Analysis of Contents and Index* (Dublin, 1887), pp. 17-18. For a discussion of this material, with further references, see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical Compositions in Medieval Ireland: The Literary Context', in *Translations from Classical Literature:* Imtheachta Aeniasa *and* Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás, ed. Kevin Murray, Irish Texts Society, Subsidiary Series, 17 (London, 2006), pp. 1-19, and Erich Poppe, 'Mittelalterliche Übersetzungsliteratur im insular-keltischen Kulturraum. Eine komparatistische Perspektive', in *Übersetzen im skandinavischen Mittelalter*, ed. Vera Johanterwage & Stefanie Würth (Wien, 2007), pp. 33-58.

[133] Robert T. Meyer, *Merugud Uilix maic Leirtis*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series, XVII (Dublin, 1958), pp. 1, 10; for the form *Merugud Uilixis* see Barbara Hillers, 'Ulysses and the Judge of Truth: Sources and Meanings in the Irish *Odyssey*', *Peritia*, 13 (1999), 194-223: p. 194 with footnote 5.

[134] George Calder, *Imtheachta Aeniasa, the Irish Aeneid*, Irish Texts Society, 6 (London, 1907), p. 2.

[135] Erik Peters, 'Die irische Alexandersage', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 30 (1967), 71-264: p. 102.

[136] See Calder, *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, pp. 10-14, and Meyer, *Merugud*, p. 3: 'Áirmiter fear do muintir Uilix do dul ar dreimni 7 ar deáithi gurub é in fear sin dorala d'Aeinias mac Ainichis dia mbaí for loingis' ('It is said that one of Ulysses' men went away in frenzy and fear and that was the man whom Aeneas son of Anchises met when he was in exile').

[137] See Poppe, *New Introduction*, p. 9.

[138] See Poppe, *New Introduction*, p. 9; the disagreements within *Imtheachta Aeniasa* are mainly due to the addition to Vergil's account of a prologue which basically follows Dares Phrygius.

there are spaces left blank between *Merugud Uilixis* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa* and between *Imtheachta Aeniasa* and the Alexander-compilation respectively.[139] The four texts of the classical section in the Book of Ballymote thus do not really fulfil Skårup's strict criteria for a cycle, in particular they lack linking cyclic signals. However, I believe that their sequence in the manuscript is not random and that they were intended to form a thematic cluster at least, if not some form of looser cyclic arrangement. In other late manuscripts narratives with events connected with Troy as a common point of reference form loose cycles as well. One example is the fifteenth-century manuscript now consisting of Dublin, Kings' Inns Library MS 12 and 13 which contains *Togail Troí*, *Don Tres Troí*, *Merugud Uilixis*, *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*, and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*.[140] *Don Tres Troí* is a tale 'about the rebuilding of Troy by Astyanax, twenty-three years after the death of Hector, the later fortunes of Troy and its final destruction under Marius and Sulla by the Consul Fimbria (date 85 BC)';[141] *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail* is 'a kind of remscél as well as a continuation of the saga of the Fall of Troy',[142] which concludes with the words: 'conadh iatsin echta 7 oighedha Gréc iar toghail na Troi'[143] ('so that these are the woeful deeds and tragic deaths of the Greeks after the destruction of Troy'). Other examples are Killiney, Franciscan House of Studies (now Dublin, University College Dublin), MS A 11, a perhaps fifteenth-century manuscript, which contains a version of *Togail Troí* and *Imtheachta Aeniasa*,[144] and Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D iv 2 (MS 1223), written probably in the second half of the fifteenth century, which contains *In Cath Catharda*, *Togail Troí*, *Don Tres Troí*, *Finghala Chlainne Tanntail*, *Merugud Uilixis*, *Sgél in Mínaduir*, and *Riss in Mundtuirc*.[145] Further research into the transmission of texts about the history of the Trojans will have to test the viability of the notion of an Irish Troy Cycle, and to delineate the literary and cultural contexts of the

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[139] See Atkinson, *The Book of Ballymote*, pp. 447-449, 486; there is no space left between *Togail Troí* and *Merugud Uilixis*, p. 445.

[140] Compare Pádraig de Brún, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in King's Inns Library Dublin* (Dublin, 1972), pp. 30-33. This manuscript would probably qualify as cyclic.

[141] Mary E. Byrne, 'The Parricides of the Children of Tantalus', *Revue Celtique*, 44 (1927), 14-33: p. 14.

[142] Byrne, 'Parricides', p. 14.

[143] de Brún, *Catalogue*, p. 33.

[144] Compare Myles Dillon et al., *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Franciscan Library Killiney* (Dublin, 1969), pp. 22-23.

[145] Compare Barbara Hillers, '*Sgél in Mínaduir*. Dädalus und der Minotaurus in Irland', in *Übersetzung, Adaptation und Akkulturation im insularen Mittelalter*, ed. Erich Poppe & Hildegard L.C. Tristram (Münster, 1999), pp. 131-144, and Brent Miles, '*Riss in Mundtuirc*: The Tale of Harmonia's Necklace and the Study of the Theban Cycle in Medieval Ireland', *Ériu*, 57 (2007), 67-112. *Riss in Mundtuirc* 'recounts episodes from the classical story of the families of the Theban king Oedipus and the Argive prophet Amphiaraus' (Miles, '*Riss*', p. 67). Miles, '*Riss*', pp. 76-79, points out complex textual relations between *Riss in Mundtuirc*, *Togail na Tebe*, and the third recension of *Togail Troí*.

emergence of such a cyclic treatment of texts about Troy. In the earliest extant manuscript to contain a version of *Togail Troí*, the twelfth-century Book of Leinster, the text is not part of any similarly obvious cyclic arrangement.[146]

Other examples of thematic clusters are the four texts about Mongán in Lebor na hUidre and other manuscripts,[147] as well as the stories about Mo Ling in the Book of Leinster.[148] The latter cluster is followed by a thematically connected sequence of further anecdotes about Irish saints,[149] and preceded by a story about Brigit and a sequence of *exempla*, which is, however, interrupted by the apocryphon *Dá Brón Flatha Nime*.[150] The final *exemplum* is claimed to have been narrated by Brendan,[151] and this may be the associative connection with the stories about Irish saints, beginning with Brigit and Mo Ling. The Book of Leinster opens with an extended historical cluster, a survey of Irish history which consists of *Lebor Gabála Érenn*,[152] the tract on the monarchies of Ireland,[153] and the tract on the Christian kings of Ireland.[154] *Lebor Gabála* itself has been characterized by Mark Scowcroft as what one might now call an open text,[155] and an

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[146] The text of *Togail Troí* in the Book of Leinster is incomplete and breaks off at the end of fol. 244[b], the text is preceded by *dindshenchas* material and followed by *remscél*-texts relating to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and Ulster, see R.I. Best & M.A. O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 4 (Dublin, 1965), p. xvii (there appears to be some blank space before *Togail Troí* begins), and R.I. Best & M.A. O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 5 (Dublin, 1967), pp. ix-xi. One may speculate about an identification of the Trojans with the Ulstermen in the minds of the compilers of the Book of Leinster, as found in the poem 'Clann Ollaman uaisle Emna', and about various thematic connections between *Togail Troí* and the Ulster-material, always assuming that no other thematically unrelated texts had intervened, see Erich Poppe & Dagmar Schlüter, 'Greece, Ireland, Ulster, and Troy. Of Hybrid Origins and Heroes', forthcoming in *Other Nations: Hybridity and Mythology in the Medieval Insular World*, ed. Wendy Marie Hoofnagle & Wolfram R. Keller (Heidelberg), and compare Francis John Byrne, 'Clann Ollaman uaisle Emna', *Studia Hibernica*, 4 (1964), 54-94, pp. 61, 76: 'Clann Ollaman uaisle Emna, / Ulltaig Sléibe lethain Liac, / cined Ír ro-fhial na réimenn: / Tro-fhian fhír na hÉirenn iat. [...] Comoirrdeirc Asia re hUlltaib / im écht, im allad, im uaill.' ('Children of Ollam are the nobles of Emain, the Ulstermen of broad Sliab Liac; the very generous victorious race of Ír – they are the true Trojan band of Ireland. [...] Asia and Ulster are equally famous in deed, in fame and in pride').

[147] See R.I. Best & Osborn Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre. Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin, 1929), pp. 333-337, and Nora White, *Compert Mongáin and Three Other Early Mongán Tales*, Maynooth Medieval Irish Texts, 5 (Maynooth, 2006), p. 11.

[148] Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 5, pp. 1236-1242.

[149] Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 5, pp. 1243-1248, ending with a lacuna in the manuscript.

[150] Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 5, p. 1235 for the story about Brigit, pp. 1222-1234 for the *exempla*, and pp. 1227-1228 for *Dá Brón Flatha Nime*.

[151] Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 5, p. 1234, 'conid hé Brenaind adfét in scel sin'.

[152] R.I. Best et al., *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1954), pp. 1-56.

[153] Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, pp. 56-93, this tract is said to be 'generally found as a continuation of Lebor Gabála': pp. xx-xxi.

[154] Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, pp. 94-99.

[155] See R. Mark Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I: The Growth of the Text', *Ériu*, 38 (1987), 79-140, p. 99: 'The text [of *Lebor Gabála*] falls not only into several major divisions, but into entirely distinct tracts, which came together early but arose from different sources and developed in different ways, sometimes even appearing as independent texts', and R. Mark Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part II: The

analysis of its development from the perspective of cyclification might be rewarding. Other thematic clusters in the Book of Leinster are the texts about Tara[156] and a 'series of seven poems on the kings of Uí Néill' ascribed to Flann Mainistrech.[157] The last two of these poems occur also in the late-eleventh- or early-twelfth-century manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 502, in a group of seven poems arranged under the heading 'Remend rigraide inso sis 7 rig hErenn a hAilich prius' ('the successions of the kings here and the kings of Ireland from Ailech first').[158] Hildegard Tristram has identified in the same manuscript a historiographical cluster, an associative complex of texts relating to the theme of the *sex aetates mundi*, which consists of the core tract on the six ages of the world, four poems following it, and eight final lines of prose.[159] It is tempting to speculate that chronologically arranged historical clusters may have been an inspiration for the later sequential cyclification of narratives.

The unpublished third recension of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* in London, British Library, Egerton 1782, dated to around 1517, may represent a cyclic, and not yet fully integrated, treatment of material relating to Conaire Mór – Flower in his description of the manuscript treats this recension as a single item.[160] All authors who have commented on it

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Growth of the Tradition', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 1-66, p. 1: '*LG* tends to grow from copy to copy, and new recensions develop from the conflation of older ones'.

[156] Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, pp. 112-123. For the Book of Leinster as a document of cultural memory and its redactors' compositional and organisational concerns see Dagmar Schneider, 'The *Book of Leinster* as a Document of Cultural Memory in Twelfth-Century Ireland', unpublished PhD thesis, Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2007, and I wish to thank Dagmar Schlüter (neé Schneider) for many constructive discussions of the Book of Leinster which have informed my presentation here. For a useful characterisation of the concerns of the Book of Leinster, and of its 'single theme', as 'historical, with the proviso that it is history as understood by the men of the twelfth century' see Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'The Irish-Language Manuscripts', in *Treasures of the Library. Trinity College Dublin*, ed. Peter Fox (Dublin, 1986), pp. 57-66: p. 59.

[157] Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 4, pp. 782-814, quotation from Peter J. Smith, '*Mide Maigen Clainne Cuind*: A Medieval Poem on the Kings of Mide', *Peritia*, 15 (2001), 108-144: p. 109. Other poems in the Book of Leinster are also ascribed to Flann Mainistrech, compare, for example, R.I. Best & M.A. O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 3 (Dublin, 1957), pp. 504-515, 590-591, 635-636, found in a larger cluster of historical and religious poems.

[158] Brian Ó Cuív, *Catalogue of Irish Language Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Oxford College Libraries*, part 1, *Descriptions* (Dublin, 2001), p. 199 for the heading and p. 200 for the series of poems.

[159] See Hildegard L.C. Tristram, *Sex aetates mundi. Die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren. Untersuchungen und Texte*, Anglistische Forschungen, 165 (Heidelberg, 1985), pp. 100-101, and her use of the term 'Assoziationskette'. In view of the observation that the second part of Rawlinson B. 502 contains further thematic clusters, see below §4.2, and also uses section headings (compare, for example, Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, pp. 198, 199), its compositional and thematic organisation would certainly repay further study.

[160] See Flower, *Catalogue*, pp. 295-297; for a brief summary of this version with some discussion see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 657-663. Egerton 1782 also contains a sequential arrangement of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* with its prefatory tales, see below §4.1.

agree on the cyclic intention of its compiler: Máire West, for example, has characterised it as 'the final stage of the saga's Middle Irish growth', 'a medley of traditions concerning Conaire Mór, including a king-list, a version of *Tochmarc Étaíne* and extra *dinnshenchas* material, all of which has been grafted on to the essential *togail* tale as contained in Recension II'.[161] As far as I have been able to ascertain on the basis of passages published from this compilation, some cyclic signals occur, at least at the end of the first part, *Scéla Eachada 7 Etaine*,[162] and before the beginning of *Togail Bruidne* proper.[163] Robin Flower has suggested that one motivation for the third recension's compiler, dated by him (and Thurneysen) to probably the twelfth century, may have been the existence of 'certain *remscéla* and the linking up of the main event of the saga, the death of Conaire, with the incidents of another cycle of story [concerning Étaín] represented by these "foretales"'.[164] Although the fully-fledged Irish narrative cycles-by-transmission discussed here are not attested in the earliest extant medieval manuscripts, but rather in fourteenth-century and later ones, the activities of the compiler of the third recension of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, tentatively dated to the twelfth century, as well as the various thematic clusters identifiable in the Book of Leinster and Rawlinson B. 502 indicate the beginnings of the 'cyclic impulse'.[165]

3.4. Welsh Examples
I will now turn to two further examples for cycles-by-transmission in medieval Welsh literature, beyond *Chwedlau Siarlymaen* mentioned

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[161] Máire West, 'The Genesis of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*: A Reappraisal of the 'Two-Source' Theory', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 413-435: p. 414; see also Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 658: 'Das Ziel des Bearbeiters war es, die Geschichte von Ētāin mit der Zerstörung der *bruiden* zu verschmelzen'. Similarly Lucius Gwynn, 'The Recensions of the Saga 'Togail Bruidne Da Derga', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 10 (1915), 209-222, p. 212: '[*Tochmarc Étaíne*] is not an independent text in the MS. [i.e., Egerton 1782], but has been grafted on to the text of 'Togail Bruidne Da Derga' and forms the beginning of this recension'; Gwynn, p. 213, notes that the compilation was 'not very skilfully' executed. Texts of *Tochmarc Étaíne* and of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* are found in Dublin, Trinity College, 1318 (formerly H.2.16), the Yellow Book of Lecan, and in Lebor na hUidre, but are separated by other, unrelated texts.

[162] See Eduard Müller, 'Two Irish Tales', *Revue Celtique*, 3 (1876-78), 342-360, p. 355: 'Scéla immorro Eochada innister sunn 7 Etaine' ('The stories of Eochaid and Étaín are told here').

[163] A title for the preceding parts is given at this point, see Gwynn, 'The Recensions', p. 213: 'Conid hi Serclighi Ailellu ainm in sceuil sin, ocus Tochmarcc Étainiu' ('So the name of this tale is *Ailill's Wasting Sickness and Tochmarc Étaíne*'). Gwynn, 'The Recensions', p. 213, also notes 'an attempt to harmonize the tale'. Ailill's love for Étaín is treated in the text called 'Scéla Ailill 7 Etaine'/'The History of Ailell and Etain' by Müller, 'Two Irish Tales', pp. 350, 355; I am uncertain whether his Irish title has any manuscript authority.

[164] Flower, *Catalogue*, p. 296, and see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 660-661; for the *remscéla* or 'foretales' as transmitted in Lebor na hUidre's version of *Togail Brudne Uí Dergae* see Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'On the *Cín Dromma Snechta* Version of *Togail Brudne Uí Dergae*', *Ériu*, 41 (1990), 103-114: pp. 105-106, 110.

[165] This term is borrowed from Taylor, 'Order from accident', in Besamusca et al., *Cyclification*, p. 60.

above.[166] *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi' are not usually referred to as a cycle, but Edmund Quiggin noted that '[t]he group of four romances in the first class [that is, *Pwyll, Branwen, Manawyddan*, and *Math*] forms a cycle of legends and is called in the manuscript *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* – the Four Branches of the Mabinogi.'[167] *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* and 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi' are, however, modern titles,[168] and the scribe of only one of the two manuscripts which now contain the four texts,[169] namely the Red Book of Hergest, would seem to have indicated that he considered the four branches to be part of the same 'mabinogi', by prefixing to the narrative 'llyma dechreu mabinogi' ('here the beginning of the Mabinogi').[170] The most telling cyclic signals in the *Pedeir Keinc* are the formulaic references to its 'branches': the White Book of Rhydderch and the Red Book of Hergest use the same formulaic phrases to close each branch, but the latter employs additional opening formulae for all four branches, which in the case of the second, third, and fourth branch explicitly number the branches.

White Book of Rhydderch	Red Book of Hergest
	'llyma dechreu mabinogi'[171] ('Here the beginning of the Mabinogi')
'Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing hon yma o'r Mabynogyon'[172] ('And so ends this present branch of the Mabinogi')	'Ac uelly y teruyna y geing honn or mabynogyon'[173] ('And so ends this branch of the Mabinogi')
	'llyma yr eil geinc or mabinogi'[174] ('Here the second branch of the Mabinogi')

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[166] Note that neither the Welsh adaptations of the romances of Chrétien de Troyes nor Chrétien's romances themselves seem to function within tight cyclic structures, see Donald Maddox, 'Cyclicity, Transtextual Coherence, and the Romances of Chrétien de Troyes', in *Transtextualities*, ed. Sturm-Maddox & Maddox, pp. 39-52, and Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Medieval Welsh Tales or Romances? Problems of Genre and Terminology', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 47 (Summer 2004), 41-58.

[167] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 642.

[168] See, for example, Sioned Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi. Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (Llandysul, 1993), p. 17.

[169] The oldest fragments of the *Pedeir Keinc* are found in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 6 part i and 6 part ii, from the second half of the thirteenth century; these are 'one leaf of *Branwen* and one of *Manawydan*, in the same hand and doubtless from the same manuscript', see Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000), p. 254.

[170] John Rhŷs & J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *The Text of the Mabinogion and Other Welsh Tales from the Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford, 1887), p. 1. I take 'mabinogi' here to be a definite noun, the name of the following narratives, following Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Branching Tree of Medieval Narrative: Welsh *cainc* and French *branche'*, in *Romance Reading on the Book. Essays on Medieval Narrative presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. Jennifer Fellows et al. (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 36-50: p. 38; alternatively Davies, *The Four Branches*, p. 17: 'this is the beginning of a mabinogi'.

[171] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 1.

[172] Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi allan o Lyfr Gwyn Rhydderch* (Caerdydd, 1930), p. 27.

[173] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 25.

[174] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 26.

'A llyna ual y teruyna y geing honn o'r Mabinogi'[175] ('And this is how this branch of the Mabinogi ends')	'A llyna ual y teruyna y geinc honn or mabinogi'[176] ('And this is how this branch of the Mabinogi ends')
	'llyma y dryded geinc or mabinogi'[177] ('Here the third branch of the Mabinogi')
'Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing honn yma o'r Mabinogy'[178] ('And so ends this present branch of the Mabinogi')	'Ac uelly y teruyna y geinc honn yma or mabinogi'[179] ('And this is how this present branch of the Mabinogi ends')
	'honn yw y bedwared geinc or mabinogi'[180] ('This is the fourth branch of the Mabinogi')
'Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing honn o'r Mabinogi'[181] ('And so ends this branch of the Mabinogi')	'Ac velly y teruyna y geing honn or mabinogi'[182] ('And this is how this branch of the Mabinogi ends')

Altogether, the redactor of the Red Book appears to have been somewhat more explicit and systematic in his presentation of the Four Branches as a narrative unit. As Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan has reminded us, the image suggested by *cainc* is that of a branch of a tree, and

> it is in the *Pedeir Keinc*, and there alone, that *cainc* is used *explicitly* within a text to describe its divisions [...] it is not used in any remotely similar *literary* context anywhere else in the corpus of Middle Welsh prose narrative.[183]

Lloyd-Morgan has therefore suggested that it is possible that 'no other group of texts possessed [or was perceived as possessing] the same relationship, the same degree of narrative overlap between them'.[184] In France, the semantically comparable term *branche* is employed extensively from the mid-twelfth century onwards, but Lloyd-Morgan has also convincingly argued that it is 'highly unlikely that there was any direct connection between the use of *cainc* in Welsh, and *branche* in French'.[185]

Three of the four branches of the *Pedeir Keinc* begin with the traditional introduction of a main protagonist, but the third branch about Manawydan starts with an elaborate and explicit cyclic signal, an anaphoric reference to the final event of the preceding branch:

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[175] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 48.
[176] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 43.
[177] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 44.
[178] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 65.
[179] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 58.
[180] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 59.
[181] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 92.
[182] Rhŷs & Evans, *Text of the Mabinogion*, p. 81.
[183] Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Branching Tree', p. 38
[184] Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Branching Tree', p. 39.
[185] Lloyd-Morgan, 'The Branching Tree', p. 47.

> Guedy daruot y'r seithwyr a dywedyssam ni uchot; cladu penn
> Bendigeiduran yn y Gwynuryn yn Llundein, a'y wyneb ar Freinc,
> edrych a wnaeth Manauydan ar y dref yn Llundein [...].[186]
> ('When the seven men we spoke of above, had buried the head of
> Bendigeidfran in the White Hill in London, with his face towards
> France, Manawydan looked upon the town in London [...].')

On the narrative surface, the four branches are connected mainly through
the character of Pryderi; and although critics agree on the considerable
narrative breaks and inconsistencies within them, significant unifying
strategies and overaching thematic concerns of the redactor of the text's
extant form have been successfully identified.[187]

The *Pedeir Keinc* are set during a time of crisis in medieval Welsh
history, the reign of Caswallawn, son of Beli,[188] who was king over the
island of Britian when Julius Caesar attempted to conquer it. Caesar's
attempts and his defeat by Cassivelaunus are reported in Geoffrey of
Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* and in its Welsh adaptation, *Brut y
Brenhinedd*.[189] *Brut y Brenhinedd* became in its manuscript transmission
the centre-piece of an 'historical cycle': it is typically preceded by *Ystorya
Dared*, the Welsh version of Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia*,
and followed by *Brut y Tywysogion* 'The Chronicle of the Princes', 'which
opens with an entry designed to link with Geoffrey's closing episodes and
which follows the story down to 1282':[190]

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[186] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 49. Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007), p. 227, suggests that '[t]he Third Branch is, in reality, a continuation of the Second, and no personal name appears in the opening lines (indeed, these may have been one branch originally)'.

[187] See, for example, J.K. Bollard, 'The Structure of the Four Brances of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1975, 250-276; Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1992), pp. 28-59; and Davies, *Four Branches*, pp. 55-65.

[188] See Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 45-46, 50-51, and compare Will Parker, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Oregon House, 2005), p. 370: 'The action [of the *Pedeir Keinc*] is set, as the audience would have undoubtedly been aware, in the final hour of native independence. It represents a passing cultural era, a world that was soon to be vanquished by the legions of Claudius, rendering the victory of Caswallon tragically superfluous.'

[189] See, for example, Neil Wright, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth. I. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 35-42; Henry Lewis, *Brut Dingestow* (Caerdydd, 1942), pp. 44-55; and John Jay Parry, *Brut y Brenhinedd. Cotton Cleopatra Version* (Cambridge Mass., 1937), pp. 70-79.

[190] Brynley F. Roberts, 'Historical Writing', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Jarman & Hughes, pp. 244-247, p. 246; see also Thomas Jones, 'Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh', *Scottish Studies*, 12 (1968), 15-27. The arrangement of Medieval Welsh religious texts in the manuscripts would probably also repay further study. For some useful preliminary considerations of the transmission of the 'Miracles of the Blessed Mary', Gwyrthyeu e Wynvydedic Veir, see Ingo Mittendorf, 'The Middle Welsh Mary of Egypt and the Latin Source of the Miracles of the Virgin Mary', in *The Legend of Mary of Egpyt*, ed. Poppe & Ross, pp. 205–236: pp. 206–210.

Together these three texts, *Ystoria Dared*, the Brut and the Chronicle, present a panorama of Welsh history from the origins of the nation in the mists of the Trojan war, through the period of settlement in Britain, the vicissitudes of fortune under the rule of successive kings, the climax of Arthur's reign, down to the loss of sovereignty.[191]

Cyclic signals connect these texts: the entry linking *Brut y Tywysogion* to *Brut y Brenhinedd* refers to Cadwaladr ap Cadwallon, 'the last king that was over the Britons' and his going to Rome, which takes up the *Brut*'s closing account of Cadwaladr.[192] *Brut y Brenhinedd* begins with a summary of the Trojan war and Aeneas' flight to Italy, as does Geoffrey's narrative.[193] The full narrative of the Trojan war to which this refers, is *Ystorya Dared*, which was first translated some time at the beginning of the thirteenth century as a prelude – or *remscél*, to borrow the Irish term – to *Brut y Brenhinedd*. Furthermore, in a number of manuscripts these three historical narratives are preceded by *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec*, a Welsh version of Petrus Pictaviensis' *Promptuarium Bibliae*, a summary of Old Testament history. It was probably translated between 1350 and 1400, and connects its narrative with *Ystorya Dared* in the final paragraph:

> Ylus vab Tros a vv vrenhin Troya, ac a edeilawd Ylium dinas, ac a'y henwis o'y henw ehun. Ac y hwnnw y bu vab Laomedon vab Ylus. Ac y hwnnw y bu vab Priaf, vrenhin Troya. Ac am hwnnw a'y etiued y traethir yn *Ystorya Daret*.[194]
> ('Ylus son of Tros was king of Troy, and he built the town of Ylium and named it after his own name. And he had as son Laomedon, son of Ylus. And he had as son Priaf, king of Troy. And he and his offspring are treated in *Ystorya Daret*.')

3.5. Norse Examples
Adaptations of Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia* and of Geoffrey's *Historia* also exist in Old Norse, *Trójumanna saga* and *Breta sögur* respectively, translated probably around the end of the twelfth

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[191] Roberts, 'Historical Writing', p. 247.

[192] See Thomas Jones, *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes. Peniarth MS. 20 Version* (Cardiff, 1952), p. 2; Thomas Jones, *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff, 1955), pp. 2-3; and Lewis, *Brut Dingestow*, pp. 207-208.

[193] See Wright, *Historia Regum Britannie. I. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568*, pp. 2-7, Lewis, *Brut Dingestow*, p. 3; and Parry, *Brut y Brenhinedd*, pp. 6-8.

[194] Thomas Jones, *Y Bibyl Ynghymraec. Sef Cyfieithiad Cymraeg Canol o'r 'Promptuarium Bibliae* (Caerdydd, 1940), p. 63.

century.[195] A thoroughly revised β version of *Trójumanna saga*, now known from manuscripts of the fourteenth century, was transmitted cyclically together with *Breta sögur*.[196] In all texts of *Trójumanna saga* β the narrative closes with an explicit cyclic signal, a reference to the following narrative of *Breta sögur* about the settlement of Britain, here quoted from Hauksbók (produced between 1301 and 1314): 'en her eftir hefir sogv fra Enea ok þeim er Bretland bygðv'[197] ('Hereafter now begins the story of Aeneas and those who settled Britain'). *Breta sögur* takes up this cyclic signal: the 'first five paragraphs of the *Historia*, containing the dedication and the description of the British Isles, are replaced [in the *Breta sögur*] by a summary of Vergil's *Aeneid*',[198] here also quoted from Hauksbók: 'Nv er at segia af Enea envm millda at [...]'[199] ('Now it is to say of Aeneas the Mild that [...]'). The juxtaposition of Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia* with Geoffrey's *Historia* was quite common in medieval manuscripts. *De excidio Troiae historia* 'is the single work most frequently associated with Geoffrey's *Historia*: the two occur together in twenty-seven manuscripts. These span all forms of the *Historia*.'[200] Julia Crick has asked the pertinent question: 'To what degree, then, is the association of these widely-circulated texts in the manuscripts inherited or spontaneous?',[201] and Stefanie Würth has suggested that a manuscript in which the two Latin texts were already combined, may have influenced the textual history of *Trójumanna saga*.[202]

An example of a Norse cyclic manuscript is Copenhagen AM 226, fol., produced in the mid-fourteenth century, which contains *Stjórn*, an account of Old Testament history, followed by condensed versions of

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[195] Compare Stefanie Würth, *Der 'Antikenroman' in der isländischen Literatur des Mittelalters. Eine Untersuchung zur Übersetzung und Rezeption lateinischer Literatur im Norden*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, 26 (Basel & Frankfurt, 1998), pp. 38-82; and Stefanie Würth, 'Historiography and Pseudo-History', in *Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, ed. McTurk, pp. 155-172.

[196] Compare Würth, 'Historiography', p. 165, and Würth, *Der 'Antikenroman'*, p. 71: 'die β-Version der *Trójumanna saga* und die *Breta sögur* [bilden] eine Überlieferungsgemeinschaft und dadurch eine fortlaufende historische Darstellung'.

[197] Jonna Louis-Jensen, *Trójumanna Saga*, Editiones Arnamagnaeanae, A 8 (Copenhagen, 1963), p. 238.

[198] Würth, 'Historiography', p. 165.

[199] *Hauksbók udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske Håndskrifter No. 371, 544 og 675, 4°* (København, 1892-96), p. 231.

[200] Julia C. Crick, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*. IV. *Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 38; see also Neil Wright, *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*. II. *The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. xciv-xcvi.

[201] Crick, *Historia Regum Britannie*, p. 38

[202] Würth, *Der 'Antikenroman'*, p. 71, and p. 149: 'Denn da der Geoffreytext in zahlreichen Handschriften mit einer Version des Dares kombiniert wurde, die z.T. beträchtlich von dem in der Ausgabe Meisters repräsentierten Wortlaut abweicht, kann zusammen mit der lateinischen Vorlage der *Breta sögur* ein zweites, interpoliertes Daresmanuskript nach Island gelangt sein, das dann zur Überarbeitung der bereits vorhandenen *Trójumanna saga* benutzt wurde'.

Rómverja saga, *Alexanders saga*, und *Gyðinga saga*.[203] *Rómverja saga*, translated c. 1180, combines Sallust's *Bellum Iugurthinum* and *Coniuratio Catilinae* with Lucan's *Pharsalia*; *Alexanders saga*, originally translated by Brandr Jónsson (fl. 1247-1264), is based on Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*; *Gyðinga saga*, also originally translated by Brandr Jónsson, deals with Jewish history from the death of Alexander to that of Pontius Pilate and is based mainly on the first of the two Apocryphal Books of the Maccabees, on the *Historia scholastica* of Peter Comestor, and on the legend of Pilate.[204] The intention of the compiler of the manuscript Copenhagen AM 226, fol. was to provide a survey of world history from the Creation to the death of Pilate, a *summa historiae* in the form of a wide-ranging compilation which was quite common in fourteenth-century Europe.[205]

My final Old Norse example of a cycle-by-transmission is *Sturlunga saga*, a compilation probably dating to around 1300 and originally consisting of twelve separate works which deal with twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic history. Its compiler has been credited with selecting, conflating, and adapting his materials, changing the order of episodes, and linking them together to create a 'semantic whole'.[206] In his prologue, this 'creative compiler'[207] 'explains his method of linking together many different sagas about events which took place at the same time, placing them more or less in chronological order'.[208] Stephen Tranter has argued that a conceptual analogy to *Sturlunga saga* is the compilation now known as Flateyjarbók, of the end of the fourteenth century, in which a number of already existing works were reshaped, particularly by the prefixing of

> lesser works leading up to the two great Olaf sagas [which] have a
> more or less direct bearing on what the compilers regard as the most

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[203] For a brief description of the manuscript see Würth, *Der 'Antikenroman'*, p. 16.

[204] On these texts see Würth, 'Historiography', pp. 163-169.

[205] See Würth, *Der 'Antikenroman'*, pp. 140-148, and especially p. 148: 'Als Gesamtwerk gesehen, ist die Handschrift AM 226, fol. ein historisches Übersichtswerk von der Schöpfung bis zum Tod des Pilatus, d.h. sie behandelt die gesamte Zeit des Alten Testaments. Trotz des aus der Bibel stammenden chronologischen Gerüsts liegt der Schwerpunkt der Darstellung auf der Historie, während auf eine heilsgeschichtliche Interpretation verzichtet wird. AM 226, fol. repräsentiert eine *summa historiae* in Form jener großteiligen Kompilationen, wie sie im 14. Jahrhundert in ganz Europa verbreitet waren'. The Leabhar Breac's Bible History is another example of this trend.

[206] Bragason, 'Sagas of Contemporary History', p. 433.

[207] This is the term used by Stephen Norman Tranter, *Sturlunga Saga. The Rôle of the Creative Compiler* (Frankfurt, Bern, New York, 1987).

[208] Bragason, 'Sagas of Contemporary History', p. 430; for the text see Jón Jóhannesson et al., *Sturlunga saga*, vol. 1 (Reykjavík, 1946), p. 115; for a translation see Julia H. McGrew, *Sturlunga Saga*, vol. 1 (New York, 1970), p. 55.

important, and lasting achievement of the two kings, the establishing of the Christian faith in Norway.[209]

4. Medieval Irish Critical Concepts of Intertextual Cohesion
4.1. *remscél*
'Cycle', in the two senses discussed above, is a modern concept. Medieval Irish literary critics and scribes did not use it. Their critical discourse on intertextual cohesion included comments on the relation of the texts of immanent cycles as well as the concept and categories of the tale-lists, but also the notions of *remscél* and *scélshenchas* which I will discuss briefly in the following.

The term *remscél* 'foretale, prefatory tale' was applied by medieval Irish literary critics mainly to a group of texts connected with *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.[210] Tom Chadwin has successfully categorized various types of *remscéla* on the basis of their relationship with the narrative of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.[211] Background *remscéla* 'provide information relevant to the text of *TBC*, but do not describe any of the causes of the plot which *TBC* narrates'.[212] Causal *remscéla* 'give causes for the text with which they are associated' and are therefore 'true fore-tales'.[213] '*Remremscéla*' are foretales not to *Táin Bó Cuailnge* itself, but to another of its *remscéla*.[214] Referential *remscéla* cut across these categories and contain a reference 'to an event which occurs *during TBC*, as opposed to describing a cause, whether direct or indirect'.[215]

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[209] Tranter, *Sturlunga Saga*, p. 30; for a discussion of the compositional functions of the *þættir* in Flateyjarbók see Würth, *Elemente*, especially pp. 155-159. The strategies and concerns behind compilations such as Morkinskinna, Fagrskinna, and Snorri's *Heimskringla* and the extent of their cyclification (Skårup's stage (b)) or unification (Skårup's stage (c)) requires further systematic analysis; on these compilations see Jakobsson, 'Royal Biography', pp. 395-397.

[210] There are two lists of *remscéla* to *Táin Bó Cuailnge* now extant, in the Book of Leinster and in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D. 4. 2 (MS 1223), 'while a third is as it were embodied in an actual collection of the *remscéla* themselves which precedes the text of TBC in Eg. 1782' (Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 88), on which see below; in the Yellow Book of Lecan a series of five tales are also called *remscéla* to *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. For a convenient summary of these sources see Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, pp. 248-251; for discussions see Norbert Backhaus, 'The Structure of the List of *Remscéla Tána Bó Cualngi* in the Book of Leinster', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 19 (Summer 1990), 19-26 (see pp. 19-20 for the list in the Book of Leinster); and Tom Chadwin, 'The *Remscéla Tána Bó Cualngi*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 34 (Winter 1997), 67-75.

[211] Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 70; he also helpfully quotes, pp. 70-75, the relevant passages from the individual *remscéla* which establish their connection with *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.

[212] Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 70; to this class belong in his scheme *Aislinge Óengusso*, *Táin Bó Flidais*, *Compert Conchobair*, *Compert Con Culainn*, *Tochmarc Emire*, and *Tochmarc Feirbe*.

[213] Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 72; to this class belong *De Chophur in dá Muccida*, *Echtra Nerai*, and *Táin Bó Regamna*.

[214] See Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 73; to this class belongs only *De Gabáil in tSída*.

[215] Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 74; examples occur in *Compert Conchobair*, *Compert Con Culainn*, and *Táin Bó Regamna*, see pp. 74-75. Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 75, has stressed that 'the classification of a text as a *remscél* [...] cuts across the other means of categorization of texts, in that a *remscél* can come from any of the traditional cycles, and be any of the tale-types listed in the manuscripts'.

The list of *remscéla* to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the Book of Leinster –
which 'proposes to enumerate the twelve remscéla, though in fact it gives
only ten titles'[216] – is part of the text about the finding of the *Táin, Do
Fallsigud Tána Bó Cualnge*, which is then followed by a group of texts
which qualify as *remscéla*.[217] The titles given in *Do Fallsigud* and of the
texts in this cluster of narratives are reproduced in the table below.
However, not all texts in the list of *Do Fallsigud* are actually included in
the cluster of narratives which follows, and the narrative cluster contains at
least two texts – *Fochond Loingse Fergusa meic Roig* and *Longes mac
nUsnig* – which would qualify as *remscéla*, but are not listed in *Do
Fallsigud*. As Norbert Backhaus remarked:

> The list [of *Do Fallsigud Tána Bó Cualnge*] is not in keeping with the
> tales actually transmitted in the LL; in particular, the lack of items
> which would explain the exile of Fergus and the debility of the Ulaid
> during TBC is remarkable.[218]

list of *remcscéla* in *Do Fallsigud*	actual sequence of *remscéla* transmitted in the Book of Leinster
1. *De Gabáil in tsída*	1. *De Gabail in tSida*
2. *De Aslingi in Meic Óic*	
3. *De Chophur na da Muccida*	2. *De Chophur in da muccida*
4. *De Tháin Bó Regamain*	
5. *De Echtra Nerai*	
6. *De Chompirt Conchobuir*	
7. *De Thochmurc [Ferbae]*	
8. *De Chompirt Con Culaind*	
9. *De Thain Bó Flidais*	3. *Táin Bó Flidais*
	4. *Tain Bó Fraich*
10. *De Thochmurc Emiri*	
	5. *Fochond Loingse Fergusa meic Roig*
	6. *Tochmarc Ferbae*
	7. *Longes mac nUsnig*

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[216] Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 88.
[217] See Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 5, pp. 1119-1170. This cluster is followed by one
further text belonging to the Ulster Cycle, *Mesca Ulad*, pp. 1171-1187 (where it breaks off owing to a
lacuna), and then by a series of King Tales.
[218] Backhaus, 'The Structure', p. 21.

It should be noted that the narrative point of reference for the *remscéla*, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, is separated from them in the Book of Leinster.[219] Cyclical and codicological cohesion by sequential arrangement within the manuscript is thus only effected for one group of *remscéla*. The text of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* itself is followed by 'several other tales of the Ulster cycle [...], forming, as it were, a sequel to the Táin'.[220] The last item in this sequel is the tale explaining the debility of the Ulstermen during the raid, *Nóenden Ulad 7 Emuin Machae*, which would probably qualify as a background *remscél*, but is not listed in *Do Fallsigud*.

Tom Chadwin has stressed that the medieval Irish classification of texts as *remscéla* 'serves to create a cycle of texts: the *remscéla* to *TBC*, together with *TBC* itself, constitute what could be called the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* cycle, in that the texts are all bound together'.[221] In the Book of Leinster, this cycle is realized in two separate thematic clusters of texts. In the early-sixteenth-century manuscript Egerton 1782 a more systematic sequential ordering of twelve *remscéla* to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* – the number proposed in the Book of Leinster – has been effected, since the *remscéla* actually precede *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the following order:[222]

1. The tale of Derdriu and the sons of Uisnech, 'Cid dia mbui longes mac n-Uisnigh'
2. The tale of the vision of Conchobor, a variant of *Tochmarc Feirbe*, '[B]ui Conchopur macc Neusa aidqi n-ann ina chotlud con facco ní ind oiccbein chuicci'
3. *Aislingi Oengusai*
4. '[B]ui Ailill ocus Meudb aidqi somnoi hi Raith Cruachan', the tale also known as *Tain Be Aingen* or *Echtra Nerai*
5. *Do chuphur in da muccado*
6. *Tain bo Ragamna*, the tale of the encounter between Cú Chulainn and the Morrígan
7. *Coimpert Conchobuir*
8. *Coimpert Conculaind*
9. *Tain bo Dartada*
10. *Tain bo Regamnai*, the tale of the abduction of the daughters of Regamon
11. *Tain bo Flidais*
12. *Táin Bó Fraích*
13. The tale relating the recovery of the *Táin*[223]
14. *Táin Bó Cuailnge*

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[219] See R.I. Best & M.A. O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1956), pp. 261-399.

[220] Best & O'Brien, *Book of Leinster*, vol. 2, p. vii.

[221] Chadwin, '*Remscéla*', p. 75 where he also remarks: 'This close association of texts works on all levels: *remscéla* are linked to other *remscéla* [...]; *remscéla* are linked to *TBC*, whether by supplying background, cause, or reference; *TBC* is linked to the *remscéla*, as illustrated by the reference in *TBC* to *Táin Bó Regamna*. Here is intertextuality in its most concrete form, whereby texts have little meaning when divorced from the texts with which they are inextricably associated.'

[222] See Flower, *Catalogue*, pp. 285-293; the list reproduces the manuscript's spellings and some of Flower's characterisations of the tales.

[223] This version of *Do Fallsigud* does not contain a list of *remscéla*, compare Kuno Meyer, 'Die Wiederauffindung der Táin Bó Cúalnge', in *Archiv für Celtische Lexikographie*, vol. 3, ed. Whitley Stokes & Kuno Meyer (Halle & London, 1905), pp. 2-6: pp. 3-4.

The difference in format between the Book of Leinster and Egerton 1782 with regard to the arrangement of *remscéla* may reflect a diachronically developing cyclical impulse, which would tie in with the observation that fully-fledged narrative cycles-by-transmission are not found in earlier manuscripts such as the Book of Leinster. Therefore it may be no coincidence that Egerton 1782 also contains the only extant copy of the (probably) cyclic third recension of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (see above, §3.3.). However, the Book of Leinster as well as Lebor na hUidre employ the concept of *remscél* – the latter with regard to the narrative universe of *Togail Bruide Da Derga*[224] – and this indicates their redactors' sense of intertextuality and cyclification of the immanent type. Furthermore, if Thurneysen's and Flower's twelfth-century date for the compilation of the third recension of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* is correct, the emergence of a cyclical impulse may considerably predate the attestation of its results in extant manuscripts.

4.2. *scélshenchas*
The use of *remscél* in Lebor na hUidre and the Book of Leinster is not the only contemporary evidence for the existence of a critical idiom in the twelfth century; there is also the famous colophon to *Táin Bó Cúailnge* in the Book of Leinster and the paired compounds *scélshenchas* 'narrative lore' and *laídshenchas* 'poetic lore' in Rawlinson B. 502, which were probably coined by that manuscript's compiler.[225] These terms would appear to be attested there only once, in the collocations *scélshenchas Lagen* 'narrative lore of the Leinstermen' and *laídshenchas Lagen* 'poetic lore of the Leinstermen' respectively. The manuscript contains an extensive section on Leinster genealogies, with the heading 'Incipiunt pauca de nominibus Laginensium 7 de regibus 7 originibus 7 de genelogiis 7 (di)uissionibus eorum',[226] which closes with narrative material headed

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[224] For the relevant passages see Ó Cathasaigh, 'On the *Cín Dromma Snechta* Version', pp. 105-106, 110: 'Orgain Brudne Uí Dergae trá iarna remscélaib .i. iar Tesbaid Etaíne ingine Ailello 7 iar Tromdáim Echdach Airemón 7 íar nAisnéis Síde Meic Óic do Midir Breg Leith ina síd' (''The Destruction of Úa Dergae's Hostel' then after its prefatory tales, that is, after 'The Absence of Étaín daughter of Ailill', and after 'The Burdensome Company of Echaid Airem', and after 'The Instruction Regarding the *Síd* of Mac Óc Given by Midir in his *Síd*''), 'Conid Bruden Uí Derga cona fúasaitib 7 cona slechtaib 7 cona remscélaib amal adfiadar i llebraib insin anúas a bith samlaid' ('So that the above is *Bruden Uí Derga* with its developments and versions and prefatory tales as books say it to be thus').

[225] Compare Edel Bhreatnach, 'Kings, the Kingship of Leinster and the Regnal Poems of *laídshenchas Laigen*: A Reflection of Dynastic Politics in Leinster, 650-1150', in *Seanchas. Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in Honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. Alfred P. Smyth (Dublin, 2000), pp. 299-312: p. 299. For the fundamental importance for the medieval Irish *literati* of *senchas* as the 'traditional lore of Irish culture: topographical [...], legal [...], and genealogical' and the semantic range of the term, see Francis John Byrne, 'Senchas', in *Historical Studies*, 9, ed. John Gerard Barry (Belfast, 1974), pp. 137-159, and p. 138 for the quotation.

[226] Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, p. 189; this is fol. 64^ra1 of the manuscript.

'Scelshenchas Lagen inso sis' ('there follows the narrative lore of the Leinstermen'),[227] namely the five narratives *Orguin Denna Rig*, *Tairired na nDessi*, *Esnad Tige Buchet*, *Comram na Cloenfherta*, and *Orgguin Tri Mac nDiarmata meic Cerbaill*.[228] Since overt cyclic signs in the form of verbal links between these texts appear to be lacking, their grouping is best characterised as a thematic cluster. The probably incomplete sequence of fifteen poems with the heading *laídshenchas Lagen*[229] are separated by unrelated texts from the Leinster genealogies, including *scélshenchas Lagen*, and are preceded by three narratives which deal with characters from Leinster prehistory, namely Echu mac Éndai Chennselaig, Brandub mac Echach, and Máel Odrán.[230] The Book of Leinster contains twenty-three poems of the genre *laídshenchas Lagen*, but 'unlike in R[awlinson B. 502], [they are] grouped together without any specific title'.[231] Furthermore, this sequence of poems is interrupted at least twice by other, arguably unrelated texts.[232]

James Carney thought-provokingly and perceptively suggested the possibility of a wider and more general application of the concept *scélshenchas*, which includes (most of [?]) Quiggin's 'pure literature' and Dillon's 'imaginative literature':

> In oral tradition the genealogies, even in the pagan period, must have been heightened by stories and traditions of the more important characters. When this type of material came to be written it was sometimes known as *scélshenchas*, which may be translated 'ancient tradition in narrative [prose] form'. Such material may be regarded as dramatised or fictionalised history; its primary purpose was usually not entertainment but instruction, and even the most obviously fictional elements may carry a didactic message. The didactic intent, the emphasis on 'history', has as a result that this type of material rarely achieves a satisfactory literary form.[233]

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[227] Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, p. 192; this is fol. 71^vb13 of the manuscript.

[228] See Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, pp. 192-193, reproducing his orthography of the titles; this cluster is followed by a chasm in the manuscript.

[229] See Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, pp. 184-185, and Bhreatnach, 'Kings', pp. 300-301; this is fol. 47^vb5 to 50^vb49 of the manuscript, followed by a chasm.

[230] See Ó Cuív, *Catalogue*, pp. 183-184.

[231] Bhreatnach, 'Kings', p. 301, and see pp. 301-302 for a catalogue of this corpus, and Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, pp. 129-260.

[232] Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, pp. 165-201, 247-251.

[233] James Carney, 'Language and Literature to 1169', in *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 1, *Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford, 2005), pp. 451-510: p. 479. On the interaction between *senchas* and narrative see also Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland to c. 800', in *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Kelleher & O'Leary, pp. 9-31, p. 23: 'The Irish schools were deeply committed to the study of *senchas* 'knowledge of the past'. Genealogy was an abiding concern, and early records survive in the form of pedigrees, synchronisms and origin legends. Many of

The format envisaged here by Carney for the transmission and development of genealogical lore in oral tradition is at least partly realized in the written historiographical material of 'Do Flathiusaib hÉrend' ('Concerning the Monarchies of Ireland') as characterised by Mark Scowcroft:

> Entries vary in extent and complexity from a terse sentence stating a king's name, the length of his reign and the circumstances of his death [...] to elaborate accounts of battles waged, forts built, plains cleared, lakes and rivers suddenly brought forth (and just as suddenly named) and lineages begotten. Anecdotes, *dindsenchas*, even miniature sagas occasionally grace a text that otherwise [...] pursues its subject with dogged monotony.[234]

As will emerge in the following discussion, I find myself in full agreement with James Carney about the functional characterization as 'fictionalised history' of the narrative texts which would belong to this category. The full critical potential of a modern critical concept of *scélshenchas* still needs to be explored.[235]

5. Cyclicity, *memoria*, and *historia*

I will now return to medieval Irish cycles, both immanent and by transmission, and to some critical implications of their cyclicity for our view of their conceptual and generic status. I am not the first to have observed that many of the main protagonists of the tales of the various immanent cycles – and of what Quiggin termed 'pure literature' and Dillon 'imaginative literature', and what is now often simply called 'medieval Irish literature' – were assigned by the medieval *literati* at least approximate dates within the chronology of Irish history and integrated into their massive genealogical schemes, and thus accepted as historical.[236]

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the more significant ancestral figures have several tales devoted to them, and the historical tales are sometimes classed as 'cycles of the kings''. With regard to Carney's reservations about the 'satisfactory literary form', Donnachadh Ó Corráin's important reminder ('Historical Need and Literary Narrative', in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies, Oxford, 1983*, ed. D. Ellis Evans et al. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 141-158: p. 141) should be taken to heart that '[s]cholars far too frequently neglect or ignore the important consideration that much of Irish literature, including *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, must be understood within the context of the highly developed *historical culture* of the mandarin classes who produced it' (my emphasis).

[234] Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I', pp. 118-119.

[235] For further thoughts on the applicability of this concept see now Schneider, 'The *Book of Leinster* as a Document of Cultural Memory in Twelfth-Century Ireland', pp. 68-121.

[236] Compare, for example, Gregory Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle: Historiography or Fiction?', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 40 (Winter 2000), pp. 1-20, p. 7: 'the more important characters and events in the Ulster Cycle were accepted as historical by the medieval literati'; see also Erich Poppe, 'Medieval Irish Literary Theory and Criticism. The Evidence of Narrative Prose', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis & Ian Johnson (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 302-309;

These dates have been one central criterion for modern critics to define the chronological and narrative horizon of the immanent cycles.

The narrative universe of the Ulster Cycle provides a straightforward example, and a few references must suffice: 'The Annals of Inisfallen record the division of Ireland into five parts under Conchobor, Ailill, and others, thereby recognizing the political situation depicted in the Ulster Cycle. They also record the death of Conchobor, and the death of Cú Chulainn, 'the bravest of the heroes of Ireland''.[237] The tract on the monarchies of Ireland, 'Do Flathiusaib hÉrend', mentioned in passing above, similarly refers to the five provincial kings of Ireland and places them at around the time of Christ's birth.[238] The Annals of Tigernach, in a section on early world history perhaps compiled in the tenth century, provide information about the same division of Ireland and about Conchobor and Cú Chulainn, including a very brief chronology of the main events in the latter's life in the entry about his death.[239] The absolute dates to be assigned to these, and other, entries are somewhat problematic and contradictory, and it must suffice here to say that they are more or less consistent with the story known from other contexts, that Conchobor's death was caused by a vision of the Crucifixion.[240] The Ulster Cycle is thus

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and Erich Poppe, 'Literature as History / History as Literature: A View from Medieval Ireland', in *Literature as History / History as Literature. Fact and Fiction in Medieval to Eighteenth-Century British Literature*, ed. Sonja Fielitz & Wolfram Keller (Frankfurt, 2007), pp. 13-27, for a preliminary discussion of the argument developed in greater detail here. For the interface of historical and narrative genres in one specific manuscript, the Book of Leinster, see Schneider, 'The *Book of Leinster* as a Document of Cultural Memory', p. 121: 'tale and *senchas*, i.e. genealogies and king-lists, interact on a synchronic level in the same manuscript: while the genealogies and king-lists function as a reference system, the tales flesh out the bare facts'.

[237] Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle', p. 7, and compare Seán Mac Airt, *The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B. 503)* (Dublin, 1951), pp. 30-31.

[238] Compare Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 1, p. 90: 'Is hí seo tra amser inro génair Crist mac Dé bí do thessargain in chiniuda doendai. Na coidedaig iar sein .i. Conchobor mac Factna. Corpre Nia Fer. Tigernach Tebannach. Cú Ruí mac Daire. Ailill mac Mátach' ('This is the time in which Christ, the son of the living God, was born to deliver the human race. The provincial kings thereafter, namely Conchobor mac Fachtna, Cairpre Nia Fer, Tigernach Tétbannach, Cú Roí mac Dáire, Ailill mac Mágach'). See also R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, vol. 5, Irish Texts Society, 44 (Dublin, 1956), pp. 298-301.

[239] Compare Whitley Stokes, 'The Annals of Tigernach. The Fragment in Rawlinson B. 502', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 374-419: pp. 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 419.

[240] See Meyer, *Death-Tales*, pp. 8, 9: 'Robói dano isin chuntabairt sin céin robo beō .i. secht mbliadna 7 nīrbo engnamaid, acht a airisium inna suidi nammā .i. naco cūala Crīst do chrochad do Iudaidib' ('In that doubtful [*better:* perilous] state, then, he [Conchobor] was as long as he lived, even seven years; and he was not capable of action, but remained in his seat only, until he heard that Christ had been crucified by the Jews'). For further examples compare Stokes, 'Tidings of Conchobar', p. 22; Anne O'Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, vol. 6 (Dublin, 1983), p. 1596, a poem added in the margin to the Martyrology of Tallaght, synchronising the reign of Julius Caesar with the birth of Christ and Conchobor; and the synchronisms contained in the section about Christ's first teaching in the Gospel History in Leabhar Breac, fol. 149[a].

placed in time around the birth and death of Christ.[241] It is likely that material about the Ulster Cycle continued to be added to the annalistic and historiographical data.[242] The exact details of this process of accretion are not relevant to my argument – what is relevant is that medieval Irish annalists, historians, and scholars attempted, with more or less success, to integrate the personnel of the narratives about their country's past into their own chronological systems. In *Auraicept na n-Éces* 'The Scholars' Primer', a textbook for prospective poets and *literati*, the reign of Conchobor is used as a point of reference for purposes of dating,[243] and there is at least one instance in which the account of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is assigned higher authority than other conflicting traditions.[244] An example for the use of Ulster heroes in the genealogies is Conall Cernach, who is made the ancestor of, for example, the Conailli of Muirthemne, of the kings of Dál nAraidi, and of the Loígis.[245] The Finn Cycle is situated in the third century AD.[246] The kings of the Kings' Cycles proper range from the third century

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[241] Other historiographical material, for example the tract on the kingship of Ireland, gives conflicting information. For details and discussion see John V. Kelleher, 'The Táin and the Annals', *Ériu*, 22 (1971), 107-127; Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 95, and for a convenient survey of the annalistic evidence D.P. Mc Carthy, ,'Chronological Synchronisation of the Irish Annals', available at https://www.cs.tcd.ie/Dan.McCarthy/chronology/synchronisms/annals-chron.htm (accessed 7/1/2008), under AD 1-84. In this context, the manipulation identified by Gisbert Hemprich of the chronology and sequence within the *réim ríoghraidhe*, the list of the kings of Ireland, in order to accomodate characters and texts of the Ulster-cycle is instructive for the Irish *literati*'s integrative concerns, see Gisbert Hemprich, 'Die "Könige von Irland". Fiktion und Wirklichkeit', unpublished PhD thesis, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, 2005, pp. 301, 528-529.

[242] Note, for example, that the eleventh-century poet Gilla Cóemáin included a reference to the death of Conchobar, '.Uii. mbliadna .xl.at cain. / o gein Crist bás Conchobuir' ('Forty-seven fair years from the birth of Christ the death of Conchobor') in his poem 'Annálad anall uile' ('All the annal-writing heretofore') on various Irish kings from the pre-Christian era to the eleventh century: see Best & O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster*, vol. 3, p. 499; and Peter J. Smith, *Three Historical Poems Ascribed to Gilla Cóemáin. A Critical Edition of the Work of an Eleventh-Century Irish Scholar*, Studien und Texte zur Keltologie, 8 (Münster, 2007), p. 190.

[243] George Calder, *Auraicept na n-Éces. The Scholars' Primer* (Edinburgh, 1917, reprint Blackrock, 1995), pp. 55, 182. For isolated references to Ailill, Briccriu, and Conall Cernach in the law texts see Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 362-363.

[244] Donald E. Meek, '*Táin Bó Fraích* and Other 'Fráech' Texts: A Study in Thematic Relationships. Part I', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 7 (Summer 1984), 1-31: pp. 25-26, with reference to Whitley Stokes, 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas. First Supplement, Extracts from the Book of Lecan', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 135-167, p. 137: 'Ni head sain a fhir, acht la Coincul[ainn] dothoit a comrac usci ar Tain bo Cuailnce' ('But this is not the truth of it, for he [i.e., Fráech] fell by Cú Chulainn in a water-combat during the driving of the cows of Cúailnge').

[245] Compare, for example, M.A. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1962), p. 87; Alan Bruford, 'Cú Chulainn – An Ill-made Hero', in *Text und Zeittiefe*, ed. Hildegard L.C. Tristram (Tübingen, 1994), pp. 185-215: p. 197; and Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, [review of O'Sullivan, *The Book of Leinster*, vol 6], *Studia Hibernica*, 24 (1984-88), 190-197.

[246] Compare, for example, Whitley Stokes, 'Second Fragment (Rawlinson B) A.D. 143-361', *Revue Celtique*, 17 (1896), 6-33: pp. 7, 8, 13, and p. 21 for an entry relating to Finn's death; Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 34; Joseph Falaky Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw. The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1985), p. 41.

B.C. to the eighth century AD.[247] The Mythological Cycle consists of a small corpus of narratives about supernatural beings of Irish prehistory.[248]

Gearóid Mac Eoin has stressed that 'certain references in the annals known from [some of] these sagas were themselves derived from the sagas' and he has characterised the Annals of Tigernach as 'notoriously saga-infected'.[249] However, what may be a problem for some modern critics, 'to know where fact ends and fiction begins'[250] in this material, is insubstantial to my argument, since I am concerned with medieval perceptions of the texts and their claims to historical veracity. The massive overlap of history and invention in the texts belonging to the narrative cycles, but also in other learned genres, has of course been noted before, and the concept 'pseudo-history' has gained some critical currency. This concept, however, still implies a modern value judgement and a modern concern with a demarcation between fact and fiction which is, I think, potentially misleading for the historian of medieval Irish textual culture.[251] The development of modern ideas about the relationship between medieval Irish texts and historical reality and of their historical (un)reliability still needs to be traced. Eugene O'Curry's stand in favour of factual truth in 1861 was

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[247] Compare Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'Orality and Literacy in some Middle-Irish King-Tales', in *Early Irish Literature – Media and Communication*, ed. Stephen N. Tranter & Hildegard L.C. Tristram (Tübingen, 1989), pp. 149-183: pp. 149-150.

[248] Compare, for example, Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, pp. 52-54. Much relevant additional material is transmitted in medieval learned genres, such as the lore of place-names (*dindshenchas*) and of personal names (*Cóir Anmann*) or *Lebar Gabála Érenn* 'The Book of the Taking (*or* Settlement) of Ireland', in which the ancient Irish supernatural beings acquire a status arguably similar to the gods of classical antiquity in, for example, Vergil's foundation myth of Rome in the *Aeneid*.

[249] Mac Eoin, 'Orality and Literacy', p. 180, and see also p. 183: 'The truth is that the Middle-Irish author had very little information about seventh-century characters and events apart from the anecdotes he was using and other parallel tales. But the picture provided by these, as interpreted by the saga authors, came to be accepted as the true history of the time and as such was inserted into the developing annalistic compilations by scribes who were glad to find any material to fill the vacuum which existed for most of the century.'

[250] Mac Eoin, 'Orality and Literacy', p. 183; see also Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part I', p. 129, and Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part II', p. 46.

[251] Compare, for example, P. W. Joyce, *Old Celtic Romances* (Dublin & London, 1920), p. iv: 'Some of these tales [given in the medieval tale-lists] were historical, *i.e.* founded on historical events, and corresponded closely with what is now called the historical romance; while others were altogether fictitious — pure creations of the imagination. But it is to be observed that even in the fictitious tales, the main characters are always historical, or such as were considered so'. The concepts of 'synthetic history' and 'pseudo-history' were coined by Eoin Mac Neill in 1921 and Thomas F. O'Rahilly in 1946 respectively, according to Gisbert Hemprich, 'Dichtung und Wahrheit. Das Problem verläßlicher historischer Quellen im irischen Mittelalter', in *Keltologie heute. Themen und Fragestellungen*, ed. Erich Poppe (Münster, 2004), pp. 153-168: p. 156. For further discussion compare Hemprich, 'Dichtung und Wahrheit'; for a useful survey of some nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarly opinions see Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), pp. 260-285. For helpful working definitions of 'fiction' see Green, *Beginnings*, p. 4, and Ralph O'Connor, 'History or Fiction? Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas', *Medieval Scandinavia*, 15 (2005), 101-169: p. 108. I must thank Ralph O'Connor for sending me a copy of his article.

already qualified[252] and answers continued to waver between Quiggin's 'pure literature' – whatever this may imply in the final analysis – and some sort of pseudo- or semi-history. Recent engagements with the medieval perceptions of the functional and generic claims of this range of texts have led to significant changes in the critical paradigm. Gregory Toner, for example, has convincingly argued that the author of the earliest version of *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the centre-piece of the Ulster Cycle, intended to 'construct a history of the cattle-raid of Cooley following normal medieval historiographical practices'.[253]

In the following, I will present some further evidence to support my suggestion that the majority of medieval Irish narratives not only formed interconnected narrative universes, but were considered by their authors to be parts of a massive project of learned, collective *memoria* intended to preserve the country's past as narrated history, within the textual genre of *historia* – which must be kept strictly separate from modern notions of historical veracity and documentation, but must also be distinguished from a detached antiquarian interest in a remote past.[254] As Máire Ní Mhanonaigh has stressed, the 'engagement [of the compilers of medieval Irish manuscripts] with the past as exemplified in their recording of earlier texts takes the form of an active ongoing dialogue with the work of previous generations'.[255]

I will begin with the definition of *historia* by Isidore of Seville – an author whose works were diligently read and used in Ireland.[256] For him, *historia* was a textual, narrative genre:[257]

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[252] See O'Curry, *Lectures*, p. 239: the so-called 'Historical Tales' 'are all true in the main', although often 'mixed with minor incidents of an imaginative character', and see also p. 242.

[253] Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle', p. 6, see also pp. 4-5, for a useful survey of relevant aspects of *Táin*-criticism. Compare also James Carney's contention ('Language and Literature', p. 479) that the medieval written versions of stories and traditions about characters known from genealogical sources 'may be regarded as dramatised or fictionalised history' quoted above (§4.2), and similarly James Carney, 'Early Irish Literature: The State of Research', in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. Gearóid Mac Eoin, Anders Ahlqvist & Donncha Ó hAodha (Dublin, 1983), pp. 113-130, p. 116: '*Táin Bó Cuailnge* is [...] neither fiction nor history, but an amalgam of both. It could be regarded as possessing the truth of a historical novel, a novel written many centuries after the events it portrays, but adhering more or less closely to a skeletal history of the past.'

[254] For a useful discussion of some problems inherent in a definition of 'antiquarianism' see Clare O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations. Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c. 1750-1800* (Cork, 2004), pp. 1-10.

[255] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland', p. 35.

[256] Compare Luned Mair Davies, 'Isidore of Seville', in *Celtic Culture*, vol. 3, ed. Koch, pp. 1025-1026.

[257] For an instructive discussion of some problems of Isidore's concept of *historia* see Hans-Werner Goetz, '"Geschichte" im Wissenschaftssystem des Mittelalters', in Franz-Josef Schmale, *Funktion und Formen mittelalterlicher Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt, 1985), pp. 165-213: pp. 182-184; on *historia* in the Middle Ages more generally see p. 208: '*Historia* war [...] *narratio*, deren Gegenstand die historischen Fakten, die *res gestae*, und deren Ziel die Bewahrung erinnerungswürdiger Taten waren. *Historia* war die historische, das heißt am Zeitablauf (*ordo temporis*) orientierte Erzählung als formuliertes Ergebnis wissenschaftlicher Betätigung.' For further aspects of a medieval notion of

Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur.

('A history [*historia*] is a narration of deeds accomplished; through it what occurred in the past is sorted out.')[258]

Isidore also uses the plural *historiae*, for the 'monuments' which preserve the memory of things done: 'Historiae autem ideo monumenta dicuntur, eo quod memoriam tribuant rerum gestarum' ('And for this reason, histories are called "monuments" [*monumentum*], because they grant a remembrance [*memoria*] of deeds that have been done').[259] Martin Irvine has therefore stressed that Isidore treats *historia* 'as a form of written or textualized memory'.[260] Furthermore, Isidore emphasised *historia*'s claim to truthfulness: 'historiae sunt res verae quae factae sunt' ('histories are true deeds that have happened')[261] – thus distinguishing them from *argumenta* 'plausible narration' and *fabulae* 'fable':

argumenta sunt quae etsi facta non sunt, fieri tamen possunt; fabulae vero sunt quae nec factae sunt nec fieri possunt, quia contra naturam sunt.

('plausible narrations are things that, even if they have not happened, nevertheless could happen, and fables are things that have not happened and cannot happen, because they are contrary to nature.')[262]

Under the heading 'Of the use of history', Isidore points out that histories are normally produced with some kind of didactic intention for their own present, and that therefore histories of the pagan past will retain some value:

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historia which impact on my arguments, note also Päivi Mehtonen, *Old Concepts and New Poetics. Historia, Argumentum, and Fabula in the Twelfth- and Early Thirteenth-Century Latin Poetics of Fiction*, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, 108 (Helsinki, 1996), p. 65: 'In the Middle Ages the basic materials of history were not "facts" in the sense of the term but *digna memoria*, things made worthy of memory by their pertinence to moral experience. Uplifting exemplification, rather than factual accuracy in the modern sense, was then one important function of history'; and O'Connor, 'History', p. 116: 'ever since Herodotus, historians had claimed the right to insert dialogue, dramatise situations, and add love-episodes, all in the name of rhetorical embellishment or *amplificatio*, without necessarily compromising the veracity of the underlying narrative'.

[258] *Etym.*, I, xli.1; Stephen A. Barney et al., *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 67.

[259] *Etym.*, I, xli.2; Barney et al., *The* Etymologies, p. 67.

[260] Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 240.

[261] *Etym.*, I, xliv.5; Barney et al., *The* Etymologies, p. 67.

[262] *Etym.*, I, xliv.5; Barney et al., *The* Etymologies, p. 67.

Historiae gentium non inpediunt legentibus in his quae utilia dixerunt. Multi enim sapientes praeterita hominum gesta ad institutionem praesentium historiis indiderunt, siquidem et per historiam summa retro temporum annorumque supputatio conprehenditur, et per consulum regumque successum multa necessaria perscrutantur.

('Histories of peoples are no impediment to those who wish to read useful works, for many wise people have imparted the past deeds of humankind in histories for the instruction of the living. Through histories they handle a final reckoning back through seasons and years, and they investigate many indispensible matters through the succession of consuls and kings.')[263]

In the Hiberno-Latin context, a definition of *historia* very close to Isidore's occurs in the seventh-century computistical manual *De Ratione Conputandi*: 'historia, in qua narrantur gesta rerum', here as part of a fourfold division of 'necessaria [...] in ecclesia dei', namely *canon diuinus*, *historia*, *numerus*, and *grammatica*, which is ascribed to Augustine.[264] The same fourfold division is found in the *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae* under the heading 'Quatuor uiae sunt lectionis' ('There are four ways of reading'),[265] but also in Irish vernacular legal texts and in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (see below, pp. 50-52).

There is an important second conceptual aspect to medieval *historia*, namely its role in Biblical exegesis at the level of literal or historical meaning.[266] As a Hiberno-Latin example I quote just one passage from the glosses on the Psalms in Rome, Vatican Library, Codex Palatinus Latinus 68:

FECIT LUNAM IN TEMPORA [...] quae utilitas secundum historiam? Id est ad alia animalia nutrienda, quae in die uel in plenilunio non audent a cubiculis uenire.[267]

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[263] *Etym.*, I, xliii; Barney et al., *The* Etymologies, p. 67.

[264] Maura Walsh & Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's Letter* De Controversia Paschali *and the* De Ratione Conputandi, Studies and Texts, 86 (Toronto, 1988), p. 117. In the possibly Insular *Ars Laureshamensis* Isidore's definition of *historia* as 'enarratio rei gestae' is quoted and contrasted with *fabula*, see Bengt Löfstedt, *Ars Laureshamensis. Expositio in Donatum Maiorem*, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaeualis, XL A (Turnhout, 1977), p. 6.

[265] Martha Bayless & Michael Lapidge, *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 14 (Dublin, 1998), pp. 134, 135, and see p. 226 for further attestations of the fourfold scheme.

[266] Compare, for example, Goetz, '"Geschichte"', p. 196: 'Die *historia* war Geschichtsbericht, nämlich die faktische Darstellung des Geschehens in der Bibel, zugleich aber die erste und grundlegende Auslegungsart (*prima significatio*), die wörtliche Auslegung jeder wahren Faktenerzählung, sie war symbolischer Erzählsinn (*significatio narrationis*) und wollte das Faktum nicht nur erzählen, sondern auch verstehen'.

[267] Martin McNamara, *Glossa in Psalmos. The Hiberno-Latin Gloss on the Psalms of Codex Palatinus Latinus 68 (Psalms 39:11-151:7). Critical Edition of the Text together with Introduction and Source*

('What is its [i.e., the moon's] use on the literal level? Namely in order to allow other animals to feed who during the day or in full moon do not dare to leave their places of rest.')

The Old Irish loan word *stoir* (or *stair*), which is derived from Latin *historia*, not surprisingly has 'literal / historical meaning' as one of its two early meanings, the other being 'historical account'.[268] The first is, for example, realized in the 'Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter' and its theory of the fourfold sense of Scripture:

> Atá cetharde as toiscide isnaib salmaib .i. cétna stoir ocus stair tánaise, síens ocus morolus. Cétna stoir fri Duíd ocus fri Solomon ocus frisna persanna remépertha, fri Saúl, fri Abisolón, frisna hingrintide olchena. Stoir tánaise fri Ezechiam, frisin popul, frisna Machabda. Síens fri Críst, frisin n-eclais talmandai ocus nemdai. Morolus fri cech nóib.
> ('There are four things that are necessary in the psalms, to wit, the first story, and the second story, the sense and the morality. The first story refers to David and to Solomon and to the above-mentioned persons, to Saul, to Absalom, to the persecutors besides. The second story to Hezekiah, to the people, to the Maccabees. The sense [refers] to Christ, to the earthly and heavenly church. The morality [refers] to every saint.')[269]

The Latin equivalents of *cétna stoir* and *stair tánaise*, *prima historia* and *secunda historia* respectively, occur in Hiberno-Latin, for example, in the so-called *Bibelwerk*[270] – which, incidentally, provides important evidence that 'the notion of the Bible *as a single work* was familiar to Gaelic ecclesiastics'.[271] The vernacular exegetical triad *stoir* 'literal/historical meaning', *síans* 'sense/mystical meaning', and *morolus* 'morality/moral

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Analysis, Studi e Testi, 310 (Città del Vaticano, 1986), p. 214. On medieval Irish concepts of Psalter exegesis see McNamara, *Glossa in Psalmos*, pp. 57-68, and Martin McNamara, 'Tradition and Creativity in Early Irish Psalter Study', in *Irland und Europa. Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin & Michael Richter (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 338-389: pp. 364-367.

[268] See E.G. Quin et al., *Dictionary of the Irish Language, based mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials. Compact Edition* (Dublin, 1983), s.v. *stair*.

[269] Kuno Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, Anecdota Oxoniensia, Medieval and Modern Series, 8 (Oxford, 1894), pp. 30, 31 with 'sense' in the second-but-last sentence for Meyer's 'meaning', following McNamara, 'Tradition and Creativity', p. 364.

[270] See McNamara, 'Tradition and Creativity', p. 365. The notion of a two-fold historical sense seems to be confined to texts emanating from Ireland, see McNamara, 'Tradition and Creativity', pp. 364-365.

[271] Padraig P. Ó Néill, *Biblical Study and Mediaeval Gaelic History*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History, 6 (Cambridge, 2003), p. 3, my emphasis, see also p. 2 for '[Biblical] books traditionally grouped together, for example the four Gospels and the fourteen Pauline Epistles'.

interpretation'[272] is also found, for example, in two related Old Irish glosses to the Milan Commentary on the Psalms in Milan, Codex Ambrosianus C 301 inf., together with *stoir* in the meaning 'historical account':

> innastoir air is ed asdulem dún doengnu · instoir
> ('of the histories, for it is the history [i.e., the literal or historical sense] that is most desirable for us to understand')[273]
> issamlid léicfimmini doibsom aisndis dintsens 7 dinmoralus ecoir frisinstoir adfiadamni
> ('it is thus we shall leave to them [i.e., others] the exposition of the sense and the morality, if it be not at variance with the history that we relate')[274]

The most interesting and telling attestations of *stoir* for our purpose, however, occur outside the Old Irish glosses in legal texts on poets and in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, in vernacular variations on the fourfold division of learning we have already met in Hiberno-Latin texts. The legal texts define 'canon, grammar, history, and enumeration (?)' as the 'four parts of knowledge of poetry', and *sdair* (a later spelling of *stoir*) specifically as 'the cattle-raids and the destructions, and the thirty major tales and the sixty minor tales':

> ceithre ranna feasa na filidheachta [...] .i. canoin. 7 gramadach. 7 sdair 7 rim. [...] IS i in sdair. .i. na tana 7 na toghla 7 na tricha primscel 7 na tri fichit foscel.[275]
> ('Four parts of knowledge of poetry, [...] that is, canon, grammar, history, and enumeration. [...] this is history, namely the cattle-raids and the destructions, and the thirty major tales and the sixty minor tales.')

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[272] Compare McNamara, 'Tradition and Creativity', p. 364, for the English translations.

[273] Whitley Stokes & John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol. 1, *Biblical Glosses and Scholia* (Cambridge, 1901, reprint Dublin, 1975), p. 13 (= Ml 14d7).

[274] Stokes & Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, vol. 1, p. 13 (= Ml 14d10).

[275] Liam Breatnach, *Uraicecht na Ríar. The Poetic Grades in Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series, II (Dublin, 1987), p. 159; for the second passage see D.A. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin, 1978), vol. 3, p. 1106. For the translation of *rím* as 'enumeration'/'enumerating' see Breatnach, *A Companion*, p. 173. However, *rím* might mean 'computation' here and in the following passage from *Lebor Gabála*, compare Erich Poppe, '*Grammatica*, *grammatic*, Augustine, and the *Táin*', in *Ildánach, Ildírech. A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, ed. John Carey et al. (Andover & Aberystwyth, 1999), pp. 203-210: pp. 206-207; Peter J. Smith, 'Early Irish Historical Verse: The Evolution of a Genre', in *Irland und Europa im Früheren Mittelalter. Texte und Überlieferung. Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages. Texts and Transmission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin & Michael Richter (Dublin, 2002), pp. 326-341: p. 337, with examples from historical verse; and Insular Latin *rimarius* with the sense 'computist', for which see Walsh & Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's Letter*, p. 33, footnote 126.

Lebor Gabála contains a poem with a prose-introduction about four divisions in the Irish language which would appear to combine grammatical and legal lore:[276]

> Ceithri randa dono acon lucht eolais forsin gaeidelg seo rotheb Gaeidel 7 ceithri hanmanda foraib Seanchus Mor 7 breatha Nemead Aei Chearmna 7 Aei Chana in ceathrumad 7 canoin ainm na renna [*variant* randa] sin ar med a fis 7 a roscad. Tri chaecad ogam 7 na remenda .i. rem nena 7 na duile feada 7 inas dir doibh. In rann aile dono .i. gramadach a hainm ar imad a sofhis Uair is si is tur eolais in labarta cirt. Na feasa dono 7 na foirfeasa 7 na togla 7 in trichaid scel 7 in .lx. foscel 7 inas dir doib. In tres rann immorro sdair a hainm side uair is inti luaiter scela 7 coimgnida. Bretha Cai immorro cona himtheacur in ceathramad rann 7 rim a hainm amal asbert in fellsom isna randaib sea:
> > Ceithri renda [*variant* randa *vel. sim.*] raitear de
> > for saide na gaeidilge
> > Canoin gramadach is sdair
> > 7 rim cona robail
> > [...]
> > Is i in sdair fa stiuir feasa [*variant* mesa *vel sim.*]
> > na feasa no foir easa [*variant* forbessa *vel sim.*]
> > tana togla tricha scel
> > 7 tri fichit foiscel[277]

('There are four divisions upon Irish, that Gaedel fashioned, among the learned, and four names upon them. Senchas Mór, Bretha Nemed, Ái Cermnai and Ái Cana the fourth – and *Canóin* is the name of that division, for the quantity of its knowledge and its aphorisms. Three fifties its ogams and its declensions (*reimenna*), that is, *Reim Nena* and the Books of Letters and that which belongs to them – the second division, then, is named *Gramadach*, for the great quantity of its learning, for it is the guide of correct speech. The Feasts and Sieges and the Destructions, and the thirty tales and the sixty sub-tales and

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[276] For references to the legal texts arguably referred to here, see Breatnach, *Companion*, pp. 162-163, 170-174.

[277] This is a text of the relevant passage from the Book of Lecan, p. 536 = f. 268v, presented by Abigail Burnyeat as part of her paper '*Grammatica* in *Lebor Gabála*; the 'four divisions of Gaelic learning' and the account of the founding of the Gaelic language' given at the 13th International Congress of Celtic Studies, Bonn, July 2007. I am most grateful to Abigail Burnyeat for the generous permission to reproduce her text and her translation here and for discussing the passage with me. See also R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, vol. 2, Irish Texts Society, 35 (London, 1939), pp. 54, 56, 118-119, for his version of the texts, from which the variants for the second quatrains are taken, and pp. 141-142 for his discussion of the passage.

that which belongs to them – the name of the third division is *Stair*,
for it is in it that tales and synchronisms are discussed. Bretha Caí
with its arrangement is the fourth division, and it is called *Rím*, as the
poet said in these verses:

> Four divisions are said of it / amongst the scholars of Irish: /
> *Canóin*, *Gramadach* and *Stair* / and *Rím* with its great efficacy.
> [...]
> *Stair*, it was an esteemed guide [*variant* it was a guide with
> judgement], / is the Feasts, the Sieges, / Cattle Raids, Destructions,
> thirty tales, / and sixty sub-tales.)[278]

Here *stair*/*stoir* is not only defined as one area of knowledge necessary for
the learned, but its range is also further exemplified with reference to the
narrative categories of the tale-lists and to the major and minor tales, *scéla*,
which make up the repertoire of the learned poet[279] and thus to the main
body (or, in modern parlance, cycles) of what has come to be called
'medieval Irish literature'. These passages therefore provide us with
welcome and instructive evidence which convincingly links the notion of
historia / *stoir* to well-known native narrative genres. The exact semantic
demarcation of *stoir* and *scél* requires further analysis, but at least for the
scholars responsible for the propagation of the theories about a fourfold
division of learning, *stoir* would appear to be a superordinate category of
learned historiographical narrative activities, with *scéla* as constituent
elements.[280]

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[278] The translation is Abigail Burnyeat's; for an alternative translation of the variant *fa stiur mesa* as
'under the guidance of judgement' see *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. (1) *mes(s)*; Seán Mac Airt,
'*Filidecht* and *Coimgne*', *Ériu*, 18 (1958), 139-152: p. 145, reads 'Is í an stair ro sdiúir mesa' ('History (?
predecent) has guided opinions') following a version printed by A.G. van Hamel, 'On Lebor Gabála',
Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie, 10 (1915), 97-197: p. 134, see also p. 145 for a brief discussion of the
passage. I wish to thank Dagmar Bronner for discussing the passages from *Lebor Gabála* with me and for
the reference to *DIL*'s (1) *mes(s)*. On the meaning of *coimgne* compare Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp.
123-127, who suggests, p. 126, that it may denote 'items of traditional historical knowledge'. A taxonomy
of medieval Irish textual genres, including 'togla, tána, tochmorca', is also given in the *dindshenchas* of
Carmun, see Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, part 3 (Dublin, 1913, reprint 1991), p. 20, but
without any further critical considerations. I wish to thank Máire Ní Mhaonaigh for reminding me of this
text.

[279] Compare Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 115-123 for a discussion of *fo-scéla* and their relation to *prím-
scéla*, in the sources used by him the ratio 30 : 60 does not occur, but *prím-scéla* regularly outnumber *fo-
scéla*. It is probably no coincidence that the first two items of version A of the tale-list, 'destructions' and
'cattle-raids', for which see Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 41, and also pp. 64, 65, are also the only two
narrative categories mentioned in the legal texts; in the poem in *Lebor Gabála* the addition of two further
categories is probably due to metrical considerations.

[280] In a note in a fifteenth-century manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 512, *stair* and
scél, together with *arramainte*, are treated as a critical triad of equal status, with reference to Macrobius,
see Brian Ó Cuív, 'Scél : arramainte : stair', *Éigse*, 11 (1964-66), 18. Here *scél* seems to have undergone
a semantic development and is equated with *fabula*: 'In scel imorro ni firinne e, 7 is ni is cosmail re
firinne' ('*scél* is not the truth, but it is something like the truth'). *Arramainte* is equated with *argumentum*

The problem of a text's status as *historia* is mooted in the well-known and often discussed Latin colophon to the Book of Leinster's version of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*,[281] where the contrast drawn by the commentator between *historia* and *fabula* would seem to imply a conventional perception of the preceding narrative as *historia*.[282] It is tempting to think that for this scribe and scholar, the momentous political and cultural changes of the twelfth century[283] entailed a shift in his perception of the narrative tradition and that its status as *historia* was no longer self-evident for him.

I believe that the concept of *historia*, and of vernacular *stair*, as historical account or, more generally, textualised *memoria* was part and parcel of the medieval Irish *literati*'s mind-set and specifically of their approach to narrative.[284] Decisive evidence for the medieval Irish *literati*'s perception of the texts they produced is provided by the linking of *stoir* with the various genres which make up their narrative repertoire, as well as by the provision of a chronological and genealogical context for the

('innisidh na neche do fetfaidhe <d>o denam gen go ndernadh iat', '[it] relates things which could be performed even though they were not performed'), and *stair* 'is the revelation of things which in truth were performed' ('An stair imorro foillsiugad na <n>ethedh do reir firinne do-rinnedh') and because of its positive truth value it is accepted by theology and philosophy.

[281] See Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1967), p. 136.

[282] Compare Erich Poppe, 'Reconstructing Medieval Irish Literary Theory: The Lesson of *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 37 (Summer 1999): 33-54, pp. 36-37; Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle', p. 8; Pádraig Ó Néill, 'The Latin Colophon to the 'Táin Bó Cúailnge' in the Book of Leinster: A Critical View of Old Irish Literature', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 269-275: p. 274; and Ann Dooley, *Playing the Hero. Reading the Irish Saga* Táin Bó Cúailnge (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2006), pp. 195-201. In a seventh-century genealogical text the term 'fabula' appears to be used in a more neutral sense 'legend', perhaps 'lore', see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Creating the Past. The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), 177-208, p. 199: 'De Fabulis Con[n]acht Muman 7 de Ratione na n-Iros'.

[283] See, for example, Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Rise of the Later Schools of *Filidheacht*', *Ériu*, 25 (1974), 126-146, and, for a few succinct cues, Damian Bracken & Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, 'Preface', in *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century. Reform and Renewal*, ed. Damian Bracken & Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (Dublin, 2006), pp. 11-12: p. 11. For comments on possibly changing perceptions of texts in twelfth-century Ireland, see Máire Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Bounderies: Irish Written Culture Around the Year 1000', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 53/54 (2007) (= *Crossing Bounderies. Croesi Ffiniau. Trafodion y XIIfed Gyngres Astudiaethau Celtaidd Ryngwladol 24-30 Awst 2003, Prifysgol Cymru, Aberysstwyth*, ed. Patrick Sims-Williams & Gruffydd Aled Williams), 87-101: p. 101. The endorsement of *gairdiugud* 'entertainment' in the twelfth-century *Acallam na Senórach* (see below, §6) is another case in point. Traces of foreign influences on twelfth-century Irish thinking in the field of literary theory still need to be proven, but it is arguably tempting to look for some acquaintance with ideas emerging outside Ireland about the viability of 'literary fiction', which have often been located in the twelfth century; compare, for example, H. R. Jauss, 'Zur historischen Genese der Scheidung von Fiktion und Realität', in *Funktionen des Fiktiven*, ed. Dieter Henrich & Wolfgang Iser, Poetik und Hermeneutik, 10 (München, 1983), pp. 423-431; G.T. Shepherd, 'The Emancipation of Story in the Twelfth Century', in *Medieval Narrative. A Symposium*, ed. Hans Bekker-Nielsen et al. (Odense, 1979), pp. 44-57; and Green, *Beginnings*, pp. 1-34.

[284] Conceptual links between secular *memoria* and liturgical *memoria* may repay further scrutiny, compare, for example, Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Memoria in der Gesellschaft und in der Kultur des Mittelalters', in *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, ed. Joachim Heinzle (Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1994), pp. 297-323, esp. pp. 307-312.

protagonists of their narratives. I therefore suggest that they perceived as *historia* (most of) the texts belonging to the various cycles discussed earlier and traditionally classified as medieval Irish 'literature', with all the problematic connotations of this modern term. Their narratives formed part of a collaborative project of a narrative *memoria* for Ireland, by the creation of chronologically and intertextually related accounts of their country's past, which transcends modern generic boundaries of (fictional) literature and (true) history.[285] This project was collaborative in a virtual sphere: all contributors had access to a basic chronological framework, the immanent whole of Irish history, but were able to fill in individually the gaps they perceived. The keen interest of the medieval Irish in the past of their own country has, of course, often been commented on before, and here I only need to quote Edmund Quiggin's memorable phrase: 'No people on the face of the globe have ever been more keenly interested in the past of their native country than the Irish'.[286] As to the textual genres involved, Quiggin himself noticed overlap and interference between literary 'sagas' and 'serious historical compositions',[287] and critics' awareness of this tension led to the creation of the concepts of 'pseudo-history' and 'synthetic history'.

Medieval Icelandic textual culture would seem to provide some instructive analogies for my interpretation of the Irish situation: Vésteinn Ólason has suggested that the creation of the medieval *Íslendingasögur* 'clearly formed part of a larger project aimed precisely at creating a history for the Icelanders':[288]

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[285] My interests here therefore differ considerably from, for example, Seán Ó Coileáin, 'Some Problems of Story and History', *Ériu*, 32 (1981), 115-136.

[286] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 630. Impressive evidence for the longevity and importance of the historical and historiographical approach to medieval Irish narratives is provided by their use by Geoffrey Keating (Seathrún Céitinn, c. 1580-1644) in his monumental *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*. For an instructive instance of source-criticism see Geoffrey Keating, *The History of Ireland*, vol. II, ed. Patrick S. Dinneen, Irish Texts Society, 8 (London, 1908), p. 174: 'Is mó saoilim an chuid-se don scéal do bheith 'n-a fhinnscéal fhilidheachta ioná 'n-a stair' 'I think that this part of the story [*scéal*] is more a folktale than a historical story [*stair*]', and for the term *finnscéal filidheachta* see also Geoffrey Keating, *The Three Shafts of Death* (Dublin, 1931), p. 233.

[287] See Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 630. Compare also Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage*, p. 4, who stressed that according to medieval Irish views there is no difference between the kings' sagas and historiography – '[z]wischen Königsage und Geschichte ist nach der irischen Auffassung kein Unterschied' – and this statement certainly needs to be expanded to include the narratives of other cycles as well.

[288] Vésteinn Ólason, 'Family Sagas', p. 112. The emphasis is placed differently by Torfi H. Tulinius, *The Matter of the North. The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth-Century Iceland*, The Viking Collection, 13 (Odense, 2002) who argues, p. 219, that the *Íslendingasögur* are literary fictional constructs which represent the interpretation and rewriting of the past 'by Icelandic (pseudo-)historians in the 1230s', see also p. 294: 'Like the legendary sagas, the Icelandic family sagas are also fictions, but the degree of complexity with which they mediate reality is greater. The *fornaldarsögur* project the aspirations and preoccupations of the thirteenth century onto heroes of the distant past, in quite an overt fashion. The *Íslendingasögur* also project a certain ideal into the past, but into the near past. They also project the

The main characteristic of the narrative technique of the *Íslendingasögur* is that the stories are narrated as if they were history. [...] The *Íslendingasögur* participate in what might be termed the textualization of Icelandic history and, in a larger context, the textualization of world history.[289]

Margaret Clunies Ross approvingly summarises Preuben Meulengracht Sørensen's similar views:

Meulengracht Sørensen characterises the saga in terms of its transformation of past events into fictive form, but in a fashion that proclaims both the narrative's truthfulness and its traditional base. His study is concerned to show how the saga form supports the impression the modern reader gains (presumably along with medieval Icelandic audiences) that sagas are true histories. [...] Icelandic saga writers [...] transformed the traditionally oral transmission of true *fræði* ['knowledge, learning'] into the fictive narrative of prose sagas. Thus the historical past, which was recognised as lost, came to be recreated as narrative and as literature. History became literature and literature was history. [... As] Meulengracht Sørensen has rightly asserted, medieval Icelanders recreated the past as saga literature and that literature became history for them.[290]

But Clunies Ross also adds the important qualification that

an enlarged sense of medieval Icelanders' sense of history and historicity [is required] to include the dimension of the supernatural, whether that is expressed in a pagan or a Christian idiom or at the level of beliefs, like sorcery, that could be accommodated to either religious faith.[291]

All this is highly applicable to the majority of medieval Irish narratives – note Gearóid Mac Eoin's contention that 'the picture provided by these [anecdotes and parallel tales about the seventh century], as interpreted by

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tensions and preoccupations of thirteenth-century society, but in a more covert fashion'. But he also points out, p. 64, the ambiguous status of 'fiction' and 'historical truth' with regard to different audiences: the so-called *lygisögur* ('lying sagas') which were told at the wedding at Reykjahólar, 'were not true historial accounts but rather fabrications for the audience's amusement, though regarded as true by some'.

[289] Vésteinn Ólason, 'Family Sagas', p. 105.

[290] Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes. Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, vol. 2, *The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, The Viking Collection, 10 (Odense, 1998), pp. 49-50.

[291] Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, p. 81; O'Connor, 'History', p. 107, similarly points out that 'it is not enough simply to assume that stories which we find unbelievable today were disbelieved by mediaeval Icelanders', with reference to Ármann Jakobsson, 'History of the Trolls? *Barðar Saga* as an Historical Narrative', *Saga-book*, 25 (1998-2001), 53-71.

the [Irish] saga authors, came to be accepted as the true history of the time'.[292] Possible conceptual parallels between Old Norse *fræði* and *fróðleikr* 'wisdom, learning, especially about the past'[293] and medieval Irish *senchas* 'tradition, lore', the craft of the scholars and historians who fashioned the medieval edifice of early Irish history, may repay further comparative and typological study.

Jürg Glauser has described the *Íslendingasögur* as a medium of cultural memory which he connects with a necessary awareness of historical difference and a precise moment in history, the loss of Icelandic independence to Norway in 1262-4[294] – and his discussion would appear to have significant typological and comparative potential for the assessment of medieval Irish textual production not only of the twelfth century.[295] The preservation of texts, and of the memorable past itself, has of course also been linked to moments of cultural crises by Irish literary historians; one only needs to refer here to William O'Sullivan's often quoted characterisation of the Book of Leinster as 'the last fling of the learned ecclesiastics of the unreformed Irish church'.[296] Another promising comparison between Icelandic and Irish approaches might be established

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[292] Mac Eoin, 'Orality and Literacy', p. 183.

[293] Compare, for example, Diana Whaley, 'A Useful Past: Historical Writing in Medieval Iceland', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 161-202: p. 165. The generic and conceptual status of Middle Welsh narratives, and especially of *Pedeir Keinc*, as 'literature' requires further analysis; see Parker, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, pp. 66-71, 269-276, 292-293, for the identification of significant layers of 'tribal history' and genealogical lore in the *Pedeir Keinc*, and p. 67, for the suggestion that 'it was as 'history' rather than 'fairy-tale' that the Mabinogi would have been classified in the minds of its twelfth-century audience. In other words, the events represented in the Four Branches were believed to have *actually occurred*'. For Beli Mawr and genealogical links which connect the narrative universe of the *Pedeir Keinc* to the pre-history of Wales, see, for example, Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 3rd edition (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 288-289.

[294] See Jürg Glauser, 'Sagas of the Icelanders (*Íslendinga sögur*) and *Þættir* as the Literary Representation of a New Social Space', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Clunies Ross, pp. 203-220, and, for example, p. 204: 'The differentiation of three chronological levels is accordingly of significance for this preliminary characterization of the *Islendinga sögur* and *þættir*. Firstly there is the 'saga era' (ninth to eleventh centuries), the period of the fictional events; secondly the 'writing era' (thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries), the time of the initial recording in writing of individual texts, and of the formation of genres; and thirdly the 'era of memory' (fourteenth to early twentieth centuries), being the time of the transmission of the texts. A central aspect of all the *Islendinga sögur* and *þættir* is this coming to terms with the past, this construction, and therefore interpretation, of history and cultural memory'. For useful considerations of the interaction of history and myth in *Íslendingabók* see Pernille Hermann, '*Íslendingabók* and History', in Pernille Hermann et al., *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia, 1 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 17-32.

[295] See, for example, Glauser, 'Sagas of the Icelanders', p. 212: 'At times when, for reasons of historical development, the tradition becomes less self-evident, there is an increased need for explanation. This can lead to a codification of knowledge about the past, a process which can be clearly discerned in the Icelandic compendia of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries'.

[296] William O'Sullivan, 'Notes on the Scripts and Make-up of the Book of Leinster', *Celtica*, 7 (1966), 1-31: p. 26. But it must not be forgotten that other periods had their own reasons for the creation and preservation of texts too; for perceptive comments on the situation around 1000 see Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Bounderies'.

with regard to the status of *Landnámabók* and of the king-lists of medieval Irish tradition (*réim ríoghraidhe*) respectively, which have both been seen as providing native narrative history with a conceptual backbone and orientation:

> *Landnámabók* mentions the names of c. 430 persons. [...] At a first glance *Landnámabók* seems to consist of a dry list of names and places, but a closer look reveals that it contains a number of small tales, many of them integrated into a larger narrative context in one or other of the sagas of Icelanders. Because of this Walter Heinrich Vogt suspected that these little episodes (*þættir*) were the origin of Icelandic narrative tradition and that the sagas were an expanded form of these episodes.[297]

As argued so far, narratives presented and perceived as *historia* serve as a textualised *memoria* of Ireland's past. However, Isidore had also pointed out that one function of *historia* was the 'instruction of the present' ('ad institutionem praesentium', *Etym.*, I, lxiii), and it has been successfully demonstrated that the past of medieval Irish genealogy, historiography, and hagiography has been shaped to meet the needs of their redactors' own time.[298] A narrative 'instruction of the present' is explicitly authorised in the originally tenth-century tale *Airec menman Uraird maic Coise* 'The Stratagem of Urard mac Coise'. It tells how the poet Urard mac Coise (d. 990) cleverly manipulates the king of Tara, Domnall mac Muirchertaig (d. 980), by reciting his narrative repertoire in the form of a tale-list with one new title in it, an 'obscured [*or* allegorical] tale' about a poet and a king of Tara of former times which Urard had prepared to draw attention to his own current plight. As expected, Domnall asks Urard to narrate this particular tale. The transition from Urard's embedded narrative back to the frame is effected by an angel, who establishes the equation between the characters of the two narrative strands. This then leads to the result desired by Urard. The conventional role of the angel as legitimating agent is

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[297] Würth, 'Historiography', pp. 158-159. For the importance of the Irish king-lists for the medieval Irish mind-set and for the organisation of Irish 'Sammelhandschriften', such as Lebor na hUidre and the Book of Leinster, see Gisbert Hemprich, 'Das Gedicht *A éigsi Banba na mbend* von Giolla Íosa Mac Firbhisigh (gest. 1301) und die irische *Réim ríoghraidhe*-Tradition', in *Kelten-Einfälle an der Donau*, ed. Birkhan, pp. 255-278: pp. 262-265.

[298] See, for example, Ó Corráin, 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative'; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Legend as Critic', in *The Writer as Witness*, ed. Tom Dunne, Historical Studies, 16 (Cork, 1987), pp. 23-38; Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry. The History and Hagiography of the Monastic* Familia *of Columba* (Oxford, 1988); Pádraig Ó Riain, *The Making of a Saint. Finbarr of Cork 600-1200*, Irish Texts Society, Subsidiary Series, 5 (London, 1997); and Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Der Schein, der trügt: Die irische Heldensage als kirchenpolitische Aussage', in *New Methods in the Research of Epic. Neue Methoden der Epenforschung*, ed. Hildegard L.C. Tristram (Tübingen, 1998), pp. 143-151.

exploited to establish a specific understanding of his narrative, namely its applicability to the narrator's/author's present, and the embedded narrative is thus authorised as an *exemplum* for appropriate present conduct on the basis of a narrative precedent.[299] Urard's own precedent is clearly invented, and thus fictitious[300] – and this poses interesting problems for the legitimacy of a creative invention of a past. I am currently uncertain whether Urard's embedded tale can be considered to be a *historia* in the strict sense, because of its fictitiousness, or whether medieval Irish literary critics were aware of a special fictitious narrative category *argumentum*/*airec menman*, but this problem does not distract from the text's over-all relevance as a meta-narrative legitimisation of the applicability to the present of narratives about the past.

The invention of a past is admittedly different from its adaptation during the transmission of a narrative about it, but it is interesting to note that Catherine McKenna has suggested that the different acounts of Mac Con Glinne's vision in the Leabhar Breac version of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* are a narrative vindication of textual and semantic fluidity not only in this tale's transmission.[301] If we accept 'New Philology''s contention that variance and fluidity is at the heart of (at least one strand of) the medieval understanding of the text and of textual authority,[302] then an Irish redactor of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* has formulated this principle with astonishing clarity. His version of the tale would emerge as an exposition of important narrative and interpretative principles and resembles in this

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[299] Compare Poppe, 'Reconstructing Medieval Irish Literary Theory', pp. 44-47. For an example from *Acallam na Senórach* of the past as an exemplum for the present in a negative sense see Geraldine Parsons, 'The Structure of *Acallam na Senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 55 (Summer 2008), 11-39: pp. 18-20. For the authenticating role of angels see Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients. Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca & London, 1997).

[300] In this context the following passage from the 'Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter' is informative, Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, pp. 28, 29: 'Ceist. Cid aní is *argumentum*? Ní anse. 'Acute mentis inventum,' 'airecc menman áith' [...]. Ceist. Cia torbatu frisind-airnechta argumenti? Ní anse. Do aissnéis inna céille dochoscethar tria cumbri m-bríathar, ut dicit Isidorus: 'Argumenta sunt quae caussas rerum ostendunt. Ex brevitate sermonum longum sensum habent' ('Question. What is *argumentum*? Not difficult. Acute mentis inventum, 'a sharp invention of the mind' [...]. Question. For what use were arguments invented? Not difficult. To set forth through short word the sense which follows, ut dicit Isidorus: 'Argumenta sunt quae caussas rerum ostendunt. Ex brevitate sermonum longum sensum habent.''). The same explanation and ascription to Isidore is found in the *Eclogae Tractatorum in Psalterium* of about A.D. 800, see Martin McNamara, 'Psalter Text and Psalter Study in the Early Irish Church (A.D. 600-1200)', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 73 C (1973), pp 201-298: pp. 287, 225-227. The medieval theory of 'argumentum' seems to be primarily concerned with questions of its probability, see, for example, Mehtonen, *Old Concepts*, pp. 93-110.

[301] Catherine McKenna, 'Vision and Revision, Iteration and Reiteration, in *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*', in *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition. A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford*, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy & Leslie Ellen Jones, CSANA Yearbook 3-4 (Dublin, 2005), pp. 269-282: p. 279.

[302] For helpful assessments of the tenents of 'New Philology' compare Karl Stackmann, 'Neue Philologie?', in *Modernes Mittelalter,* ed. Heinzle, pp. 398-427; and Jürgen Wolf, 'New Philology/Textkritik. Ältere deutsche Literatur', in *Germanistik als Kulturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung in neue Theoriekonzepte* (Reinbeck, 2002), pp. 175-195.

respect *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise*, which legitimates the application to the present of a narrative about the past.

One further aspect of *historia* needs at least to be mentioned, though it cannot be explored here any further: *historia*, narrative history or historical narrative, provides information about the past with contemporary applicability, but besides being useful it also had to captivate the intended audience. On the formal level, this is reflected in the stylistic and rhetorical elaboration of many overtly historiographical works, which links *historia* to functionally similar genres such as sermons and saints' lives. The second part of *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* 'The Viking-Irish Conflict' is a good Irish example of a stylistically refined and 'imaginative rewriting of history'.[303]

6. 'Pure Literature' – Some Concluding Thoughts

If one accepts the explicative power of the medieval concept of *historia* for the understanding of the status of medieval Irish narratives, or at least the majority thereof, some modern perplexities about the boundaries of literature and history, of fiction and veracity may dissolve. The classification of specific medieval Irish texts as 'literature' is conditioned by modern literary tastes,[304] and although I have attempted to deconstruct Quiggin's concept of 'pure literature' for medieval Ireland, I do not wish to deny that medieval Irish *literati* were able to use, and very often used, advanced compositional and literary techniques to develop their themes and to structure their texts. Furthermore, *historia* itself has a dimension of entertainment, and a medieval Irish critical concept of some sort of literary entertainment was available with the term *gairdiugud*, literally 'a shortening [of time]',[305] perhaps best paraphrased as a 'useful as well as pleasant diversion'. The *locus classicus* for *gairdiugud* is the twelfth-century *Acallam na Senórach*, in which an angel endorses Patrick's fascination with secular topography and historical lore, as well as its codification and transmission in writing.[306] In a comparative European perspective, the activation and vindication of a positive category of

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[303] Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland', p. 47, and see also p. 42. For rhetorical and fictional elements acceptable in historical writings compare, for example, Green, *Beginnings*, pp. 146-152.

[304] See Ní Mhaonaigh, 'The Literature of Medieval Ireland', p. 33.

[305] The Norse term for 'entertainment', *skemmtun*, literally '(time-)shortening', relies on the same conceptualization, see Ralph O'Connor, *Icelandic Histories and Romances* (Stroud, 2006), p. 26, and O'Connor, 'History', p. 151, and compare German 'Zeitvertreib'.

[306] Whitley Stokes, *Acallamh na Senórach*, Irische Texte mit Übersetzungen und Wörterbuch, 4.1 (Leipzig, 1900), p. 9: 'as gairdiugud menman 7 aicenta dúin sin' ('this is a diversion of mind and spirit for us'); for the context compare Ann Dooley & Harry Roe, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland (Acallam na Senórach)* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 11-12.

'fiction' has often been located in the twelfth century,[307] and sustained analysis of the availability of such notions in the Irish textual culture is necessary. Pending such analysis, I will end my discussion with the somewhat speculative suggestion that an eventual emergence of some forms of a 'pure [i.e., autonomous/ficticious] literature' in Ireland may be linked to what Quiggin perceptively identified as the Irish authors' predilection for humour and exaggeration – as he says of the *Táin*: 'We feel that the story-teller is continually expecting a laugh and he exaggerates in true Irish fashion, so that the stories are full of extravagantly grotesque passages'.[308] If we accept, for example, Edgar Slotkin's analysis of *Tromdám Guaire* as a 'humorous piece', as 'entertainment and a work of literature, not a saga in the strict sense nor a historical narrative' – and finally as a reflection of a '*narrative* tradition in which the ruler is threatened by unruly poets but saved by a character from an ostensibly lower class',[309] then we might detect in the attitudes of some medieval Irish authors echoes of Bakhtinian 'carnivalization' and 'popular laughter',[310] which subvert the truth-value of *historia* in self-conscious literary re-workings of traditional material. Promising candidates for such an analysis might be *Fled Bricrenn*, *Compert Mongáin ocus Serc Duibe-Lacha do Mongán*, the B-text of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, and, perhaps, the Middle

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[307] Compare, for example, Jauss, 'Zur historischen Genese'; Shepherd, 'The Emancipation'; and Green, *Beginnings*.

[308] Quiggin, 'Celt', p. 627. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Irish Origin-Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies', in *History and Heroic Tale. A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg et al. (Odense, 1985), pp. 51-96, p. 85, has suggested the following as a path for the development of an 'autonomous' literature in Ireland: 'The *métier* of the Irish genealogist – where mythology, racial and dynastic pride, group consciousness and territoriality, and that shared experience which is history to the unlearned, encounter the well-stocked mind of the literate scholar, who sets himself the professional tasks of explaining and unifying present and past – leads on directly to the imaginative re-creation of that past. This in turn produces a literature which, in time, frees itself from the historical matrix in which it was formed and becomes progressively an autonomous work of art, responding not to any one narrow historical situation but to broader and increasingly universal human situations'.

[309] Edgar M. Slotkin, 'Maelgwn Gwynedd: Speculations on a Common Celtic Legend Pattern', in *Heroic Poets*, ed. Nagy & Jones, pp. 327-335: p. 328.

[310] For these terms and a discussion of the *Voyage de Charlemagne* als 'karnevalistische Ideologiekritik' see Peter Wunderli, 'Das Karlsbild in der altfranzösischen Epik', in *Karl der Große*, ed. Bastert, pp. 17-37: pp. 36-37, which has been my inspiration here. For the possible interface between cyclicity, intertextuality, and fictionality see Green, *Beginnings*, pp. 55-57 (see, for example, p. 57: 'the importance of intertextuality in the genesis of fiction lies not in any invention *ex nihilo*, but in the exploitation of gaps or blank spots in a previously existing narrative for new ends'); for parodic elements and the creation of an aesthetic distance between text and audience in Continental romances, which might productively be transferred to a discussion of some medieval Irish texts, see Caroline A. Jewers, *Chivalric Fiction and the History of the Novel* (Gainesville, 2000), esp. pp. 1-82; for a three-stage model of organic development of literary genres and forms advocated in theories of literary history see, for example, Claus Uhlig, *Theorie der Literaturhistorie. Prinzipien und Paradigmen* (Heidelberg, 1982), p. 84: 'man [kann] innerhalb von Gattungsentfaltungen drei Hauptphasen unterscheiden [...]: nämlich eine erste des Aufbaus, bis der Typ sich herausgebildet hat, eine zweite der raffinierten *imitatio* [...], die Variationen und Modifikationen des Gattungstyps zuläßt und endlich eine dritte, in der negative Kritik, Burleske und Satire und auch radikal antithetische Innovation vorkommen'.

Irish recension of *Mesca Ulad*,[311] but this is beyond the scope of the present discussion.[312]

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[311] Nutt, *Cuchulainn*, p. 30, characterises *Fled Bricrenn* as 'romanticised, at times it produces an almost parodistic effect; it necessarily presuppose a much earlier and a well-developed body of literature'. An analysis of *Mesca Ulad* in the Book of Leinster as 'pure literature' would need to take into account not only the narrative's problematic textual history, but also the tensions arising from this manuscript's function as a respository of cultural memory and its redactor's qualms about the truth-value of *Táin Bó Cúailnge* as expressed in the colophon. For insightful thoughts on some twelfth-century attitudes and an arguably changing literary climate in which 'the texts of the tales are no longer viewed as precious and rare survivals, but instead they are secure enough to made fun of', see Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Bounderies', p. 101.

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