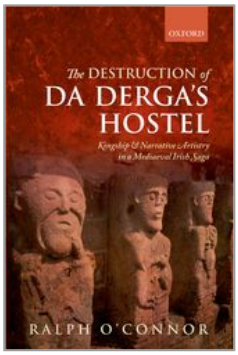

The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel: Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga
Ralph O'Connor

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The Text and its Authors; or, How to Write a Saga

Ralph O'Connor

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter focuses on the material process of saga-writing and authorship. The Middle Irish saga exists in several divergent manuscript versions, raising the question of whether it is possible to analyse the original version. The author shows that these versions can still be used as a composite window onto the original saga, because even the greatest variations do not affect the underlying structure and effect of the story. The *Togail* is set in the context of other mediaeval texts about Conaire. Scholars agree that the *Togail* was based on several divergent sources, leading some to suggest that the saga was not written with any artistry at all. The chapter argues that these sources were well harmonized, and that compilatory techniques were a fundamental aspect of saga artistry. This chapter provides the reader with a clear sense of the textual basis on which to explore the saga as a literary work.

Keywords: authorship, recensions, sources, compilation, inconsistency, contradiction, manuscripts, variants, textual criticism

Like all mediaeval Irish sagas, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* represents a species of literature far removed from the familiar world of modern prose fiction. This conceptual gulf yawns widest at the most basic levels. First, this saga no longer survives in its original tenth- or eleventh-century form, but in seven divergent manuscript texts dating from the late eleventh or twelfth down to the sixteenth century. In other words, it has not come down to us as a single authoritative 'work', but as a constellation of versions, each of which represents the tenth- or eleventh-century 'work' in slightly divergent ways. Second, scholars unanimously consider that the *Togail* was not written from scratch in the Middle Irish period, but incorporates large sections of earlier texts (now lost) which the saga-author has edited and built into his structure. As I will show, these facts do not lessen the author's creative achievement, but some ground-clearing is needed before launching into an analysis of the saga's narrative strategies and purposes. The very appropriateness of literary analysis requires defending from the ground up.

In the first section of this chapter I discuss the divergent manuscript texts of the *Togail* and some of the literary-critical problems raised by textual variation. I argue that, despite their differences, these texts can be used as a window on the saga as originally composed in the tenth or eleventh century (the 'archetype', to use the text-critical term). The second section turns to the other texts about Conaire and his family circulating in mediaeval Ireland: here I briefly discuss the relationships between the *Togail* and these other texts, including the possibility that the saga-author used some of them as sources. Finally, the third section deals with the challenges posed to literary criticism by the saga-author's compilatory methods. Having thus built up some sense of how saga-authors worked with their materials, I will go on to explore how the *Togail* works as a story.

Textual Variation, the Archetype, and Our Text

We begin with the direct physical evidence for our saga. Table 1 shows the extant texts of the *Togail*, the manuscripts in which they are contained, and (since most are fragmentary) how much of the saga they contain.[1]

(p.19)

Table 1. The manuscripts of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. Line numbers are taken from Knott, *Togail*

Text	Manuscript	Date when text was written	Lines of Knott's edition represented in the text
U	*Lebor na hUidre*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25 (1229), pp. 83–99	between mid-11th and 12th century,[2] with later interpolations by hand 'H'	Lines 215–1539
Y	The Yellow Book of Lecan, Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318 (H.2.16), cols. 716–739b	between 1390 and 1417, probably before 1400	1–1539 (complete)
Y2	The Yellow Book of Lecan, Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318 (H.2.16), cols. 123–124	probably 15th century (and later than Y)	1–100

Text	Manuscript	Date when text was written	Lines of Knott's edition represented in the text
D	Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D iv 2 (formerly Stowe 992), fols. 79r–86r	15th century	1–1539 (complete)
E/F[3]	London, British Library, MS Egerton 92, fols. 18r–20v, 22r–23v, 21r–v; The Book of Fermoy, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 29, pp. 213–216	15th century	E: 1–482, 644–1044F: 1045–1351
H2	Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1319 (H.2.17), pp. 477–482[4]	15th or 16th century	164–361, 546–894, 1045–1197
A	London, British Library, Additional MS 33993, fols. 4r–5v	late 15th or 16th century	1–145

To avoid confusion in subsequent references to these texts, it should be stressed that each siglum in the first column (U, Y, and so on) refers to a *text* of the *Togail* in manuscript, not to the manuscript as a whole. To enable palaeographically minded (p.20) readers to locate passages in these manuscript-texts,

however, in my references to each text I also give the folio, column, or page number of the relevant manuscript (depending on how its pages are paginated).[5]

According to the most thorough and authoritative study of the manuscripts so far (by Máire West), none of these texts is a direct copy of any other of these texts.[6] Scholars differ on the texts' precise relations with each other, but all agree that they derive at more than one remove from the same now-lost original version.

When was that original version composed? It has traditionally been dated to the eleventh century, as was suggested most influentially by Rudolf Thurneysen in 1921.[7] Because of their anonymity, dating sagas is notoriously difficult, especially when they contain few contemporary historical references. The oldest extant text of the *Togail*, U, is found in a manuscript dated from the mid-eleventh to the twelfth century, which provides the latest possible date of composition. The usual procedure for dating a saga is to plot aspects of its language (both morphology and syntax) against general changes in the Irish language as observed in other, more securely datable texts (this last category being often open to doubt). This procedure does not offer precise or even especially reliable dates, but it is often used to date texts provisionally to within a century or two.[8] During the Middle Irish period, various forms found in Old Irish were progressively simplified, transformed, and confused with each other. This process took place at differing rates for different linguistic forms, so that texts from the tenth and early eleventh centuries often display a mixture of Old and Middle Irish forms rather than modernizing consistently. The *Togail* displays this pattern throughout.[9] It therefore seems reasonable to treat it as a saga composed in the tenth or eleventh century.

In this discussion I refer to this original version of the *Togail* as the 'archetype', that is, the ancestor of the extant texts. Of course, it is quite possible that the ancestor of the extant texts was not physically written by the author of the 'original version' but was a slightly later copy of that version.[10] Nevertheless, for simplicity I here use the word 'archetype' to speak of this original version.

(p.21) But before we can even talk about the archetype, one fundamental challenge to this endeavour must be addressed: textual variation. The extant texts are not identical, but display numerous differences in words, phrases, sentences, and sometimes whole sections. A greater degree of creative licence was applied to the transmission of these texts than the modern concept of 'copying' allows for. How exactly this worked, and the extent to which (some?) scribes exercised genuinely 'authorial' creativity, are questions still to be settled (partly because we know so little about the relationship between composition and writing in the production of vernacular prose narrative in mediaeval Ireland), so the use of terms such as 'scribe', 'copy', and 'author' inevitably begs basic questions.[11] I will consider some of the implications below, but the primary challenge remains: how can these divergent texts be used as a basis for discussing a lost tenth- or eleventh-century archetype? They surely deserve analysis as scribal performances or interpretations in their own right, and in their own historical contexts, along the lines of reception history.[12] However, such an analysis would be more valuable if it were founded on an understanding of the literary workings of the tenth- or eleventh-century archetype which these scribes all reinterpreted in their different ways. My analysis aims primarily to illuminate this tenth- or eleventh-century archetype rather than its sources or any one of the extant texts of the *Togail*, although these will of course be considered as well.

Still, how do we know what that archetype looked like? The simple answer is that, as with most Irish sagas, we do not know *exactly* what the archetype contained word by word, but have to supply our uncertainties by informed conjecture and close study of the texts in all the available manuscripts. However, we have a better chance with the *Togail* than with many other sagas of being able to read the archetype 'through' the extant texts. This is because the texts' divergences happen, by and large, to be less serious for the literary critic than for the textual critic, for three reasons.

First, most of the variation takes place at a low level of narrative significance. The commonest form of variation is in

spelling and orthography and in the use of abbreviations for words or common formulae. Verbal inflexion, too, varies considerably: a verb may change its tense from present to past or even active to passive, usually (though not always) without affecting the meaning of the passage as a whole. Prepositions and other forms can be swapped for each other, but this most often happens when the sense is the same: *ar dorus* and *i ndorus* both mean 'in front of', while *for*, *ol*, and *ar* all mean 'said'. Word order is occasionally switched around, usually between items in a list or elements in a description, but the net result is very similar; on one occasion in F the order of two whole tableaux in the description-sequence is (p.22) reversed, but again without disruption to the general effect.[13] Where words or phrases are added or omitted, these are usually conjunctions, temporal adverbs, prepositions, vocative elements, and other 'pointers'—*didiu* ('then'), *samlaid* ('thus'), *olsi* ('she said'), *de* ('from it'), and *a Ingcél* ('O Ingcél')—all of which underline the meaning but rarely change it. If applied consistently, the omission of words and phrases like these can have a cumulative stylistic effect when compared with a fuller text, but most of the texts of the *Togail* do not show consistent patterns of omission or expansion except at certain points in individual manuscripts.[14]

A few variations seem to have taken place as a result of scribal error at one stage or another: this affects numbers in particular, where the presence or absence of a single stroke, dot, or roman numeral can have significant arithmetical consequences. However, as we shall see in the discussion of textual inconsistencies below, numbers are used in this saga for rhetorical or symbolic effect rather than in an arithmetically precise manner. At a few points, some texts omit part of a sentence as a result of a scribe having accidentally jumped a line in their received text: these errors, of a very different kind to the above, are usually easy to spot because the sentence ends up making no syntactic sense, although admittedly in such cases it is not always possible to restore the original wording with confidence.[15]

Second, there are plenty of textual variations which do affect the text's meaning more materially, but most of these are at

the level of local detail, sustaining rather than disrupting the overall significance and structure of the passages in question. These take the form of amplification, abbreviation, or alternative wording. In some cases difficult or obscure forms seem to have been replaced with alternative words or syntax.[16] At other points, especially in descriptions, lists, and chains of formulae, an individual word or short phrase has been added, omitted, or substituted for another, possibly for reasons of individual taste or (with varying lists of names) because additional source-material was used. In the description of Étaín's cloak, the gleam of the gold is *forderg* (‘very red’) in Y but *aiderg* or *aiderc* (read *airdirc*, ‘conspicuous’) in D, E, A, and Y2, while her cheeks are described as *glanáilli* (‘bright and lovely’) in Y but not in the other four texts.[17] Likewise, Ingcél's pupils in Y are said to be as black as *dethach* (‘smoke’), but in D and U they are as black as *dega* (‘a beetle’).[18] This kind of variation affects the description-sequence, too, especially in the exclamations and predictions of doom uttered by the sons of Donn Désa: as we shall see in chapter 6, the frequent repetition of these formulae enables (p.23) them to be left out or included in individual tableaux with a greater degree of textual freedom than in other parts of the saga, sometimes lengthening or shortening the exchange significantly. In these instances the degree of dramatic effect may thus be intensified or downplayed, but the nature of the effect remains very much the same.

The presence or absence of explanatory or illustrative glosses —in the margins, between the lines or incorporated into the main text—gives rise to some of the variation we see in the texts of the *Togail*: U is particularly rich in glosses, preserved in the hands of both scribes (‘M’ and the later hand ‘H’) responsible for this text of the *Togail*. The drive to explain in more detail, and the related urge to create a more logical narrative flow, also results in a few instances where a sequence of events seems to have been filled out a little, as when the slaves who have been ordered to throw the baby Mess Búachalla into a pit take pity on her. In Y, D, and Y2 this occurrence is explained by the baby's behaviour (*tibidsi gen gáire friu oca tabairt isin chuithi*, ‘she smiled at them as they

were putting her into the pit'), but this vivid detail is not present in E or A, either because it was not in the original version or because it was edited out.[19] The net result is, however, very similar: the slaves take pity on the baby and she is given to the cowherds instead. The most striking example of such variation comes at the end of the saga: did the warrior Mac Cécht have a wolf chewing at his wounds, and was it pulled out by the tail and disposed of? The account in Y does not specify what the creature in his wound is, alluding mysteriously to *sengán sentalman* ('an ant of [the] ancient earth'), but D and U explicitly equate this 'ant' with a wolf and give details of how Mac Cécht's female interlocutor pulled it out for him.[20] It is possible that the details about the wolf were accidentally omitted from Y, but even so the episode's primary significance is clear: Mac Cécht was lying wounded and near death on the battlefield, and refusing to make a fuss even though something serious was biting him.

Variations of these kinds are fairly numerous, especially in the description-sequence, but not nearly as numerous as one might expect in such a long and descriptively detailed saga. Barring divergences in spelling, inflection, and word order, the bulk of the saga is the same, word for word, in all the texts, with variations of the kinds just discussed occurring as scattered exceptions rather than the rule. Moreover, apart from the 'maverick' texts D and U (discussed below), and not counting the repeated response-formulae in the description-sequence, the only instances where more than a few words at a time are added or omitted occur in the saga's two longest descriptions. The description of Étaín is 42 lines long in Knott's edition of Y, but seven of these lines present in Y and D (amplifying the existing description of her face and form) are absent from E, A, and Y2.[21] Similarly, in Y and H2 the prophetic poem which forms part of the 77-line description of (p.24) Conaire includes 22 words in its third stanza (lines 1060–3), amplifying the images of doom and bloodshed in earlier parts of the poem; these lines are absent from D, F, and U. It is hard to know which version is more original, so these passages are two of the more 'blurry' areas when we look through the extant texts to discern the contours of the archetype; but the overall effect is similar in both versions

because both additional passages enlarge on images present in the shorter versions.

The third reason why we may be relatively confident in our ability to ‘see’ most of the archetype's narrative outline is that genuinely large-scale variation is restricted to the two ‘maverick’ texts of the saga, D and U, and even here is found only at the end of the saga (the battle and epilogue) and in a handful of earlier episodes. Many of these variations can be identified fairly securely as later additions (on palaeographical grounds in U, on linguistic and stylistic grounds in D) and are therefore less important to discussions of the archetype. Moreover, most of them—even the most radical changes—end up reinforcing the textual strategies of the archetype, such was the power of its narrative logic.

The peculiarities of D and U must first be summarized. The battle and epilogue in D diverge significantly from the original text in stylistic terms, presenting a linguistically later (twelfth-century at the earliest) and more elaborate paraphrase which lays on strings of adjectives in a manner characteristic of later Middle and Early Modern Irish battle-narratives or *catha*.[22] It is clearly demarcated from the preceding saga by the only section-heading in the whole of D, which explicitly puts this part of the story into the new *cath* genre: *Incipit de cath na maidne for bruidne da berg* (‘Here begins [an extract] from the morning's battle at Da Berga's Hostel’).[23] This heading raises the possibility that the author of D had access to a separate, later tale about this battle, which he has here incorporated into the *Togail* instead of the archetype's final chapters. A similar tendency to paraphrase and amplify, much less thorough but still noticeable, can also be seen in D during the episodes which describe the landing of the plunderers’ fleet, the arrival of Conaire's retinue at the Hostel, and the king's conversation with Cailb. Nevertheless, at both points of reworking in the saga, the nature and order of the events described barely change at all. If there was a separate battle-narrative, that text clearly drew substantially on the *Togail* itself.[24]

U preserves three distinct layers of alteration. First, its immediate exemplar (i.e. the text from which it was copied or

adapted) contained a few antiquarian additions not present in other texts, explaining the origins of place-names and folk-customs and referring to other written accounts known to the writer (e.g. lines 7033–46, (p.25) 7960–3, 8001–4).[25] This writer also expanded considerably on the battle-narrative and epilogue, adding extra events rather than paraphrasing in the manner of D. Next, when the scribe whose hand is known as 'M' came to write this slightly enlarged text of the *Togail* into *Lebor na hUidre*, he continued the antiquarian trend by inserting a number of glosses and section-headings, and by adding a summary of an earlier tale about Conaire's death (Recension I, discussed below) after the text of the *Togail* itself.[26] Last come the contributions of the later scribe 'H' (or 'the interpolator') who revised *Lebor na hUidre*. This individual inserted still more material, mostly consisting of a few extra words and several glosses, often with a view to correcting historical errors;[27] but he also inserted a whole new page into the extended sequence of descriptions in order to add new characters to Conaire's retinue (lines 7578–7673).

These may sound like serious and large-scale amplifications, but even here the saga's structure remains surprisingly consistent. That there *is* such a structure must of course await demonstration in subsequent chapters of this book, but, at the risk of circularity, my point can be illustrated by the three most glaring divergences in the saga's most idiosyncratic manuscript-text, U. The first of these adds an extra episode to the story, the second adds many extra characters to an already densely populated text, and the third seems to aim at shifting the saga's entire structural balance; yet all three in fact maintain and strengthen a structure which I will go on to show was shared by the other, less divergent texts.

The first example occurs midway through the saga, just after the plunderers have returned to Ireland. Once they have built a hilltop cairn to mark their deed as an *orgain* (raid, destruction, massacre) rather than a rout, they hold a council to decide where to attack.[28] Between the cairn-building and the council U has more details (in hand M) about the cairn's purpose and historical significance (lines 7034–40), and then a new event is added: the sons of Donn Désa build a huge

bonfire (*torc tened*, literally ‘a boar of a fire’) to warn Conaire, somehow without the other plunderers noticing (lines 7041–6). This addition (also in hand M) has its own historiographic purpose, as the third-person narrator[29] explains that the custom of building beacons originated with this fire. It also reinforces the parallel trajectories of Conaire and his foster-brothers: the king's own fire was described a few lines earlier as *torc caille* (‘a boar of the forest’, U lines 7001–2). More dramatically, it (p.26) heightens the poignancy of the brothers’ situation. It recalls the behaviour of the exiled Ulster hero Fergus mac Róich in the early stages of the *Táin*: having pledged his support to the rival kingdom of Connaught, Fergus accompanies their armies to Ulster on a cattle-raid, but he is careful to warn the Ulstermen and to lead the Connaught armies on a roundabout route, hoping that the Ulstermen will be able to defend themselves in time.[30] The U-text of the *Togail* likewise emphasizes the brothers’ dilemma between their duty to the other plunderers and their affection towards their foster-brother.[31] But while this additional episode has a marked dramatic effect, the same dilemma and the parallels between Conaire and his foster-brothers have already been built into the archetype's basic structure, as we shall see in chapter 3. U simply underlines it.

The second and most substantial example comprises the additional matter inserted into the long description-sequence by means of a new leaf of parchment (lines 7578–7673), in which groups of swineherds, charioteers, harpers, poets, war-goddesses, and Englishmen (among others) join Conaire's retinue in the Hostel. These additions to the archetype, in the hand of the interpolator H, do not substantially alter the saga's structure, but merely underline its peculiar character as well as the varied nature of Conaire's retinue. The final battle is further delayed by these extra tableaux: the fundamental structural feature of this saga, in which the hurtling narrative momentum of the first half is held in suspension by the lyric stasis of the second half, is reinforced.[32]

The most striking and potentially radical alteration was made in U's battle-narrative, and appears in hand M. Here the initial aim *does* seem to have been to change the saga's structure, by

attempting to replace the brief final battle-scene with a full enumeration of what each champion did (perhaps wishing to follow the growing fashion for battle-narratives also seen in text D). Just after Mac Cécht has cut his way through the besiegers to fetch water, the other two texts extant at this point go on to narrate how the rivers and lakes of Ireland hid from him.[33] In U, the latter passage is somewhat delayed. First a new subheading appears: *Imthússa lochta na brudne iss ed chestnigther sund colléic* ('The deeds of the occupants of the Hostel: this is what is now discussed here', line 7898). The narrator now begins to describe how each group of warriors sallied forth in turn, performing precisely as Fer Rogain had predicted in the description-sequence. Were this narrative principle carried out in full, the structure of the saga would be seriously affected: much of the archetype's dramatic effect derives from the fact that the events of the battle are *not* narrated straightforwardly, but uttered at an earlier point in the story by a prophetic voice within an extended and heightened exchange of direct speech.[34] And indeed, after the first two additional battle-descriptions, taking up five lines each, the (p.27) U-narrator's enthusiasm begins to flag. He disposes of the three Picts in three lines, and the nine Otherworldly musicians in only two, then gives up:

> is fota fri haisnis is tophlíúin menman is búadred do chétfaidib is emiltius fri hestidib is imarcraid n-innisen tíachtain darna nechib inundaib fo dí. Acht tancatár iar n-urd lucht na brudne immach 7 ro fersatár comlonna forsna diberga 7 dotuitset leó amal ro radi Fer Rogain 7 Lomna Druth fri Ingcel.[35]
>
> It is long to tell, it is exhausting for the mind, it is confusing to the senses, it is a bore for the audience, it is an excess of narrative to go over the same things twice. But the occupants of the Hostel came out in order and performed their contests with the plunderers and fell by them, just as Fer Rogain and Lomna the Fool had told Ingcél.

In abandoning his projected battle-narrative, and above all in pointing out what a waste of time such an addition would be, the narrator ends up strengthening and emphasizing the

original narrative strategy (which will be explored in detail in chapters 6 and 7).[36]

If even these major divergences in the maverick texts U and D uphold the same basic structure as the less divergent texts, then all these texts' smaller variations—many as they are—may seem less damaging to the possibility of analysing the leading features of the archetype which underlies them. This is not to deny such variants' potential cumulative significance: many of the additions present in U give this text and *Lebor na hUidre* as a whole a distinctively learned, almost encyclopaedic flavour, illuminating this revised manuscript's purpose and implied audience, while D's souped-up battle-narrative may be worth considering alongside the modernized recensions of other Middle Irish sagas contained in its manuscript, D iv 2. Such matters must await a closer and fuller study of the saga's reception history than space allows here.

The tendencies just outlined suggest that our various 'windows' onto the Middle Irish text of the *Togail* are, on the whole, more transparent than one might have thought. Here, as we shall find elsewhere when considering the *Togail* as a work of literature, a Shakespearean comparison offers some sense of perspective. The two extant versions of *King Lear* also vary considerably. They align themselves with distinct genres ('Tragedy' or 'History'), and their structural differences include the inclusion or omission of entire (and pivotal) scenes and even affect how the play ends, such as whether Lear dies from grief and exhaustion or from the joyful shock of suddenly imagining that his murdered daughter Cordelia still breathes.[37] The (p.28) scenes common to both versions may not display anywhere near as much small-scale variation as is found in the *Togail* texts (because of the limitations imposed by print culture and the iambic pentameter) but, faced with the question 'what makes this work tragic?', Shakespearean scholars could give a different answer for either version. The *Togail*, by contrast, presents the same tragedy in all seven texts: the archetype is only partially and superficially obscured by the shifting permutations of scribal variation which characterize Middle Irish saga literature in general.

It is nevertheless vital to remain aware of these shifting permutations wherever they do affect the saga's meaning in more than minor details. Accordingly, whenever I cite the *Togail* I give any variants of narrative significance in footnotes or discuss them in the main text, as this book is based on the study of all the available manuscript-texts of the saga. ‘Narrative significance’ is of course a highly subjective criterion, and technically every slight change is ‘significant’ in one way or another: I have tried to be as complete as possible, but space does not allow all orthographic divergences and syntactic reversals to be listed.

Having established that we may use the extant texts to study the archetype, albeit with blurred edges at various points, it now remains to explain which text or texts are to be used as the main basis for quotations in this book. The archetype may be visible in its main outlines, but in the many individual cases of varying verbal forms there is often no reliable way of telling which form was in the archetype and which was substituted later. The same applies to the texts as a whole: although some limited parts of D and U can be identified as *not* belonging to the archetype, no individual text as a whole can confidently be called ‘closer’ to the archetype than any other, and none of them is obviously dependent on any other. Barring obvious additions such as those just discussed, all these texts potentially have equal authority as ‘witnesses’ to the archetype, and this makes it very difficult to reconstruct the archetype in all its detail. For this reason most of the editions so far produced have tended to be based on the selection of a ‘best text’ with varying degrees of critical intervention to bring that text closer to the archetype.

The closest we have to a critical edition, taking account of all the available texts, is Máire West's unpublished edition of 1986, written as a Ph.D. dissertation and currently undergoing revision for publication.[38] In its 1986 form her edition does not claim to be a reconstruction of the archetype, but aims to get as close as possible to that unattainable end by producing a text based on the greatest possible agreement of the various manuscripts; her readings privilege Old Irish over Middle Irish forms and follow the order and some of the stylistic procedures of Y, such as its shorter versions of some passages

in the description-sequence. However, it also includes the additional tableaux and many glosses from U, becoming to this extent a conflated text (although these parts' separate origins are clearly indicated) which is relatively distant from the archetype. Because it is both unpublished and a work in progress it would not be appropriate to use it here for quotations, but with its (p.29) detailed textual notes and commentaries it is essential reading for anyone studying the *Togail* in depth. The published version is eagerly awaited.

Two editions of this saga have been published, neither of them using all the available manuscripts. Whitley Stokes's 1901 edition is based on U, with the beginning of the saga supplied from Y and many readings supplied from Y, D, and other texts, with some variants provided in footnotes.[39] The most recent published edition is Eleanor Knott's of 1936: this is the closest we have to a 'best-text' edition. It is firmly based on Y, of which it claims to be a 'transcript', reproducing much of the manuscript's spelling and orthography. A full list of variants from D is given in an appendix, with the last chapters of D printed in full, but the text itself contains no indication of where a variant occurs; the other variants (in endnotes) are few and far between, again with no indication given in the text. Despite the fact that this is a 'transcript' of Y, Knott's critical instincts led her occasionally to substitute readings from other manuscripts: she admitted having followed D in 'one or two' cases (in fact thirteen), U on at least three occasions, and E at least once.[40] Most of these departures are clearly signalled in footnotes in the main text, where the relevant readings of Y are provided, but it is an inconsistency (as Knott herself admitted).

In this book my quotations will be based on Knott's edition, for three reasons: it is the most widely used printed edition, it is the basis for the only complete English translation in print at the time of writing,[41] and her preferred text Y seems safer to use as a 'best text' than the other two relatively complete texts D and U because it contains fewer obvious interpolations and modernizations. However, I will attempt to mitigate the problems of Knott's edition in the following ways.

First, I provide a translation of every quotation. Second, on the few occasions where her text departs (however trivially) from her stated aim of producing a ‘transcript’ of Y, mine will stick doggedly to Y, giving Knott's reading in a footnote. The only exception to this will be where the scribe of Y seems to have omitted a word or words by mistake, clearly resulting in nonsense: in this case I supply missing words from one or more other texts in square brackets and with an explanatory footnote. My text will however stick to Y even if Y has an unintelligible word, but in such cases my translation will interpret that word with the help of the other texts. For example, Conaire's prophetic verses contain the unintelligible phrase *dom-ársad imned*, which all the other texts extant at this point render *dommarfas imned* (‘suffering is revealed to me’): in the absence of a workable alternative, therefore, my translation interprets Y's *dom-ársad* as a rather distorted variant of the same form.[42] Third, I give any significant variants in footnotes, including any indication of whether any of these may better reflect the archetype. Y will therefore become our chief ‘window’ onto the archetype, with line numbers (p.30) referring to Knott's text; but Y's shortcomings in this role will be fully flagged up along with any light shed by other texts. For ease of reading, however, I have altered and added to Knott's (and Y's) punctuation and paragraph breaks, and following the example of West's edition I print verse on separate lines rather than as continuous prose. In both my text and variants, I follow Knott in expanding all obvious abbreviations (*Nī*, with a long stroke over the *i*, always means *Ní anse* ‘Not difficult’ in this saga), but I do not expand the phrase 7*rl* (*et reliqua*, i.e. ‘etc.’) because it is not always clear how many extra words are implied by this. I also reproduce Knott's somewhat inconsistent practice of adding length-marks, which are not often found in Y, except where this changes the meaning of the word (e.g. *ór*, ‘gold’, for *or*, ‘hem’, in line 8).

It is hoped that these procedures will provide readers with an accessible, usable text which can be easily keyed back to Knott's edition, but which preserves some sense of the textual ‘uncertainty principle’ necessary when reading the archetype through the extant manuscripts. Readers familiar with the

English translation in Jeffrey Gantz's Penguin paperback *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (based on Knott's edition) will also recognize ‘their’ saga in the text discussed here, although my translations are more literal than Gantz's. Gantz's translation is problematic in some respects—adding small portions of direct speech unattested in the Irish texts, silently omitting some other phrases for reasons of taste, and mistakenly representing the warrior Mac Cécht as dying at the end of the story[43]—but it is the most widely available and is recommended as an accompaniment to this book for readers unacquainted with Old and Middle Irish.[44] It conveys a lively sense of the saga's range of literary styles and, unlike most of the other English translations in print at the time of writing, it does not make a nonsense of the saga's rhythm, structure, and dramatic effect by omitting huge swathes of its direct speech.[45]

For those wishing to consult the individual texts, four of these are available in print or online. Digital scans of Y (but not Y2), D, U, and F are all accessible via the collaborative Irish Script on Screen project (ISOS) run by the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, with high-quality scans available on request.[46] U is the only text available in full in a semi-diplomatic edition, Osborn Bergin's and R. I. Best's edition of *Lebor na hUidre*, which clearly distinguishes between the different scribal (p.31) hands;[47] most of my references to U are to line numbers in this edition of *Lebor na hUidre*. Knott's edition of the *Togail* also contains a semi-diplomatic transcription of the last section of D, to which I refer where relevant.[48] Y and Y2 are available in an 1896 facsimile edition of the Yellow Book of Lecan, but its reproduction quality is very poor compared with the high-definition online version of Y.[49] E, H2, and A have not been published in any form. My references to all the texts apart from Y and U cite the folio, page, or column numbers of the manuscripts themselves.[50]

The Sources and Recensions of the *Togail*

As the work known as the *Togail* exists in a constellation of variant texts, so, too, it has its place within a larger galaxy consisting of competing versions of the Conaire story. In other

words, the *Togail* was not the only story being told about Conaire in mediaeval Ireland. Many of these alternative stories predated the *Togail* and went under the same title *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (or similar);[51] some of them are likely to have been used as source-material for our *Togail*, directly or indirectly. So, in order to understand the authorial procedure which went into the making of the *Togail*, we must now glance briefly at some of the other extant narratives relating to Conaire and his immediate ancestors, before we turn finally to the crucial question of how the saga-author used his sources and whether he did so with any artistic purpose.

References to stories about the events at Da Derga's Hostel are found in various Middle Irish texts, including lists of storytellers' repertoires (the so-called 'tale-lists') and summaries of the stories themselves.[52] The story itself is told in three different 'tellings', under roughly the same title. These are known as different 'recensions' of the saga, and their relation to each other has been clarified by West. They are: a short summary which she has named Recension I; the well-known Middle Irish saga (preserved in the seven manuscript-texts listed above) which she has named Recension II, and a longer late Middle Irish reworking which she has named Recension III.[53] This book is about Recension II, and my use of the title *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* or 'the *Togail*' refers only to this recension unless stated (p.32) otherwise. The relationship between these recensions, however, calls for some preliminary explanation.

First, the term 'recension' needs clarifying, as it has not always been used in a consistent manner. In older scholarship it often denotes simply one manuscript text, as in 'the Y recension of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*'. Its meaning has now changed: today it usually means the work of an author, differing significantly in form and content from another recension. Two different manuscripts may preserve texts of the same recension of a saga, give or take the kinds of small-scale variation outlined above. As Edgar Slotkin has put it, 'when a combination of verbal variety, thematic variety, and [variety of] overall content exists between manuscripts, we have a case of two recensions of a saga'.[54] As we have just

seen, verbal variation is a fundamental characteristic of saga texts, and does not by itself qualify a text as a separate recension; nor, necessarily, does the addition or omission of individual episodes, even if these are substantial.

When, in modern terms, does a variant text become a new recension? In current parlance, a new recension is generally said to appear either when the text's structure changes radically or, more clearly, when the text is completely reworked in a more up-to-date language and/or style. For example, if the modernized reworking of the *Togail* found at the end of D had been applied right through that text, D as a whole would qualify as a fresh ‘recension’ in the conventional terminology, even if its structure remained similar.[55] Equally, if the *Togail*'s style remained more or less constant but its structure were altered by (say) fusing it with another full-length saga, a new recension would also result. This is in fact precisely what has happened in the text known as Recension III, probably written in the twelfth century and surviving in two manuscripts.[56] Here, parts of the Middle Irish saga *Tochmarc Étaíne* (‘The Wooing of Étaín’) have been dovetailed with a slightly lengthened text of the *Togail*, along with other material. Doubtless this writer saw his enlarged version as a fuller and therefore better account of the events related in both sagas.[57]

Recension I is more important for our purposes, since it predates our saga, perhaps by over a century. It does not survive as a full tale in its own right; it survives, in John Carey's words, as ‘an outline of a story rather than a story properly so called’.[58] It is extant in two versions, identified by West as Version A and Version B. As their versions of the story differ markedly from Recension II, it seems (p.33) appropriate to call it a separate recension. One summary survives in four sixteenth-century Connaught manuscripts; the other, a longer summary, appears in *Lebor na hUidre*, where it is said to represent the version of the *Togail* found in a now-lost manuscript, *Slicht Libair Dromma Snechta* (‘the Book of Drumsnat version’, line 8005).[59] These two summaries outline the story's main events in a highly compressed style, taking up less than a page each in the present book's format. Most

scholars consider the Connaught version to be the earlier one, closest to *Cín Dromma Snechta* itself, so (adapting West's labels) I here term it Recension Ia.[60] It was later re-edited and amplified: the result, here labelled Recension Ib, is preserved in *Lebor na hUidre* just after the U-text of the *Togail* itself.[61]

The differences between these two summaries show how adding or subtracting narrative information could radically transform the meaning of the story, even on this small scale. The material common to both summaries consists of a passage explaining how Ingcél compelled his reluctant Irish comrades[62] to join with him in destroying Úa [*sic*] Derga's Hostel and killing Conaire, having already enabled them to plunder as they wished in Britain. In Recension Ia this passage is preceded by just two introductory sentences identifying Conaire as the king who was slain in the Hostel, to which he had come *ho dhu-haudfas ndou inreth cacha mentate* (‘after it appeared to him that every dwelling [in Brega] had been devastated’).[63] The Otherworldly element so prominent in Recension II is thus conspicuously absent from Recension Ia, unless one interprets the sentence just quoted in terms of spectral apparitions. Indeed, Ia hardly focuses on Conaire at all, spending far more time on the pirates and their decision to attack the Hostel.

This weighting is completely displaced in Recension Ib, which is almost twice as long as Ia and emphasizes the Otherworldly causes behind Conaire's death. It replaces Ia's two introductory sentences with a much longer account explaining that Conaire's death was the result of a feud between his ancestor King Eochaid and the *síd*-dwellers of Brí Léith, as recounted at the end of the saga *Tochmarc Étaíne*— (p.34) whose three segments are then mentioned as the *remscéla* (‘fore-tales’ or ‘prequels’, line 8006) of our story.[64] In the process the author of Ib turned the story from a simple narrative of piracy and invasion to a story of the Otherworld's revenge.

Were these summaries, or was the lost recension which they summarize, used as sources in the making of Recension II, that is, the *Togail* proper? Thurneysen held (and many still

agree) that the *Togail* was constructed from two divergent Old Irish texts;[65] but West has since shown that the tenth- or eleventh-century saga-author had at his disposal not just two, but 'many written and oral variants' of the story, some of which he has 'attempted to amalgamate […] into one tale'.[66] The precise identity of these lost sources cannot be established, still less their overall form. Nevertheless, some aspects of Recension Ib point to the possibility that it or its source supplied the *Togail* with source-material or structural precedents. Despite the disparity in size and the conflicting identities of some of the plunderers, Recensions Ib and II share an unusual structural feature: they divide sharply into two halves, presenting first a multi-generational exposition of Conaire's ancestry, Otherworldly connections, and achievement of the kingship (including his royal taboos), then, halfway through, switching abruptly to focus on Ingcél and the plunderers deciding to attack the Hostel. In the second halves of both versions, the plunderers trying to dissuade Ingcél refer to the planned destruction using the emotive adjective *líach* ('grievous').[67]

There is one piece of more concrete evidence for a textual relationship between Recensions I and II. In Recension Ib, after explaining why the *síd*-dwellers of Brí Léith sought Conaire's death, the narrator informs us that *is hé rí insin loingside siabrai* ('he is that king whom spectres exiled', lines 8018–19). This sentence reappears word-for-word in Recension II (line 250), albeit at one of those junctures where the extant texts vary considerably: this is just after Conaire has been prevented by spectral apparitions from taking the homeward road to Tara. The closest reading in the *Togail* to that of Recension Ib is found in D and E: *Is hé rí insin loingside siabrai din bith* ('he is that king whom spectres exiled from the world').[68] The other texts tinker with the sentence to varying degrees, either adding a conjunction to link it to the subsequent sentence (Y and H2)[69] or (p.35) replacing it altogether (U).[70] The evidence is scanty but suggestive: the author of the *Togail* may have had access to Recension Ib or its source.

Before discussing other possible sources for the *Togail*, a brief note on the saga's title is called for. Recension Ia bears a title in two of its four sixteenth-century texts, namely *Bruiden Hí Derga* (in TCD MS 1337) and *Togail Bruidne Da Derg* (in RIA 23 N 10). Recension Ib has the header-title *Orgain Brudne Uí Dergae* and the end-title *Bruiden Uí Derga*. The only text of Recension II to bear a title is Y, which is entitled *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*.[71] The latter title also appears in both versions of the Middle Irish tale-lists, whose original probably dates back to the tenth century, but we cannot know whether the saga they list was Recension II, Recension I, or some other recension no longer extant.[72] It is impossible to tell what the original title of Recension I was: the word *orgain* appears several times in the text of both summaries of Recension I, but the word *togail* is equally frequent in its title-rubrics.[73] As for Recension II, the plunderers in this saga refer repeatedly to the central event as an *orgain*, even marking this ‘genre’ with a cairn; yet this saga also contains pointed references to that central event as a *togail*. The resulting uncertainty over the original title of either Recension I or II may matter less than it seems, given the considerable overlap between the semantic fields of the words *orgain* and *togail* in Middle Irish literature. *Orgain* can mean ‘massacre’, ‘raid’, or ‘destruction’, while *togail* is usually translated ‘destruction’ but often denotes a raid, siege, or storming.[74] All these terms describe aspects of what happens at Da Derga's Hostel, and it is ultimately that location, rather than the specific terminology of attack, which dominates the extant titles of either recension of our saga.[75]

Aside from Recension I, information about Conaire and other characters in the saga is preserved in a range of other mediaeval texts: chronicles, glosses, place-name lore (*dindṡenchas*), genealogical tracts, and other sagas. The most important of (p.36) these is the genealogical tract *De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir* (‘Of the Descendants of Conaire Mór’), which preserves an alternative version of Conaire's inauguration. Scholars agree that this tract predates the *Togail*.[76] It presents Conaire taking the kingship by force with the help of sinister Otherworldly beings, and it contains an explanatory sentence which is almost a mirror-image of that found in

Recensions Ib and II: *Ise in Conairi sin iarum ri bertatar siabrai hirrige* (‘that Conaire, then, is the king whom spectres raised to the kingship’, lines 73–4). This complicates the textual relationship between Recension Ib and the *Togail*: Thurneysen suggested that the sentence in *De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir* was modelled on the *Togail*, whereas Lucius Gwynn thoughts that the sentence in Recension Ib echoed *De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir*.[77] The literary significance of this possible link will be discussed in the next chapter when examining the Otherworld's role in Conaire's kingship.

Source-material for the *Togail* is harder to identify among those texts which do not clearly predate the *Togail* in their extant versions: it is often easier to see them having drawn on the *Togail* rather than the other way round. The saga-*cum*-genealogical tract *De Maccaib Conaire* (‘Of the Sons of Conaire’), extant in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster, was conceived as a sequel to the *Togail* story, and relates to the version told in Recension II: it tells of how Conaire's three surviving sons avenged their father's death.[78] The death-tale of the Ulster prince Cormac Cond Loinges, *Bruiden Da Choca* (‘The Hostel of Da Choca’), is extant in a twelfth-century version which bears clear structural and stylistic signs of influence from Recension II of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*.[79] There certainly was an earlier version of *Bruiden Da Choca*, since the title *Togail Bruidne Da Choca* appears in the tale-lists; but whether this tale resembled or influenced the extant *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* we do not know.[80]

Similar difficulties apply to the extant Middle Irish *Tochmarc Étaíne*, probably written around the same time as the *Togail*. As the author of Recension III of the *Togail* realized, these two sagas are clearly related: *Tochmarc Étaíne* uses Conaire's (p.37) birth as a pointer towards other tales at the end of its main narrative,[81] while the *Togail* begins with a lavish description of Étaín herself. But the shared episodes (Eochaid finding and marrying Étaín, Mess Búachalla's exposure and rescue) conflict so fundamentally, both in the information they provide and in the way in which the episodes are told, that a direct relationship between the two extant sagas seems

doubtful. There may be a closer relation between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and Recension Ib, which was apparently intended as a bridge between the sagas of Étaín and Conaire; but in their surviving forms, the Étaín-stories preserved in *Tochmarc Étaíne* and Recension Ib also conflict in some particulars.[82] Whether or not the *Tochmarc Étaíne* mentioned in the tale-lists preserved the same version of the story as the extant saga is anyone's guess.[83]

For the present, then, most of the *Togail*'s sources are shrouded in mystery. Some of the extant texts are clearly related, but in most cases direct borrowing by the author of the *Togail* is very hard to establish. This situation calls for a circumspect approach when discussing the ‘sources’ of the *Togail*. For our purposes, perhaps the most useful way to deal with these disparate texts clustering around the legend of Conaire is to disengage them from the necessity of being direct sources. In this book I shall treat them instead, for the most part, as evidence of how other mediaeval Irish writers viewed the story of Conaire. In this light they help us to glimpse something of the way in which the author of the *Togail* struck out with a story differing from most of these accounts, whether or not any of these were known to him in their present forms. We shall then be in a better position to appreciate the *Togail*'s artistry and purposes.

Compilation, Creativity, and Clumsiness; or, How to Read a Saga

The most important of the saga's lost sources are those which not only provided its author with information or literary templates but may also themselves survive (to some degree) within the text of the *Togail* itself. Scholars have so far been unanimous in viewing the *Togail* as a compilatory text whose creator stitched together different parts of older narratives into a newly composed whole. Alongside this view, most studies of the *Togail* also hold (or unintentionally imply) that the result is not very coherent as a work of art, and that the saga's artistic merits derive from qualities in its sources which shine through in the extant saga *despite*, rather than because of, the work of its tenth- or eleventh-century author or

redactor. In the rest of this chapter I shall challenge this view of the saga-author, first setting his practice in a wider context of Middle Irish saga-compilation and then reassessing the evidence for clumsiness in the *Togail*. In the process I hope to show that (p.38) compilation and authorial creativity were not mutually exclusive categories in the production of Irish sagas. Subsequent chapters will go on to explore the art and craftsmanship of the *Togail* as it was composed in the Middle Irish period, focusing above all on its structure.

While scholars unanimously view the *Togail* as a text consisting almost entirely of older sources stuck together, the evidence for this view is not conclusive. This view derives primarily from text-critical analysis of the saga's narrative structure and was put forward most influentially by Thurneysen (building on the work of Heinrich Zimmer, Max Nettlau, and others) in 1921. Thurneysen identified some narrative contradictions and repeated episodes (*Dubletten*, 'doublets') which, he felt, pointed to the combination of two versions of the saga. His conclusions have since been refined: West has identified many further instances of doubling and alleged contradiction which suggest to her that at least three versions have been combined in the extant *Togail*, together with (as she puts it) 'a good deal of [the author's] own creativity'.[84] As will become clear below, many of the alleged contradictions are either not contradictory at all or could have resulted from the error of a single author, although there is plenty of evidence (especially of doubling with minor variation) to suggest that the saga-author did indeed draw on sources which told the story in divergent ways. However, these instances are not numerous enough to compel the view (nowhere discussed explicitly) that the *entire saga* is made up of older texts.

The other evidence brought to bear on this question is linguistic. From this perspective, however, it is still harder to work out which parts of the text were incorporated wholesale and which parts were written afresh by the tenth- or eleventh-century author. The most homogeneously 'archaic' passages are the incantatory verse prophecies known as *rosc*; but, as Johan Corthals and Liam Breatnach have shown, linguistic

archaism was an expected feature of this poetic genre. It was supposed to sound ancient and mysterious, and later Irish authors were perfectly capable of composing such passages themselves.[85] Meanwhile, the ordinary prose is early Middle Irish, presenting a fairly consistent mixture of Old and Middle Irish forms throughout the *Togail* (except in the modernized sections of D). If pre-existing material has been incorporated into the saga, therefore, it has been reworked and sometimes reworded.

Textual criticism and linguistic dating do not, therefore, enable us yet to judge accurately of the relative proportion in the *Togail* between original composition and reworked earlier sources, should such a distinction be wished. Even in cases where the author clearly drew on divergent tellings of the story, there is no incontrovertible evidence that he incorporated these texts wholesale into his own composition. (p.39) In this sense, his identity as a 'compiler' (rather than an author) remains unproven, and the jury is still out. However, in this book I will follow text-critical opinion and assume for the sake of argument that the *Togail* is probably at least partly 'compilatory': that older texts have, in places, been incorporated *verbatim*. From this angle, some of the more localized stylistic choices in the *Togail* may derive not from our saga-author but from one of his predecessors. For example, embedded verses and variant doublets are strong *prima facie* candidates for having been imported from pre-existing texts, although their status cannot be proved either way; my analysis will tend to give them the benefit of the doubt, partly in order to show that compilation itself could be a highly creative and imaginative exercise.

Indeed, we may be missing the point altogether if we become too focused on whether the writer of the *Togail* was primarily an author or a compiler. It is true that most literary theory from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards (and some earlier theory) did draw a sharp line between the author—who was responsible for the form as well as the content of his or her text—and the compiler, who was responsible only for its form and did not contribute any original composition, restricting his or her activity to assembling pre-existing

writings.[86] But some influential earlier literary theories from late Antiquity through the early Middle Ages blurred this distinction to some degree, as did a great deal of literary practice throughout the mediaeval and modern periods. The seventh-century bishop Isidore of Seville, whose opinions were well known to Irish scholars, defined a *compilator* as one who *aliena dicta suis praemiscet* (‘mixes things said by others with his own words’) and cited the example of the Roman poet Virgil, allegedly accused of being a *compilator* because he had borrowed from Homer. Virgil's response was, we are told: *‘Magnarum esse virium clavam Herculi extorquere de manu’* (‘“To wrest the club from Hercules's hand is to be of greater power”’).[87] This anecdote suggests that, for Isidore and those who agreed with him, mingling compilation with composition could be no less ‘authorial’ than composing all the words oneself.[88]

If the writer of the *Togail* used pre-existing sources, he altered and arranged them in order to bring out pertinent strands within his larger structure, in a manner which Hugh Fogarty and Geraldine Parsons (among others) have already shown to (p.40) be at work in other Middle Irish narratives.[89] This will become apparent in subsequent chapters from the way in which the saga is consistently woven through with recurring and developing social themes, formal patterns, and individual words and phrases which build up tension or irony from repetition in new contexts. The more one examines these larger patterns and their meanings and dramatic effects—in other words, the more carefully one reads the saga as a whole rather than as a collection of extracts—the more its internal coherence and its author's creative hand become apparent.

I should stress here that by ‘creative’ I am not implying that the *Togail* was conceived as fiction. The modern dichotomy between ‘history’ and ‘literature’ did not exist in the Middle Ages. Gregory Toner, Erich Poppe, and Dagmar Schlüter have recently shown that sagas in mediaeval Ireland (as in Iceland) were presented and used as a form of historiography, in the broad sense of textualized memory.[90] The widespread acceptance of consciously ‘fictional’ prose was a long way in the future, and the Latin term *fabula* was usually employed as

a pejorative label meaning a false or deceptive story.[91] But this valorization of historically true stories as the only appropriate content for prose did not imply a downgrading of creativity or imagination. The literary analysis of Irish sagas sometimes seems to proceed on the assumption that, if a piece of writing can be shown to be 'historical' or 'factual', it cannot be 'literary' or even 'entertaining' in any meaningful way.[92] In fact, as in (p.41) the rest of Europe, historiography was itself open to creative manipulation in the interests of other forms of 'truth' than the merely literal. In all but its most pared-down forms (such as annalistic chronicles), *historia* was designed not only to record past events, but also to persuade audiences of moral, political, or religious truths by revealing the past in rhetorically effective, memorable, and entertaining literary forms. The spectrum of forms and styles for narrating the past was very broad, including both Latin and the European vernaculars and embracing a variety of verse and prose genres including saint's life, saga, epic, heroic poetry, and even (in the later Middle Ages) romance.[93] Like many poets and prose writers of his day, the author of the *Togail* was retelling and commemorating Conaire's fall in the way that seemed most appropriate for his purposes, generating new meanings from old sources newly arranged and recomposed, and perhaps also amplified with his own contributions.[94]

As a historian handling multiple sources, the author of the *Togail* had to deal with the problem of contradictory information. Divergent sources could be worked into a text in two ways, and these are exemplified by the first recension of the *Táin* on the one hand and by the *Togail* on the other. On the one hand, the author might flag up the presence of variant accounts in his saga, interrupting the story to mention a different version of the episode just related. On the other hand, he might try to harmonize parts of his divergent sources, welding them into a single narrative.

The first approach is characteristic of *compilatio* in the stricter, later mediaeval sense. It is this approach which is taken in the first recension of the *Táin*, especially as seen in *Lebor na hUidre*. The following passage is a well-known example of the way in which divergent sources are marked up

in the *Táin*, and comes after a long sequence in which Ailill and Medb lead their troops to Drum Féne:

> It é sin trá a n-imthechta ó Chúalṅgi co Machairi iarsin tslicht sa. Dogníat immorro augtair 7 libair aile córugud aile fora n-imthechtaib a Findabair co Conaille .i.[95]
>
> Those then are their journeyings from Cúailnge to Machaire according to this version. But other authors and books give a different arrangement to their journeyings from Findabair to Conaille, as follows.

(p.42) The next few hundred lines narrate this 'other' version in full, before moving on to the next episode. This technique is repeated at many points in this recension of the *Táin*, breaking up the narrative just as the visual cues in the *Lebor na hUidre* text of the *Táin* box up the separate episodes with coloured section-headings. The result prevents the reader from becoming immersed in the story; instead, it encourages a scholarly detachment from the text and facilitates critical reading.[96] The compiler is clearly visible in these metatextual statements as a mediator, managing the texts in front of him, sometimes judging which is more likely to be true and sometimes (as in this case) inviting readers to judge for themselves between the competing accounts and participate in the scholarly enterprise themselves.[97] Modern popular translations of the *Táin* typically leave out these passages in order to present a dramatically more compelling narrative.

The *Togail* displays a radically different approach to the writing of history and the management of divergent sources. As James Carney recognized, it seems to have been conceived as dramatic narrative right from the start, aimed at engrossing the audience as much as possible.[98] (Indeed, its use of dialogue, description, and narrative tension far outdoes that of the 'dramatic narrative' identified by Joaquín Martínez Pizarro in early mediaeval historiography.)[99] It has none of the long variant versions and scholarly asides which the *Táin* makes such a show of. The only two examples of *Táin*-style 'alternatives' in the *Togail* are nothing more than brief notes, and both of these occur not in the archetype but among the

additional material included in text U. The first of these is the passage already mentioned where Conaire's foster-brothers secretly light a huge fire to warn him of their presence. The narrator then adds, in typically antiquarian vein, that this was the origin of the custom of lighting a *tendál* or warning-beacon (line 7042). He then mentions that other people say it was the first *tendál samna* (‘Samain-beacon’, line 7045)[100] but does not come down on one side or the other. Logically, of course, they could both have been true: the same fire could have started both customs, and in any case the two versions do not differ in their account of what happened, only in what it later gave rise to.[101]

The second example is slightly different. Near the end of the saga, Y tells us that all but five of the plunderers perished in the battle, but only nine of Conaire's own men (lines 1490–5). U casts some doubt on this death-toll, presenting it as what (p.43) *araile libair* ‘other books’ tell us (U, line 7953). The narrator of U goes on to suggest what he sees as a more realistic death-toll, namely three-quarters of the plunderers and forty or fifty of Conaire's men, introducing it as follows: *Iss ed immorro is slicht i llebraib ailib and 7 is dochu combad fíriu* (‘but this is the version in other books, and it is probably more accurate’, lines 7960–1).

These two short notes, so different in scale from the long alternative episodes of the *Táin*, are the only two instances of self-consciously compilatory technique in the *Togail*. It is no coincidence that they both appear only in the *Lebor na hUidre* text (U), whose compilatory features I discussed above and whose visual formatting closely resembles that of the *Táin*-text in the same manuscript. In all the other extant texts, and elsewhere in U (and hence in the archetype as well), the approach to conflicting sources taken in the *Togail* is to weld them into a single narrative. In this way the story is allowed to flow unimpeded, while still making use of more than one source. Rather than encouraging listeners to keep stepping outside the story and subject it to critical judgement, this technique allows listeners to be drawn into the world of the story, so that they can respond directly and emotionally to the events related.[102] Even in U, the only example of genuinely

conflicting accounts of what happened is positioned so that it does not detract from the saga's dramatic effect. It comes *after* the ‘destruction’ itself, withdrawing our gaze from the sound and fury of the final catastrophe, taking us away from the central events of the saga, and carrying us forward into the epilogue which reflects back on the events of the fateful night.

All this suggests that there was some variety in mediaeval Irish attitudes towards textual integrity, and that indeterminacy of meaning was not inscribed at every level of every saga. In the case of the *Togail*, different readers and subsequent writers or redactors might interpret the story differently, and the meaning of the story itself was made deliberately ambivalent (as we shall see); but as a sequence of events it had to retain a basic level of textual integrity in order to pull off its dramatic effect.

This method of managing contradictory sources carries certain risks. If the author of the *Togail* drew on divergent accounts, it comes as no surprise to learn that some contradictions have crept into the narrative. As was mentioned above, these contradictions have become the focus of text-critical attention to this saga and have led to some rather negative appraisals of its artistry. Thurneysen called the tenth- or (for him) eleventh-century saga-author *Der Kompilator* (‘The Compiler’), and was not impressed:

> Der Kompilator ist kein Künstler, sondern nur darauf bedacht, möglichst alles zu bringen, was er in verschiedenen Fassungen vorfindet. Daß dadurch Widersprüche und Dubletten entstehen, kümmert ihn fast nie.[103]
>
> **(p.44)**
>
> The *Kompilator* is no artist, but is concerned only to combine, where possible, everything he finds in different versions. It almost never bothers him that contradictions and doublets result from this.

This view is still dominant. More recent studies of the saga's textual history echo Thurneysen's strictures.[104] The most

detailed of these are two articles by West, one of which disputes Tomás Ó Concheanainn's suggestion that Y was dependent on U,[105] while her second targets Thurneysen's theory that the *Togail* was compiled from two sources only.[106] By pointing to the number and variety of inconsistencies and repetitions in all the extant texts, West has convincingly demolished both these theories. Neither of her arguments requires a demonstration of the saga-author's clumsiness in stitching his sources together, yet an impression of clumsiness does make the case for compilation more forceful:

> the *Kompilator*'s primary concern was to amalgamate as much source material relating to the central theme of Conaire's tragic downfall as was available to him at the time, regardless of contradictory details, in order, perhaps, to preserve this important tale for posterity. To expect a high degree of consistency in such a tale would be to misunderstand its growth and structure.[107]

Elsewhere, when engaging in a *literary* analysis of the *Togail*, West has called it a 'cohesive whole':[108] clearly it is possible for a saga to display overall coherence while still containing inconsistencies of detail. As a discipline, however, text-critical scholarship often downplays such notions of literary coherence for the purposes of dissection. The drive to uncover the textual history of the *Togail* has, until relatively recently, pushed its inconsistencies to centre-stage without a corresponding emphasis on what makes it cohere.

The *Togail* does indeed contain some unresolved inconsistencies, and it is very likely that these derive from multiple and divergent sources. But the inconsistencies are nowhere near as numerous or damaging to the saga's coherence as their dominance in the scholarship might seem to imply. No fewer than thirty have been identified by Nettlau, Thurneysen, Ó Concheanainn, West, and other scholars (although they disagree among themselves over many of these). On examining each instance in terms of the saga as a whole, and in terms of mediaeval Irish narrative expectations, I find that twenty of them can be interpreted as non-contradictory, and that the remaining contradictions are either trivial in literary-critical terms (whatever their significance for

textual criticism) or play a purposeful role in the narrative, even if they are technically contradictory. I demonstrate this point more fully in a forthcoming separate article which closely examines all the alleged inconsistencies in this saga, and several of these cases will be mentioned in (p.45) subsequent chapters as and when they occur.[109] Nevertheless, in bringing this chapter to a close it is worth giving a few examples, both to show how trivial most of the 'real' inconsistencies are and to illustrate some of the critical assumptions involved in the diagnosing of inconsistency. It is important to clear up these misunderstandings from the outset, because it is still widely held that the *Togail* is basically incoherent, and this judgement has not yet been explicitly challenged even by scholars who, in practice, favour a more holistic approach to the saga.

Several slips in the saga result from numerical variation. The pirate chief Ingcél is said in some parts of the saga to have three pupils in his single eye, but elsewhere to have seven pupils.[110] Zimmer suggested that this inconsistency points to two sources, one starring a three-pupilled pirate, the other featuring a seven-pupilled pirate, and his view is echoed by Nettlau, Thurneysen, and (more cautiously) by West.[111] Such a conclusion is possible, but the discrepancy could alternatively derive from a simple mistake made several times by the saga-author in copying information from his source. It only takes one more downstroke of the pen to change the roman numeral *iii* to *uii*.[112] Furthermore, in mediaeval Irish narrative, numbers are often used in a symbolic rather than strictly arithmetical manner. The numbers 3, 5, 7, and 9 were particularly popular and sometimes almost interchangeable for this purpose, and arithmetical inconsistencies are very common in the sagas.[113] They do not seem to have troubled saga-authors much, although they were sometimes noticed during subsequent textual transmission: in U, hand M has offered both alternatives for the number of Ingcél's pupils by writing an interlinear gloss giving the other number (line 7054 and n.), while in the modernized conclusion of D the number of named survivors is brought up to five by leaving Ingcél himself out and adding three of Donn Désa's sons (accidentally involving this version of the story in a further contradiction,

since the prophecies repeatedly emphasize Ingcél's survival).[114]

Most of the other numerical inconsistencies are as likely to result from the error of a single author as from divergent sources.[115] Da Derga's Hostel is variously said to have seven doors and nine doors.[116] The narrator mentions that among the (p.46) plunderers were seven of Ailill's and Medb's sons, all called Maine, whom he then lists, but the list gives eight men of that name.[117] Finally, the number of plunderers who survive the battle is said to be ‘a single group of five’ (*oenchóicer*), but only three men are then listed, namely Ingcél and his two brothers.[118] None of the errors listed here seriously affects the overall coherence of the *Togail*.

Many of the saga's remaining contradictions, both real and apparent, have been identified at the expense of attention to this saga's distinctive narrative strategies, especially the device of modified repetition which is so vital to the poetically virtuosic description-sequence.[119] The neo-Aristotelian ideal of narrative economy causes particular problems when imposed on the *Togail*. The tendency towards expansiveness and exaggeration found in many Middle Irish sagas is enhanced in this saga by the deployment, at several levels, of a deliberate aesthetic of proliferation. Dramatic capital is made, as we shall see, from the disorienting appearance of more and more Otherworldly beings, Irish plunderers, and foster-kin as the story progresses. These phenomena may be seen as purposeful aspects of the story's structure rather than as symptoms of compilatory carelessness, even if some of them (such as the number of plunderers) introduce numerical inconsistencies more glaring than those mentioned above.[120]

One example will suffice to demonstrate the *Togail*'s peculiarity in this respect, concerning the *búada* (‘talents’) which Conaire teaches his three foster-brothers towards the beginning of the saga (lines 115–17): these are special gifts of hearing, seeing, and judgement. They are not subsequently confined to their original recipients, but are seen to be possessed and/or employed by several other plunderers with whom Conaire's foster-brothers join forces (lines 439

onwards). These talents allow Conaire's various enemies to spy on and identify him as a prelude to the attack. Their proliferation beyond their original recipients may well derive from the combination of divergent sources, as West has suggested.[121]

In making this suggestion, West refers to the phenomenon as an instance of inconsistency. This diagnosis rests on an assumption of narrative economy. Certainly, the idea of a hero's special talents being used to destroy him has a pleasing (p.47) symmetry;[122] and if the *Togail* were cast in a simpler or more economical genre, the initial information (that Conaire had taught his foster-brothers these three talents) would engender certain expectations in its audience. From that point on, we would be waiting for the moment at which the foster-brothers used their new-found talents, especially once they became his enemies; we would not be expecting these talents to reappear in the hands of others without warning. Such an occurrence would violate the narrative principle of ‘economy of information’ which informs a range of mediaeval and modern genres (folktale, novella, farce) with which Irish sagas should not be too closely equated. The same principle underlies the most conservative of modern narrative genres, such as the detective story or thriller. Within the main plot, no item of information is wasted: everything plays its designated part in a plot-pattern which can be clearly apprehended by the audience when the story is over.

A recent series of thrillers provides a telling example of special talents to compare with those of the *Togail*. The *X-Men* films[123] present a variety of mutant characters of the future, each one possessing a specific preternatural ability. One of these, Storm, has a useful talent for summoning up weather effects (coincidentally resembling her namesake Sín, ‘Storm’, in the Middle Irish death-tale of Muirchertach Mac Erca). In the first film, some time after we have been informed of her special talent, a thick fog is required to hide the heroes. It is of course Storm who provides the fog: we would feel irritated if (without any narrative preparation) she did nothing while the necessary weather were created by another mutant previously distinguished by his talent for hitting people very hard. Such

conventions do not apply to the *Togail*, and their absence does not necessarily imply clumsiness. Here, the proliferation of these talents beyond their original source provides one more level on which Conaire is overwhelmed by forces he himself sets in motion, helping to build up a sense of mounting fear and tension during the saga's first half. In other words, what seems asymmetrical or inconsistent at one level may have been intended to reinforce or echo a larger pattern within the story. Even if we continue to view this example as technically 'inconsistent', it nevertheless contributes to the wider pattern.

The importance of these larger patterns is clearer still in one instance of what seems to me to be a genuine inconsistency, this time concerning the *gessi* or taboos placed on Conaire's reign. On his way to the Hostel, Conaire is overtaken by a sinister Otherworldly couple carrying a singed, screaming pig; the man tells him they will come to him in the Hostel that night. The narrator then explains that *gess dosom […] in nísin* ('that was *geis* for him', line 372); but such a *geis* has not been mentioned in the list of *gessi* issued to Conaire earlier in the story. Instead, in line 179 he has been given a *geis* against admitting a single man *or* a single woman (not a couple), and he violates this *geis* when the prophetess Cailb enters his house later on (p.48) in the story.[124] Thurneysen suggested, reasonably enough in my view, that the episode with the Otherworldly couple came from a different source to the surviving list of *gessi*, and that the author of the *Togail* incorporated both passages without bothering to add the new *geis* to the earlier list.[125] But, as with the numerical slips, it barely disturbs the flow of the story. Far from constituting an interruption to the overall dramatic effect, the encounter with the Otherworldly couple fits into a pattern of increasingly aggressive and misshapen supernatural beings imposing themselves on the doomed king, in a visual embodiment of the Otherworld's transformation from ally to enemy. This episode enables the author to present Conaire and his men reacting with increasing confusion and fear. Conaire's conversation with the Otherworldly couple also brings into play the recurring themes of foreknowledge, hospitality, and Conaire's royal status, which are treated with increasing irony as the story progresses. So, while the author did slip up and perhaps

betray his sources in not adding this *geis* to the earlier list, the extra episode itself is woven with consummate skill on several levels into the larger dramatic structure of the saga.

Finally, some of the alleged inconsistencies seem to me to be contrasts rather than contradictions. For example, Conaire's son Lé Fer Flaith is described at one point riding confidently after three Otherworldly horsemen (line 314), but later in the story he is identified as being only seven years old and is described weeping uncontrollably (lines 1137–40). For Thurneysen and West, these two passages derive from different sources and contradict each other.[126] Three points are worth making here. First, if this is a contradiction it is the error of a single author, since *both* passages emphasize the boy's unusual equestrian skills: the first by showing him in action, the second by having his *marcachas* (‘horsemanship’) praised by Fer Rogain (line 1137). Second, seven-year-old boys in mediaeval Irish sagas (as in modern-day real life) are perfectly capable of riding, and of doing more impressive feats besides.[127] As if to emphasize this point, the modern retellings by Barbara Leonie Picard and Randy Lee Eickhoff are happy to retain this supposed contradiction, even though they tidy up and ‘rationalize’ some of the culturally more distant features of the Irish saga.[128] Third, in a story which traces the king's emotional journey from confident, active leadership to passive fear, grief, and (p.49) confusion, there is nothing contradictory in his son undergoing the same transformation.

This last observation applies with still more force to the portrait of Conaire himself at the centre of the description-sequence. The central part of this tableau (lines 1010–44) presents Conaire as a confident and powerful warlord; the part immediately following it presents him as a frightened and vulnerable young man (lines 1045–66). West may be right to suggest that the two contrasting poems, which comprise most of this sequence, derive from divergent sources. She has called the result ‘contradictory’;[129] yet the author has taken great care to ensure that the sources’ divergences do not damage the narrative's basic coherence. The two passages are not simply set alongside each other with no thought for narrative consistency, but are deliberately framed and

focalized as different categories of utterance within the tableau, focusing alternately on the real and the ideal Conaire and using different poetic genres to do so. As I will show in chapter 7, the juxtaposition creates a narrative contrast which is ideologically loaded: the brightness and confidence of Conaire's kingship as portrayed in the central part heightens the darkness and grief of its destruction as represented in the subsequent part. It is a moment of supreme dramatic irony, and it is a fitting centrepiece to a saga whose overall structure has been orchestrated to explore the tensions and contradictions within the whole institution of kingship.

Looking more closely at the narrative procedures of the *Togail*, then, it becomes clear that, unlike what we tend to think of as typical ‘compilations’, it has been put together as an internally consistent whole, designed to entertain and move audiences rather than simply to provide them with a comprehensive collection of information. More self-consciously aggregative or compilatory tendencies do emerge in one or two of the individual texts, especially U: these developments are well worth attention in their own right, but they should be distinguished from the practices which gave rise to the saga's Middle Irish archetype. Although some of the saga's narrative features suggest the juxtaposition of more than one source, most of its apparent inconsistencies turn out to be conscious compositional strategies, often perhaps exploiting differences between the putative sources at the author's disposal and orchestrating them to achieve a calculated dramatic effect. As the example of Virgil's *Aeneid* reminds us, the *Togail* shows that a compilation can be seen, in modern terms, as a literary masterpiece. It is even possible that the Irish saga is not a ‘compilation’ at all in any meaningful sense of the word, but (as modern readers view the *Aeneid*) simply a composition drawing on multiple sources; but this is a question for future research to solve, and my exploration of the saga's design does not depend on this question being answered one way or the other.

For some hints as to how this perspective can transform our understanding of the textual culture in question, it is instructive to see the inroads it has made since the 1970s in Old Testament studies—the Hebrew Bible being, like the Irish

sagas, a (p.50) corpus of narrative prose-*cum*-poetry with similarly compilatory origins. Of the positivistic source-criticism which used to dominate this field, the biblical scholar Robert Alter has complained that ‘from so much overfocused concentration on the seams’ of each book, it has ‘drawn attention away from the design of the whole’. Instead, Alter and others have championed what he calls ‘a continuous *reading* of the text instead of a nervous hovering over its various small components’.[130] Text-critical acumen and empathetic reading need not be mutually exclusive, and Alter's remarks seem equally pertinent to the Irish situation:

> conventional biblical scholarship has been trigger-happy in using the arsenal of text-critical categories, proclaiming contradiction wherever there is the slightest internal tension in the text, seeing every repetition as evidence of a duplication of sources, everywhere tuning in to the static of transmission, not to the complex music of the redacted story.[131]

Perhaps it is a little too easy to urge the literary approach in biblical studies, where largely reliable texts have been established thanks to many centuries of intensive critical attention right across the Judaeo-Christian world. Irish sagas have not yet had the advantage of becoming the canonical texts for two major world religions, and so they have fared less well. A great deal of editorial hovering over their seams still remains to be done simply to produce reliable critical editions. But we need not be always waiting for the perfect edition before getting down to the business of literary analysis. Where printed editions are not yet available, we have the manuscripts before us, in many cases at the click of a mouse; we need only sit down and read them in their own terms. Having now adjusted our headsets, let us listen to the music.

Notes:

([1]) Much of the following information expands on that provided by West, ‘An Edition’ and ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’.

([2]) The making of *Lebor na hUidre*, especially the dates and identities of its various scribes, is still controversial. For more general discussion see R. I. Best and Osborn Bergin, eds.,

Lebor na hUidre (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1929), pp. ix–xlii; Tomás Ó Concheanainn, 'The Reviser of Leabhar ha hUidhre', *Éigse*, 15 (1973–4), 277–88; D. N. Dumville, '*Scéla Lái Brátha* and the Collation of Leabhar na hUidhre', *Éigse*, 16 (1975–6), 24–8; Ó Concheanainn, 'LL and the Date of the Reviser of LU', *Éigse*, 20 (1984), 212–25; Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'The Interpolator H in Lebor na hUidre', in Mallory and Stockman, eds., *Ulidia*, pp. 39–46; Ó Concheanainn, 'Textual and Historical Associations'. For a summary of these debates see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Lebor na hUidre', in Seán Duffy, ed., *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopedia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 267–9. For a fundamental reassessment of the nature of the evidence, see Elizabeth Duncan, 'A History of Gaelic Script, AD 1000–1200', Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 2010. For discussion relating to the *Togail* see the studies by Ó Concheanainn and West referenced in note 46 of the Introduction above.

([3]) This was originally a single text of the *Togail*, but the manuscript has since been split into two parts (with two names), one in London (containing text E) and one in Dublin (containing text F). E has been bound incorrectly: my list gives the correct sequence for reading the saga. To aid readers wishing to consult the original manuscripts, I refer to the two halves of this text using different sigla, E and F.

([4]) The pagination of H2 is confusing. This text is written on four parchment sheets paginated on recto and verso as follows: 477, 478, 479, two unnumbered pages (which for convenience I name 479.1 and 479.2), 480, 481, and 482. I use the siglum H2 for this manuscript to avoid confusion with the H-interpolator of *Lebor na hUidre* (abbreviated to H).

([5]) Hence, in my references, 'Y2 (MS, col. 123)' is a shorthand for 'Y2, in TCD MS 1318 (H.2.16), col. 123'. The exception is U, for which I cite line numbers in the semi-diplomatic edition of *Lebor na hUidre* (ed. Best and Bergin), unless attention is needed to the layout of the manuscript-text itself, in which case I cite the manuscript's page-numbers.

([6]) For a stemma see West, 'An Edition', p. 301; *eadem*, 'Leabhar na hUidhre', pp. 65–7.

([7]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 627.

([8]) On this procedure and its problems see Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'The Dating of Middle Irish Texts', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), 109–37 (he dates the *Togail* to the eleventh century on p. 119); and, for the Old Irish period, David N. Dumville, *Three Men in a Boat: Scribe, Language, and Culture in the Church of Viking-Age Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), especially pp. 29–34.

([9]) West, 'An Edition', pp. 313–51.

([10]) This possibility has been raised by West, who dates the original composition to the early tenth century and the 'archetype' about a century later ('An Edition', pp. 350–1).

([11]) For one view of the question, see Edgar M. Slotkin, 'Medieval Irish Scribes and Fixed Texts', *Éigse*, 17 (1977–9), 437–50.

([12]) See, for example, Dagmar Schlüter, *History or Fable? The* Book of Leinster *as a Document of Cultural Memory in Twelfth-Century Ireland* (Münster: Nodus, 2010), and (for a later period) Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Ireland: Motivations and Milieu* (Münster: Nodus, 2000).

([13]) F, p. 216 (the tableaux of Fer Caille and the three British plunderers).

([14]) One example is the first few hundred lines in E and A, both of which are relatively condensed at this point.

([15]) Where a 'correct' version of the sentence is found in one or more of the texts, it is not always clear whether or not that version represents the original wording or a correction inserted later.

([16]) A good example is the sentence beginning (in Y) *Is é rí insin loingsige siabrai* ('he is that king whom spectres exiled') and its linkage to the next sentence, which clearly presented

individual scribes with a challenge. See the discussion below under ‘The sources and recensions of the *Togail*’.

([17]) Knott, *Togail*, lines 12 and 21: Y (MS, col. 716); D (MS, fol. 79r); E (MS, fol. 18r); A (MS, fol. 4r); Y2 (MS, col. 123).

([18]) Knott, *Togail*, line 407: Y (MS, col. 722); D (MS, fol. 80v); U, line 6866.

([19]) Knott, *Togail*, line 75: Y (MS, col. 717); D (MS, fol. 79r); E (MS, fol. 18v); A (MS, fol. 4v); Y2 (MS, col. 124).

([20]) Knott, *Togail*, lines 1504–8: Y (MS, col. 739b); D (MS, fol. 86r); U, lines 7969–75.

([21]) Knott, *Togail*, lines 34–40; Y (MS, col. 716); D (MS, fol. 79r); E (MS, fol. 18r); A (MS, fol. 4r); Y2 (MS, col. 123).

([22]) This part of D, corresponding to lines 1395–1539 of Knott's edition of Y, is printed in Knott, *Togail*, pp. 65–9. See also Fig. 8 on p. 158 below. On later Middle Irish stylistic developments see Úaitéar Mac Gearailt, ‘Change and Innovation in Eleventh-Century Prose Narrative’, in Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ed., *(Re)oralisierung* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1996), pp. 443–96; Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘The Literature of Medieval Ireland’, pp. 41–2.

([23]) Knott, *Togail*, p. 65, §141. The substitution of B for D in *Derga* is common in mediaeval references to Da Derga's Hostel.

([24]) This point is demonstrated in West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 288–9.

([25]) West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, pp. 71–3. For a different view of this additional material, namely that it was integral to the original (eleventh-century) saga, see Ó Concheanainn, ‘Notes’, p. 78.

([26]) Lines 8005–37. On M's ‘antiquarianism’ and compilatory tendencies, see H. P. A. Oskamp, ‘Notes on the History of *Lebor na hUidre*’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 65, Section C, no. 6 (1967), 117–37.

([27]) This dimension of H's procedure is analysed by Gregory Toner, ‘Scribe and Text in *Lebor na hUidre*: H's Intentions and Methodology’, in Ruairí Ó hÚiginn and Brian Ó Catháin, eds., *Ulidia 2: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 2009), pp. 106–20. On the creative contribution of H to other texts in *Lebor na hUidre* see, among other studies, Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, pp. 64–100.

([28]) For the Y version, see Knott, *Togail*, lines 620–8.

([29]) In this book I refer to the third-person narrator of the *Togail* and other texts as ‘the narrator’ in contradistinction to other voices within the narrative.

([30]) Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 216–55.

([31]) On this point see Boll, ‘Foster-Kin in Conflict’, p. 171.

([32]) See chapters 6 and 7 for an analysis of this structural feature.

([33]) Knott, *Togail*, lines 1456–62; Y (MS, cols. 739–739a); D (MS, fol. 85v).

([34]) O Daly, ‘*Togail Bruidne Da Derga*’, pp. 117–18.

([35]) Lines 7913–18. Compare the much more forthright insistence on a proper battle-scene made by another reader of the *Togail*, the twelfth-century author of the first recension of *Bruiden Da Choca* (‘The Hostel of Da Choca’): see Gregory Toner, ed. and trans., *Bruiden Da Choca* (London: Irish Texts Society, 2007), pp. 126–36. Here the ‘watchman device’ has been reduced to three descriptions only, enabling the battle to be narrated in detail without fear of repetition. For a late Middle Irish parallel to the U-text's reluctance to repeat information already given (in this case in a poem about preceding events), see Alexander Bugge, ed. and trans., *Caithreim Cellachain Caisil: The Victorious Career of Cellachan of Cashel* (Christiania: Gundersen, 1905), p. 17 (§29).

([36]) The significance of the original structure is analysed by Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’.

([37]) See the essays in Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, eds., *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of King Lear* (Oxford University Press, 1983).

([38]) West, ‘An Edition’; on her editorial procedure see ibid., pp. 368–9.

([39]) Stokes, ‘The Destruction’.

([40]) Knott, *Togail*, p. xiii; see also p. 112, s.v. *dám*; see West, ‘An Edition’, p. 700, s.v. *súili*.

([41]) Gantz, *Early Irish Myths*, pp. 61–112. But see now Borsje, *The Celtic Evil Eye*, pp. 269–339.

([42]) Knott, *Togail*, line 1064. Y (MS, col. 733); U, line 7460; D (MS, fol. 83v); F (MS, p. 213); H2 (MS, p. 481). This passage is discussed in context in chapter 6: see note 128 there.

([43]) Gantz, *Early Irish Myths*, pp. 61–112 (see p. 105 for Mac Cécht's death). The last point is discussed in chapter 7, pp. 220–1.

([44]) Gantz's introductory remarks are, however, fundamentally opposed to the spirit of mediaeval Irish scholarship as developed in the last four decades, and are not recommended.

([45]) The translations in Koch and Carey, *Celtic Heroic Age*, and Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales* (both based on Stokes's edition of U) omit almost half the saga. The most accurate English translations extant are the unpublished one by West (‘An Edition’; see note 33 in Introduction above) and Borsje, *The Celtic Evil Eye*, pp. 269–339. However, both of these to some extent conflate Y with U, so Gantz will remain a useful guide to the shape of the archetype as far as we can discern it.

([46]) The URL is http://www.isos.dias.ie/english/index.html. I have used these files regularly in my own research for this book, as well as consulting the manuscripts themselves. Unlike most of the manuscripts on ISOS, The Yellow Book of Lecan

has not been scanned in its entirety: hence Y2 is missing from the ISOS files.

([47]) A fully diplomatic edition would make it possible to see in every case where abbreviations in the manuscript-text had been expanded by the editors: this procedure is not followed with total consistency by Bergin and Best.

([48]) Knott's transcription of this part of D is keyed to Stokes's section-numbers, which I use in my own references (as well as to the folio numbers of the manuscript itself).

([49]) R. Atkinson, facs. ed., *The Yellow Book of Lecan*, 2 vols. (Dublin: RIA, 1896), pp. 91–104.

([50]) My references follow the pagination format used for each manuscript in ISOS or currently favoured by its holding library. Hence, some refer to folios, others to pages and others to columns.

([51]) On the variations in the title see below, p. 35.

([52]) For the tale-list reference see Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1980), p. 41. The tale-lists have been dated by scholars to the tenth century at the latest: on the original version see Gregory Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’, *Éigse*, 32 (2000), 88–120. The summaries are discussed below.

([53]) West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, pp. 63–4; *eadem*, ‘Aspects of *díberg*’, p. 451; *eadem*, ‘Genesis’, p. 413. All three are edited in *eadem*, ‘An Edition’. On other editions of these texts see below.

([54]) Slotkin, ‘Medieval Irish Scribes’, p. 449.

([55]) See Knott's comments on D (*Togail*, p. xiv): ‘Whether a complete recension in the later style ever existed we cannot tell now.’

([56]) These are London, British Library, Egerton 1782 (written 1517) and Dublin, Trinity College, 1288 (H.1.14, written

1750). The Egerton text is printed in West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 821–93, and its structure outlined in ibid., pp. 117–45. Several readings from the Egerton text are provided, with translations, as variant readings or additional text in Stokes, ‘The Destruction’.

([57]) T. M. Charles-Edwards, ‘*Tochmarc Étaíne*: A Literal Interpretation’, in Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard, eds., *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), pp. 165–81, p. 165; Poppe, *Of Cycles*, pp. 31–2. Older discussions of Recension III include Lucius Gwynn, ‘The Recensions’, pp. 212–17; *idem*, ‘The Two Versions of *Tochmarc Étaíne*’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 9 (1913), 353–6; Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 657–63.

([58]) John Carey, *Ireland and the Grail* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2007), p. 31.

([59]) The manuscripts are: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 N 10 (written 1575); London, British Library, Egerton 88 (*c*. 1564); Dublin, Trinity College, 1337 (H.3.18) (*c*.1500–1600); and Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Phillips G7 (*c*.1500–1600). For the debate on the relations between these texts see Ó Concheanainn, ‘A Connacht Medieval Literary Heritage’, pp. 32–4; West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, pp. 91–8; Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’; Ó Concheanainn, ‘*Leabhar na hUidhre*: Further Textual Associations’, pp. 84–5; John Carey, ‘On the Interrelationships of some *Cín Dromma Snechtai* Texts’, *Ériu*, 46 (1995), 71–92. For an edition of the Connaught version, see Séamus Mac Mathúna, ed. and trans., *Immram Brain: Bran's Journey to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985), pp. 449–50; the accounts in *Lebor na hUidre* and the G7 manuscript have been edited by Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’, pp. 105–7 and 110–11; and an edition using all the manuscript-texts has been provided by West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 371–9.

([60]) Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’; West, ‘Genesis’, p. 413; Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, pp. 44–5. For a

dissenting view see Ó Concheanainn, ‘A Connacht Medieval Literary Heritage’, pp. 32–4.

([61]) Henceforth, line-numbers for Recension Ib refer to Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*. See Ib, line 8006.

([62]) Ingcél's comrades are not the three sons of Donn Désa as in Recension II, but the three sons of Úa Toissich and two other men.

([63]) Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’, p. 107, following the text in Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Phillips G7.

([64]) The author of Recension III appears to have taken his cue directly from Ib in linking *Tochmarc Étaíne* with Recension II of the *Togail*, as is suggested by the presence of edited extracts from Ib inserted into the story both at the link and just before Conaire has been fatally diverted from his journey back to Tara. See Lucius Gwynn, ‘The Recensions’, p. 214. For Recension III at these points see West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 832–3 and 839–40 (§§23 and 41).

([65]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 623–7; see also Ó Cathasaigh, ‘*Gat* and *Díberg*’, p. 204.

([66]) West, ‘Genesis’, p. 435.

([67]) Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’, p. 110 (for the G7 text of Ia); Ib, line 8030; Knott, *Togail*, lines 492, 594, 611, 612, 1100, 1137.

([68]) D (MS, fol. 80r); E (MS, fol. 19v). See below, p. 79, and West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 721–2. A similar sentence appears in Recension III (ibid., pp. 839–40).

([69]) Y (MS, col. 720) has the same form of words as D and E, but with *fo* added beneath the line between *din* and *bith* to form the conjunction *fo bith* ‘because’ (read *bíth*), linking the sentence (not very logically) to the subsequent one which states that fear then overtook Conaire and his men (Knott, *Togail*, p. 77) and prompting Knott to read *dī* (with a dash over

the *i*) as *didiu* (‘then’, line 250) rather than as *din* (‘from the’). H2 (MS, p. 477) has a similar form to Y, but here *fo* is part of the main text and preceded by a punctuation mark.

([70]) In U the whole sentence is rendered very differently: *Is iat dodróni in smúitcheó ndruidechta sin din bith síabrai fo bithin ar ro corpait géssi Conaire* (‘it was spectres who made of the world that cloudy mist of magic, because Conaire's *gessi* had been violated’, lines 6749–50). Here, as in H2 and Y, the conjunction (*fo bithin*) has been added, but linked to a different cause, reflecting the tendency of U to clarify details of the story.

([71]) Y (MS, col. 716). For full references to the manuscript-texts of Recension I see note 59 above.

([72]) Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 41 and 54–5. In the late Middle Irish saga *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, our saga is referred to as simply *Bruiden Dā Derg*: see Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., *Aislinge Meic Conglinne: The Vision of MacConglinne: A Middle Irish Wonder-Tale* (London: Nutt, 1892), pp. 124–5.

([73]) Ó Cathasaigh, ‘On the *Cín Dromma Snechta*’, p. 104.

([74]) E. G. Quin, ed., *Dictionary of the Irish Language Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials: Compact Edition* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1983; henceforth *DIL*; available online as *eDIL* at www.dil.ie), s.vv. *orgun* and *togail*. A detailed analysis of the semantic fields in question remains an important desideratum. See the brief note on classical *togla* in chapter 8, note 42.

([75]) The variation between the forms *Bruiden Da Derga* (which, if spelt *Dá*, may be derived from *día*, ‘god’) and *Bruiden Úa Derga* (from *úa*, a male descendant) in the title-rubrics of Recension I bears significantly on the identity of Da Derga. However, the extant texts of Recension II usually refer to him as Da Derga (with no length-mark), paralleling the names of other hostellers in Middle Irish literature (such as Mac Da Réo and Da Choca).

([76]) Lucius Gwynn, ed. and trans., ‘De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir’, *Ériu*, 6 (1912), 130–43 (line numbers refer to this text). The tale survives only in fifteenth-century manuscripts, but the most recent study of this tale calls it the earliest account of Conaire's inauguration: see Thomas Owen Clancy, ‘King-Making and Images of Kingship in Medieval Gaelic Literature’, in Richard Welander et al., eds., *The Stone of Destiny: Artefact and Icon* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2003), pp. 85–105, p. 91. Edel Bhreathnach dates it to, possibly, the eighth century in her ‘Temoria: Caput Scotorum?’, p. 71, as does Elizabeth FitzPatrick in her *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c.1100–1600: A Cultural Landscape Study* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), p. 49. These datings all go back to Thurneysen (*Heldensage*, p. 619).

([77]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 621, n. 4; Lucius Gwynn ‘The Recensions’, p. 218. Thurneysen’s view contradicts his own datings of the *Togail* and *De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir*.

([78]) Lucius Gwynn, ed. and trans., ‘De Maccaib Conaire’, *Ériu*, 6 (1912), 144–53. On this tradition see also Nettlau, ‘On the Irish Text’, pp. 140–1 [1893].

([79]) On some of these influences, and on the text’s date, see Toner, *Bruiden Da Choca*. See also Whitley Stokes, ed. and trans., ‘Da Choca's Hostel’, *Revue Celtique*, 21 (1900), 149–65, 312–27, 388–402, at p. 398; Edward Gwynn, ‘On the Idea of Fate’, p. 159; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Early Ireland: Directions and Re-directions’, *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal*, 1.2 (1994), 1–15, pp. 10–11; Borsje, ‘Approaching Danger’, pp. 90–2.

([80]) This was noted by Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, p. 86 (see pp. 41, 55, 64, and 65 for the tale-lists’ citations of this title).

([81]) Osborn Bergin and R. I. Best, eds. and trans., ‘Tochmarc Étaíne’, *Ériu*, 12 (1934–8), 137–96, p. 188.

([82]) See also Bergin and Best, ‘Tochmarc Étaíne’, p. 139.

([83]) For these citations see Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 42, 56, 64, and 65.

([84]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 625–6; Zimmer, ‘Keltische Studien’; Nettlau, ‘On the Irish Text’, pp. 251–2 [1891], 454–5; West, ‘Genesis’, pp. 434–5.

([85]) Johan Corthals, ‘Zur Frage des mündlichen oder schriftlichen Ursprungs der Sagenroscada’, in Stephen Tranter and Hildegard L. C. Tristram, eds., *Early Irish Literature: Media and Communication* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1989), pp. 201–20; Liam Breatnach, ‘Zur Frage der “Roscada” im Irischen’, in Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ed., *Metrik und Medienwechsel: Metrics and Media* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1991), pp. 197–205.

([86]) Malcolm Parkes, ‘The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book’, in J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson, eds., *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115–41, p. 128; cited and discussed in Abigail Burnyeat, ‘*Córugud* and *compilatio* in Some Manuscripts of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*’, in Ó hÚiginn and Ó Catháin, eds., *Ulidia 2*, pp. 356–74, p. 358.

([87]) Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols., unpaginated (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), X.44, cited by Burnyeat, ‘*Córugud* and *Compilatio*’, p. 358; see also Gregory Toner, ‘Authority, Verse and the Transmission of *senchas*’, *Ériu*, 55 (2005), 59–84, p. 63, for evidence that this anecdote was known in eleventh-century Ireland. On the potentially pejorative implications of the label *compilator* see Neil Hathaway, ‘*Compilatio*: From Plagiarism to Compiling’, *Viator*, 20 (1989), 19–44. I am grateful to Stephen Hanaphy for discussion of this point, and for sharing some of his unpublished research with me.

([88]) See Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: ‘Grammatica’ and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 241–3.

([89]) Hugh Fogarty, ‘*Retoiric* and Composition in *Geneamuin Chormaic*’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 20 (2000), 1–21; Geraldine Parsons, ‘*Acallam na Senórach* as

Prosimetrum', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 24 (2004), 86–100; *eadem*, 'A Reading of *Acallam na Senórach* as a Literary Text', Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2006; *eadem*, 'The Structure of *Acallam na Senórach*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 55 (Summer 2008), 11–39.

([90]) Gregory Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle: Historiography or Fiction?', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 40 (Winter 2000), 1–20; Erich Poppe, 'Medieval Irish Literary Theory and Criticism: The Evidence of Narrative Prose', in Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism Vol. 2: The Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 302–9; Erich Poppe, 'Literature as History/ History as Literature: A View from Medieval Ireland', in Sonja Fielitz, ed., *Literature as History/History as Literature: Fact and Fiction in Medieval to Eighteenth-Century British Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 13–27. Sagas' role as commemoration and textualized *memoria* has been explored by Schlüter, *History or Fable?*, and in an unpublished paper by Erich Poppe, 'Some Thoughts on Narrative History and Cultural Memory in Medieval Ireland' (2008), first given at the University of Oslo. I am grateful to him for allowing me to see a draft of this article and for some stimulating discussions on this subject.

([91]) On Irish concepts of fable and history see Brian Ó Cuív, 'Scél: arramainte: stair', *Éigse*, 11 (1964–6), 18; Francis John Byrne, '*Senchas*: The Nature of Gaelic Historical Tradition', in J. G. Barry, ed., *Historical Studies 9* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1974), pp. 137–59; Erich Poppe, *A New Introduction to Imtheachta Aeniasa, The Irish Aeneid: The Classical Epic from an Irish Perspective* (London: Irish Texts Society, 1995), pp. 3–17; Ó Néill, 'The Latin Colophon'; Harriet Thomsett, 'Meeting on Whose Terms? The Equation of Latin and Vernacular Literary Terminology in the Old Irish Glosses', *Quaestio*, 3 (2002), 107–20; Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, pp. 195–201; and the works by Poppe cited in the previous footnote. For a particularly suggestive recent discussion see Poppe, *Of Cycles*, pp. 42–63; on similar matters in other northern European narrative traditions see Ralph O'Connor, 'History or Fiction?

Truth-Claims and Defensive Narrators in Icelandic Romance-Sagas', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 15 (2005), 101–69.

([92]) This modern dichotomy mars Carney's otherwise insightful discussion of what he calls *scélshenchus*, 'dramatised or fictionalised history', in his 'Language and Literature to 1169', pp. 479–82. The Irish term was first used in the early twelfth-century manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 502 to denote short tales relating to specific royal dynasties, and has been put to sustained use (without the false dichotomy) by Schlüter, *History or Fable?*.

([93]) On the European context for this formal and structural variety in historiography, see Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti, eds., *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). On some Irish examples and their functions see John V. Kelleher, 'Early Irish History and Pseudo-History', *Studia Hibernica*, 3 (1963), 113–27, p. 127; J. N. Radner, 'Writing History: Early Irish Historiography and the Significance of Form', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 312–25.

([94]) On the drive to recover the past in eleventh-century Ireland see Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Boundaries', pp. 98–9.

([95]) Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 1027–9. On this technique see Toner, 'The Ulster Cycle', pp. 12–13; but compare the cautionary remarks by Máire Herbert, 'Reading Recension 1 of the *Táin*', in Ó hUiginn and Ó Catháin, eds., *Ulidia 2*, pp. 208–17, pp. 210–11.

([96]) Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Boundaries', p. 94; Burnyeat, '*Córugud* and *Compilatio*'.

([97]) On this procedure, see Toner, 'Authority', pp. 73–5; Morgan Thomas Davies, 'Protocols of Reading', p. 22.

([98]) Carney, 'Language and Literature to 1169', p. 483.

([99]) Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (University of Toronto Press, 1989).

([100]) Samain was the night of 31 October, the same as present-day Hallowe'en.

([101]) This possibility may explain why the word *immorro* ('but/however'), conventionally used to introduce such variants, is absent from this passage. The possibility of two equally true origin-legends offers an exception to the 'single truth' model of *dindṡenchas* interpretation advanced by Toner, 'Authority', p. 74. Compare Rolf Baumgarten, 'A Hiberno-Isidorean Etymology', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 225–8.

([102]) On the manipulation of audience sympathy see Hildegard L. C. Tristram's thought-provoking article 'Mimesis and Diegesis in the *Cattle Raid of Cuailnge*', in John Carey et al., eds., *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999), pp. 263–76 and, from the standpoint of cognitive psychology, Tom Sjöblom, 'Beyond Narratives: Taboos as an Early Irish Custom', in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm, eds., *Approaches to Mythology and Religion in Celtic Studies* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 150–77, pp. 164–73.

([103]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 25.

([104]) For example, Ó Concheanainn, 'Notes', pp. 77, 79, 82 (on the faults of the Y-text).

([105]) Ó Concheanainn, 'Notes'.

([106]) West, 'Genesis'.

([107]) West, 'Leabhar na hUidhre', p. 68. Compare Ned Sturzer, 'Inconsistencies and Infelicities in the Welsh Tales: Their Implications', *Studia Celtica*, 37 (2003), 127–42, which uses perceived contradictions within the Four Branches of the *Mabinogion* to argue against single authorship.

([108]) West, ‘Aspects of *díberg*’, p. 951; a judgement echoed in *eadem*, ‘Genesis’, p. 435.

([109]) Ralph O'Connor, ‘Compilation as Creative Artistry: A Reassessment of “Narrative Inconsistency” in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*’, forthcoming in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (2013).

([110]) Three (lines 406–7, 641, 1176–7) and seven (lines 517, 1131–2). In U, one of the three-pupilled references is rendered as seven, with a gloss signalling the uncertainty (line 7054 and n.).

([111]) Zimmer, ‘Keltische Studien 5’, p. 573; Nettlau, ‘On the Irish Text’, pp. 252 [1891] and 454–5; Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 637–9; West, ‘Genesis’, p. 417.

([112]) This error would need to have taken place at an early stage in the saga's transmission, since these numbers generally appear as words rather than numerals in the extant texts of the *Togail*. The potential for error in copying numerals is noted by West, ‘Genesis’, p. 418.

([113]) On symbolic numbers see Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage*, pp. 186–204; Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 167–71. For an example of a later Irish parody of numerical error of this kind, see Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, pp. 4–5.

([114]) D (MS, fol. 85v) Similar interventions were made to U by the H-interpolator, as analysed by Toner, ‘Scribe and Text’, pp. 114–17.

([115]) West, ‘Genesis’, p. 418.

([116]) Seven doors (lines 281, 587–9, 981), nine doors (line 1088). This contradiction has been noticed only by Mac Cana (*Branwen*, p. 88 n. 1), who referred it to ‘the whim of the story-teller’.

([117]) Lines 383–7. See Nettlau, ‘On the Irish Text’, p. 251 [1891]; West, ‘Genesis’, p. 416. The same error is found in the

list of Maines in the second recension of the *Táin*: see Cecile O'Rahilly, ed. and trans., *Táin Bó Cúalnge from The Book of Leinster* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967), lines 148–50.

([118]) Lines 1494–95. This inconsistency has been noted by West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, p. 75; *eadem*, ‘Genesis’, p. 417.

([119]) See, for example, West, ‘Genesis’, pp. 430–4. On modified repetition in other contexts, see Proinsias Mac Cana, ‘An Instance of Modified Narrative Repetition in Fled Bricrenn’, *Ériu*, 28 (1977), 168–72; *idem*, ‘Notes on Structure and Syntax in *Fled Bricrenn*’, in Pádraig Ó Ríain, ed., *Fled Bricrenn: Reassessments* (London: Irish Texts Society, 2000), pp. 70–91.

([120]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 625–6; West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, pp. 67–8; West, ‘Genesis’, pp. 415–18, 421–2, 430–3.

([121]) West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, pp. 67–8; West, ‘Genesis’, pp. 416, 421 n. 48. At least one mediaeval reader of the *Togail* (who went on to author a new version) also disliked this untidiness: in the twelfth-century Recension III, the number of people using these three skills is significantly reduced, as noted by West (‘An Edition’, p. 135).

([122]) Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The Concept of the Hero’, p. 87, has discussed this motif in terms of Dumézilian geometry.

([123]) Bryan Singer, 2000 and 2003; Brett Ratner, 2006; and various spinaffs.

([124]) This discrepancy was noted by Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 626; Nettlau, ‘On the Irish Text’, p. 451.

([125]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 626.

([126]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, p. 625; West, ‘Leabhar na hUidhre’, p. 67; West, ‘Genesis’, p. 418.

([127]) According to the first recension of the *Táin*, Cú Chulainn was only five when he killed nine men in combat (Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, line 535). In *Scéla*

Chonchobuir, Conchobor mac Nessa is said to have been seven when he took the kingship of the Ulaid: see R. I. Best et al., eds., *The Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, 6 vols. (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1954–83), lines 12446–7 (future citations of *The Book of Leinster* will refer to the line-numbers in this edition). On the term *gilla* sometimes referring to young children, see *DIL*, s.v. *gilla* (b). On the age of seven as a point of social and legal transition, see Boll, 'Foster-Kin in Conflict', pp. 9–11.

([128]) Barbara Leonie Picard, *Three Ancient Kings* (London: Kaye and Ward, 1972), p. 141; Randy Lee Eickhoff, *The Destruction of the Inn* (New York: Forge, 2001), p. 83 (for the boy's age see p. 139).

([129]) West, 'Genesis', p. 433.

([130]) Robert Alter, 'Introduction to the Old Testament', in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (London: Collins, 1987), pp. 11–35, pp. 25 and 26 (italics original).

([131]) Robert Alter, trans., *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), pp. xlii–xliii. Similar observations have been made concerning Greek and Latin epic: see James J. O'Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic: Studies in Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid and Lucan* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).