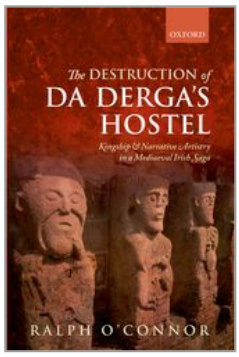

The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel: Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga
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The Latin Dimension

Classical and Biblical Influence

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Abstract and Keywords

The final three chapters address the question of the saga's contemporary purpose and significance: why was it written, and what did it mean for its tenth- or eleventh-century author(s) and audiences? Chapter 8 explores the possibility that its composition was informed (although not dictated) by the Latin literary culture in which eleventh-century Irish writers were steeped, engaging with recent lively debates about the influence of classical and biblical literature on native Irish sagas. The author suggests that, while classical epic may have provided structural and stylistic precedents for the composition of the *Togail*, close attention to this saga turns out to cast doubt on some of the stronger claims made by scholars about classical epic as a necessary model for the composition of large-scale Irish sagas. The chapter briefly assesses the somewhat more promising evidence for biblical influence on Irish sagas, to prepare the ground for chapter 9.

Keywords: Latin, classical, epic, Bible, Old Testament, neoclassicism, ekphrasis, ‘watchman device’, amplificatio

From the analysis so far, the *Togail* emerges as a powerful and coherent work of literature designed to move and entertain its audiences as well as to provide information about Conaire. It is nevertheless not best described as a blend of history and literature, because in early mediaeval Ireland these two concepts were not separate to begin with: writing good history and telling a good story were not polar opposites, but often served as the twin motors of vernacular narrative practice in a culture which was highly ambivalent (to say the least) about the value of writing factually untrue stories.[1] While plenty of sagas present historical narrative without paying much attention to thematic coherence or dramatic structuring, there is no evidence that the dramatic power or thematic richness of the *Togail* would have given rise to any doubts over its status as *historia*; and this seems confirmed by the fact that subsequent scribal interventions in the texts of the *Togail* from the twelfth century onwards combine aesthetically motivated alterations (such as making a poem's metre work better) with would-be improvements of the saga's historical accuracy and consistency.[2] It would therefore be a mistake, I suggest, to draw too sharp a dividing-line between the *Togail* and less complex forms of historiography from the period, at least in terms of their historical function.[3]

Nevertheless, in its aesthetic organization, the *Togail* does indeed take the dramatic possibilities of *historia* (and of *compilatio*) to an unprecedented level. Its sources have been purposefully edited and/or recomposed within a new large-scale dramatic structure, the creative product of an author (or, possibly, authors) working in the tenth or eleventh century. This structure enables the saga not only to tell Conaire's history, but also, in so doing, to explore the tragic tensions within the institution of kingship as personified in Conaire.

Why was the *Togail* written—and why, specifically, this tragic emphasis? The next three chapters will attempt to answer this question by situating the *Togail* in its historical contexts, relating its composition to wider concerns in contemporary Irish textual, political, and ecclesiastical culture. In recent

decades historical and literary scholarship on the Irish sagas has been increasingly dominated by (p.229) this contextual approach, with James Carney's influential book *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (1955) usually cited as its main starting-point. Carney's polemical goal was to refute the notion that the authors of mediaeval sagas passively transmitted archaic myths and legends, and to emphasize instead their creative role as authors who drew not only on folk tradition but on their 'total literary experience', and who used this to engage with concerns of their own time and place.[4] Latin learning and Christianity were fundamental to literacy in early mediaeval Ireland, so we might expect to find some evidence of the influence of classical, biblical, Patristic, and other learned writings on Old and Middle Irish sagas, most of which were almost certainly written in ecclesiastical institutions in their extant forms.

Of course, folklore and mythology can hardly be relegated to the margins of these texts. Hard evidence is notoriously scanty on this front, but few scholars would now insist that early mediaeval scribes invented stories about the heathen past from whole cloth, and any saga-author's 'total literary experience' would surely have included a sizeable dose of oral storytelling and lore from both popular and elite sources. The saga-authors (re)composed their stories in forms which reflected a *fusion* between native lore and Latin learning, and between literacy and orality (especially in connection with the possible viva-voce *performance* of some sagas).[5] There are still fierce debates over the relative strength of each component in specific texts and over the precise 'contemporary' context into which each saga fits; but the radically hybrid nature of mediaeval saga-writing is now a scholarly commonplace, and it is not really feasible to divide scholars up between 'nativists' and 'anti-nativists' as some have suggested.[6] Indeed, the very term 'external element'—usefully coined by Carney to label the learned Latin features of Irish sagas—is becoming increasingly awkward, as the depth and range of the saga-authors' engagement with Latin literature becomes clearer.[7] These elements were rarely *objets trouvés* to be slotted in when required; rather, many saga-authors fully internalized the forms, functions, and ambitions of the Latinity to which

they had access, no less than did the authors of Anglo-Saxon elegies and Arthurian romance. They created a potent artistic amalgam by fusing the narrative traditions to which they were heir.

The *Togail* has been oddly absent from much of this discussion, perhaps because its purportedly ‘traditional’ content is so prominent and so fascinating in its own (p.230) right. However, it has crept into the sidelines of debate in two of the most popular and (still) controversial topics for debate on the significance of the so-called ‘external element’ in Irish literature, namely the influence of classical epic and biblical narrative, respectively, on the sagas’ form and content. Both kinds of text have been claimed to be crucial for the development of Irish sagas, especially longer, ‘heroic’ sagas like the *Táin*. Given the evident popularity of the *Togail* in the Middle Ages and its tendency to lurk around the edges of the debates just mentioned, it is worth directly examining these questions in relation to this saga.

I shall argue that while classical epic may have been an important part of the saga-author's literary universe, and may have provided structural and stylistic precedents for the composition of the *Togail*, direct or even indirect influence on a large scale cannot yet be securely demonstrated. In fact, the example of the *Togail* turns out to cast doubt on some of the stronger claims made by scholars about classical narrative as a necessary model for the composition of large-scale Irish sagas. The case for biblical influence is also difficult to demonstrate securely, but one specific story provides a striking set of parallels for the Irish saga's representation of Conaire, namely the Old Testament story of King Saul and the prophet Samuel—a story which, as chapter 9 will show, resonated through mediaeval European (including Irish) discussions of kingship. Both classical and biblical examples would nevertheless have formed only part of the saga-author's ‘total literary experience’ and are to be seen as contributing towards, rather than explaining away, the saga-author's creative achievement. Having examined these possible literary precedents, we shall be in a better position in chapter 10 to

explore the meaning of the *Togail* for a contemporary audience and its relation to then-current political and religious debates.

Classical Translations and the Origins of Vernacular ‘epic’

The extant *Togail* was composed during a period of intense engagement with secular classical literature by Irish authors and audiences. This interest had a long pedigree: in the early Middle Ages Irish scholars on the Continent were involved in the transmission of Roman literature, although the extent of their involvement is now being debated anew.[8] In Ireland, this fascination for classical poetry, mythography, and history expressed itself most powerfully in the Middle Irish period, (p.231) when a number of secular classical narratives were translated or adapted into vernacular Irish prose.[9] Texts from various Latin genres—from the hexameters of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius's *Thebaid* to the unadorned prose of the *De excidio Troiae historia*, the ‘History of the Destruction of Troy’ attributed to Dares Phrygius—were rewritten to fit the evolving norms of Irish saga, both stylistically and structurally.[10] The results were among the earliest translations of classical narratives anywhere in Europe. Incorporated alongside native sagas into manuscripts and lists of storytellers’ repertoires, texts such as *Togail Troí* (‘The Destruction of Troy’) helped to thread Irish history into a world-historical framework, complementing the activities of chroniclers during this period. These classical adaptations also provided new matter for moral and political reflection, and new possibilities for stylistic experimentation.

The demand for these adaptations reflects an increasing interest in large-scale narratives, especially narratives about military conflict. This interest was simultaneously being met by the composition of longer native sagas such as the *Táin* and the *Togail*. Like these native sagas, many of the classical adaptations (and their sources) explore themes of warfare, honour, appropriate royal behaviour, and tragic conflicts among kin and foster-kin by means of large-scale narrative structures built on sophisticated combinations of poetic techniques and devices.[11] The question therefore arises: did

Irish interest in the classics influence the composition of native sagas such as the *Táin* and *Togail*?

Descriptive practice has provided one possible avenue by which classical influence on the sagas has been mooted: specifically, the ekphrastic technique of describing persons from head to toe (as seen in the description of Étaín in the *Togail*).[12] Eleanor McLoughlin and Dorothy Dilts Swartz have shown that the Middle Irish pattern for ekphrastic personal descriptions resembles the self-conscious neoclassical procedures of late-antique Gallo-Roman rhetoricians such as Sidonius Apollinaris, as well as to the revival of these techniques in eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe. McLoughlin and Swartz have diagnosed neoclassical influence on this basis. There could have been several possible channels of influence: Irish scholars on the Continent or in Ireland could have come into contact with Gaulish rhetoricians, with their textual productions, with Carolingian texts imitating their techniques, or with products of the subsequent revival of interest in (p.232) rhetoric which reached its peak in the late Middle Irish period.[13] However, this suggestion is complicated by the fact that similar procedures structure the descriptive runs found in oral epics, such as the twentieth-century Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian examples analysed by Albert Lord[14] (although head-to-toe order does not feature in the ‘arming runs’ which serve as Lord's prime examples). The descriptions found in native sagas such as the *Togail* and the *Táin* do not settle the question of (neo)classical influence, but instead suggest that saga artistry was rooted in both oral and literary narrative practices.

Saga-authors may have been open to aspects of neoclassical Latin poetics, but this possibility does not solve the more controversial question of whether classical epic had any deep-rooted influence on native Irish sagas. In the first place, allusions are notoriously difficult to identify. In the *Táin*, the upwelling of the River Cronn against the Connaught army was seen by Thurneysen as having been modelled on the upwelling of the River Scamander against Achilles in the *Iliad*, but this and similar parallels for individual episodes can no less easily be put down to common sources in myth and folklore.[15] Direct

allusions do sometimes occur: a gloss in the first recension of the *Táin* explicitly identifies the Irish war-goddess Morrígan with the Fury Allecto, and *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* ('The Voyage of Máel Dúin') closes with a quotation from the *Aeneid*.[16] But such allusions are scarce and do not demonstrate knowledge of the classical source-text in its entirety: they could come from mythographies, glossaries, or commentaries, at second or third hand (a route which may seem 'tortuous' but which reflects the reality that not all scholars in early mediaeval Ireland had access to well-stocked libraries of classical texts).[17] They are clear signs of active engagement with the classics among Middle Irish saga-authors, but they do not suggest that the classics were their primary interest.

It is especially difficult to identify specific classical allusions in the *Togail*. Brent Miles, in his groundbreaking and painstaking study of classical epic techniques in (p.233) Irish sagas, mentions only one possible allusion in the *Togail*,[18] and it is an example which to my mind demonstrates some of the risks of allusion-hunting. Miles first suggests that the transformation of Mercury's winged sandals into an *éncennach* ('bird-covering') in the second recension of *Togail Troí* was borrowed from the *Aeneid* by the Irish translator; he then suggests that, in this light, Nemglan's *énchendach* in the *Togail* must also be a subtle reference to Virgil's Mercury, described in the same book of the *Aeneid* as flying away *avi similis* ('in the likeness of a bird').[19] This is, of course, a possibility. However, the possibility that Virgil's description of Mercury was known to the twelfth-century author of *Togail Troí* II does not increase the likelihood that the tenth- or eleventh-century author of the *Togail* (or his putative source) also knew that description and wished to allude to it. It seems more likely in this case that the *Aeneid* and the *Togail* both present independent variations on the international folk motif of the supernatural avian shapeshifter, which was especially widespread in Irish and northern European folklore. Any storyteller seeking to dramatize the moment at which a bird turned into a human, or vice versa, would surely have been able to come up with the

idea of a feathered covering without needing a learned precedent to do so.[20]

Identifiable classical motifs, even the more far-fetched ones, are not frequent in the *Táin*, still less in the *Togail*. More significant for our purposes is the question of large-scale structural influence. This question has most often been pursued in relation to the *Táin*, easily the longest and most elaborate pre-twelfth-century native saga. Thurneysen, Carney, and a number of more recent scholars have argued that the first recension of the *Táin* was written in imitation of classical epic, whether modelled on the *Iliad* itself or (more likely) on Latin epics such as the *Ilias Latina*, Statius's *Thebaid*, or Virgil's *Aeneid*.[21] Ekphrastic techniques, especially the 'watchman device' discussed in chapters 6 and 7, lie at the heart of these debates. Although the *Táin* is normally the focus of interest here, ekphrasis plays a still greater structuring role in the *Togail*, which is the second longest pre-twelfth-century native saga and has a structure of equal complexity and (arguably) more evident coherence than that of the *Táin*. These debates which centre on the *Táin* therefore have a significant bearing on the possibility of classical antecedents for the *Togail*.

First, some general principles require consideration. In the best-known and least compromising recent statement of the 'classicizing' view, Hildegard Tristram has argued that the *Táin* as we have it 'could not have been compiled without the knowledge of the written translations of lengthy classical texts' since, before this (p.234) knowledge arrived, 'Irish authors did not have extended discourse models to go by in connecting short […] episodes in a macro-form composition with the attempt to integrate them as a consistent whole.'[22] Her assertion echoes that made by Carney: 'Those features which are part of the [sagas'] epic scale of presentation *must* be due to imitation of the classics or of Christian developments of them.'[23] Tristram has invoked two larger claims to support her view. First, 'oral cultures tend to feature short narratives which may […] be concatenated to form extended oral narratives […] More complex and truly

integrated narratives are rare and seem to develop mainly in written cultures.'[24] If this is indeed the case, it leads only to the conclusion that literacy had a profound effect on the composition of sagas. It does not in itself point to specifically classical influence; such influence would need to be demonstrated by close examination of the texts themselves.[25] Tristram's second supporting claim is that, in mediaeval Europe generally, 'translation movements' have tended to result in 'a subsequent literary boom in the receiving languages'[26]—which may be true, but does not in itself suggest that translation movements are *necessary* to literary booms or to the composition of 'macro-forms'. Her argument omits the possibility that Latin macro-forms could have exerted influence on saga-writing directly, without the help of Irish intermediaries. These Latin texts could include classical epic, but also longer biblical narratives, as will be suggested in the second part of this chapter in connection with the *Togail*.

Fundamental to Tristram's argument is the idea that classical adaptations into Irish predated the composition of 'complex and truly integrated' sagas such as the *Táin* and the *Togail*.[27] As I have argued elsewhere, this chronology is not clear from the manuscript evidence: both *Togail Troí* (probably the earliest of the classical adaptations) and the first recension of the *Táin*, as well as the *Togail*, are generally accepted to be tenth- or eleventh-century reworkings of lost earlier versions, so we cannot assume that the authors of either native saga had access to large-scale classical adaptations: their likely dates of composition are too close and linguistic dating too blunt an instrument.[28]

(p.235) A related set of problems bedevils attempts to establish priority on the basis of motifs, borrowings, or allusions. Scholars such as Leslie Diane Myrick and John Harris have observed that classical adaptations such as *Togail Troí* contain many motifs and narrative devices resembling those found in native Irish sagas, including the *Táin*; the favoured explanation for this is usually that these techniques have been borrowed from native storytelling in order to Gaelicize the foreign, classical subject-matter, turning it into a genuinely Irish saga.[29] More recently, Miles has argued in

detail that both *Togail Troí* and the *Táin* participate in a self-consciously neoclassical aesthetic, and that many of the so-called ‘native’ techniques originated in imitation of classical literature rather than in native storytelling. Miles's analysis puts flesh on the bones of Carney's and Tristram's suggestions: not only does he show, convincingly, that *Togail Troí* was written using a highly inventive palette of neoclassical devices, but more controversially he argues that the *Táin* was itself significantly modelled on *Togail Troí* and other classical tales rather than the other way around.[30]

Both ‘Gaelicizing’ and ‘classicizing’ schools of thought home in on ekphrasis, and specifically the ‘watchman device’, to solve the question of priority. Both first and second recensions of *Togail Troí* and the *Táin* contain very similar treatments of the ‘watchman device’ to describe the approaching armies of Greece and Ulster respectively: first a riddling sequence in which the armies are ‘seen’ as apocalyptic natural phenomena, then a more mimetic sequence in which they appear as armies.[31] The episode in the *Táin* is entitled *Toichim na nBuiden* (‘The Reckoning of the Companies’). For Myrick, the striking resemblance between the two passages suggests that the author of *Togail Troí* borrowed the device from the *Táin*, and she strengthens her case by pointing to the presence of other traditional narrative techniques in *Togail Troí*.[32] Miles draws the opposite conclusion, namely that the author of the *Táin* imitated *Togail Troí* or a classical source, and his discussion ends by hinting that the ‘watchman device’ itself may have originated in classical imitation rather than traditional storytelling. Miles strengthens his case concerning *Toichim na mBuiden* by pointing to other instances of neoclassicism and classical allusion in the *Táin*, presenting a vital corrective to Myrick by emphasizing the classicizing ambitions of later Middle Irish authors (and translators).[33]

(p.236) However, as I have argued elsewhere, Miles's specific argument about the ‘watchman device’ in *Toichim na mBuiden* applies much more convincingly to the second recension of the *Táin* and the linguistically later portions of the first recension than to the first recension's version of *Toichim na mBuiden*

itself—a pattern which is consistent with the greater number and variety of extant classical adaptations in late Middle Irish than in early Middle Irish.[34] Consequently, Miles's examples of *imitatio* are insufficient to demonstrate that the ‘watchman device’ in *Toichim na mBuiden* originated in imitation of classical narrative, even though it seems to have become ‘classicized’ as it was reworked by later authors. Any larger claim (which Miles admittedly only hints at)[35] that the Irish ‘watchman device’ as a whole originated in classical imitation cannot be sustained on the basis of a discussion of the *Táin* and *Togail Troí* alone, since the device is used in several other early Middle Irish sagas composed at the same time as, or earlier than, the first recension of the *Táin*. Sims-Williams's argument that the Irish ‘watchman device’ originated in international storytelling, against which Miles's discussion is pitted, therefore emerges unscathed, although it is not the only other explanation available.[36] Consequently, identifying possible classical allusions and parallels in native ‘macro-form’ sagas does not justify ignoring possible native models for the composition of such sagas: the question remains open.

Ekphrasis in the ‘Watchman Device’: Classical-traditional Interplay

Nevertheless, none of these considerations stands in the way of the possibility that classical models (alongside oral storytelling and other models) did contribute to the development of compositional techniques in Irish sagas in the earlier period. Miles has convincingly shown that ekphrasis is crucial as a device of amplification within the classicizing project of *Togail Troí*, and that at several points ekphrastic techniques were used to amplify both recensions of the *Táin*. Given the extensive structural use made of ekphrasis in the *Togail* to build up a genuine ‘macro-form’, it is worth considering at least the possibility—if not the necessity—that this practice reflects some classical input.

This possibility may even be stronger for the *Togail* than for the *Táin*. In the *Táin*, the accumulation of separate episodes (the armies’ progress, Cú Chulainn's single combats) is the chief device of narrative extension, the last of these extended

as a set-piece by inserting numerous embedded verses (the combat with Fer Diad). These techniques are offset by set-pieces of large-scale ekphrasis (Cú Chulainn's revenge for the boy-troop, the mustering of Ulster) to heighten key moments in the (p.237) story. In the *Togail*, however, more than half the text is built on an ekphrastic structure, whereas its episodic accumulation is brief and concentrated. A long ekphrastic display of unparalleled beauty opens the saga; shorter ekphrases of other individuals punctuate the framing narrative; and at the saga's heart is the great set-piece of the description-sequence, easily the most ambitious example of the ‘watchman device’ in Irish literature, in which ekphrastic passages are concatenated, dramatized, and nested within each other.

The use of the ‘watchman device’ in the *Togail* as a technique of dramatic extension is far more extensive and elaborate than anywhere else in northern European narrative tradition, leaving room for the possibility that a classicizing approach may be partly responsible for the author's reliance on this traditional narrative device as the chief means of raising the structure of the whole saga to ‘epic’ scale. But the device's appearance in the *Togail* (as in several other Middle Irish sagas) is also far more extensive, elaborate, and structurally predominant than anything we find in classical epic. Classical ‘watchman devices’ repeat their pattern only a few times (thrice in the *Iliad*, twice in the *Thebaid*) and the individuals’ appearance and accoutrements are not described in detail; instead, they are used as springboards for narrating free-wheeling background stories about them, their homes, and their relatives. Native Irish ‘watchman devices’, on the other hand, repeat their pattern many times (most of all in the *Togail*), focus especially on the individuals’ appearances and accoutrements, and offer only short passages of background narrative in the longer examples. These differences make it unlikely that the Middle Irish ‘watchman devices’ closely imitated any extant classical examples, especially since Statius's treatment is even more alien to the Irish mode than Homer's—the reverse of what one might expect, given that, of these two authors, Statius is much more likely to have been known in early mediaeval Ireland.[37]

If the ‘watchman device’ in the *Togail* does reflect any influence from classical epic, then, the evidence suggests that this influence must have been very indirect, and (as with the neoclassical descriptive practices) did not rest on an in-depth knowledge of the original Latin or Greek sources. Certain passages from the *Aeneid* and its commentaries seem to have been known at least to some saga-authors in tenth- and eleventh-century Ireland, and the teaching of *grammatica* (with its rhetorical element) would have continued to involve secular Latin verse. Excerpts, synopses, grammatical-rhetorical instruction and portions of commentary—sources whose importance for the saga-authors has been emphasized by Miles in particular—represent the most likely forms in which Old and early Middle Irish saga-authors encountered many of what we think of as ‘the classics’.[38] If, by relying (p.238) on such sources, they knew more about the aims and techniques of classical epic than they knew of the works themselves, then close and sustained imitation would be difficult; but they could have been spurred to apply the rhetorical devices they learned about in this context to the telling of native stories, blending oral and learned narrative techniques.[39] A new imperative to compose, connect, and compile large-scale texts from smaller units is visible right across Middle Irish textual culture, and was driven by pressing cultural and socio-political concerns. So, to adapt Tristram's and Miles's arguments, classical training offered one among several structural ‘toolkits’ to move this project forward (another such ‘toolkit’ is discussed below, namely the Bible). It could have helped them develop a native trope such as the ‘watchman device’ in a new direction and on a larger scale.[40] Classical influence, in other words, need not have been strict *imitatio*; it could have been more submerged and pervasive. Such a process is, of course, almost impossible to prove: it is simply one possibility among several.

One could carry this speculation further. To mediaeval Irish scholars and readers without routine access to complete texts of classical epics but schooled in the idea that ekphrasis was an excellent means of epic *amplificatio*, the structures of the extant *Togail* and *Táin* could even have seemed like Ireland's answer to the classical epic, had they been in search of such a

thing.[41] If the *Táin* were conceived or received as a form of 'epic', this would have encouraged subsequent comparisons between the warriors of Troy and Ulster once classical literature became better known in the later Middle Irish period. This possibility may equally apply to the *Togail*. If the *Togail* were conceived or received as a form of 'epic'—deploying techniques of narrative amplification to build up a resonant sequence of ekphrastic spying-episodes which give the saga a genuinely epic tone—then this might even help explain why the title-rubric *Togail* was subsequently given to the would-be epic *Togail Troí* and the late Middle Irish adaptation of Statius's *Thebaid*, *Togail na Tebe* ('The Destruction of Thebes'), rather than using the much commoner and often synonymous *Orgain*.[42] At the very least, the shared rubric indicates that the (p.239) classical tales were seen as sharing features with the native tale (despite great differences of structure). This perception may in turn shed light on why the later Middle Irish authors of the D-text and U-text of the *Togail* saw fit to alter its final episodes in the direction of the late Middle Irish *cath* or battle-saga, a genre which may itself have been influenced by the battle-heavy classical adaptations and possibly also the *Aeneid* itself.[43]

Attractive as such speculations are, however, they must be set alongside an awareness that the case for classical influence on the structure of the *Togail* is based on a network of plausible conjectures rather than clear evidence of likely sources. This is not to reduce the value of such arguments—literary history in this field would be barren indeed without informed conjecture—but simply to remember that other factors must also be taken into account. The ambivalence of the extant evidence can be seen in one final example of a possible analogue between the description-sequence in the *Togail* and classical literature. In its structure, dramatic effect, and dominance over the whole text, the closest analogue is found not in classical epic (whose marked differences from Middle Irish 'watchman devices' have just been noted), but in Greek tragedy, a genre probably unknown to mediaeval Irish authors.[44] In the *Seven Against Thebes* of Aeschylus, a full third of the play is taken up by a sevenfold 'watchman'

sequence in which a Theban messenger describes and identifies[45] to King Eteocles the enemy champions who are besieging each gate of the city under the command of the king's exiled brother Polyneices. The king responds to each description with predictions of victory and assigns a general to each gate, and each time the chorus then adds exclamations of hope and (increasingly) fear. This sequence, the heart of the drama, culminates in the revelation that the final champion is Polyneices, and that the king will have to fight his own brother to the death, which prompts agonized reflections by the king on the inexorable force of fate and desperate pleas by the chorus for him not to go ahead with this fight.[46]

There is no evidence that any Greek (or indeed Roman) tragedies were known to mediaeval Irish scholars as complete texts, so any classical influence would have to (p.240) be indirect.[47] The legend of Eteocles and Polyneices was not unknown to saga-authors, who showed a particular interest in ancient Thebes: the account of the battle between the two brothers in Statius's *Thebaid* was reworked not only in *Togail na Tebe* itself but also in the late Middle Irish tale, *Riss in Mundtuirc* ('The Tale of the Necklace').[48] Furthermore, the basic idea of two estranged brothers locked in a fateful collision-course with each other under their father's curse resonates with the central plot of the *Togail*. But this parallel need not imply classical influence on the *Togail*; it is equally possible that the popularity of the *Togail* (in both extant and lost forms) or the currency of its major themes were what made Irish scholars so responsive to the Theban legends in the first place.[49]

More importantly, the closeness of the parallel lies primarily not in the legend itself but in its dramatic execution: its internal structure which produces a mounting sense of doom, and its placing within the whole literary work which it dominates structurally and dramatically just as the description-sequence dominates the *Togail*. These are features which do not survive in synopses, mythographies, secondary references, or any extant alternative versions of the story (Latin or Irish).[50] The most likely source, Statius's *Thebaid*, has nothing like this scene. Instead, it transplants Aeschylus's

‘watchman device’ to a passage describing the Theban warriors: here some concern is expressed over the outcome of the impending battle, but the passage's main emphasis is on the baroque profusion of back-stories about the warriors and their family histories, diverting the reader's attention from the underlying tragic conflict foregrounded by Aeschylus.[51] When it comes to the fight itself, four books later, the enraged brothers express neither uncertainty nor regret concerning their impending combat with each other; any pathos latent in the situation is redistributed to discrete utterances by scattered onlookers, but the prevailing emotions are rage and disgust.[52] (p.241) The same arrangement is seen in the Irish retelling, *Togail na Tebe*, which follows Statius closely in the ‘watchman’ sequence and presents a similar distribution of emotions in the (more freely adapted) duel-sequence.[53] *Riss in Mundtuirc* likewise presents Eteocles and Polyneices attacking each other with no regrets, does not even specify that they died in the battle, and places the dramatic emphasis instead on Amphiaraus, a prophet compelled to fight in a battle he knows he cannot survive.[54] The tragic pathos of the brothers’ conflict, which so closely parallels that in the *Togail*, is far clearer in Aeschylus's drama.

Based on what is known and speculated as to the kinds of classical texts available to Irish saga-authors, then, the hypothesis of classical influence cannot account for the large-scale structural parallel between these two works of literature. Alternative explanations are required. One possibility is Sims-Williams's hypothesis that the various ‘watchman devices’ found in ancient and mediaeval literature reflect a common origin in orally disseminated folk tradition, which seems an entirely reasonable way of explaining the international distribution of this form.[55] W. B. Stanford, by contrast, suggested that the device evolved independently from the everyday phenomenon of people asking about the identity of other people.[56] This suggestion has been rejected by Carney and Sims-Williams because it fails to take account of the elaboration of the device in literary texts, which develop the everyday phenomenon into complex artificial structures.[57] A similar problem in fact applies both to Sims-Williams's ‘international folklore’ hypothesis and to the hypothesis of

indirect classical influence: neither explains why both Aeschylus and the author of the *Togail* developed the underlying source-pattern in complex but converging ways distinct from other treatments (whether this source-pattern is conceived as an oral narrative template, an everyday phenomenon, or the synopsis of a classical legend).

A third possibility—and here we are venturing into the realms of speculation—would be to develop Stanford's suggestion along the lines of what biologists call ‘convergent evolution’, whereby similar complex features evolve independently in different times and places and among widely different organisms, in response to common environmental conditions and constraints. The camera-eye, for example (an eye which can form an image) has evolved independently among vertebrates, cephalopods, snails, and several other animal groups, using different tissues and different organic ‘ground-plans’ to produce essentially the same finely tuned device with the same function, answering a common need.[58] So, too, shared cultural (p.242) conditions and concerns can prompt the development of similar means of shaping narratives (although cultural ancestry is infinitely harder to pin down securely than biological ancestry). A well-known example whose underlying causes are much debated is the independent, but convergent, evolution of the drama, possibly from religious rituals, in several very different cultures ranging from ancient Athens to fourteenth-century Japan.[59] The model of convergent evolution neither precludes nor requires common inheritance: diagnosing vestiges of classical influence on mediaeval miracle-plays, as some scholars have done, leaves open the question of why the classical tradition was revived in this time and place and in this particular way.

The same question applies to parallels between mediaeval Irish sagas and Greek tragedy, whether or not common oral or literary sources were involved. Such questions of independent evolution were examined most thoroughly in the early twentieth century by Hector and Nora Chadwick, who explained many parallels in narrative content and milieu between the stories of the ancient Greeks and of various other European, African, and Asian societies in terms of a generic

'Heroic Age', a phase in social evolution through which many (but not all) cultures have passed at different periods.[60] Their analysis is now dated in several respects, not least in their assumption that oral traditions current in the 'Heroic Age' may be more or less unproblematically reconstructed from texts written centuries later by mediaeval Christian authors. These considerations do not necessitate the total rejection of the Chadwicks' approach, but rather its refocusing and further development, applying it more closely to the social conditions of the time of writing than to those of the time depicted. A second problem is that grand schemes of social evolution often tend to be discredited by humanities scholars nowadays because of the chauvinistic or imperialistic assumptions on which such schemes are often founded (less so with the Chadwicks').[61] Furthermore, cultural and literary studies in present-day academia are so deeply divided along ethnocentric, national, or regional lines that it has become almost axiomatic to treat differences between cultures as by definition more significant than similarities between them, sometimes resulting in misplaced claims of exceptionalism.[62] The parallels to which the Chadwicks drew attention still call for some attempt at explanation, and the (p.243) possibility of broadly analogous social and political structures evolving in response to common needs is a promising starting-point which need not end in sterile reductionism or a denial of cultural specificity.

It would be interesting, if beyond the scope of the present study, to explore the possible cultural common ground between Athenian dramatists and Irish saga-authors, including their attitudes to older narrative traditions about a celebrated yet problematic age of legend, to important transformations in political and social life, and to the role of literary production in representing both these phenomena. Such parallels could help us to understand why the hypothesized common sources (oral, classical, or both) and hypothesized common kingship-myths[63] were developed in a way which—as has often been observed—brings the narrative world of many Irish sagas so much closer to that of the ancient Greeks than to the Latin authors whose texts were more widely available to them.[64] Alongside the evidence for direct borrowing from oral tradition and classical

sources, these parallels could help us to understand why, as Carney observed, mediaeval Irish saga-narrative very nearly evolved into verse drama, with the *Togail*—that most 'tragic' of sagas—as the closest point of contact between the two.[65]

The Question of Biblical Influence

There are, of course, other kinds of macro-form text besides classical epic which could have served as models or examples for the construction of relatively large-scale vernacular sagas like the *Togail*. Saints' lives, for instance, integrated oral and textual traditions (along with considerable invention) into unified literary structures centring on a single impressive protagonist, adapting longstanding compilatory procedures.[66] Some of the Hiberno-Latin saints' lives are structured as dossiers proving the sanctity of their protagonist and are not in chronological order, but others are organized as substantial narratives, such as the eighth- or ninth-century *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* ('Voyage of St. Brendan'), which is only a little shorter than the *Togail* and was extremely popular both within and outside Ireland. (p.244) Whether the *Navigatio* borrowed its structure from secular (oral or literary) sagas or vice versa, however, remains open for debate.[67]

More promising candidates for large-scale narrative templates are found in what was by far the most prestigious collection of texts in early mediaeval Irish culture: the Bible. The various branches of literary training (reading, writing, grammar, rhetoric) reached their highest goal in the correct understanding and dissemination of biblical texts, especially the Psalms, Gospels, and Pauline epistles.[68] The precise Latin texts used for each book varied, but by the Middle Irish period St Jerome's text, the Vulgate, was dominant.[69] The Bible was the source and centre of Irish literacy, so we might expect it to have had at least some influence on the ecclesiastically authored vernacular sagas of the early Middle Irish period.

Its importance in this respect has been vigorously asserted in recent decades, most influentially and extensively by Kim McCone, whose *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (1990) amasses a large number of textual

parallels and other evidence to support Carney's view that biblical and ecclesiastical texts and ideologies lie behind the composition and/or transmission of virtually all Old and Middle Irish secular literature, not just a selected subset of it. The nature and extent of such influence on the sagas remains a controversial topic in a field where feathers are easily ruffled, and McCone has not resisted that temptation; but his work has undoubtedly renewed scholarly interest in the question as well as providing some sensitive and revealing readings of individual texts. Meanwhile, beneath the heated debates over ecclesiastical influence lies the deeper question of whether the sagas are to be seen primarily as integrated compositions or as collections of lore only partially recomposed. It is reasonable to expect the answer to differ from saga to saga, and to be based on close literary analysis.[70]

The cautionary remarks mentioned above in respect of classical influence apply equally here. The possibility of biblical influence on secular sagas cannot be assumed merely from the cultural prestige of the Bible. It needs to be properly demonstrated in each individual case, on the basis of more than just one or two striking parallels (and an accumulation of far-fetched parallels is no more persuasive than a single far-fetched parallel). In the absence of direct biblical quotations or (p.245) unambiguous allusions—rare in the sagas—such influence cannot be convincingly demonstrated simply by observing that a motif or character in a saga resembles a motif or character in the Bible, especially if the motif in question has parallels in international folklore or performs a markedly different narrative function in the two texts concerned.[71] For example, I am not entirely convinced by McCone's suggestion that the representation of the three red horsemen in the *Togail* as prophets of doom was ‘probably coloured by and perhaps even partially created from scriptural imagery’, in this case the riders of spectral horses in Zechariah 1.8 and Revelation 6.4.[72] The horses in Revelation are four rather than three, and only one of them is red; in Zechariah a single red horse is accompanied by other horses of various colours. The rider is in neither case described as red, and in Zechariah this apparition does not even portend disaster. The terrible battle unleashed by the rider of the red horse in Revelation does of course

parallel the battle foretold by the red riders in the *Togail*, as has recently been emphasized by Mark Williams;[73] but without further supporting evidence, this parallel seems to me to be just as easily explained by the traditional association of the colour red with blood and violence and the tendency of prophecy to make use of unnatural colour effects.

If biblical influence cannot be easily assumed, however, nor can it be easily discounted just because the motifs in question happen to appear in world folklore. If some traditional Irish stories did significantly resemble well-known biblical stories, this convergence probably would have been noticed by the monastic authors who drew on these stories to write sagas about them. Indeed, it could have prompted such authors to make use of those stories rather than others, perhaps reshaping them to reflect the biblical pattern more closely; and it could have affected the saga's reception. For example, the resemblance between the birth-narratives of Cú Chulainn's and Christ, with both figures having both natural and supernatural fathers, is not sufficient for us to conclude that the extant *Compert Con Culainn* (‘The Birth of Cú Chulainn’) was modelled on the biblical account, since this is a motif found in hero-myths worldwide.[74] Yet other Irish authors, perhaps prompted by this parallel, drew out the parallels between Cú Chulainn and Christ. In one tale his death is represented as sacrificial, tied upright to a standing-stone at his own request and pierced by a spear; in an inset verse-episode he subsequently appears to the women of Emain Macha and prophesies the coming of Christianity, while in another tale he is summoned from Hell by St Patrick to bear witness to the true faith.[75] It is quite possible that these typological comparisons between Christ (p.246) and Cú Chulainn drew strength not only from Cú Chulainn's status as culture-hero, but also from a pre-existing consonance between the two men's birth-tales.

This form of ‘creative interplay of native and biblical models’ is often invoked by McCone as a fall-back position for some of his biblical parallels where direct influence seems unlikely, but this position is rejected by Sims-Williams as ‘weak’ and ‘speculative’.[76] Certainly, not all the parallels cited by McCone

are defended in the detail they would ideally deserve. But the argument itself is weak only insofar as it offers no claim of *direct* ecclesiastical influence on the original version of the Irish text in question,[77] while its speculative nature does not reduce its value as a possibility to be taken into account. The Bible's prestige in mediaeval Irish centres of learning may not guarantee its influence on every aspect of saga-writing, but it does mean that biblical analogues (where these are convincingly demonstrated) demand serious consideration at the level of textual reception, transmission, and recreation, even if no case is being made for direct biblical influence from the outset.

By far the greatest number of possible parallels with Irish sagas are found in the historical books of the Old Testament. These books were less frequently copied and commented on than the Psalms (or indeed the Gospels), so it cannot be assumed that every literate Irishman knew all these books equally well; but there are enough quotations, commentaries, and unambiguous allusions surviving to indicate a lively learned interest in the history of Israel.[78] One impressive example of this interest in the Middle Irish period, and another symptom of the new drive for large-scale narrative structures in the vernacular, is *Saltair na Rann* or ‘Psalter of the Quatrains’. The main body of this tenth-century Irish poem consists of 150 cantos (modelled ultimately, perhaps, on the 150 Psalms) retelling the sacred history of the world from Creation to Apocalypse, supplementing the biblical stories with cosmological and historical material from other sources and adding a further twelve poems after the ‘Psalter’ proper.[79] Most of these cantos retell or reflect on the events of Old Testament history.

By the Middle Irish period, the Old Testament had long been valued for its authoritative information about law and lordship in particular. Irish legal texts as well as canon law drew explicitly on the Old Testament to justify or illustrate specific points of law, often using the biblical text in highly creative ways.[80] The (p.247) prologue of one important early mediaeval collection of native law, the second recension of the *Senchas Már*, famously authorized its contents for Christian users in

typological terms, arguing that the native laws had been revealed by the Holy Spirit according to *recht aicnid* (‘the law of nature’) to righteous poets and judges, just as *recht petarlaice* (‘the law of the Old Testament’) had been revealed to the patriarchs and prophets. Both kinds of law were now superseded by the *bélra* [*sic*] *mbán mbiait .i. recht litre* (‘the white language of the *Beati*, i.e. the law of Scripture’), and the rest of the prologue explains how the old and new laws were harmonized under the guidance of St Patrick, possessor of the new authoritative ‘white language’.[81]

Some Middle Irish texts give examples of these righteous heathen, such as the wise judge Morann and the over-king Cormac mac Airt, and engage in other typological strategies to harmonize certain aspects of the pre-Christian past with the new Christian order.[82] In part this was a strategy to validate the telling of heathen tales in an ecclesiastical culture increasingly anxious about the boundaries of proper religious conduct. More positively, it contributed (like the classical adaptations) to the wider mediaeval endeavour of connecting Irish legendary history with world salvation history. The Old Testament was central to this project, as is seen by the example of *Lebor Gabála* (‘The Book of the Invasions [literally ‘Takings’]’), another macro-text typical of its times. Extant in recensions from the eleventh century onwards, this encyclopaedic prose-and-verse history of Ireland begins like *Saltair na Rann* with a retelling of the Creation-story in Genesis, but goes on to narrate how various descendants of Noah and other biblical characters led successive invasions of Ireland from antediluvian times to the early Middle Ages. Like many mediaeval European chronicles, its account of the wanderings of the Gaels is clearly modelled on the wanderings of the Israelites in Exodus, with Ireland as a version of the ‘Promised Land’.[83] Its later sections on the pre-Christian kings of Ireland are modelled on the four Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings: these books present a panoramic history of the kings of Israel and Judah from the origins of the kingship to the Babylonian captivity many generations later.[84]

(p.248) These examples demonstrate a vigorous interplay between biblical and traditional subject-matter and point to various ways in which the books of the Old Testament could be used as templates or reference-points for vernacular literature. Indeed, the pre-eminence of the ‘white language of Scripture’ was held by some of the highest authorities in the early mediaeval Church to cover not only the subject-matter it touched on, but also its structural and rhetorical attributes—its literary form, in fact. Isidore of Seville argued that several poetic genres were first invented by the Hebrew peoples (later to be imitated by the Greeks), and that the Old Testament contained some of the first known examples of these. In his *Etymologies*, as McCone has pointed out, Isidore claimed Moses's canticle in Deuteronomy 32 as the first heroic poem and the Book of Lamentations as the first threnody; elsewhere Isidore remarks on the structure of Job, with its central portions in verse and its prose frame.[85] His account was taken up a century later in Northumbria by the Venerable Bede, who analysed biblical poetry in a similar manner.[86] Both scholars’ views were treated with the utmost respect in mediaeval Ireland: Isidore's *Etymologies* became known as the *Culmen* or ‘summit of learning’, and one Middle Irish story even tells how the sole surviving copy of the *Táin* itself was once given away in exchange for a copy of the *Etymologies*.[87]

In practice, too, the Bible's influence on European (especially Greek and Latin) literature in the first millennium AD was considerable. As Erich Auerbach observed in his magisterial study *Mimesis*, the spread of Judaeo-Christian narrative conventions brought about a gradual shift away from sharp distinctions between modes (characteristic of classical Latin authors) towards greater stylistic and generic fluidity incorporating both prose and verse, elevation and banality, rhetorical elaboration and the unadorned paratactic style, reflecting the variety found within individual books of the Bible itself.[88] Vernacular literature followed suit, and what McCone calls the ‘supple stylistic continuum’[89] of Middle Irish saga style may be seen—in part—as the baroque apogee of a pan-European post-classical practice, besides its echoes of oral narrative styles and its neoclassical elements. If the

classical tradition presented one possible set of literary models, the Bible presented another.

(p.249) As with the classical hypothesis, the possibility that the *Togail* reflects biblical influence has never been given sustained consideration. A few hints have been offered concerning individual episodes. Carney mentioned the allusion to the biblical monster *Leuidan* ('Leviathan') *timchela in domuin* ('who encircles the earth', line 502) as evidence of Christian authorship, but did not speculate as to where the allusion might have come from.[90] McCone has suggested possible biblical echoes in the episode of the red horsemen and Conaire's arrival at Tara,[91] possible biblical sources for the narrative formulae used to introduce the saga itself and embedded verses within it, and instances of 'compatibility' with aspects of Old Testament ideology and narrative technique; but all these are treated very briefly.[92] Another biblical narrative model has been suggested for the episode of Conaire's fatal thirst by Connell Monette, but this suggestion takes the form of a brief personal communication in an endnote to Dooley's study of the *Táin*, and again is not explained.[93] Finally, Edel Bhreathnach has recently stated that the *Togail* 'incorporates elements of biblical and archaic kingship', but offers no further comment or evidence for these biblical elements.[94]

Bhreathnach is, I believe, correct to locate the possibility of biblical influence on the *Togail* within the domain of kingship ideology. To my mind, the strongest evidence for biblical influence on the *Togail* is furnished not by isolated allusions or general stylistic features, but by a sustained resemblance between the story of Conaire's royal career as narrated in the *Togail* and that of Saul as narrated in the first book of Samuel. In the next chapter I lay out my reasons for suspecting that this biblical text informed some (though not all) aspects of the structuring of the *Togail* and its representation of kingship, and I will speculate that this influence could have been prompted by pre-existing resemblances between earlier (oral and/or textual) legends about Conaire and the biblical story of Saul. I will further maintain that, regardless of whether or not influence took place, the biblical text provides a vital context

for our understanding of the cultural significance of the *Togail* —and especially its treatment of kingship ideology—for its own audiences.

Notes:

([1]) See Poppe, ‘Literature as History / History as Literature’, and pp. 40–1 above.

([2]) Compare Toner, ‘Scribe and Text’.

([3]) Here I differ from James Carney's division of Irish sagas between those which emphasize the ‘story’, such as the *Togail* or *Fingal Rónáin*, and those whose main point is ‘history’, which he calls *scélshenchus* (drawing on Rawlinson B502). See Carney, ‘Language and Literature to 1169’, pp. 479–83.

([4]) The phrase ‘total literary experience’ is from James Carney, ‘The Ecclesiastical Background to Irish Saga’, in A. Furumark et al., eds., *Arctica: Essays presented to Åke Campbell* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956), pp. 221–7, p. 221. The number of scholars who genuinely believed that scribes were passive transmitters of ancient material was smaller than Carney suggested; but this view was and is still current in popular discourse about the Irish sagas.

([5]) Compare Davies, ‘Written Text as Performance’.

([6]) See the sensible remarks of J. E. Caerwyn Williams and Patrick K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 105. The term ‘nativist’ was recently given a new lease of life by Kim McCone in *Pagan Past* (*passim*), applied most forcefully to Gerard Murphy and Proinsias Mac Cana; but both scholars took a serious interest in classical influences on Irish saga-writing, while McCone's own attitude towards the sagas (like Carney's) is more complex than some of his fiercer critics have suggested.

([7]) As observed by Miles, *Heroic Saga*, p. 150.

([8]) Landmark discussions include Michael W. Herren, ‘Classical and Secular Learning among the Irish before the Carolingian Renaissance’, *Florilegium*, 3 (1981), 118–57,

reprinted in *idem, Latin Letters in Early Christian Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 1–38; Brian Ó Cuív, 'Medieval Irish Scholars and Classical Latin Literature', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 81C (1981), 239–48; Rijcklof Hofman, 'Some New Facts Concerning the Knowledge of Vergil in Early Medieval Ireland', *Études celtiques*, 25 (1988), 189–212; and, most recently, David N. Dumville, *The Early Mediaeval Insular Churches and the Preservation of Roman Literature: Towards a Historical and Palaeographical Reëvaluation*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge, 2004).

([9]) Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, 'Translations and Adaptations into Irish', *Celtica*, 16 (1984), 107–24; Poppe, *A New Introduction*; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical Compositions in Medieval Ireland: The Literary Context', in *Translations from Classical Literature: Imtheachta Æniasa and Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás*, ed. Kevin Murray (London: Irish Texts Society, 2006), pp. 1–19.

([10]) For contrasting accounts, see Myrick, *From the De Excidio*; Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 19–28; John R. Harris, *Adaptations of Roman Epic in Medieval Ireland: Three Studies in the Interplay of Erudition and Oral Tradition* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998); Barbara Hillers, 'Ulysses and the Judge of Truth: Sources and Meanings in the Irish *Odyssey*', *Peritia*, 13 (1999), 194–223; Erich Poppe, '*Imtheachta Aeniasa*: Virgil's Aeneid in Medieval Ireland', *Classics Ireland*, 11 (2004), 74–94, online at http://www.classicsireland.com/2004/poppe.html; Miles, *Heroic Saga*.

([11]) Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Classical Compositions', pp. 8–9, 18.

([12]) This technique contrasts with descriptions of beautiful women in the Old Testament, for example Song of Songs 7.1–9, where the progress is from feet to head (noted by McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 51).

([13]) On this possible influence, see McLoughlin, 'Rhetorical Description', pp. 141–203; Swartz, 'Stylistic Parallels', pp. 27–32; *eadem*, 'The Beautiful Women'; *eadem*, 'The Problem of Classical Influence in the Book of Leinster *Táin Bó Cúailnge*:

Significant Parallels with Twelfth-Century Neo-Classical Rhetoric', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 7 (1987), 96–125.

([14]) Lord, *Singer of Tales*, pp. 86–92, noted by Miles, *Heroic Saga*, p. 101.

([15]) Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, line 1164; Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 96–7. See Ruairí Ó hUiginn, 'The Background and Development of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*', in Mallory, *Aspects of the Táin*, pp. 29–67, p. 40. This analogue is penetratingly examined in a comparative (rather than source-critical) manner by Joseph Falaky Nagy, 'The Rising of the Cronn River in the Táin Bó Cúailnge', in Ahlqvist et al., *Celtica Helsingiensia*, pp. 129–48.

([16]) Cecile O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, lines 954–5; H. P. A. Oskamp, ed. and trans., *The Voyage of Máel Dúin: A Study in Early Irish Voyage Literature* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1970), pp. 177–8. For discussion of the Morrígan as Fury see Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 96–7; Herbert, 'Transmutations of an Irish Goddess', p. 148; Borsje, 'Omens', pp. 242–8; Miles, *Heroic Saga*, pp. 148–50.

([17]) This route is described as 'tortuous' by Ó hUiginn, 'The Background and Development of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*', p. 40. On the contents and use of Insular libraries more generally, see the case-studies by Neil Wright reprinted in his *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995).

([18]) In the doctoral dissertation on which Miles's *Heroic Saga* was based ('Middle Irish Saga and Irish Neoclassicism', Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2005, pp. 161–2), Miles suggested a second possible allusion, comparing the prophetess Cailb with the prophetess Calybe in Virgil's *Æneid* (another avatar of the Fury Allecto), but this suggestion has been withdrawn in the published book.

([19]) Knott, *Togail*, lines 92 and 142; Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, IV, line 31076; Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–*

VI, ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), Book IV line 254; Miles, *Heroic Saga*, pp. 75–6.

([20]) The reference to the *éncennach* in *Togail Troí* II could be both ‘Gaelicizing’ and ‘classicizing’ at the same time, assimilating an allusion to Virgil into the native saga tradition via a passage also designed to introduce classical mythology to a wider Irish audience.

([21]) Thurneysen, *Heldensage*, pp. 96–7; Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature*, pp. 276–9.

([22]) Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ‘The “Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge” in Tension and Transition: Between the Oral and the Written, Classical Subtexts and Narrative Heritage’, in Doris Edel, ed., *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995), pp. 61–81, pp. 75, 70.

([23]) Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature*, pp. 321–2, emphasis mine.

([24]) Tristram, ‘The “Cattle Raid”’, p. 70.

([25]) For this point (in relation to both biblical and classical influence), see Patrick Sims-Williams's review of Kim McCone's *Pagan Past, Éigse*, 29 (1996), 179–96, p. 189.

([26]) Tristram, ‘The “Cattle Raid”’, p. 71.

([27]) Tristram, ‘The “Cattle Raid”’, p. 73.

([28]) On the dating of *Togail Troí*, see Gearóid Mac Eoin, ‘Das Verbalsystem von *Togail Troí* (H.2.17)’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 28 (1960–1), 73–136 and 149–223 (especially pp. 201–2). The only other adaptation which could have predated the extant *Togail* is *Scéla Alexandair meic Philip* (‘Tales of Alexander, Son of Philip’), which in its extant form postdates (a version of) *Togail Troí*: see Erik Peters, ed., ‘Die irische Alexandersage’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 30 (1967), 71–264, p. 94. The Irish *Aeneid* itself, *Imtheachta Æniasa* (‘The Wanderings of Aeneas’), is usually dated to the twelfth century

or perhaps the late eleventh: see Poppe, *A New Introduction*, pp. 32–3. On the possibility of an earlier date see Erich Poppe, 'A Virgilian Model for *luirech thredúalach*?', *Ériu*, 54 (2004), 171–7, p. 176. The difficulty I mention here has been discussed by Michael Clarke, 'An Irish Achilles and a Greek Cú Chulainn', in Ó hUiginn and Ó Catháin, eds., *Ulidia 2*, pp. 238–51, p. 243 n. 25; Herbert, 'Reading Recension 1', p. 208, and more closely in my forthcoming article, 'Was Classical *imitatio* a Necessary Precondition for the Writing of Native Irish "Macro-Form" Sagas? Reflections on the "Watchman Device" in the *Táin* and the *Togail*', in Ralph O'Connor, ed., *Classical Literature and Learning in Mediaeval Irish Narrative* (in preparation).

([29]) Myrick, *From the De Excidio*; Harris, *Adaptations of Roman Epic*.

([30]) Miles, 'The Literary Set Piece'; *idem, Heroic Saga*.

([31]) *Togail Troí*, Recension I: Stokes and Windisch, *Irische Texte*, II part 2 (1884), lines 846–74 and 876–911 (translation on pp. 93–6). *Togail Troí*, Recension II: Stokes, *Togail Troi*, lines 1358–1458. The passage in the *Táin* (both recensions) is discussed above, pp. 160–2. For a useful comparative table of the main descriptive elements see Miles, 'Middle Irish Saga', pp. 189–90.

([32]) Myrick, *From the De Excidio*, pp. 137–8.

([33]) Miles, 'The Literary Set Piece'; *idem, Heroic Saga*, pp. 175–92. A similar suggestion was made, very briefly, by Carney (*Studies in Irish Literature*, pp. 312–13).

([34]) I discuss *Toichim na mBuiden* in more detail in my forthcoming article, 'Was Classical *imitatio* a Necessary Precondition…?'.

([35]) Miles, *Heroic Saga*, p. 191.

([36]) Sims-Williams, 'Riddling Treatment', revised and enlarged in *idem, Irish Influence*, pp. 95–133. It should be noted that Sims-Williams's most recent discussion (ibid., p. 99 n. 22)

makes good the omission of *Togail Troí* noted by Miles, *Heroic Saga*, p. 175.

([37]) The late Middle Irish translation of the *Thebaid, Togail na Tebe*, contains no indication that either Statius's ‘watchman device’ or his description of Panic's illusions were felt to share anything with existing Middle Irish patterns. Statius's ‘watchman device’ is here translated with minimal alteration, while the Panic sequence is drastically cut and shorn of any features (such as the appearance of a dusty cloud or the illusion of armies) which have given Miles cause to suggest Statius’s original passage as a source for the *Táin*. See Calder, *Togail na Tebe*, pp. 168–72.

([38]) On the importance of these sources see Miles, *Heroic Saga*, pp. 51–94; *idem*, ‘*Riss in mundtuirc*: The Tale of Harmonia's Necklace and the Study of the Theban Cycle in Medieval Ireland’, *Ériu*, 57 (2007), 67–112, pp. 70–4. See also Michael Clarke, ‘Achilles, Byrhtnoth, and Cú Chulainn: Continuity and Analogy from Homer to the Medieval North’, in Michael Clarke et al., eds., *Epic Interactions: Perspectives on Homer, Virgil, and the Epic Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 243–71, pp. 264–71.

([39]) Apposite comments on ekphrastic techniques are found in Priscian's *Praeexercitamina*, which (Gabriele Knappe has argued) was known in early mediaeval Ireland and put to use in the composition of the Insular rhetorical performances known as the *Hisperica famina*. See Gabriele Knappe, ‘On Rhetoric and Grammar in the *Hisperica famina*’, *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 4 (1994), 130–62. The possibility that this work was known to Irish saga-authors, and its techniques put to use in their productions, has been discussed by Miles, *Heroic Saga*, pp. 112–13.

([40]) Compare Mac Gearailt, ‘Change and Innovation’, pp. 492–3.

([41]) The most detailed case for this form of *emulatio* in the *Táin* is that proposed by Miles, although he suggests a combination of direct knowledge of classical epic with schooling in epic

poetics (*Heroic Saga*, pp. 145–93). Compare Swartz, ‘Stylistic Parallels’, pp. 125–53.

([42]) This depends on the hypothesis that the *Togail*, in a form bearing that title-rubric, predated *Togail Troí*. Support for this hypothesis is provided by the fact that *Togail Troí* and *Togail Larisa* (presumably an earlier version of *Togail na Tebe*) appear alongside *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* only in tale-list B, which dates in its extant form from the late Middle Irish period, whereas *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* itself is present in both tale-lists A and B and hence probably in the early Middle Irish archetype of both lists (Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 41, 54–5; Toner, ‘Reconstructing’). The title *Togail Bruidne Da Derg* is also present in one text of Recension I of the *Togail*. On the significance of the title-rubric see chapter 1, p. 35.

([43]) This view is advanced by Mac Gearailt in a number of articles including his ‘Change and Innovation’, pp. 486–92, and his ‘*Togail Troí*: Ein Vorbild für spätmittelirische *Catha*’, in Erich Poppe and Hildegard L. C. Tristram, ed., *Übersetzung, Adaptation und Akkulturation im insularen Mittelalter* (Münster: Nodus, 1999), pp. 123–9. It has been critically discussed by Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Classical Compositions’, pp. 12–14.

([44]) See note 47 below.

([45]) The fact that the watchman both describes and identifies the warriors sets this sequence apart from the ‘watchman device’ as defined by modern literary scholars, in which the watcher is ignorant of the identity of those he/she sees.

([46]) Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas*, ed. G. O. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), lines 375–719 (for commentary see pp. 103–6). For a close translation see Aeschylus, *Persians, Seven Against Thebes, Suppliants, Prometheus Bound*, ed. and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 193–227 [lines 375–719].

([47]) Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel (‘Phaedra und Hippolytos im irischen Gewand: die mittelalterliche *Fingal Rónáin*, “Der Verwandtenmord des Rōnān”, als Theaterstück’, in Bettina Besold-DasGupta et al., eds., *Nachleben der Antike: Formen ihrer Aneigung* (Berlin: Weidler, 2006), pp. 237–66) has recently suggested that the author of *Fingal Rónáin* knew Seneca's *Phaedra*. The parallels are certainly suggestive, as I observed in an earlier study (‘“Stepmother Sagas”: An Irish Analogue for *Hjálmþérs saga ok Ölvérs*’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 72 (2000), 1–48, pp. 22–3). Mac Gearailt (‘The Making of *Fingal Rónáin*’), however, has emphasized the equally striking differences between the classical treatments and their Irish analogue. The possible circulation of *passages* from Seneca in mediaeval Ireland will be discussed in Michael Clarke's paper in preparation, ‘Classical Echoes in Irish Saga: The Case of Senecan Tragedy’, in Ralph O’Connor, ed., *Classical Literature and Learning in Mediaeval Irish Narrative* (in preparation)

([48]) Calder, *Togail na Tebe*; Robert T. Meyer, ‘The Middle-Irish Version of the *Thebaid* of Statius’, *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Art and Letters*, 47 (1962), 687–99; Miles, ‘*Riss in mundtuirc*’. Miles points out (pp. 74–6) that *Riss in mundtuirc* also displays Ovidian influence.

([49]) Evidence that at least one other (later) Middle Irish saga-author drew on the representation of conflict between brothers in the *Thebaid* or *Togail na Tebe* is provided by Borsje, ‘Demonising the Enemy’, pp. 31–2.

([50]) See, for example, the reasonably detailed synopses written (probably between 975 and 1075) by the First Vatican Mythographer, in Nevoi Zorzetti and Jacques Berlioz, ed. and trans., *Le Premier mythographe du Vatican* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), pp. 50 and 87 (I §79, II §50).

([51]) Statius, *Thebaid, Books 1–7*, pp. 416–26 [VII.243–373].

([52]) Statius, *Thebaid, Books 8–12; Achilleid*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 206–36 [the discrete utterances are XI.136–207, 315–87, 424–6, 457–81].

([53]) Calder, *Togail na Tebe*, pp. 168–72 and 278–94. There are, however, important differences between the second passage and Statius's epic: Antigone's speech to Polyneices ends on a very different note, the opposing armies voice their grief more clearly, and the ghosts of dead Thebans and Greeks behave in a more conventionally spooky manner. On the style and procedure of *Togail na Tebe*, see Harris, *Adaptations of Roman Epic*, pp. 159–200.

([54]) Miles, '*Riss in mundtuirc*', pp. 84–90.

([55]) Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence*, pp. 96–106.

([56]) W. B. Stanford, 'Towards a History of Classical Influences in Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 70 C (1970), 13–91, pp. 32–3. See also West, 'An Edition', pp. 86–7.

([57]) Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature*, p. 307; Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence*, pp. 99–100.

([58]) On evolutionary convergence see Simon Conway Morris, *Life's Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); on the camera-eye see pp. 151–8.

([59]) For discussion of some convergent features see Mae J. Smethurst, *The Artistry of Aeschylus and Zeami: A Comparative Study of Greek Tragedy and Nō* (Princeton University Press, 1989).

([60]) H. Munro Chadwick and N. Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, 3 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1932–40); see especially III, 727–49. This work extended the comparison between Greek and Germanic heroic poetry undertaken in H. Munro Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1912). For a perceptive recent discussion of the Chadwicks' model see Clarke, 'Achilles, Byrhtnoth, and Cú Chulainn', pp. 243–7.

([61]) Clarke ('Achilles, Byrhtnoth, and Cú Chulainn', p. 245) has suggested that the Chadwicks held that the 'heroic age' was a necessary phase in the development of civilization, and that

so-called primitive cultures were necessarily ‘immature’. However, the Chadwicks’ doubts about the universality of the developmental paradigm they leant on, and its links to theories of racial superiority, clearly emerge in the third volume of *The Growth of Literature* (III, 749 and 900–1), published in 1940 when such theories had particularly troubling connotations in Europe.

([62]) A trenchant discussion of this trend as seen in cultural anthropology is offered by Robert A. Segal, ‘In Defense of the Comparative Method’, *Numen*, 48 (2001), 339–73.

([63]) The resemblance of the *Togail* to Greek tragedy was explained by Francis John Byrne in terms of a shared ‘basic kingly myth’, tacitly drawing on Frazer's comparative mythology. See his *Irish Kings*, pp. 59–60.

([64]) Clarke (‘Achilles, Byrhtnoth, and Cú Chulainn’, pp. 258–71) explains some parallels shared by the *Iliad*, *Beowulf*, and the *Táin* using a persuasive combination of the hypotheses of oral dissemination, indirect classical influence and common social concerns (although he does not grant the last factor much of a role in shaping specific narrative devices). As in biological discourse on convergent evolution, the demonstrable absence of direct (textual) influence results in these parallels being described as ‘uncanny’ and ‘astonishing’ (pp. 247, 259), reflecting surprise or disbelief that such minutely similar ends could evolve independently from separate and dissimilar beginnings.

([65]) Carney, ‘Language and Literature to 1169’, p. 483. Compare Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel's observations on *Fingal Rónáin* as a proto-drama (‘Phaedra und Hippolytos’).

([66]) On early compilatory activities, see David N. Dumville, ‘Language, Literature, and Law in Medieval Ireland: Some Questions of Transmission’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 9 (Summer 1985), 91–8, p. 95.

([67]) See Ludwig Bieler, ‘Two Observations Concerning the *Navigatio Brendani*’, *Celtica*, 11 (1976), 15–17; on the date, see David N. Dumville, ‘Two Approaches to the Dating of

Nauigatio Sancti Brendani', *Studi medievali*, series 3, 29.1 (1988), 87–102, reprinted in Jonathan M. Wooding, ed., *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 120–32. Compare the standard (albeit disputed) model of the Icelandic saga's development from Latin saints' lives in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: see Gabriel Turville-Petre, *The Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 142.

([68]) Pádraig P. Ó Néill, *Biblical Study and Mediaeval Gaelic History* (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, University of Cambridge, 1998), pp. 13–14.

([69]) See Martin McNamara, 'The Text of the Latin Bible in the Early Irish Church: Some Data and Desiderata', in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter, ed., *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission/ Ireland and Christendom: The Bible and the Missions* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 7–55; Ó Néill, 'Biblical Study', pp. 21–5.

([70]) McCone himself provides such an analysis of one saga in Kim McCone, ed., Echtrae Chonnlai *and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland* (Maynooth: Department of Old and Middle Irish, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2000), pp. 47–119.

([71]) This problem applies to Frank O'Connor's suggestion that the relationship between Fergus and Medb in the *Táin* was modelled on that of Samson and Delilah in Judges 16. See Frank O'Connor, *The Backward Look* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 32; Patricia Kelly, 'The *Táin* as Literature', pp. 84–5. For cautionary remarks see Sims-Williams, review of McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 189.

([72]) McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 44.

([73]) Mark Williams, *Fiery Shapes*, p. 16 (although in the Irish battle, only a few of Conaire's men die).

([74]) This point was made by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'Mythology in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*', in Tristram, *Studien zur Táin Bó Cúailnge*, pp. 114–32, pp. 126–8.

([75]) Kimpton, *The Death of Cú Chulainn*, lines 535–75; *Siaburcharpat Con Culainn*, in *Lebor na hUidre*, lines 9221–9548 (translation in Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, pp. 347–54).

([76]) McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 34, 196, 249; Sims-Williams, review of McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 189–90.

([77]) Similar criticism has been voiced by Layzer, *Signs of Weakness*, pp. 12–13: 'it is not enough to suggest and dismiss likeness in a phrase'.

([78]) Useful surveys include McNamara, 'The Text of the Latin Bible', pp. 33–9; Joseph F. Kelly, 'Hiberno-Latin Theology', in Heinz Löwe, ed., *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), II, 549–67, pp. 557 and 565–7; Ó Néill, *Biblical Study*.

([79]) Whitley Stokes, ed., *The* Saltair na Rann: *A Collection of Early Middle Irish Poems* (Oxford, 1883). The Bible itself was not translated into Irish in the Middle Ages, but retellings of sacred history such as *Saltair na Rann* may have met this need for audiences without Latin. See Herbert, 'Crossing Historical and Literary Boundaries', p. 94.

([80]) See Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach, and Aidan Breen, 'The Laws of the Irish', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 382–438; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Irish Vernacular Law and the Old Testament', in Ní Chatháin and Richter, *Irland und die Christenheit*, pp. 284–307. A valuable survey is provided by T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Early Irish Law', in Ó Cróinín, *A New History of Ireland I*, pp. 331–70. See also the more general survey by Raymund Kottje, *Studien zum Einfluss des alten Testamentes auf Recht und Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters (6.–8. Jahrhundert)* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1964).

([81]) John Carey, ed. and trans., 'An Edition of the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the *Senchas Már*', *Ériu*, 45 (1994), 1–32, p. 12; Carey's translation is also printed in his *King of Mysteries: Early Irish Religious Writings*, 2nd edn. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 139–44. The *Beati* means Psalm

118, a text which was especially highly valued by Irish churches. For varying interpretations of the typology at work in this passage see Charles Donahue, '*Beowulf*, Ireland, and the Natural Good', *Traditio*, 7 (1949–51), 263–77, pp. 266–74; *idem*, '*Beowulf* and Christian Tradition: A Reconsideration from a Celtic Stance', *Traditio*, 21 (1965), 55–116, pp. 68–71; Kim McCone, 'Dubthach maccu Lugair and a Matter of Life and Death in the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the *Senchas Már*', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), 1–35; *idem, Pagan Past*, pp. 92–102; John Carey, 'The Two Laws in Dubthach's Judgment', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 19 (1990), 1–18; Nagy, *Conversing with Angels*, pp. 200–8; R. Mark Scowcroft, '*Recht Fáide* and Its Gloss in the Pseudo-historical Prologue to the *Senchus Már*', *Ériu*, 53 (2003), 143–50.

([82]) McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 72–7. This typological device will be discussed further in chapters 9 and 10.

([83]) R. Mark Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála* Part II: The Growth of the Tradition', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 1–66.

([84]) The (Greek) Septuagint and (Latin) Vulgate texts entitle these books as 1–4 Kingdoms and 1–4 Kings (*Reges*) respectively, and Eastern Orthodox and some modern Catholic bibles maintain this practice today. The (Hebrew) Masoretic Text entitles them 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings (*Malachim*), a practice maintained in modern translations of the Hebrew Bible and modern Protestant, Anglican, and some Catholic bibles. I follow the latter title-division when quoting the text of the Vulgate. Isidore of Seville seems to have been aware of both ways of dividing the text: see Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, VI.i.6 and VI.ii. 9–11.

([85]) Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, I.xxxix.11–19 and VI.ii.13–14; McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 37–8.

([86]) Bede's discussion of Job, the Song of Songs and other books is found in book I, chapter 25 of *De arte metrica*: see Bede, *Opera Didascalica*, ed. C. W. Jones and D. Hurst, 3 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975–80), I, 140–1.

([87]) *Do ḟallsigud Tána Bó Cúailnge*: see Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, II, lines 32882–3, and Murray, ‘The Finding of the *Táin*’. On the *Culmen* see Tomás Ó Máille, ‘The Authorship of the *Culmen*’, *Ériu*, 9 (1921–3), 71–6. On the importance of Isidore's *Etymologies* in Ireland (at least from the eighth century onwards), see, for example, Paul Russell, ‘The Sounds of a Silence: The Growth of *Cormac's Glossary*’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 15 (Summer 1988), 1–30, pp. 16–27.

([88]) Auerbach, *Mimesis*, pp. 44–9, 63–73, 151–5. The stylistic and generic fluidity of the Old Testament is discussed in Robert Alter, ‘The Characteristics of Ancient Hebrew Poetry’, in Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible*, pp. 611–24, p. 612, and McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 44–52.

([89]) McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 50 (this useful phrase is mistakenly attributed to Patricia Kelly by Carson, *The Táin*, p. xxi n. 3).

([90]) The Leviathan in the Bible does not encircle the earth, although late-antique Leviathans do. On the Leviathan motif in Ireland and elsewhere see Borsje and Ó Cróinín, ‘A Monster’.

([91]) In ‘A Tale of Two Ditties: Poet and Satirist in *Cath Maige Tuired*’, in Ó Corráin et al., *Sages, Saints and Storytellers*, pp. 122–43, p. 143 n. 99, McCone suggests that Conaire's appearance at Tara as king-to-be with a stone in his sling ‘may be an echo of David’, but offers no further comment.

([92]) McCone's cases for ‘compatibility’ are: the idea that Conaire is punished for the crimes of his grandfather; the poetic parallelism in the horseman's verses; the use of lists or catalogues; Conaire's initial rejection at Tara on account of his youth. These and the suggested cases of ‘biblical influence’ are discussed in McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 38, 44, 46, 48, 51, and 139–40.

([93]) Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, p. 251 n. 36. I discuss this possibility in the next chapter.

([94]) Edel Bhreathnach, ‘Perceptions of Kingship’, p. 22.