

FORAS FEASA AR ÉIRINN: ESTABLISHING A LITERARY CANON

GEOFFREY KEATING'S *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (FFÉ), or the 'Basis of Knowledge about Ireland', is an account of the history of Ireland which is divided into two books, the first detailing events from the beginning of time down to the coming of Christianity to Ireland, and the second continuing down to the twelfth-century Norman Invasion. There follows a collection of genealogies of major Irish families (both native and of Old English stock) as well as tables of synchronisms from the Flood to the early years of the seventeenth century.¹ The original source has not survived nor do we have an exact date of compilation for the work, although internal textual evidence points to a *terminus post quem* of 1633: in that year Sir James Ware published *Two histories of Ireland* which included Edmund Spenser's *A view of the state of Ireland* and Meredith Hanmer's *Chronicle of Ireland*, two of a number of authors which Keating cites in the introduction to FFÉ.² In addition, we may note that the work must have been completed by 1635 because the Tipperary scribe Michael Kearney embarked on an English translation of FFÉ in that year.³

Two very early extant sources for FFÉ form part of the Franciscan collection of manuscripts now housed at University College Dublin.⁴ Our text in the first of these, MS A 14, was written by two scribes, one of whom seems to have been Míchéal Ó Cléirigh. A note which is incorporated into the narrative itself indicates that at least part of the manuscript was written in September at the Franciscan convent of Kildare.⁵ Although no year is specified, it was possibly in 1636 as Ó Cléirigh may have been in Kildare in September of that year before returning to Louvain in early 1637.⁶ The second scribal source, MS A 15, was written by an anonymous scribe between 1638 and 1641.⁷ Both manuscripts were consulted by Comyn and Dinneen for their edition.

Keating sets out his scientific stall in a lengthy introduction, or *dionbhrollach*, wherein he states that his purpose is to refute what he deems to be the falsehoods which were proclaimed by foreign writers concerning Ireland and her Catholic inhabitants, and to reveal instead the truth of the country's state – *fírinne stáide na críche*.⁸ Thus, unlike Giraldus Cambrensis and his ilk whose accounts relied on hearsay evidence – *innisin*

¹ *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn le Seathrún Céitinn, D.D. The history of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, 4 vols, ed. David Comyn, Patrick S. Dinneen (ITS, London 1902-14).

² FFÉ I, 24, 64, and 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, respectively; cf. Anne Cronin, 'The sources of Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*: 1. The printed sources' *Éigse* 4 (1943-44) 235-79 (at pp 241-2, 245-7).

³ 'Jany Anno Salutis 1635' is the date inserted at the end of f. [1r] in RIA MS 1136 (24 G 16), itself a copy of Kearney's lost original which was completed in 1668 by the Kerry scribe Domhnall mac Thomáis Uí Shúilleabháin; cf. Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin 2000) 59 n. 1, 183.

⁴ Myles Dillon, Canice Mooney, Pádraig de Brún, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Franciscan Library, Killiney* (Dublin 1969) (hereafter *FLK Cat.*).

⁵ *ibid.* 27-30.

⁶ Cf. Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating* 177.

⁷ *FLK Cat.* 30-2.

⁸ FFÉ I, 2 l. 4.

sceul ainteasdach – thereby rendering them unscholarly, unreliable and ultimately, of course, unhistorical, Keating argued that his was a scholarly approach because it was founded on hard evidence gleaned from Ireland’s chief historical books – *prímhleabhair an tseanchusa*.⁹ This important distinction is reiterated at the end of the introduction when the author argues that his history is based on hard evidence *a prímh-leabhraibh seanchusa Éireann, agus a hiliomad d’úghdaraibh barántamhla*, ‘from the chief books of Ireland, and from a good many trustworthy foreign authors’.¹⁰ Accordingly, Keating’s approach reflects that of the new humanistic historicism of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe which regarded history (*ars historica*) as a branch of learning in its own right with the important function of rediscovering the past as recorded in the written authority of primary sources or *primi auctores*.¹¹

Our focus in what follows below is threefold: first, to highlight an example of the near immediate response by subsequent scholarship to Keating’s challenge to take up where he left off and make available material relevant to Ireland. This in itself attests not only to the speed with which FFÉ was subsumed into the literary tradition, but also to its canonical influence on later compilers.¹² Second, the influence which Keating’s history had on the content of texts being transmitted. This is particularly evident in material which promotes what I have termed elsewhere an ‘O’Brien Saga’.¹³ Our third and more specific concern will locate examples of literary accretions or innovations which ultimately point to textual transmission as an active, ongoing process, while highlighting also the dynamic role of its transmitters. It is the case, of course, that textual accretions or innovations may be motivated by a scribe’s political predilections. Indeed, they may even be more practically rooted in his awareness of a patron’s particular tastes and/or politics. However, why should not the literary debt to Keating’s FFÉ also incorporate aesthetic considerations? We shall see presently that the work itself prompted scribes to engage with a given text, add to it and ultimately modify it. In this scheme of things, then, scribal intent is motivated, essentially, by the creation of a text anew for artistic purposes.

A RESPONSE TO KEATING’S DESIDERATUM

In addressing the first issue here, we may begin with the following desideratum as expressed by Keating himself in the concluding section to his *díonbhrollach*:

... agus cibé thoigeoras scríobhadh go foirleathan líonmhar ar Éirinn d’á éis so, doghéabhaidh i sna sein-leabhraibh ceudna mórán do neithibh inscríobhtha uirre do

⁹ *ibid.* 74 l. 5, 76 ll 34-5.

¹⁰ *ibid.* 92, 94 ll 72-4 and 93, 95.

¹¹ Breandán Ó Buachalla, ‘Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: History of Ireland. Foreword to 1987 reprint’ (ITS, London 1987); *idem*, ‘Annála Ríoghachta Éireann agus Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: an comhthéacs comhaimseartha’ *Studia Hibernica* 22-3 (1982-83) 59-105 (at pp 66-9); *idem*, *The crown of Ireland* (Galway 2006) 14-17.

¹² For a discussion of the effect of FFÉ on the manuscript history of *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach*, see *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach. The violent death of the children of Uisneach*, ed. Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith (ITS, London 1993) 21-2.

¹³ Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, ‘Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag agus Cath Chluain Tarbh’ *Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Iris an Dá Chultúr* 20 (2005) 104-19 (at p. 119); *idem*, ‘Some observations on the ‘Dublin Annals of Inisfallen’’ *Ériu* 57 (forthcoming).

fágbhadh amuigh d’aon-toisg ann so, d’eagla gurab lughaide do thiocfadh an tsuim seo do chum soluis, iad uile do chur i n-aon obair, ar a mhéid do dhuadh a gcur i n-aon-chairt.

... and whoever shall desire to write fully and comprehensively on Ireland hereafter, he will find, in the same ancient books, many things desirable to write of her which have been purposely omitted here, lest, putting these all in one work, thereby this compilation should less likely come to light from the greatness of the labour of putting them in one writing.¹⁴

In admitting that there are deliberate omissions from the *seinleabhraibh* which he consulted, Keating cleverly anticipates the critic who would berate the shortcomings of his FFÉ, but he also challenges succeeding scholars to revisit the same sources and reveal that which they considered to be important. In effect, the author calls for the continued collation of material concerning Ireland from primary sources, a challenge which was taken up almost immediately when Keating’s near contemporary, one Eugenius Carti, or Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh, completed his *Leabhar Gearr na Pailíse* (LGP), or the ‘Short Book of Pallas’, in 1648.

The original source itself has not survived, so that the title, its compiler, the 1648 dating and, indeed, the place of compilation must be pieced together from subsequent eighteenth-century references to the book. It certainly circulated among scholars at that time as witnessed by the seven references to it in scribal sources dating from 1725 to the early 1770s.¹⁵ It is probably also the same source as ‘the Book of Pallech’ mentioned in passing by one Thomas O Duinn in a letter from Cashel, dated 16 April 1719, to Thomas O’Sulleavane (fl. 1722-26) of the Middle Temple, London – he who anonymously composed the ‘Dissertation’ prefixed to the 1722 edition of the *Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde*.¹⁶ Besides, ‘Leabhar gear na pailise’ was listed among ‘manuscripts now extant’ in Ireland by Edward Lhwyd in his *Archaeologia Britannica* (1707).¹⁷

An Phailís, moreover, probably refers to the townland of Pallas, Co. Kerry, Pallas Castle being the chief residence of Mac Cárthaigh Mór which was located near Beaufort

¹⁴ FFÉ I, 94 ll 76-82 and 95.

¹⁵ Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, ‘Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh* sna lámhscríbhinní’ *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* 34 (2004) 179-215 (at p. 200).

¹⁶ Herbert Wood, ‘Letter from Domnal O’Neill to Fineen MacCarthy, 1317’ *PRIA* 37 C, no. 7 (1926) 141-8 (at pp 141, 147); Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, ‘Select documents xxxvi: is the O’Neill–MacCarthy letter of 1317 a forgery?’ *Irish Historical Studies* 23 (1982-83) 61-7 (at pp 64-5); Robin Flower, Myles Dillon, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum* III (London 1953) 15-17. We may note that O Duinn refers in the same letter to ‘the black booke of Mollago’ being returned to his possession, i.e. *Leabhar Dubh Molaga* which Keating names as the tenth and final ‘chief book’ which he consulted (FFÉ I, 80). The *Leabhar Dubh* was lent by its owner, Diarmuid Mac Cárthaigh, to Domhnall mac Taidhg Óig Uí Shúilleabháin who copied it in 1640, but only a section of this copy has survived, now Cambridge McClean MS 187, ff 50r-62v (Pádraig de Brún, Máire Herbert, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in Cambridge libraries* (Cambridge 1986) 104-5). O Duinn’s letter, however, suggests that the source was still in circulation in 1719.

¹⁷ Alan Harrison, ‘Who wrote to Edward Lhwyd?’ *Celtica* 16 (1984) 175-8 (at pp 175-6); idem, *Ag cruinniú meala. Anthony Raymond (1675-1726), ministéir Protastúnach, agus léann na Gaeilge i mBaile Átha Cliath* (Baile Átha Cliath 1988) 74; Ní Úrdail, ‘Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*’ 214 n. 97.

Bridge, Killarney, where the Laune River leaves the Lakes to flow north-westward towards Castlemaine harbour.¹⁸ Of relevance in this connection also is a colophon which Seón Mac Solaidh (fl. 1715) reproduced in the two earliest extant copies of LGP, written jointly by himself and Riosdard Tuibear (fl. 1710-40) between 1714 and 1716. This identifies one Eugenius Carti as compiler as well as the date and place of compilation:

Ag sin foras feasa c[h]lainne Mhíleadh Easpáinne 7 ar ghabh lánríghe Éireann dīobh 7 rīghe dhā chōigeadh Mumhan fo leith. Sgriptum per mé Eugenium Carti Baile an Oiléin aedibus Domini Tadei Dermisi Cormaci Carti anno domini 1648 undesimoque Januarii. Ar na athsgríobhadh le Seón Mac Solaidh a mBaile Hardaman a bporrāisde Thighthe Callain a cCondae na Midhe 7 a mbarúntacht Sláinghe da charaid ionmhuin Risdard Tiubear an t-ochtmadh lā .x. do m[h]í Feab[h]ra an b[h]liadhain d’aois an Tig[h]earna 1715/16.¹⁹

That is the basis of knowledge about the descendants of Míl Easpáinne and those of them who assumed the full kingship of Ireland and the kingship of the two provinces of Munster in particular. Written by me Eugenius Carti, Baile an Oiléin, in the house of Lord Tadeus son of Diarmaid son of Cormac Carti anno domini 1648 and on the eleventh of January. Having been rewritten by Seón Mac Solaidh in Ballyhardiman, in the parish of Stackallen in Co. Meath and in the barony of Slane for his dear friend Richard Tipper, the eighteenth day of the month of February, the year of our Lord 1715/16.

‘Baile an Oiléin’, as I have argued elsewhere, is probably the same as Oileán Ciarraí, or Castleisland, thus our Eugenius Carti would have belonged to the Coshmang branch of Clann Chárthaigh.²⁰ According to Munster genealogies in the eighteenth-century *Leabhar Muimhneach*, the Coshmang branch itself was divided into three separate septs (Magh Laithimh or Molahiffe, Na Foidhrí or Fieries and Cluain Maoláin or Cloonmelane) and the same source traces the Molahiffe branch in descending order from Eoghan son of Cormac, King of Desmond (1325-59), down to the aforementioned Lord Tadeus son of Diarmaid son of Cormac.²¹ In addition, the latter appears to be the same as Tadhg son of

¹⁸ John O’Donovan, *Annala Rioghachta Eireann, Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the year 1616*, 7 vols (Dublin 1848-51) V 1305 n. x (hereafter *AFM*); while Wood, ‘Letter from Domnal O’Neill’ 147, and Ó Murchadha, ‘Select documents xxxvi’ 65, 66, accepted that the placename in the title was that situated in Co. Kerry, neither was convinced of the existence of a ‘Book of Pallas’.

¹⁹ BL Egerton MS 106, ff 3r-44r and ff 128r-132v (at f. 132v); the accompanying translation above is my own. A similar colophon in the second copy of LGP in RIA MS 152 (23 K 37), pp 33-172 (at p. 172) is dated 24 February 1715/16; for these volumes and their contents see Robin Flower, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum II* (London 1926) 329-41 and T. F. O’Rahilly, Kathleen Mulchrone et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin 1926-70) 433-8, respectively.

²⁰ Ní Úrdail, ‘Seachadadh Cath Cluana Tarbh’ 198.

²¹ ‘Tadhg mac Diarmada, mic Cormaic, mic Diarmada, mic Cormaic, mic Domhnaill, mic Eoghain Bhuid Mhainge’ (Tadhg Ó Donnchadha, *An Leabhar Muimhneach maraon le suim aguisíní* (Baile Átha Cliath [1940]) 209-10); cf. Samuel Trant McCarthy, *The MacCarthys of Munster. The story of a great Irish sept* (Dundalk 1922) 265-77. The centre of the MacCarthys of Coshmang was the castle of Molahiffe and it was supported by two other castles at Fieries and Cloonmelane (Valerie Bary, *Historical, genealogical,*

Diarmaid son of Cormac of Magh Laithimh who, on the authority of the Four Masters, died in 1581 in a skirmish at Aghadoe during the Desmond wars, while ‘Teige M’Dermot M’Cormac’, Lord of Coshmang, is also named in the Patent Rolls of Elizabeth for the year 1589.²²

The copies of LGP indicate that this source contained a series of six prose texts beginning with *Cath Cnucha* and continuing sequentially with *Cath Maighe Léana*, *Cath Maighe Mucraimhe*, *Cath Cricinna*, *Caithréim Cheallacháin Chaisil* and *Cath Cluana Tarbh*, each of which is connected by a series of annals which begin at A. D. 174 and continue down to A. D. 1138. The fortunes of Ceallachán Chaisil from the beginning of a ten-year reign of the two provinces of Munster – *ceannas dá chóigeadh Mumhan ar feadh deich mbliadhan* – until his death in A. D. 954 are treated in detail in FFÉ, of course, and attention is also paid therein to the Battle of Clontarf which concludes an extensive section by Keating on Brian Bórainmhe from his succession to the kingship of Ireland in A. D. 1002 to his death at Clontarf which is dated A. D. 1034.²³ We may note that the latter date for the Battle of Clontarf entered subsequent tradition and is reproduced, for example, in copies of *Cath Cluana Tarbh* deriving from LGP.

It is not insignificant that two further tales from the series incorporated into Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh’s compilation, i.e. *Cath Maighe Léana* and *Cath Maighe Mucraimhe*, are included by Keating among a number of sources ‘in which there is much of ancient record to be discovered’ – *mar a bhfuil mórán seanchusa ré a fhaisnéis*²⁴ – but which he did not incorporate into FFÉ because, as has been stated already here, he expected succeeding scholars to reveal that which he did not address in his work. Besides, I would argue that Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh’s reference to a *foras feasa* or basis of knowledge concerning the descendants of Míl Easpáinne in the colophon quoted above recalls the more famous *foras feasa* by his contemporary Geoffrey Keating. Indeed, Mac Cárthaigh’s distinction between two provinces of Munster – *dhá chóigeadh Mumhan* – may also owe a specific debt to FFÉ where east and west Munster are named ‘Cúigeadh Eochaidh Abhradhruadh’ and ‘Cúigeadh Chonraoi mac Dáire’, respectively.²⁵

What contemporary relevance would LGP have for a member of the Coshmang branch of Clann Chárthaigh in the 1640s? Clearly, the prose tales in this book celebrate a glorious era in Munster’s past and its entry at A. D. 1138, moreover, describes the death of Cormac Mac Cárthaigh, one of the ablest and most widely esteemed rulers in the province. By contrast, the end of the sixteenth century was marked by much division and political restiveness. We have noted that in the particular case of the Coshmang branch, Tadhg, Lord of Coshmang, died in 1581 while serving with the Earl of Desmond against his overlord, Mac Cárthaigh Mór, and the English forces. It is no coincidence, of course, that such an unsettled climate caused concern for other contemporaries of Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh, i.e. those poets who composed political poems in Irish between the 1640s and 1660 which reiterated the importance of unity and integrity among families of Old-Irish

architectural notes of some houses of Kerry (Clare 1994) 80-1, 114, 184); cf. Ni Úrdail, ‘Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*’ 214 n. 90.

²² *AFM* V 1756 and James Morrin, *Calendar of patent and close rolls of chancery in Ireland from the 18th to the 45th of Queen Elizabeth*, 2 vols (Dublin 1861-62) II 170, respectively.

²³ FFÉ III, 222-34 (l. 3675) and 256 (l. 4033)-276, respectively.

²⁴ FFÉ I, 81 and 80 ll 91-2.

²⁵ *ibid.* 120 (l. 16)-122 (l. 39).

and Anglo-Norman descent, while harking back all the while to a Golden Age.²⁶ Specifically, *Tuireamh na hÉireann* or *Aiste Sheáin Uí Chonaill* by Seán Ó Conaill (fl. 1650), bitterly laments the demise of the once illustrious era of *Mac Cárthaigh Mór is a shliocht i n-aonacht* ('Mac Cárthaigh Mór and his sept together') which included *Tiarna Choise Mainge na méithbhreac* ('The Lord of Coshmang of the fat trout').²⁷

I suggest, then, that with his own synthesis, Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh followed Keating's precedent in wishing to illuminate an illustrious era in Ireland's past. This he did by including two tales regarded by Keating as an important source of *seanchas*, as well as reproducing two prose narratives on the triumphs of Ceallachán Chaisil and Brian Bórainmhe. Like Keating before him, his contemporary focuses on a glorious past and shows the intended reader of his own *foras feasa chloinne Míleadh Easpáinne* that despite the troubled climate of seventeenth-century Ireland such glory could be retrieved through unity of purpose rather than by division of loyalties.

A further response to Keating's desideratum was that by the Uí Neachtain scholars and their coterie of like-minded individuals who promoted the transmission of LGP in the eighteenth century. This Dublin-based group began to convene in the capital city under the tutelage of Seán Ó Neachtain (d. 1729) and his son Tadhg (d. *circa* 1752) in the early decades of the eighteenth century, and set about collating and transcribing texts relevant to Irish history, including FFÉ and its sources.²⁸ Thus, scribal associates such as Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín, or Hugh MacCurtin (d. 1755), and the aforementioned Riosdard Tuibear and Seón Mac Solaidh, responded to an evolving antiquarian readership, both Catholic and Protestant, by providing manuscript material concerning Ireland's past. Indeed, it is to Mac Solaidh and Tuibear that we owe the existence of the two earliest extant copies of LGP which, as we have noted, were written between 1714 and 1716 and which also reproduce Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh's original colophon of 1648.²⁹ Two further copies of the work were produced during the first half of the eighteenth century by Tadhg Ó Neachtain and Aodh Ó Dálaigh (fl. 1725-55), another associate of this group, although neither refers to the title of the compilation nor to its compiler.³⁰

Dublin, then, was a hub of scribal activity in the early eighteenth century, and those who moved to, and worked for a time in, the capital city had access to numerous primary sources at that time. In the particular case of LGP, moreover, it is possible that its introduction to Dublin scholarship may have been due to the efforts of Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín who, as we know from manuscript evidence, moved from Co. Clare to Dublin

²⁶ Cf. Cecile O'Rahilly, *Five seventeenth-century political poems* (Dublin 1952); Cuthbert Mhág Craith, *Dán na mbráthar mionúr*, 2 vols (Baile Átha Cliath 1967) I 251-5, II 236-40; Pádraig de Brún, Breandán Ó Buachalla, Tomás Ó Concheanainn, *Nua-Dhuanaire* I (Baile Átha Cliath 1986) 31-4.

²⁷ O'Rahilly, *Five seventeenth-century political poems* 59-82 (at pp 77-8 II 401-18). Half of Ó Conaill's poem, which describes Ireland's Golden Age from the Flood to the glorious reign of Brian Bórainmhe, finds a prose equivalent in Keating's FFÉ.

²⁸ Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, 'Irish scholars and scribes in eighteenth-century Dublin' *Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Iris an dá Chultúr* 4 (1989) 41-54 (at pp 41-6); Harrison, *Ag cruinniú meala* 24, 40-2.

²⁹ See n. 19.

³⁰ TCD MS 1289 (H.1.15), pp 675-740, p. 744, written at some point between 1729 and 1745, and RIA MS 619 (D iii 2), pp 217-85, p. 287, which was completed in 1746, respectively; for a description of these volumes and their contents, see T. K. Abbot, E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin 1921) 50-60 and O'Rahilly, Mulchrone et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts* 1945-52, respectively.

where he was living by September 1714.³¹ Interestingly, among the ‘most Authentick Authors who writ of this Battle of Cluantarf’ which the author describes in his own history of Ireland, he identifies ‘Mac-Liag in the *Munster* Book of Battles, etc.’³² When we consider that Mac Solaidh and Tuibear began the first of two transcripts of LGP in 1714, the year Mac Cruitín was resident in Dublin, and that they completed these transcripts a year before the latter’s history appeared in print in 1717, it is tempting to suggest that Mac Cruitín himself provided them with this Munster compilation³³ – either in its original form or as a copy. Alternatively, of course, given that the first half of eighteenth-century Dublin ‘could be termed the ‘meeting of the waters’ of the manuscript tradition’,³⁴ Mac Cruitín, like Mac Solaidh and Tuibear before him, would have accessed LGP through his contacts with others based in Dublin at a time when many primary sources were being made available to Irish scholars there.

PROMOTION OF AN ‘O’BRIEN SAGA’

We may now address an example of Keating’s influence on the content itself of Irish narrative. Significant in this regard is the second book of FFÉ which incorporates a description of Viking oppression in Ireland. Keating describes this section of his work as a summary, or *suim aithghearr*, based ‘on the authority of the book which is called *Cogadh Gall re Gaedhealaibh*’ – *de réir an leabhair da ngairthear Cogadh Gall ré Gaedhealaibh*.³⁵ His summary is quite a detailed one, in fact, beginning in the early ninth century, and continuing down to the early decades of the eleventh century with a concluding description of the Battle of Clontarf. Given that the Middle-Irish source for this section of FFÉ, *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib* (CGG), is a piece of Dál gCais propaganda, originally intended to bolster the political ambitions of Brian Bórainhe’s descendants in the twelfth century,³⁶ small wonder that the Dál gCais should be very much to the fore in Keating’s account. Brian Bórainhe, according to FFÉ, epitomised the best of Irish kingship, one whose rule incorporated sovereignty, military might and fecundity.³⁷ Subsequent tradition was inspired by the importance which Keating attached to the Uí Bhriain in Ireland’s history and an ‘O’Brien Saga’ of sorts begins to emerge in the course of our literary transmission.

³¹ ‘Moladh do Dhia Ámen. An ceathramhadh lá déag do mhí September an bhliaghain d’aois Chríost .i. 1714, ann Áth Cliath’, title-page accompanying Maynooth MS M 86, part b; cf. Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Choláiste Phádraig Má Nuad* III (Má Nuad 1966) 81-5 (at p. 84).

³² Hugh MacCurtin, *A brief discourse in vindication of the antiquity of Ireland* (Dublin 1717) 252 (marginal note).

³³ Cf. Vincent Morley, *An crann os coill. Aodh Bui Mac Cruitín, c. 1680-1755* (Baile Átha Cliath 1995) 55.

³⁴ Ní Shéaghdha, ‘Irish scholars and scribes’ 45.

³⁵ FFÉ III, 157 and 156 ll 2467-8.

³⁶ John Ryan, ‘The Battle of Clontarf’ *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 68/1 (1938) 1-50 (at pp 3-4); Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin 1972) 78, 91-2; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Bréifne bias in *Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*’ *Ériu* 43 (1992) 135-58 (at pp 135-8); idem, ‘*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*: some dating considerations’ *Peritia* 9 (1995) 354-77 (at pp 354-6); idem, ‘*Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* and Cork’ *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 110 (2005) 73-83 (at pp 73-5).

³⁷ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating* 145, 176.

Five key texts have been transmitted in our post-classical manuscript corpus, all of which comprise and, indeed promote, this particular saga. The first of these is the romantic prose re-enactment of the Battle of Clontarf and bears the title *Cath Cluana Tarbh* (CCT). Almost ninety transcripts have come down to us dating from the period between 1701/02 and 1890.³⁸ All of these sources contain a core narrative, i.e. the text of CCT which formed part of the contents of the aforementioned LGP. This essentially comprises a number of supernatural motifs attached to Murchadh son of Brian, as well as incorporating a speech on the horrors of the battle, delivered by Maol Sheachlainn Mór son of Domhnall (d. 1022), King of Meath, which ultimately derives from CGG. The narrative itself has very little in common with Keating's wearisome re-enactment of the battle, which amounts to a list of the opposing forces who descended on Clontarf, followed almost immediately by yet another detailing those who fell in battle.³⁹

Notwithstanding this, however, it will be argued presently that Keating's influence on the transmission of CCT proved to be considerable indeed, for it was his particular understanding of a pre-battle scene, as depicted in CGG, as well as his post-battle interpretation of a rather bland Maol Sheachlainn in the same Middle-Irish source, which caught the imagination of successive compilers of CCT. In addition, according to FFÉ, 'the year of the Lord when the Battle of Cluain Tarbh was fought was 1034, the Friday before Easter' – *aois an Tighearna an tan tugadh an cath-so Chluana Tarbh 1034 bliadhna an aoine ria gCáisc* – a date which Keating attributes to an anonymous *seanchaidh*.⁴⁰ Although the ascription is vague, the date was probably influenced by that of Marianus Scottus (Móel Brigte) who mentions the death of Brian Bórainne, 'rex Hiberniae', at A. D. 1036 in the third book of his *Chronicon*.⁴¹ That Keating had access to the latter source is confirmed by two references to it in FFÉ.⁴² We may note that where a date is mentioned in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources of CCT, most of them follow Keating in assigning the historical event at Clontarf to A. D. 1034.

The romantic prose re-enactment of the Battle of Clontarf is one of the most popular texts to be transmitted in our post-classical manuscript sources. Moreover, the scribal evidence points to transmitters as dynamic figures who created and re-created their own literary accounts, all of which form part of an overall CCT narrative. This state of affairs facilitates the division of the tale's substantial body of manuscript sources into textual groups. The first, quite a short text, comprises scribal copies of the core narrative itself as it occurs in LGP, while transcripts of two separate versions may also be identified, i.e. Version 1 and Version 2 of CCT, both of which have further material added to the core narrative. Of relevance to our discussion here, however, is Version 2 of CCT because its compilers derived its pre- and post-battle scenes from Keating's FFÉ and added them to the core narrative of the romantic prose tale itself. Indeed, as well as borrowing from Keating, other compilers of this version indulged in even more editorial intrusion by

³⁸ Ní Úrdail, 'Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*' 179-82.

³⁹ FFÉ III, 272 (l. 4268)-276 (l. 4348).

⁴⁰ *ibid.* 277 and 276 ll 4333-5.

⁴¹ Edente G. Waitz, 'Mariani Scotti Chronicon' *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 5 (1844) 481-564 (at p. 555); Bartholomew Mac Carthy, 'The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus, no. 830' *Todd Lecture Series* 3 (1892) 3-36 (at p. 8); cf. Ní Úrdail, 'Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*' 184.

⁴² FFÉ II, 16 ll 244-5, 376 ll 5864-5; cf. Cronin, 'The sources of Keating's *Forus Feasa*' 276, and Ní Úrdail, 'Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*' 184.

incorporating material from another work, i.e. the *Leabhar Oiris* (LO) or ‘Book of Chronicles’, and spliced this along with passages from FFÉ onto the core narrative. Accordingly, Version 2 has four variants, referred to here as 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D, all of which are apt testimonies to scribal creation and re-creation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴³

The second eighteenth-century text to promote its own particular ‘O’Brien Saga’ is that named above as LO.⁴⁴ The contents of this work fall into two parts: the first, and indeed main section, begins with Maol Sheachlainn’s accession as High King of Ireland and concludes with a detailed description of the Battle of Clontarf, while the second brings the reader by means of a series of short annals down to A. D. 1027. The most striking feature about the latter section is its inclusion of three poems on the theme of the *ubi sunt?* which celebrate the Golden Age of the Dál gCais and which mourn the passing of its heroes, Brian Bórainhe, Murchadh, Cian son of Maolmhuadh, and Brian Bórainhe’s nephew, Conaing son of Donnchuan.⁴⁵ Although somewhat more disjointed than the first section of LO, this second section is, nonetheless, decidedly an Uí Bhriain encomium.

The transmission of LO in the scribal corpus clearly indicates that it was not an unpopular text. Only ten copies were known to R. I. Best when he published his edition in 1904, whereas the most up-to-date information from descriptive catalogues, both published and unpublished, yields a number of at least twenty-five transcripts together with a further ten volumes which contain the second section only of LO. Seventeen transcripts of the work were produced by scribes associated with the Uí Neachtain circle, and the earliest four scribal witnesses were produced between 1711 and 1714 by one of these associates, the Limerick scribe Diarmuid Ó Conchubhair, or Dermot O’Connor (fl. 1711-30).⁴⁶ The latter’s main claim to fame was his controversial English translation of FFÉ, printed in 1723.⁴⁷ Ó Conchubhair most probably introduced LO to other scholars while based in Dublin in 1720. The work’s content would have found considerable favour with the Uí Neachtain scribal coterie, keen as they were to provide instances of Ireland’s glorious past to an antiquarian readership interested in historical sources.

⁴³ Version 2A: FFÉ III, 256 (l. 4033)-262 (l. 4141), 266 (l. 4193)-272 (l. 4270) and FFÉ III, 278 (l. 4370)-284 (l. 4473); Version 2B: FFÉ III, 266 (l. 4193)-270 (l. 4264) and FFÉ III, 284 ll 4155-473; Version 2C: FFÉ III, 266 (l. 4194)-270 (l. 4264) + LO (= R. I. Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’ *Ériu* 1 (1904) 74-112 (at p. 83 §§23-4 and pp 89-91 §§36-40)); Version 2D: FFÉ III, 266 (l. 4194)-270 (l. 4264) + LO (= Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’ 78-83 §§1-24 and 89-91 §§36-40).

⁴⁴ Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’.

⁴⁵ *Fada bheith gan aoibhneas ann* (attributed to Mac Liag), *Uathmhar an oidhche anocht* and *Raithleann Ráith Chuiric is Chéin* (attributed to Mac Giolla Chaoimh), all in *ógláchas*, mainly of *rannaíocht mhór* (Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’ 95-101 §50, §§52-3); cf. A. J. Goedheer, *Irish and Norse traditions about the Battle of Clontarf* (Haarlem 1938) 63 and Colm Ó Lochlainn, ‘Poets on the Battle of Clontarf – II’ *Éigse* 4 (1943-44) 33-47 (at pp 36, 38). The first two poems were published with an accompanying translation in English by James Hardiman, *Irish minstrelsy, or bardic remains of Ireland with English poetical translations*, 2 vols (London 1831) II 202-7, 208-11.

⁴⁶ TCD MS 1296 (H.2.5), pp 214-32 (1711-12); RIA MS 549 (23 L 4), pp 165-78 (1713); Cashel MS 22, pp 157-66 (1714); Maynooth MS C 98, part b, pp 231-45 (1714).

⁴⁷ Brian Ó Cuív, ‘An eighteenth-century account of Keating and his *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*’ *Éigse* 9 (1958-61) 263-9; Breandán Ó Madagáin, *An Ghaeilge i Luimneach 1700–1900* (Baile Átha Cliath 1974) 32-3, 88-9; Diarmaid Ó Catháin, ‘Dermot O’Connor, translator of Keating’ *Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Iris an dá Chultúr* 2 (1987) 67-87 (at pp 79-87).

The Irish manuscript corpus contains three further narratives, compiled in the second half of the eighteenth century, which promote their own versions of an ‘O’Brien Saga’. They form a triad of post-classical annals which are mainly concerned with Munster affairs, and while the Battle of Clontarf and matters surrounding it occupy a central place in their respective narratives, each has a different account of this historical event. It is the case, therefore, that these annals attest to compilers who, as narrative creators, and indeed re-creators, transmitted their own particular story about the heroic role of the Dál gCais at Clontarf. In certain cases, the story-element is marked stylistically as the narrative shifts from a terseness of presentation to one which is more verbose and, at times, colourful.⁴⁸

Briefly, we find that in the set of annals which has come to be known as the ‘Dublin Annals of Inisfallen’, one of its most substantial entries, i.e. that for the year 1014, presents a heroic sovereign in Brian Bórainmhe who brandishes both crucifix and gold-hilted sword before entering battle. His son Murchadh in the same text, having killed a Viking most nasty, but eviscerated himself, manages to stay alive to receive communion. Thus presented, the Dál gCais in these eighteenth-century annals are paragons of Christian virtue who are foils to the heathen Viking invaders. Such a Christian-pagan juxtaposition ultimately derives from the Middle-Irish CGG text, of course, but the manner of presentation in these annals is one which I have not located in any Modern Irish literary re-telling of the Battle of Clontarf.

A second set of Inisfallen annals is a fragmentary compilation with the accompanying title *Blóidh don tSeanstairr dá ngoirthear Analadha Innis Faithliona: iarna sgríobhadh as Seinleabhar Meamaruim do fríoth a cConntae Chiar[r]uidhe* (‘An Extract from the Old History which is called the Annals of Inisfallen, having been written from an Old Vellum Book which was found in Co. Kerry’). It was compiled between 1759 and 1761 by Mícheál (mac Peadair) Ó Longáin (d. 1770) and I have referred to it elsewhere as *Annála Inse Faithleann Uí Longáin*, or the ‘Ó Longáin Annals of Inisfallen’, in order to distinguish it from the other two eighteenth-century Inisfallen annals.⁴⁹ This work comprises a substantial section, A. D. 1005-14, detailing Brian Bórainmhe’s reign as High King which derives from LO. Accordingly, the predominant concern here is with the role of the Dál gCais in Munster’s history while the work also incorporates the *ubi sunt?* theme which reinforces their glorious era.⁵⁰

The latter theme is also included in the post-Clontarf description of our third set of Inisfallen annals which came to be known as the ‘MacCurtin Annals of Inisfallen’ because its authorship was attributed by Seosamh Ó Longáin (1817-80), grandson of the aforementioned Mícheál Ó Longáin, to Hugh MacCurtin.⁵¹ The account for the years 1013, 1014 in this work which describes events directly preceding Clontarf as well as the battle itself, corresponds to passages from FFÉ which occur in Version 2 of the CCT prose

⁴⁸ Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’ 108-12, 115-18; idem, ‘Some observations on the ‘Dublin Annals of Inisfallen’’ *Ériu* 57 (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’ 106, 117; for Mícheál Ó Longáin and an inventory of his manuscripts, see Breandán Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí 1700-1850* (Baile Átha Cliath 1982) 88-91, and Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland: motivations and milieu* (Münster 2000) 35-43.

⁵⁰ Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’ 82-101 §§16-55; see also n. 45 above.

⁵¹ Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’, 105-6; for Seosamh Ó Longáin, see Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí* 149-58, and Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland* 119-33.

tale.⁵² The compiler's editorial skill, therefore, yielded a variant description of the battle to that in LO because it is embellished by Version 2 of the CCT narrative. The latter includes supernatural motifs relating to Murchadh son of Brian and a deceitful Maol Sheachlainn, for example, but it also contains a colourful preamble concerning Gormfhlaith, wife of Brian Bórainhe, who, according to Version 2 of CCT, instigated the battle at Clontarf by chastising her brother, Maol Mórdha son of Murchadh, for submitting to the Dál gCais. It will be shown presently that an ambitious Gormfhlaith and a duplicitous Maol Sheachlainn are portrayals by Keating which inspired his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary confrères.

CREATION AND RE-CREATION

Although intended as a historical record of Munster matters, the events s.a. 1014 in the above post-classical annals incorporate specific narrative accretions which serve to promote the heroic quality of the Dál gCais. We may now consider further examples in the specific context of FFÉ.

Keating, as noted already, attached considerable importance to the Uí Bhriain and to Brian Bórainhe in his history, even though his account of the battle itself is quite a colourless one. Indeed, the only mildly interesting comment is that directed at Maol Sheachlainn, King of Meath, which Keating inserted into the following description of the forces converging on Clontarf:

... rí Laighean is Lochlonnaigh do leith, agus dá mhac ríogh Lochlonn mar atá Carolus Cnutus is Andreas 'n-a dtaoiseachaibh orra; Brian go maithibh Muimhneach, Chonnacht is Mhidhe don leith oile, agus Murchadh mac Briain 'n-a thaoiseach orra, acht amháin nar bh'áil lé Maoilseachlainn congnamh leo.

... the king of Leinster and the Lochlonnaigh on one side, the two sons of the king of Lochlonn, to wit, Carolus Cnutus and Andreas being their leaders; Brian with the nobles of Munster, Connaught and Meath on the other side, with Murchadh son of Brian, as their leader. Maoilseachlainn, however, did not wish to help them.⁵³

This concluding comment is a rather garbled rendering of a pact of non-aggression between Maol Sheachlainn and the Vikings on the eve of the battle which is detailed in the Middle-Irish CGG text.⁵⁴ The post-battle narrative of FFÉ includes a speech by Maol Sheachlainn to Clann Cholmáin in which he outlines the terrible conditions which prevented him and his army from partaking in the battle, a speech which ultimately derives from CGG.⁵⁵ Unimpressed by the act-of-God tenor of Maol Sheachlainn's speech, Keating cautions his reader thus:

⁵² Best, 'The Leabhar Oiris' 93-101 §§47-55 and FFÉ III, 266 (l. 4193)-270 (l. 4264), respectively; for Version 2 see n. 43 above.

⁵³ FFÉ III, 274 ll 4297-302 and 275.

⁵⁴ James Henthorn Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh. The war of the Gaedhil with the Gaill, or the invasions of Ireland by the Danes and other Norsemen* (London 1867) 168 §xcvi.

⁵⁵ FFÉ III, 284 ll 4155-73; cf. Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* 180-2 §ciii.

Féach, a léaghthóir, bíodh gurab ar sluagh Briain do bhí Maoilseachlainn is fir Mhidhe ag teacht go láthair an chatha, maseadh do bhí do cheilg idir sé féin is Lochlonnaigh nach táinig san ordughadh i measc shluagh Briain, acht is eadh do rinne é féin is a shluagh d'anmhain do leathtaoibh an chatha, amhail ro orduigheadar Lochlonnaigh dó.

Observe, O reader, that though it was as part of the host of Brian that Maoilseachlainn and the men of Meath came to the field of battle, still through a plot between himself and the Vikings, he did not come into the battle array amongst Brian's host, but what he did was to remain with his host beside the battle, as the Vikings had directed him.⁵⁶

Clearly, this is a treacherous Maol Sheachlainn, the friend turned foe who conspired deceitfully with the enemies of the Dál gCais on the eve of the battle, and it is this deceitful aspect of his character which informs subsequent tradition, albeit in varying degrees of emphasis. The text of LO, for example, leaves the reader in no doubt as to who the consummate villain is:

Do fhéach Murchadh dha leith dheis iar n-a sheachnadh do Mhaolsheachlainn 7 d'fhearaibh Midhe dul leis annsa chath, 7 iar gcur ghuint eotarra 7 an cath, 7 ar gcur Bhriain 7 mhaithe Mumhan an oidhche roimhe sin amach do Lochlannaibh 7 do Laignibh⁵⁷

Murchadh looked to his right side after Maol Sheachlainn and the men of Meath avoided entering into the battle with him, and after he placed a distance of a field between them and the battle, and exposed Brian and the nobles of Munster on the previous night to the Vikings and the Leinstermen

So too we find included in the entry s.a. 1014 in the 'Dublin Annals of Inisfallen' the following remarks on Maol Sheachlainn's duplicity:

... ach d'ēalaign Maolseachloinn gona Mhidhechaibh, mar do gheall an oidhche roimhe sin, et do chuir gort eatartha et an chath; acht nír luíghdig sin meanmain Bhriain ná an Dáil cCais, oír do chosnamhadar an cath go ró dhásachtach.⁵⁸

... but Maol Sheachlainn absconded with his men of Meath as he promised the night before and established a distance of a field between them and the battle; but this did not diminish Brian's courage nor that of the Dál gCais, for they contested the fight very fiercely.

⁵⁶ FFÉ III, 284 (l. 4474)-286 (l. 4479) and 285, 287.

⁵⁷ Best, 'The Leabhar Oiris' 86 §32, although *dha leith dheis* in the scribal source is incorrectly reproduced as *d'a leith d'éis* in the printed edition. The accompanying translation in English and those that follow here, except for passages from FFÉ, are my own.

⁵⁸ TCD MS 1281 (H.1.7), f. 23r-23v.

Other interesting modifications are evident in versions of the CCT narrative. Thus, copies of Version 2A of the tale describe how Maol Sheachlainn's guile was brought to the attention of Brian Bórainmhe before the Battle of Clontarf commenced:

Ro fhág Maolseachluinn Rígh Mídhe an cath faoi Mhurchadh ⁊ faoi Dhál gCais óir do bhí do cheilg idir é ⁊ Lochlannaigh gan teacht san gcath ⁊ ro chuir gort treabhtha idir a mhuintir ⁊ an cath, ⁊ an tan do hinseadh san do Bhrian do thuig gur le ceilg do sheachain Maolseachluinn an cath, ⁊ adubhairt gurab a n-éagmais do-rin sé féin gach áthas riamh dá ndearna.⁵⁹

Maol Sheachlainn, the King of Meath, left the battle to Murchadh and the Dál gCais since there was a plot between him and the Vikings not to enter into battle, and he placed a distance of a ploughed field between his people and the battle, and when Brian was told that he understood that it was because of a conspiracy that Maol Sheachlainn avoided the battle, and he said that every victory that he [Brian] himself ever achieved was in vain.

Similarly, Maol Sheachlainn's collusion with the enemy is highlighted in Versions 2C and 2D of the tale:

Cuireas Maoilseachlainn fios ós íseal go Rígh Laighean an oídhche roimh an ccaith dá rádh leis teacht dochum an chatha do bhrígh gur chuir Brian Donnchadh mac Briain ⁊ trian an tsleachta Mhuimhnigh do chreacha Aoibh cCinnsiolla ⁊ do gheall féin go ttréigfeadh Brian san ccaith.⁶⁰

Maol Sheachlainn sent word secretly to the King of Leinster on the eve of the battle telling him to come to do battle because Brian sent Donnchadh son of Brian and a third of the Munster host to plunder the Uí Chinnsealaigh, and he himself promised that he would abandon Brian in the battle.

In some copies of Version 2B, moreover, the following rhetorical question is put in parenthesis to the reader: *ó nach truadh a léightheoir an cheilg sin do bhí ag Leith Chuinn chum Muimhneach*⁶¹ ('o reader is that plot which Leath Cuinn had against the people of Munster not a shame?').

Somewhat more embittered is the reaction by one Diarmuid Ó Maolchaoine (fl. 1764-1806) from near Sixmilebridge in Co. Clare who concluded his transcript of CCT (Version 2B) in 1787 with the following advice to the reader:

... agus biodh a fhios agad air gcéadhna gurbho tré fheall agus chum fealla air Bhrían Bhóirbhe mac Cinnéide chum teacht asteach ionna Árd Rígh Ēirionn do

⁵⁹ For example in RIA MS 946 (23 H 15), pp 61-8 (at p. 63); RIA MS 897 (12 F 20), pp 209-30 (at p. 217); RIA MS 981 (23 N 18), pp 79-96 (at p. 85).

⁶⁰ For example in RIA MS 211 (23 G 20), pp 215-20, p. 223 (at p. 216) and RIA MS 204 (E vi 3), pp 1-38 (at pp 19-20), i.e. transcripts of Version 2C and Version 2D, respectively.

⁶¹ For example in TCD MS 1414 (H.6.10), p. 182; RIA MS 246 (24 C 14), p. 6; RIA MS 482 (23 K 43), p. 206; Rome MS 4, p. 224; NLI MS G 637, p. [60]; NLI MS G 324, p. 93; RIA MS 38 (23 K 46), p. 84.

rinne Maoilseachluinn Mór agus fir Mhídhe an tarang úd as Cath Chluana Tairbh tarsna guirt béatála agus claíphe, agus as íad do thug túarusgabháil úatha, 7 dob é a mían lingneamh uim thráthnóna air a mbíodh beó do chaithibh Bhríain, Mhurchadh, Thoirdhealbhaigh, Dhubhlainn, agus Dháil gCais, agus a mbíodh beó díobh do mharbhadh air an láithir sin, ag sin Cath Chluana Tairbh.⁶²

... and know also that it was because of deceit and in order to commit treachery against Brian Bórainmhe son of Cinnéidigh to become High King of Ireland that Maol Sheachlainn Mór and the men of Meath made that retreat from the Battle of Clontarf across a lea-burned field and ditch, and it is they who gave a report, and it was their desire to jump in the evening on all the survivors of the battalions of Brian, Murchadh, Toirdhealbhadh, Dubhlaing and the Dál gCais, and kill all those alive there; that is the Battle of Clontarf.

The matter provoked an equally extreme response from the Waterford scribe, Uilliam Breathnach (fl. 1812-18), in 1813 when he maintained that the entire matter amounted to a conspiracy against the men of Munster:

Ionus gurab e sinn Catha Cluana Tarbh 7 feall Rígh Laighionn 7 Mhídhe do shaoil Gaoidhil do thabhairt fa daorsmacht 7 moghsaine Lochlainig. Acht faraoir tréim[h]se g[h]airid 'na dhíagh sinn do rin Mac Mhurchadh Laighionn 7 Laighionnac[h]aibh sinn do thabhairt fa daorsmacht Gall acht tiocfa[i]dh an lā a ionna mbeidh Ruagadh na Loc[h]lannach aig Muimhneachaib[h] ortha is náir bho fada uat[h]a e.⁶³

So that that is the Battle of Clontarf and the treachery of the Kings of Leinster and Meath who sought to bring the Irish into the submission and bondage of the Vikings. Unfortunately, however, a short while after that Mac Murchadh of Leinster and the men of Leinster brought us under the slavery of foreigners, but the day will come when the people of Munster will banish the Vikings and let them not have to wait long for it.

Breathnach's text (Version 2B) and this colophon were, in turn, copied between 1824 and 1826 by a fellow scribe from Waterford, Ristead Paor (fl. 1824-66), who added *mara*

⁶² RIA MS 246 (24 C 14), pp 27-8. According to a colophon by this scribe in BL Egerton MS 150 (f. 353r), he was born 'lámh re hAbhain o Gearne' i.e. Droichead Abhann Ó gCearnaigh (Sixmilebridge); eleven of his manuscripts, written between 1764 and 1787, have survived, indicating that he spent much of his life in Limerick, and Eugene O'Curry knew him 'about the year 1806' (Flower, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum* II 593).

⁶³ Dunnington MS 1, p. 356; this volume and its contents are described by Edgar M. Slotkin, 'Two Irish literary manuscripts in the Mid-West' *Éigse* 25 (1991) 56-80 (at pp 57-62); for Uilliam Breathnach and an inventory of his manuscripts, see Eoghan Ó Súilleabháin, 'Scríobhaithe Phort Lairge 1700-1900' in *Waterford: history and society*, ed. William Nolan and Thomas P. Power (Dublin 1992) 265-308 (at pp 269-70).

bhfuil peacadh dham sin d'iarraidh ('if it is not a sin for me to request that') to the parochial sentiments of his exemplar!⁶⁴

It is the case, then, that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scribes expanded on the criticism of Maol Sheachlainn's contribution at Clontarf by Keating. Yet it is also the case that the latter's partisan views come to light earlier on in his account when a clear contrast is made between a rightful and honourable sovereign, and his predecessor who forfeited his claim to the kingship of Ireland. Thus, Brian Bórainmhe emerges as one who succeeded to power 'by the strength and bravery of his feats of valour and championship, driving the foreigners and the Danair out of the country, and not by treachery' – *lé calmacht is lé cródhacht a ghníomh goile is gaiscidh, ag ionnarbadh eachtrann is danar as an gcrích, agus ní go cealgach*. Maol Sheachlainn, however, was given 'to luxury and comfort and ease, a line of action that was useless for the defence of Ireland at that juncture' – *do shádhaile is do sheascaireacht is do shuaimhneas, inneall fá héadtarbhach ré cosnamh Éireann an tráth soin*.⁶⁵

Hugh MacCurtin followed Keating in establishing this contrast between an upright Brian Bórainmhe and a dishonourable Maol Sheachlainn, which contrast he heightens in the following passage by shifting from present to past tense:

Maoilseachluinn finding it now his Time to be in some sort reveng'd on *Brian*, stands off with the Forces of *Meath*, so soon as the Signal was given, and continues a meer Spectator during the whole Time of the Battle, without joining either Side. And yet notwithstanding this treacherous Carriage of *Maoilseachluinn* (for it can be termed no better, tho' after this Fight was over he recover'd the Monarchy by it) the noble, valourous, and undanted PRINCE MOROGH, Eldest Son of the Victorious BRIAN BOROVEY, by the Power of the Hereditary Stream of Courage and Magnanimity flowing in his strong Veins, having perswaded his Father to retire into his Tent, by reason of his great Age, behav'd himself with his *Momonian* and *Conacian* Forces so bravely, and made such furious Impressions on every Side into the main Battalions of his Enemies, that altho' neither Courage, nor Dexterity, nor Ambition, nor Glory, nor Revenge, nor Dispair, propos'd unto them respectively, were wanting to make the *Danes* and *Lagenian* Forces withstand him a very long Time, and sell the Victory at a very dear Rate, he won the field at last'.⁶⁶

Even though Keating's negative portrayal of Maol Sheachlainn resonated with Munster scholars, others regarded it as one of the shortcomings of his history. One case in point is a criticism of FFÉ which was written in the last decade of the seventeenth century by a grandson of Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh (fl. 1600-35). The anonymous author singled out Keating's sarcastic aside to the reader,⁶⁷ probably because of its anti-northern stance:

⁶⁴ RIA MS 102 (23 L 5), p. 267; for this scribe and an inventory of his manuscripts, see Ó Súilleabháin, 'Scriobhaithe Phort Lairge' 293-5.

⁶⁵ FFÉ III, 257, 256 ll 4020-2 and 249, 248 ll 3888-90, respectively; cf. Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating* 145.

⁶⁶ MacCurtin, *A brief discourse* 245-6.

⁶⁷ n. 56 above.

As mó as inchreidthe na leabhair oiris 7 annála do scríobhadh leis an aois ealadhna diaidh a ndiaidh 7 do bhí a n-orlamhos 7 a ccoimhéd ag an eaglais ionnas nach ccurifidhe brég ionnta iná stair Chatha Cluana Tarbh ó aonughdar amháin dá fheabhas gan breathnughadh nó breathamhnas an aois ealadhna nó an seanchaidh go coitchionn do bheith air; óir as amhlaidh a-deir an Leabhar Gabhála 7 na leabhair airis gurab é Maolsheachloinn gona mhuintir do chothaigh an cath tar éis marbthha Briain 7 Murchaidh agus uaisleadh Dál eCais d’urmhór gur bhrissiot ar Lochlannaibh 7 ar Laighnibh go raibhe marbhadh 7 mudhughadh aca orra ó Chluain Tarbh go hÁth Cliath. Measoim fós nach raibhi cairdeas nó caradradh nó síothcháin eidir Mhaoilsheachloinn 7 Lochlonnaibh acht uiread le Brian, amhail as follas is na cathaibh do chuir orra.⁶⁸

Far more credible are the books of chronicles and annals which were written from age to age by the learned class, and which the church had in [its] custody and possession, so that no falsehood would be inserted into them nor the story of the Battle of Clontarf by any single author, however brilliant, without the examination or judgement of the learned class or historian in general; for the *Leabhar Gabhála* and the books of chronicles state that it was Maol Sheachlainn and his followers who persevered in battle after the death of Brian, Murchadh and the nobles of the Dál gCais for the most part, and they defeated Vikings and Leinstermen, killing and massacring them from Clontarf to Dublin. I also think that, no more than in the case of Brian, neither friendship nor alliance nor concord existed between Maol Sheachlainn and the Vikings, as is clear from the battles he waged on them.

Similarly, the antiquary Charles O’Conor (1710-91) of Belanagar, Co. Roscommon, argued in his *Dissertations on the history of Ireland* that:

Some writers, who drew most of their materials from modern *Romances*, accuse him [Malachy II] of a malicious Desertion at the Battle of *Clontarfe*: But this account being irreconcilable with the whole Tenour of his Life and Conduct, and not in the least supported by *Tigernach*, or any other Writer who lived near the Period in Question, must be deservedly rejected.⁶⁹

The reference here to modern romances recalls Sarah Butler whose *Irish tales*, one of the first novels to be published by an Irish writer, is set to the background of the Battle of Clontarf.⁷⁰ The narrative may be divided into two sections which anachronistically fuse events in Ireland in the ninth and early eleventh centuries. The first section portrays the

⁶⁸ Brian Ó Cuív, ‘A seventeenth-century criticism of Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*’ *Éigse* 11 (1964-66) 119-40 (at p. 136); cf. Ní Úrdail, ‘Seachadadh *Cath Cluana Tarbh*’ 210 n. 41.

⁶⁹ Charles O’Conor, *Dissertations on the history of Ireland* 2nd edition (Dublin 1766) 264-5.

⁷⁰ *Irish tales: or, instructive histories for the happy conduct of life*. By Mrs. Sarah Butler (London 1716); cf. *The feminist companion to literature in English. Women writers from the Middle Ages to the present*, ed. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, Isobel Grundy (London 1990) 164-5; Ian Campbell Ross, ‘“One of the principle nations in Europe”: the representation of Ireland in Sarah Butler’s *Irish tales*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7 (1994) 1-16; Siobhán Kilfeather, ‘The profession of letters, 1700-1810’ in *The field day anthology of Irish writing* V, ed. Angela Bourke et al. (Cork 2002) 772-832 (at pp 773, 782-7, 830).

unhappy and unconsummated love between ‘Murchoe’ son of Brian Bórainmhe and one Dooneflaith, daughter of Maol Sheachlainn son of Maol Ruanaidh (d. 862) while the second is set during Brian’s reign as King of Ireland and concludes with a description of the Battle of Clontarf. Butler seeks to convince her reader of the historical validity of *Irish tales* by claiming in her preface that although she has ‘cloath’d it with the Dress and Title of a Novel’, she ‘err’d as little from the Truth of the History, as any perhaps who have undertaken anything of this Nature’.⁷¹ Among the sources which buttress this ‘truth’ is one ‘Dr Keting’ whom Butler acknowledges three times.

Of relevance to our purpose here is the description of the Battle of Clontarf which closely follows that in FFÉ. Accordingly, Maol Sheachlainn as portrayed in *Irish tales* is also Brian Bórainmhe’s friend turned foe:

Nor for half the Day could it be decided upon which side hovering Victory would light; and had *Maolseachelvin* (who Headed the Army of *Meath*) came up, they had soon turn’d the Scale. But he, remembering the Affront of *Bryan*, who made him be Depos’d, to make way for himself, as soon as the Signal was given, stood off with his Men, and was only a Spectator of the most bloody and terrible Fight that ever was Acted on the Tragick Theatre of *Irish* Ground. Nay, tho’ at one time he saw his own Country-men begin to give way, and the *Danes* in a probability of winning the Day, yet did he stand unmov’d.⁷²

Further down in her narrative, Butler informs her reader that the Danes were overcome ‘without the assistance of *Maolseachelvin*’ who ‘put in for his Share, and made himself once more Monarch of *Ireland*.’⁷³

With regard to events before the Battle of Clontarf, FFÉ describes a visit by Maol Mórdha, King of Leinster, to Brian Bórainmhe at Kincora which ultimately derives from the Middle-Irish CGG narrative. Gormfhlaith, wife of Brian Bórainmhe and sister of Maol Mórdha, features at this point where she emerges as an ambitious woman who wishes to bolster her Leinster connections by ridiculing her brother, Maol Mórdha King of Leinster, for bowing down to the might of Thomond.⁷⁴ In reviving this particular scene, however, Keating inserts the comment *fá cuimhin lé Maolmórda comhrádh na ríoghna*, ‘Maolmordha kept in mind the queen’s remarks’,⁷⁵ which implies that Gormfhlaith’s remarks influenced her brother and contributed to a quarrel between the Leinster king and Murchadh son of Brian which, in turn, goaded Maol Mórdha on to seek allies in war against the Dál gCais. The negative effect of Gormfhlaith’s words is a theme which is subsumed into subsequent tradition.

According to Sarah Butler’s *Irish tales*, for example, Gormfhlaith’s ‘words, (tho’ at present he [Maol Mórdha] made her no reply) sunk deep in his Heart’ he ‘being touch’d to the quick with the Reproof that his sister had given him’.⁷⁶ By the following morning

⁷¹ Butler, *Irish tales* pp xiii-xiv.

⁷² *ibid.* 122-3.

⁷³ *ibid.* 126, 127.

⁷⁴ FFÉ III, 266 (l. 4193)-268 (l. 4230); cf. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Tales of three Gormlraiths in medieval Irish literature’ *Ériu* 52 (2002) 1-24 (at pp 20-1).

⁷⁵ FFÉ III, 268 ll 4215-6 and 269.

⁷⁶ Butler, *Irish tales* 110.

‘his Heart was so full (what with the rebukes his Sister had made him, and the defiance his Nephew had given him) that he had no way to ease it’.⁷⁷ Similarly, Hugh MacCurtin observed that Maol Mórdha took ‘to heart his Sister’s words’.⁷⁸

In Irish-language sources, all four variants of Version 2 of CCT include this ‘Gormfhlaithe Episode’, although as in the case of the characterisation of Maol Sheachlainn, differences in emphasis are evident. Thus, we find that Keating’s interpretation of the scene in the CGG text is itself re-interpreted in some transcripts of Version 2B of CCT. The Cork scribe Séamas Ó Conaire (fl. 1773-74) writes forcefully *do chuaidh an cómhradh sin go mór fá Rígh Laighean 7 fá cumhach é tríd* (‘that conversation greatly affected the King of Leinster and he was sad on account of it’).⁷⁹ Other interpolations which occur in Version 2B are: *acht cheana fá chúmhach Rí Laighean do chomhradh na mná*⁸⁰ (‘the King of Leinster was sad, however, because of the conversation of the woman’) and *acht cheadhna fá dúmhach Rígh Laighean do chómhradh na mná an tan san*⁸¹ (‘the King of Leinster was grieved by the conversation of the woman at that time’), while the remark *acht cédna, fá chumann le Rígh Laighen cómhradh na Ríoghaine* is translated in two sources as ‘The King of Leinster, notwithstanding his apparent indifference, was deeply affected at the Queen’s reproof’.⁸² Versions 2C and 2D present an equally melancholic Maol Mórdha with the remark *do chuaidh an comhradh sin tríd agus fá cúmhach dobrónach é dá thoisg* (‘that conversation got to him and he was sad and dejected as a result of it’).

SCRIBAL INTENT

The recasting of Maol Sheachlainn as treacherous reveals much about the political sentiments of our post-classical compilers. Politics, too, is at the heart of the growth of the ‘O’Brien Saga’ itself, of course, and CCT, LO and the three eighteenth-century ‘Annals of Inisfallen’ referred to above promoted their own version of this saga. In LO, for example, even though we do not know anything about its author except that he was ‘a zealous partisan of Brian, as is shown by the omission of his [Brian’s] less successful exploits’,⁸³ the work clearly resonated with Thomond scribes who penned eight of the twenty-five copies now extant. In the case of our post-classical annals, moreover, an O’Brien interested in his eponymous ancestors was their intended reader, i.e. Dr John O’Brien, Irish scholar and RC Bishop of Cloyne and Ross (1748-69).⁸⁴ Small wonder,

⁷⁷ *ibid.* 112.

⁷⁸ MacCurtin, *A brief discourse* 243.

⁷⁹ Maynooth MS R 64, part c, p. 194; cf. John Mac Neill, ‘Cath Cluana Tairbh’ *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* 7 (1896-97) 8-11, 41-4, 55-7 (at p. 8), although the scribal source for this printed text is not named here. Ó Conaire’s contribution to parts a and c of this volume was identified by Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí* 50.

⁸⁰ For example in RIA MS 246 (24 C 14), p. 3; RIA MS 482 (23 K 43), p. 205; Rome MS 4, p. 222; Hyde MS 13, p. 138; Torna MS ii, p. 193; Villanova MS 43695, pp 45-6.

⁸¹ For example in TCD MS 1414 (H.6.10), p. 179; RIA MS 892 (12 F 13), p. 34.

⁸² RIA MS 524 (23 E 4), p. 48 and p. 49, and RIA MS 525 (23 E 5), p. 3 and p. 4.

⁸³ Best, ‘The Leabhar Oiris’ 74.

⁸⁴ Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’ 106-8; for Dr O’Brien and his contribution to Irish scholarship, see James Coombes, *A bishop of penal times. The life and times of John O’Brien Bishop of Cloyne and Ross 1701–1769* (Cork 1981); Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí* 218-22; Diarmaid Ó

then, that the detailed description of the Battle of Clontarf in these annals – with Brian Bórainmhe as consummate Christian sovereign of Ireland, leading the forces of the nation to victory over the pagan foreigners – would appeal to this bishop of penal times.

The evidence from the material under review here, however, points to a sense of textual aesthetics on the part of its compilers which also influenced the course of literary transmission. In the case of the third set of Inisfallen annals, for example, that which came to be known as the ‘MacCurtin Annals of Inisfallen’, we have seen that Version 2 of CCT (which itself replicates passages from Keating’s FFÉ) is incorporated into its narrative.⁸⁵ The three earliest extant transcripts of these annals were written by Mícheál Ó Longáin, one of which he completed in 1766, while two remaining copies probably also date from this time.⁸⁶ In one of these, our scribe referred to *easbadh mhór san seinleabhar* (‘a great deficiency in the old book’), and he outlined in a note inserted into a second transcript how he would emend the lacunar text of his exemplar:

Annsa seanmhamram do bhí a seilbh Uí Dhonnchadh an G[h]leanna as ar tar[r]angach go fóirlionta fírin[n]each an scríbhín[n] seo, do ráinig easbadh duilleoga ón áit seo go flathas D[h]ómhnaill mhic M[h]urchadh; gidheadh cóimhlíonfam an urusbadh [*sic*] soin as Réim Ríog[h]ra atá scríobhtha aguin[n] a meamram cianaosda ionna bhfuil air [g]cēadna an Leabhar Gabhála.⁸⁷

In the old vellum which was in the possession of O’Donoghue of Glenflesk out of which this document was completely [and] faithfully drawn, a lack of leaves occurred from this place to the reign of Dómnall mac Murchadha [High King, A. D. 743-63]; however, I will complete that lacuna from the *Réim Ríoghra* which I have written from an ancient vellum which also contains the *Leabhar Gabhála*.

Scribes such as Ó Longáin clearly looked upon themselves as editors whose duty it was to engage with the text at hand and supplement what they considered to be lacking in an exemplar. Indeed, the account for the years 1013, 1014 in these annals is a fine example of editorial work for not only does this section include passages which, as noted already, are also found in LO, but these passages in turn are fleshed out by Version 2 of the CCT narrative. In the light of the above statement of intent, I would argue that the editor in this case was probably Mícheál Ó Longáin.

It is of interest that Bishop John O’Brien did not have a high regard for FFÉ as is clear from an article published in 1764 under the pseudonym M. de C., i.e. Monseigneur de Cloyne: not only did he refer to FFÉ as ‘l’Histoire fabuleuse du Docteur Keating’, but the

Catháin, ‘An Irish scholar abroad: Bishop John O’Brien of Cloyne and the Macpherson controversy’ in *Cork: history and society*, ed. Patrick O’Flanagan, Cornelius G. Buttimer (Dublin 1993) 499-533; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Collège des Irlandais Paris and Irish studies* (Dublin 2001) 97-113.

⁸⁵ See n. 51 and n. 52 above.

⁸⁶ Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’ 105-6.

⁸⁷ Maynooth MS M 56, part a, pp 1-92 (at p. 18) and Dublin MS IL 1, part c, pp 1-57 (at p. 2), respectively. For a description of the latter volumes and their contents, see Ó Fiannachta, *Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Choláiste Phádraig Má Nuad III* 9-14 and idem, *Clár lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge: leabharlanna na cléire agus mionchnuasaigh II* (Baile Átha Cliath 1980) 70-6, respectively; cf. Ní Úrdail, ‘*Annála Inse Faithleann an ochtú céad déag*’ 113.

author relegated Keating to a circle ‘d’autres Ecrivains fabuleux’.⁸⁸ Four years later, Dr O’Brien once again dismissed FFÉ because of its ‘fabulous stories’, while he valued greatly the substance of what he styled ‘our authentic native annals’.⁸⁹ Ó Longáin cannot have been unaware of these sentiments regarding Keating because the prelate was one of his most important patrons from the late 1750s into the early 1760s.⁹⁰ The textual splicing which is evident in the account for the years 1013, 1014 resulted nonetheless in a narrative which was compiled despite the predilections of its intended reader, yet one which, I would contend, was motivated by Ó Longáin’s aesthetic concern to ‘complete that lacuna’ (*uireaspa*) in his exemplar.

Mícheál Ó Longáin’s remarkable sense of text was inherited by subsequent generations within this family as evidenced by Versions 2C and 2D of CCT, for each was the result of innovations by his son, Mícheál Óg (1766-1837), and grandson, Peadar (fl. 1801-60), respectively. The original compiler of Version 2B of CCT, moreover, was one Eoghan Ó Caoimh (1656-1726) from Cork, a scribe whose editorial work marked a textual precedent in the manuscript tradition of CCT: Ó Caoimh’s transcript, penned between 1702 and 1703, is the earliest to show borrowings from FFÉ.⁹¹ As in the case of Mícheál Ó Longáin, this scribe too conceded that his role encompassed that of editor. By way of illustration, we may note the following opening section from a colophon to a transcript of FFÉ which Ó Caoimh wrote between 1707 and 1709:

Ag sin críoch Fhoruis Feasa ar Éirinn, do réir mur fuarus é, agus d’f[h]águbhus amuich beagán do nithibh éadtarbhacha dár sgríobhadh lé húghdar an leabhair .i. Séathrún Céating agus do chuirios ina n-áit mórán do neithibh tairbhacha don léaghthóir fuarus a bpríomh leabhraibh Seanchusa do cheilsíod an aois ealadhan air an Séathrún réimhráidhte.⁹²

That is the end of *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* as I found it and I left out a few useless things which were written by the author of the book, i.e. Séathrún Céitinn, and I put in their place many useful things for the reader which I found in the main books of ancient history which the learned class concealed from the aforementioned Séathrún.

We have seen that Keating admitted to omitting many things purposely in his history and he challenged future scholars to reveal that which they considered to be important.⁹³ Ó Caoimh responded in kind by reflecting on the material to be transcribed, arranging it

⁸⁸ ‘Mémoire de M. de C. a messieurs les auteurs du Journal des Sçavans, au sujet des poëms de M. Macpherson’, *Journal des Sçavans* (May 1764) 277-92, (June 1764) 353-62, 408-17, (August 1764) 537-55, (September 1764) 604-17, (December 1764) 845-57 (at December 1764, 851, and August 1764, 539-40, respectively). I am grateful to Diarmaid Ó Catháin for placing his copy of the latter source at my disposal.

⁸⁹ *Focalóir Gaidhíle-Sax-Bhéarla or an Irish-English dictionary* (Paris 1768) pp xl-xlj.

⁹⁰ Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland* 40-1, 140-2.

⁹¹ Stonyhurst MS A II 20, vol. 2, part a, pp 418-28; for Ó Caoimh and his scholarship, see Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí* 33-6.

⁹² Limerick MS O, pp 7-247 (at p. 247), a reference I owe to Professor Máirtín Ó Murchú. The volume itself is one of seven housed in the Catholic Bishop’s residence; see Pádraig de Brún, ‘Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge i Luimneach’ *Éigse* 12 (1967-68) 91-108 (at pp 103-8).

⁹³ See n. 14 above.

according to his particular editorial policy and setting a revised text down in writing. Our scribe also applied his editorial skills to the core narrative of CCT which resulted in the revised text referred to already here as Version 2B. The extant sources of this tale indicate that Ó Caoimh was the first to splice passages from FFÉ onto its core narrative. That a separate compiler introduced further interpolations from the work which resulted in the text referred to as Version 2A of CCT attests in itself, of course, to Keating's canonical influence on subsequent narrative tradition.⁹⁴

In sum, the material under review here owes a literary debt to FFÉ. Eugenius Carti, or Eoghan Mac Cárthaigh, responded to Keating's challenge by compiling his own particular *foras feasa*. Other scholars derived passages directly from FFÉ itself which they added to a given exemplar and this active engagement with their sources resulted in new texts. In taking up Keating's gauntlet, therefore, *do scríobhadh go foirleathan lionmhar ar Éirinn d'á éis so* ('to write fully and comprehensively on Ireland hereafter'), scribes in post-classical Ireland are not solely to be regarded as copyists who faithfully reproduced a given exemplar, but rather as interpreters who created and re-created narrative. The motivation, moreover, for thus writing fully and comprehensively was not only political in nature: it was also driven by an aesthetic sense to shape literary tradition.

MEIDHBHÍN NÍ ÚRDAIL

MANUSCRIPT ABBREVIATIONS

BL Egerton: Egerton Collection, British Library, London
 Cambridge McClean: McClean Collection, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
 Cashel: GPA-Bolton Library, Cashel, Co. Tipperary
 Dublin MS IL: Irish Jesuit Archives, Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2
 Dunnington: Formerly owned by Michael Dunnington, Lexington, Kentucky, now in the possession of Professor Edgar M. Slotkin, University of Cincinnati
 Hyde: Hyde Collection, James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway
 Limerick: Catholic Bishop's House, Limerick
 Maynooth MS C: O'Curry Collection, NUI Maynooth
 Maynooth MS M: Murphy Collection, NUI Maynooth
 Maynooth MS R: Renehan Collection, NUI Maynooth
 Rome: Papal Irish College, Rome
 Stonyhurst: Jesuit College, Blackburn, Lancashire
 Torna: Torna Collection, University College Cork
 Villanova: Falvey Memorial Library, Villanova University, Pennsylvania

⁹⁴ The earliest extant transcript of Version 2A of CCT is that in RIA MS 946 (23 H 15), pp 61-8, completed in 1771 by Ríghrí Mac Raghnaill, or Roger Reynolds, at 'Baile an [sic] Chaisleáin', Co. Cork.