John Carey
The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory

QUIGGIN PAMPHLETS

ON THE

SOURCES OF MEDIAEVAL GAELIC HISTORY

1

The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory

JOHN CAREY

(with a memoir of Edmund Crosby Quiggin by David N. Dumville)

DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE, AND CELTIC

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE IRISH NATIONAL ORIGIN-LEGEND: SYNTHETIC PSEUDOHISTORY

The vast and variegated corpus of mediaeval Irish literature includes few texts which can claim to have exercised an influence as fundamental and pervasive as that of the Middle Irish treatise which came to be called *Lebar Gabála*[1]— a title best rendered as 'Book of Taking', or perhaps 'Book of Settlement'.[2] In a culture which has been characterised as that of the 'backward look',[3] it is the many versions of this work which since the eleventh century have served as the primary point of reference for the full sweep of the imagined past. Bringing together a heterogeneous body of legends and speculations regarding the ancient history of the country and the origins of its people, and fitting them into a single comprehensive framework, *Lebar Gabála* provided a narrative extending from the creation of the world to the coming of Christianity, and beyond — a national myth which sought to put Ireland on the same footing as Israel and Rome. In the centuries

---

[1] The only edition is *Lebor Gabála Érenn. The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, ed. & transl. R.A.S. Macalister (5 vols, London 1938-56; rev. imp., 1993). Citations from Macalister's edition in this essay will use the abbreviation *LGÉ* followed by volume-number. The Irish Texts Society numbering of the several parts, and their original dates of publication, are as follows: part I, I.T.S. vol. 34, 1938; part II, I.T.S. vol. 35, 1939; part III, I.T.S. vol. 39, 1940; part IV, I.T.S. vol. 41, 1941; part V, I.T.S. vol. 44, 1956.

[2] The more familiar labels 'Book of Invasions' and 'Book of Conquests' in fact translate the variant title *Leabhar Gabháltas*, favoured in the early nineteenth century by Edward O'Reilly. For examples, see his book, *A Chronological Account of Nearly Four Hundred Irish Writers with a Descriptive Catalogue of their Works* (Dublin 1820), pp. xiii, cxv.

[3] Frank O'Connor, *The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature* (London 1967).

which followed its writing, its doctrines served as foundation and backdrop for legend, historiography, poetry, and political thought.

But what lay behind these doctrines, and how did they come together to form the story which *Lebar Gabála* was to make canonical? The days when scholars could use *Lebar Gabála* as a hunting ground for clues concerning the prehistory of Ireland seem finally to have passed — although at least one eminent celticist was still making the attempt in the middle of the present century,[4] and quite recently the text has been invoked as a witness to corroborate the catastrophist theories of Immanuel Velikovsky.[5] But even if we have resigned ourselves to seeing *Lebar Gabála* as a repository of myths, not history, we can reflect that myths too have a history — and that there is in any case much which we can learn from them.

The pagan Celts must have had many traditions regarding the world's origins and their own, but we can glimpse these only obliquely and from afar. Thus Strabo's statement that the druids declared 'souls... and the universe to be imperishable, although sometimes fire and water will prevail'[6] perhaps reflects a native conception of cosmic cycles — then again, it may be no more than a piece of armchair extrapolation, based on the belief shared by many Greek and Roman authors that the teachings of the druids closely resembled those attributed to Pythagoras. The Alexandrian scholar Timagenes, writing in the first century B.C., may give us a

---

[4]   I refer to T.F. O'Rahilly's brilliant but in many respects misguided *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin 1946); for specific references, given in the context of a general discussion of modern scholarship on *Lebar Gabála*, see my introduction to the reprint of Macalister's *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, part I, p. [17], n. 55.

[5]   Emmet John Sweeney, *The Lost History of Ireland: An Enquiry into the Pre-Christian History of the Gaels* (Derry 1992).

[6]   *Geographia*, 4.4.4.

little more to go on when he summarises what purports to be the testimony of the druids concerning the peopling of Gaul.[7]

Drysidae memorant re uera fuisse populi partem indigenam, sed alios quoque ab insulis extimis confluxisse et tractibus transrhenanis, crebritate bellorum et alluuione feruidi maris sedibus suis expulsos.

'The druids say that a part of the population was in fact autochthonous, but that others streamed in from remote islands and from the regions beyond the Rhine, driven from their homes by constant wars and the flooding of the tempestuous sea.'

This sketchy paraphrase, alluding apparently to stories of a sequence of invasions whereby Gaul was settled by refugees fleeing natural and military disasters, seems tantalisingly reminiscent of the basic framework of Irish legendary history which we find crystallised in *Lebar Gabála*.

Whatever may have been the druids' teachings on these topics, the conversion of the Celtic peoples to Christianity replaced the authority of the pagan hierarchy with that of the Bible. Such native origin-legends as survived had now to be harmonised with the model supplied by the Book of Genesis, as interpreted and embellished by the emerging discipline of Christian historiography — a process of hybridisation and invention whose results have been labelled 'synthetic history' or 'pseudohistory' by Irish

---

[7]   Cited by Ammianus Marcellinus, *Historiae*, 15.9.4 (ed. & transl. John C. Rolfe [3 vols, Cambridge, Mass. 1935-40], I.176-9).

scholars.[8] In the West, two Patristic works proved particularly useful to the synthetic historians: Jerome's translation of the Chronicle of Eusebius (A.D. 379), and the 'History against the Pagans' of Orosius (A.D. 417). Together with the Bible, these authors exercised a pervasive influence on the evolution of Ireland's legendary history, providing not merely information about distant times and places but also narrative models which could serve as templates for elaborating an artificial past.[9]

Beginning in the sixth century, a series of writers undertook to trace the origins of the barbarian peoples who had settled in the territories of the Empire.[10] The earliest known to us is Cassiodorus (*ob. ca* 583), whose lost history of the Goths was used by his younger contemporary Iordanes in writing his own 'Origin and Deeds of the Getae'. The seventh century saw the appearance of the so-called 'Chronicles of Fredegarius', a work which claimed that the Franks were descended from refugees from the fall of Troy; of considerably greater significance for Irish

---

[8]   The term 'synthetic history' seems to have been introduced by Eoin Mac Neill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin 1921), p. 40, where 'pseudo-history' is also mentioned; see further J.V. Kelleher, 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963) 113-27. An illuminating discussion of the rise of Christian historiography has been provided by Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago 1983), pp. 77-106; his treatment of *Historia Brittonum*, however, is inaccurate.

[9]   The most exhaustive treatment of the deployment of such models in *Lebar Gabála* and its forerunners is that of R. Mark Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála — Part II: The growth of the tradition', *Ériu* 39 (1988) 1-66; for an earlier discussion of the parallelism between the Gaels and the Israelites see Macalister, *LGÉ*, I.xxvii-xxviii.

[10]   A dated but convenient reference-work for this material is Max Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, I (München 1911); he discussed the Continental texts cited in this paragraph on pp. 212-15 (Iordanes), 223-7 ('Fredegar'), 58-60 (Isidore), 267-70 (Paulus Diaconus). See now also Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)* (Princeton 1988).

learning were the voluminous writings of Isidore of Seville (*ob.* 636), which included a 'History of the Goths, Vandals, and Sueves'. In the eighth century Paulus Diaconus pieced together earlier sources to produce his 'History of the Langobards' (A.D. 744), and Bede touched on the question of English origins when describing the settlement led by Hengist and Horsa in his 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People' (A.D. 731). The oldest Celtic pseudohistorical tract to survive, *Historia Brittonum* or 'The History of the Britons', comes a century later than Bede.[11] Together with much other lore, *Historia Brittonum* provides alternative accounts of the ancestry of the Britons: that which came to enjoy the greatest currency traced them to an eponymous Brutus or Bruto — a great-grandson of Aeneas, and thus like the Franks descended from Trojan exiles.

Historia Brittonum also contains two accounts of the early history of Ireland. The first describes a series of settlements of Ireland from Spain, some of which can be linked with figures prominent in the later tradition. Here is what it says about the first peoplings of the island.

Nouissime autem Scotti uenerunt a partibus Hispanie ad Hiberniam. Primus autem uenit Partholomus cum mille hominibus de uiris et mulieribus. Et creuerunt usque ad quattuor milia hominum; et uenit mortalitas super eos, et in una septimana omnes perierunt, et non remansit ex illis etiam unus.

Secundus ad Hiberniam uenit Nimeth, filius quidam Agnominis; qui fertur nauigasse super mare annum et dimidium. Et postea tenuit portum in Hibernia, fractis nauibus eius, et mansit ibidem per multos annos. Et iterum nauigauit cum suis et ad Hispaniam reuersus est. Et postea uenerunt tres filii

---

11   In what follows I have relied on a text supplied by David Dumville who is reëditing the work: for his new edition see *The Historia Brittonum*, ed. D.N. Dumville (10 vols, Cambridge 1985-). On dating see his paper 'Some aspects of the chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972-4) 439-45, where he has assigned the composition of the *Historia* to 829/30. More generally see his studies in *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot 1990).

militis Hispanie cum triginta ciulis apud illos et cum triginta coniugibus in unaquaque ciula. Et manserunt ibi per spatium unius anni. Et postea conspiciunt turrim uitream in medio mare, et homines conspiciebant super turrim; et querebant loqui ad illos, et nunquam respondebant. Et ipsi uno anno ad obpugnationem turris properauerunt cum omnibus ciulis suis et cum omnibus mulieribus, excepta una ciula que confracta esset naufragio, in qua erant uiri triginta totidemque mulieres. Et alie naues nauigauerunt ad expugnandam turrim. Et dum omnes descenderant in littore quod erat circa turrim, operuit illos mare et demersi sunt; et non euasit unus ex illis. Et de familia illius ciule que relicta est propter fractionem, tota Hibernia impleta est usque in hodiernum diem.

'Most recently, the *Scotti* have come from the regions of Spain to Ireland. For Partholomus came first, with a thousand people, both men and women. They increased to four thousand, and a plague came upon them, and in one week they all died and not even one of them remained.

'Second there came to Ireland Nimeth, the son of a certain Agnomen: he is said to have sailed upon the sea for a year and a half and finally landed in Ireland, his ships being wrecked; and he stayed there for many years and again set sail with his people and returned to Spain. Afterwards came three sons of a Spanish soldier, with thirty ships along with them, and thirty wives in each ship; and they remained there for the space of a year. Then they saw a glass tower in the middle of the sea; and they could see men on (the summit of) the tower, and were trying to speak to them; and they never answered. In the same year they set out to attack the tower with all their ships and all their wives — save for one ship which had been damaged by shipwreck, in which were thirty men and as many women. The other ships set sail to attack the tower; and when they had all alighted on the shore which was around the tower, the sea covered them and drowned them, and not one escaped. And from the progeny of the one ship which had been left behind because it was damaged, all Ireland has been populated until the present day.'

There follows a list of settlers who occupied regions adjacent to Ireland: one of them, held to have settled the Isle of Mann and others near it, is named Builc.

The second account, which claims the authority of the 'most learned of the Irish' (*peritissimi Scottorum*), resembles the Frankish and British origin-legends in that it deals with the protracted wanderings of a heroic ancestor; but it begins with the exodus of the Israelites rather than the fall of Troy. A Scythian

nobleman, residing in Egypt at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea, is expelled by the Egyptians after the drowning of their armies, for fear that he will take over the kingdom. He and his people wander for forty-two years through northern Africa before travelling to Spain and thence to Ireland: a parallel with the Biblical search for the Promised Land is clearly the basis of their adventures.

Starting with Heinrich Zimmer's pioneering work a century ago,[12] much has been written about the relationship between the information in *Historia Brittonum* and the more developed doctrines of *Lebar Gabála*; and I certainly cannot hope to do justice here to everything said upon the subject. But it is worth while to pause at this point for a look, even if it is only a quick one, at some aspects of this evidence: for much of what we find in *Lebar Gabála* existed already, albeit in rudimentary form, in the *Historia*.

Let us start with the first of the two sections, which may for convenience be called the 'invasion-sequence.' The three initial settlements have clear counterparts in the later literature: for *Partholomus* we find Partholón the son of Sera; for *Nimeth* son of *Agnomen* there is Nemed the son of Agnoman; while to the three sons of the soldier of Spain there correspond the variously reckoned sons of Míl Espáne, ancestors of the Gaels themselves. Later accounts likewise tell of an attack on a tower which ends when the attackers are drowned by the sea, but it is associated with the descendants of Nemed, not the sons of Míl. The name of the settler *Builc*, included by the author of *Historia Brittonum* in the list of later migrations, is in fact a population-name: the *Builg* are the same as the Fir Bolg, whose settlement occurs in later versions

---

[12]   *Nennius Vindicatus. Über Entstehung, Geschichte und Quellen der Historia Brittonum* (Berlin 1893), especially pp. 215-25.

between those of the people of Nemed and their successors, the Tuatha Dé.

But who are all these people? Even a superficial answer gives us a glimpse of the rich interplay of native and imported ideas which went into the making of the pseudohistorical schema. *Partholón* is the Irish form of the name 'Bartholomew': and Kuno Meyer made the ingenious and convincing suggestion that this name was assigned to the first man to settle in Ireland after the Deluge because it was interpreted by the Fathers of the Church to mean 'the son of the one who holds up the waters.'[13] The name *Nemed*, by contrast, is pure Celtic, an extremely important word whose field of meanings includes the senses 'sacred object' or 'sacred enclosure' and 'legal rank' or 'legal privilege.'[14] With *Míl Espáne* or 'the Spanish soldier' we are back with foreign influence — and I should perhaps point out explicitly that the name *Míl Espáne* is neither more nor less than a direct borrowing into Irish of the Latin phrase *miles Hispaniae* which we find in the *Historia*. I shall return shortly to the significance of a doctrine of Spanish origins. As for the *Builg* or *Fir Bolg*, an ambiguous but cumulatively persuasive body of evidence suggests that they were in fact a powerful and important group at a very early date: their name seems to be closely related to that of the *Belgae*, a group of warlike Celtic tribes who flourished on the Continent until Caesar's time.[15]

At the very first stages of trying to assess the evidence, then, we get a curiously mixed impression of the kind of material

---

[13]   'Partholón mac Sera', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 13 (1919-21) 141-2; cf. my paper 'The Irish vision of the Chinese', *Ériu* 38 (1987) 72-8.
[14]   See for instance J. Vendryes, *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* (Dublin 1959-), N-9.
[15]   I have discussed some of the evidence in '*Fir Bolg*: a native etymology revisited', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 16 (1988) 77-83.

with which we are dealing. Partholón and Míl Espáne look like scholarly constructs, the figments of men steeped in Jerome and Isidore; but Nemed and the Fir Bolg cannot be so easily accounted for, and they appear to reflect — at whatever remove — indigenous memories and speculations about the peopling of Ireland.

It is otherwise with the story of the Scythian nobleman, and his adventures in Egypt, Africa, and Spain: here the whole effort is to fit the Gaels into an imported historical framework, and it is the resources of the Church's Latin learning which are brought to bear in so doing. All of the African itinerary, for example, is lifted bodily from Orosius's 'History'. As we observe this, however, we should observe something else as well. The Irish scholar who invented the story of the Scythian nobleman was trying to do what Cassiodorus and Iordanes and 'Fredegarius' and Isidore and the rest had done — but he achieved it in his own way. The context is that which we find in other barbarian historiographers, but the story itself appears to be an independent invention. *Historia Brittonum* is in fact the ideal showcase for this originality, in that it gives us the opportunity to contrast the inventive Irish story with the more derivative British one: Brutus is another Trojan prince, an ancestor-figure imitated from the Frankish chronicles.

The two accounts in the *Historia* give us some impression of Irish pseudohistorical lore as it existed at the opening of the ninth century, but they are far from telling the whole story. To get a better impression of the range of ideas current at this period, we must take a look at other, and earlier, sources.

Evidence which can be convincingly dated to the seventh century is hard to find; but a reference to 'the slopes of the lands of Éremón' in the early poem 'Moen oen' seems to indicate that this

presumably artificial son of Míl Espáne can be traced back at least as far as that.[16]

It is significant that an allusion to one of Míl's sons should be the oldest evidence of Irish pseudohistorical doctrine to come down to us. The most important aspect of the whole scheme must always have been the genealogical system which it enshrined, an elaborate framework which derived all the dynasties of Ireland from the first Gaelic invaders, and in the process projected the political agenda of the seventh or eighth or ninth century back into the exemplary past.[17] This system was subjected to constant tinkering as political alignments shifted over time, resulting in an increase in the number of Míl's sons from two or three to eight, and in the switching of ancestry on the part of various lineages. The legitimating importance of descent from the original settlers is reflected in allusions to Míl and his children in the opening sections of several genealogical tracts, and indeed of some sagas and saints' lives also.[18] But let us return to our chronological survey.

When we reach the eighth century, the pickings are rather better than in the seventh. Thus the grammatical tract called 'The Scholars' Primer' discusses the origins of the Gaels and the Gaelic language at the building of the Tower of Babel[19] — a story linked

---

[16]   *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, I, ed. M.A. O'Brien (Dublin 1962; rev. imp., 1976), p. 1; on the name's formation, cf. Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála* — Part II', p. 20, n. 53.

[17]   See, for example, J.V. Kelleher, 'The pre-Norman Irish genealogies', *Irish Historical Studies* 16 (1968/9) 138-53.

[18]   For example, see *Corpus Genealogiarum*, ed. O'Brien, I.123, 129, 186, 269, 358, 362-3; *Cath Maige Mucrama*, ed. & transl. Máirín O Daly (London 1975), pp. 38-9; *Scéla Moshauluim*, ed. & transl. *ibid.*, pp. 74-5; *Betha Ciaráin*, in *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*, ed. & transl. Whitley Stokes (Oxford 1890), pp. 118-19.

[19]   Anders Ahlqvist, *The Early Irish Linguist. An Edition of the Canonical Part of the Auraicept na nÉces* (Helsinki 1983), pp. 47-8.

with that of the Scythian nobleman in Egypt, for Gaedel, eponymous forefather of the Gaels, is elsewhere stated to have been the son of a Scythian scholar who travelled to Egypt from Babel. Probably a little later than the 'Primer' are sections appended to early poems on the rulers of Leinster, which trace their ancestry back to Adam.[20] We also find stories which do not seem to be Biblical in inspiration: the tale 'The Seizure of the Hollow Hill', which describes how the first Gaelic inhabitants of Ireland were obliged to make a treaty with the gods or fairies in order to be successful in raising their crops and herds; and a fragment plausibly ascribed to *Cín Dromma Snechtai* — 'The Book of Drumsnat', a lost manuscript generally thought to have been of eighth-century date — relating what appears to be a rather farfetched rationalisation of a legend in which the original settlers intermarried with the divine race.[21] There are other doctrines which may go back to *Cín Dromma Snechtai*: the ideas that a woman named Banba led a settlement of Ireland before the Flood; that the Fir Bolg came to Ireland as refugees from Greece; and that the invading Gaels had to contend with a trio of tutelary goddesses.[22] If the attribution of these passages, and the standard dating of *Cín Dromma Snechtai* itself, are correct, then we must conclude that *Historia Brittonum* gives us only the outline of what was already a flourishing tradition of legendary speculation.

---

[20]   On the doctrine reflected in these additions, and their date, see my article, 'The ancestry of Fénius Farsaid', *Celtica* 21 (1990) 104-12.

[21]   V. Hull, 'De Gabáil in t-Sída', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 19 (1931-3) 53-8, and 'The Milesian invasion of Ireland', *ibid.*, pp. 155-60.

[22]   The most recent discussion of the body of pseudohistorical material ascribed to *Cín Dromma Snechtai* is that of Séamus Mac Mathúna, *Immram Brain: Bran's Journey to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen 1985), pp. 421-69. There are aspects of Mac Mathúna's analysis with which I find myself in disagreement; I hope to publish my own views on this subject in the near future.

This early Irish pseudohistorical corpus includes two doctrines suggesting influence from the work of Isidore of Seville. Both appear for the first time, as far as I know, in *Historia Brittonum*. In the first of the accounts of Irish origins which I have just summarised, all the invaders are made to come to Ireland from Spain: A.G. van Hamel plausibly suggested that this detail was inspired by Isidore's invocation of Spain as 'mother of races' in the encomium which introduces his 'History of the Goths'.[23] In the second of the accounts, the derivation of the Gaels from Scythia appears to imply an equation of *Scythae* or 'Scythians' and *Scot(t)i* or 'Irishmen';[24] this could I think have been inspired by a passage later in the same work.[25]

Gothi de Magog Iafeth filio orti cum Scythis una probantur origine sati, unde nec longe a uocabulo discrepant. Demutata enim ac detracta littera Getae, quasi Scythae, sunt nuncupati.

'The Goths, descended from Magog son of Japhet, are shown to have the same origin as the Scythians, from whom they do not differ greatly in name. For if one letter is changed and another dropped they are called *Getae* (that is, Scythians).'

The same stratagem of altering one letter, dropping another — and, incidentally, changing the declension — which turns *Gothi* to

---

[23]   'On *Lebor Gabála*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 10 (1914/15) 97-197, at p. 173. For Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* see *Chronica Minora Saec. IV. V. VI. VII.*, ed. Theodor Mommsen (3 vols, Berlin 1891-8), II.241-390, at p. 267.

[24]   Various scholars have accepted that this equivalence was taken for granted in the tradition: thus van Hamel, 'On *Lebor Gabála*', p. 173; Eoin Mac Neill, *Phases of Irish History* (Dublin 1919), pp. 90-1; R. Baumgarten, 'A Hiberno-Isidorian etymology', *Peritia* 2 (1983) 225-8, at pp. 226-7; Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála* — Part II', p. 17. I have however found no explicit assertion of it earlier than Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, written in the 1630s: *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating D.D.*, ed. & transl. David Comyn & P.S. Dinneen (4 vols, London 1902-14; rev. imp., 1987), I.102, and elsewhere.

[25]   *Chronica Minora*, ed. Mommsen, II.293.

Getae can turn *Scythae* to *Scoti*; and the genealogical doctrine according to which the Gaels and Scythians descend from Magog is only a step removed from Isidore's assertion that Magog was the ancestor of the Goths and Scythians.[26] Although the current orthodoxy appears to be that the 'History of the Goths' did not circulate outside of Spain,[27] these hints in *Historia Brittonum* may provide evidence that among its many contributions to their knowledge, Isidore's work furnished seventh-century Irish scholars with a model of barbarian pseudohistory.

In the later ninth century, two important texts in the Irish language carried forward and developed the traditions reflected in *Historia Brittonum*: the 'Story of Tuán son of Cairell', and the poem 'Whence is the origin of the Gaels?'. The story recounts how a man named Tuán survived from the time of Partholón into the Christian period by passing through the shapes of a series of animals and regaining his youth with each transformation.[28] Similar tales are found elsewhere in the literatures of Ireland and Wales, and arguably preserve traces of pre-Christian conceptions of time and memory.[29] These pagan or quasi-pagan ideas are here, however, firmly subordinated to the Church: Tuán narrates all his knowledge to the saints, and his teachings are stated to survive in ecclesiastical manuscripts.

---

[26] *Etymologiae*, 9.2.27, edd. Jose Oroz Reta & M.-A. Marcos Casquero, *San Isidoro de Sevilla: Etimologías* (2 vols, Madrid 1982/3), I.744. Cf. *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi*, ed. & transl. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Dublin 1983), p. 74 (§25): 'Foénius Forsaid, a quo sunt Scithi et Gothi'.

[27] J. N. Hillgarth, 'Ireland and Spain in the seventh century', *Peritia* 3 (1984) 1-16, at pp. 5-6.

[28] The most recent edition and translation are my own: 'Scél Tuáin meic Chairill', *Ériu* 35 (1984) 93-111.

[29] I have discussed some aspects of this topic in my article, 'A British myth of origins?', *History of Religions* 31 (1991) 24-38, especially pp. 33-5.

Tuán's extended if sketchy biography covers the same ground as the 'invasion-sequence' of *Historia Brittonum* and agrees with it closely in various of its details: thus Partholón's people die of a plague which lasts a week, and Nemed's voyage to Ireland takes a year and a half. The story develops the scheme, however, by inserting the Fir Bolg and Tuatha Dé between Nemed and the sons of Míl. The Fir Bolg have been mentioned already. The Tuatha Dé are the old gods; and their treatment in the 'Story of Tuán' is interesting in more than one respect. On the one hand, they are inserted into the sequence of a purportedly historical framework — just one in a series of settlements. On the other, the author is noncommittal as to their true nature, saying that 'the learned do not know their origin; but they think it likely that they were some of the exiles who came from heaven.'

The poem, ascribed to Mael Muru of Fahan (*ob*. 887), corresponds to the account of the Gaelic migration in *Historia Brittonum*: again we read of Scythian origins, an Egyptian sojourn, protracted wanderings, arrival in Spain, and the eventual conquest of Ireland.[30]   But here too the story has been developed considerably: it is in fact very close to what we find a couple of centuries later in *Lebar Gabála*. Instead of wandering through Africa, the Gaels return to Scythia by way of the Indian Ocean, then embark upon another protracted voyage which at last brings them to Spain.

This change may be an innovation, but other parts of the poem include elements which are potentially quite old. We are

---

[30]   James Henthorn Todd included an edition and translation of the poem as an appendix to *Leabhar Breathnach annso sis. The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius*, edd. & transl. J.H. Todd & A. Herbert (Dublin 1848), pp. 220-71; see also *The Book of Leinster formerly Lebar na Nuachongbála*, edd. R.I. Best et al. (6 vols, Dublin 1954-83), III.516-23. A fresh edition of this poem, based on all the manuscripts, is badly needed.

explicitly told that the wives of the first Gaelic settlers belonged to the Tuatha Dé, the 'tribes of gods', a doctrine which (as I have mentioned) is only hinted at in an earlier source. We also find here the idea — suppressed in the later literature — that the Irish are descended from an ancestor figure who now reigns over the realm of the dead, a tradition suggestively close to Caesar's statement that the Gauls believed themselves to be descended from the god of the underworld.[31] Mael Muru is, moreover, the first to tell us of the bargain which the invaders struck with the Tuatha Dé: that they would put out to sea once more, and approach again after putting the magic barrier of nine waves between themselves and land.

Yet another interesting aspect of the poem is the presence in it of what seems to be an element borrowed from Frankish pseudohistory — the idea that the migrations of the Gaels were interrupted by a lengthy sojourn in the Maeotic marshes at the estuary of the River Don. It can scarcely be a coincidence that a similar episode appears at the beginning of the 'Book of the History of the Franks' (A.D. 727), whose author developed the Trojan doctrine of the 'Chronicles of Fredegarius'.[32]

---

[31]   Discussion by Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (2nd edn, New York 1985), pp. 36-8.

[32]   *Liber historiae Francorum*, §1, in *Fredegarii et aliorum chronica. Vitae sanctorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum merovingicarum 2 (Hannover 1888), pp. 215-328, at 241-2. The association between the Franks and the Maeotic marshes may have been suggested by an anecdote, related immediately after this passage and set in the time of the Emperor Valentinian I, in which the Franks distinguished themselves by venturing into the marshes to attack an army of Alans; the idea that the marshes were adjacent to Pannonia, indicating a confusion between the Don and the Danube, appears to be reflected in Mael Muru's statement that the Gaels sailed thence directly into the Mediterranean (*Leabhar Breathnach*, edd. & transl. Todd & Herbert, pp. 236-7; *The Book of Leinster*, edd. Best et al., III.518, n. 1).

Alii quoque ex principibus, Priamus uidelicet et Antenor, cum reliquo exercitu Troianorum duodecim milia intrantes in nauibus abscesserunt et uenerunt usque ripas Tanais fluminis. Ingressi Meotidas paludes nauigantes, peruenerunt intra terminos Pannoniarum iuxta Meotidas paludes et coeperunt aedificare ciuitatem ob memoriale eorum appellaueruntque eam Sicambriam; habitaueruntque illic annis multis creueruntque in gentem magnam.

'Others of the princes, namely Priam and Antenor, taking ship with the rest of the Trojan army, [that is] twelve thousand men, fled and journeyed as far as the banks of the River Don. Voyaging into the Maeotic marshes, they came into the territory of the Pannonians beside the Maeotic marshes; and they began to build a city there as a monument to themselves, and they called it Sicambria. And they dwelt there many years, and grew to be a great people.'

Mael Muru also brings the wandering Gaels to Crete and Sicily, an itinerary reminiscent of that followed by Aeneas;[33] another Classical touch, in a subsequent poem closely based on that of Mael Muru, is an encounter with the sirens.[34]

An intriguing double process was at work as the tradition grew: on the one hand, more and more use was made of Continental materials and historiographic models; on the other, increasing amounts of what looks like native legend were fitted into the expanding framework. Certain of our sources agree so closely on some points of detail — I should point especially to the correspondences between the *Historia* and the story of Tuán — that we should evidently think in terms of a shared textual basis: some

---

[33]   Contrast the route taken across northern Africa by the Scythian nobleman and his followers in *Historia Brittonum*, evidently drawn from Orosius, *Historiae aduersum paganos*, 1.2.90-94 (ed. C. Zangemeister [Leipzig 1889], pp. 13-14).

[34]   The poem is 'Gaedel Glas, from whom are the Gaels', by Gilla Coemáin. For general remarks on this poet, see the discussion below; for the text see *LGÉ*, II.100-1, and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20-1, 40-3, 74-5. Ulysses's meeting with the sirens, and the stratagem of putting wax in the ears, are mentioned together with many other scraps of Classical lore in Gilla in Choimded's poem 'O King of heaven, make plain to me', in *The Book of Leinster*, edd. Best et al., III.574-87, at p. 576.

kind of proto-*Lebar Gabála*, existing in writing already in the ninth century.

Most of the pseudohistorical literature which has reached us from the tenth and eleventh centuries takes the form of lengthy didactic poems, many of them preserved only in one or more of the recensions of *Lebar Gabála*.[35] There must also have been prose pseudohistorical works written during this period, but they have not survived: very probably *Lebar Gabála* itself supplanted them. Traces of such writings can be found within the textual tradition of *Lebar Gabála* itself, however: portions survive as passages inserted in the text at various points in its evolution;[36] and the organisation of one of the poems indicates that its author had available to him in the first half of the eleventh century a version of what became in *Lebar Gabála* the section dealing with the Tuatha Dé.[37] *Lebor Bretnach*, an Irish version of *Historia Brittonum*, is probably closely contemporary with *Lebar Gabála*, and its author must have drawn on material of the same kind when embellishing the Irish section of his Latin source-text.[38] The Middle Irish 'tale-list', in a section which Proinsias Mac Cana has taken to have been added in the tenth or eleventh century, includes the migrations of Partholón,

---

[35]　In the interpretation of the evidence presented here I differ from the views of R.M. Scowcroft, who has argued that Eochaid ua Flainn and Gilla Coemáin composed their poems 'as companion-pieces to the prose-text' ('*Leabhar Gabhála* — Part II', pp. 4-5). I hope to publish a detailed analysis of the textual history of *Lebar Gabála* as a whole, as part of an edition of that work's first recension.

[36]　I have edited one of these as 'A Tuath Dé miscellany', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 39 (1992) 24-45.

[37]　The poem in question is Flann Mainistrech's 'Listen, scholars without flaw': *LGÉ*, IV.224-41.

[38]　Edited by A. G. van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach. The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum ascribed to Nennius* (Dublin [1932]); cf. D.N. Dumville, 'The textual history of "Lebor Bretnach": a preliminary study', *Éigse* 16 (1975/6) 255-73.

Nemed, the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha Dé, and the sons of Míl Espáne among the events of which a *fili* or professional poet was supposed to be able to furnish an account;[39] and a précis of Irish pseudohistory is included in the probably tenth-century tale, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara'.[40]

Four poets of this period were particularly important in the subsequent formation of *Lebar Gabála*: Eochaid ua Flainn (*ob.* 1004),[41] Flann Mainistrech (*ob.* 1056), Tanaide Eólach (*ob. ca* 1075?), and Gilla Coemáin (*fl.* 1072). As a sociological aside, it is interesting that some of these poets were quite well connected men. Eochaid was the brother of one of the lay abbots of the greatest religious establishment in Ireland, that of Armagh; and all of the subsequent abbots until the accession of St Malachy in 1134 were his descendants.[42] Flann was lector (*fer léiginn*) at Monasterboice, and was related to some of its former abbots and bishops: the monastery was subsequently administered by his own son and grandsons.[43] Tanaide is an obscure figure; but there may be truth

---

[39]   Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin 1980), pp. 82-3.

[40]   R.I. Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', *Ériu* 4 (1908-10) 121-72.

[41]   I here accept the identification of Eochaid ua Flainn with the Eochaid ua Flannacáin assigned this obit in the chronicles. This equation was first proposed by Rudolf Thurneysen, 'Zu irischen Handschriften und Litteraturdenkmälern, zweite Serie', *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft für Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Philologisch-historische Klasse, neue Folge, Bd. 14, Nr. 3, p. 5; I hope before long to present evidence in support of this position, based on the content of Eochaid's poems.

[42]   See T. Ó Fiaich, 'The church of Armagh under lay control', *Seanchas Ardmhacha* 5 (1969) 75-127.

[43]   M.E. Dobbs, 'The pedigree and family of Flann Manistrech', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* 5 (1921-4) 149-53.

in the assertion of one late source that he founded Uí Maelchonaire, one of the great learned families of Connaught.[44]

But what contribution did these men, and the tradition of Middle Irish didactic poetry which they represented, make to the growth of Irish pseudohistory? This is a big question and requires several complementary answers.

The first thing to be said is that they generated a large corpus of extremely influential material, a repository of information drawn upon most notably by the eleventh-century author of *Lebar Gabála*. They were evidently trying to produce unified cycles of poems which would cover extensive subject-areas: thus Eochaid wrote a series of poems on Partholón, Nemed, the Tuatha Dé, and the sons of Míl; Flann — whose massive output provoked Rudolf Thurneysen to label him rather unkindly as an 'author of dreadfully arid doggerel'[45] — wrote groups of poems on the major dynastic segments of Uí Néill, and on the chronology of Eusebius; and Gilla Coemáin produced a trilogy of long poems of which the first and second described Irish history respectively before and after the coming of St Patrick, while the third synchronised all of Irish history with events in the wider world.

When we begin to go through this formidable body of writing, however, we find that most of the information which it contains is schematic and indeed rather pedantic: the poems concentrate on the successions of kings, the origins of place-names, and the dating of notable happenings. This can make for rather dull reading: and *a fortiori* the prose paraphrases of this verse

---

[44]   The statement occurs in a document of the mid-seventeenth century, written by Fearfeasa Ó Maelchonaire and included by Paul Walsh as an appendix to his *'Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae' by the Four Masters* (Maynooth 1918), pp. 134-8; see p. 137.

[45]   'Zu irischen Handschriften', p. 9: 'Autor von fürchterlich trockenen Reimereien'.

stand for the most part at the dry end of mediaeval Irish literature. This is not surprising, and we should not make too much of it. These are evidently school poems, meant to be memorised as a means of retaining large quantities of data: the very form of the verse would have aided rote-learning and indeed catechesis, thanks especially to such ornamental features as internal rhyme and linking alliteration. One composition in particular, beginning with the line 'Answer my questions, lad', seems to me to be an exceptionally neat example of the poem as teaching instrument. In each member of a lengthy series of quatrains, the first couplet consists of a question to which the second couplet provides the answer — rather like a series of oral flash-cards.[46]

One suspects that much of this genealogy, toponymy, and chronology was generated more or less artificially on an *ad hoc* basis; in most cases, however, we do not know enough to speak with confidence one way or the other. What we can say a little more about, and what indeed merits mention at this point, is the material which we find altered or omitted by the poets of the tenth and eleventh centuries. At the risk of oversimplifying, I should suggest that their work shows a decided tendency to rationalise the legendary past: to suppress or reinterpret supernatural and perhaps originally pagan doctrines which we find attested in the fragments of earlier evidence which have survived.

Some of the doctrines thus modified I have already mentioned. Mael Muru tells us that the first Gaels intermarried with the Tuatha Dé, and that after death the Irish go to the house of their ancestor Donn: neither doctrine is attested in the Middle Irish period, and indeed Donn is specifically stated to have perished without issue. I mentioned also that *Cín Dromma Snechtai* apparently reported that the first woman in Ireland, arriving before

---

[46]   *LGÉ*, IV.52-61.

the Flood, was named Banba: the same passage which gives us this information goes on to say that she herself survived the Flood and lived on until the time of the Gaelic settlement, being in fact identical with a goddess Banba who confronted the invaders. In Eochaid's poetry, by contrast, her name is Cesair, she is given a Biblical pedigree, and we are told that she died before the Flood came to Ireland.[47]　In the story of Tuán, as we saw, uncertainty was expressed concerning the true nature of the Tuatha Dé, and the view was tentatively put forward that they were fallen angels. The problem remained a troubling one, and we can see its treatment evolving in the Middle Irish poems. Eochaid began one of his compositions by rhetorically asking whether the Tuatha Dé were demons or humans; after discussing the matter for some quatrains, he assigned them a place among the descendants of Nemed.[48]　A couple of generations later, Flann went a step further, devoting a rather monotonous poem of thirty-seven quatrains to demonstrating their mortality by cataloguing the deaths of as many of them as he could think of.[49]

This is an interesting undercurrent in the poetry, and presumably reflects one facet of the mentality which prompted prominent churchmen to produce a normative pseudohistorical schema: in seeking to perpetuate the glories of Ireland's legendary past, they seem to have had at least one eye on plausibility — perhaps indeed on acceptability. Equally interesting is the way in which the type of material which the didactic poets excluded began to creep back into *Lebar Gabála* itself. Much of it is already in the earliest version, which gives us for example a vivid account of the magical means used by the Gaels to win Ireland from the gods; and

---

[47]　*LGÉ*, III.44-5. Cf. p. 11, above.
[48]　*LGÉ*, IV.212-15.
[49]　*LGÉ*, IV.224-41.

much more, bit by bit, entered the various recensions and subsidiary versions which followed.

The eleventh-century author of *Lebar Gabála* used a wide range of sources; but much of the basic doctrine and structure of the work derives from the poems which I have discussed. The foundation-stones on which he constructed the portion of the text dealing with the early settlements are seven poems by Eochaid, Flann, Tanaide, and Gilla Coemáin. The idea of using these compositions as the basis of an *opus geminatum* — a 'double work' in which prose echoes poetry — was a crucial element in the constitution of *Lebar Gabála*; still more fundamental was the device, of which there is no trace in the earlier literature, of combining the invasion-sequence with the account of the Gaelic migration by inserting the former in the latter.

Lebar Gabála seems to have become very popular almost as soon as it was written (probably shortly after the year 1050), and to have been recopied and expanded several times in the first few decades of its history. Of all the versions, that called the first recension (written after 1072) probably represents the original most closely. The original text was also revised to form the basis of what we know as the second recension, a version so extensively modified as often to disagree sharply with its source.[50] Another version, the *Míniugud*, 'Explanation', survives only as an appendix to the second recension, whose author excerpted a text closely resembling the first recension to supply some new matter but also included parts of the original *Lebar Gabála* which had been

---

[50]   A fragment of the *Míniugud* text attached to a derivative version of the second recension survives in the 'Book of Glendalough' (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson B.502), written *ca* 1130; thus R.M. Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála — Part I: The growth of the text', *Ériu* 38 (1987) 81-140, at p. 87. This provides a *terminus ante quem* for the original text of the second recension, as well as for its earlier versions.

omitted or replaced in the course of the second recension's own development. Both the first and second recensions were repeatedly expanded (subsequent redactors borrowing from each other and from external sources) until they were fused in a third recension. A further synthesis of various texts of *Lebar Gabála* was made by Míchél Ó Cléirigh in his own version, completed in 1631.[51] At the same period, Geoffrey Keating took *Lebar Gabála* as a starting point in his *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, a much more ambitious and sophisticated work;[52] the Four Masters did the same in their 'Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland'.[53]

The widespread influence of the text is obvious in the literature of the later Middle Irish and Modern Irish periods: there are countless allusions to its doctrines in sagas, poems, chronicles, pedigrees, and place-name lore. The fruit of a historiographic tradition which had been evolving for centuries, *Lebar Gabála* itself never stopped growing and changing throughout the middle ages and beyond, finding room in the loose framework of its many versions for a multitude of divergent and supplementary statements. The result is a bewildering textual labyrinth, a tangle of variants and inconsistencies which makes a striking contrast with the literary polish and consistent doctrine of a book like Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of the Kings of Britain', written three quarters of a century after the original version of *Lebar Gabála*; Geoffrey's is a work of fabrication whose temporal scope and

---

[51] For a partial edition see *Leabhar Gabhála — The Book of Conquests of Ireland: The Recension of Micheál Ó Cléirigh*, I, edd. & transl. R.A.S. Macalister & J. Mac Neill (Dublin [1916]).

[52] For the edition, see above, n. 24.

[53] *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, ed. & transl. John O'Donovan (2nd edn, 7 vols, Dublin 1856).

literary impact entitle it to be considered the closest British equivalent to *Lebar Gabála*.[54]

It would be a mistake, however, to judge *Lebar Gabála* exclusively by foreign standards. It, and the other texts considered here, were written to address a specifically Irish need: they sought to develop a vision of history which would accommodate, and reconcile with one another, the rich corpus of native legendary lore and the Latin learning introduced into Ireland by the Church. In this they were outstandingly successful — indeed, the very complexity of the evidence testifies to the versatility of the underlying scheme, and to the enthusiasm with which it was adopted and developed by generation after generation of historians, antiquaries, poets, and story-tellers.[55]

---

[54] On Geoffrey, see *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge 1985-). For traces of another twelfth-century British pseudohistory, see D.N. Dumville, 'Celtic Latin texts from northern England, c. 1150-c. 1250', *Celtica* 12 (1977) 19-49. For discussion see P.C. Bartrum, 'Was there a British "Book of Conquests"?', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 23 (1968-70) 1-6; Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (New York 1966); R. William Leckie, Jr, *The Passage of Dominion* (Toronto 1981).

[55] This is a revised and annotated text of the first E.C. Quiggin Memorial Lecture, given in the University of Cambridge on 18 November, 1993. I am grateful to the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic for the invitation to deliver this lecture, and to David Dumville for his many valuable criticisms and suggestions as it was being prepared for publication.

Bibliography of suggested reading

Primary sources (see discussion in text)

Historia Brittonum: ed. Edmond Faral, *La Légende arthurienne* (3 vols, Paris 1929), III.1-63; transl. A.W. Wade-Evans, *Nennius's "History of the Britons"* (London 1938); new edition by David N. Dumville, *The Historia Brittonum* (10 vols, Cambridge 1985-)

Seathrún Céitinn, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn: The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, edd. & transl. David Comyn & P.S. Dinneen, Irish Texts Society vols 4, 8, 9, 15 (4 vols, London 1902-14; rev. imp., 1987)

Lebar Gabála: ed. & transl. R.A.S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, Irish Texts Society vols 34, 35, 39, 41, 44 (5 vols, London 1938-56; rev. imp., 1993); Ó Cléirigh's version edd. & transl. R.A.S. Macalister & John Mac Neill, *Leabhar Gabhála — The Book of Conquests of Ireland: The Recension of Micheál Ó Cléirigh*, I (Dublin [1916]) [no more published]

Lebor Bretnach: edited by A.G. van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach. The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum ascribed to Nennius* (Dublin [1932]); edd. & transl. J.H. Todd & A. Herbert, *Leabhar Breathnach annso sis. The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin 1848)

Mael Muru, *Can a mbunadas na nGaedel*, 'Whence is the origin of the Gaels?': *Leabhar Breathnach*, edd. & transl. Todd & Herbert (as above), pp. 220-71

Scél Tuáin meic Chairill, 'The Story of Tuán son of Cairell': ed. & transl. John Carey, *Ériu* 35 (1984) 93-111

Suidigiud Tellaig Temro, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara': ed. & transl. R.I. Best, *Ériu* 4 (1908-10) 121-72

Secondary sources

Carey, J., 'Origin and development of the Cesair legend,' *Éigse* 22 (1987) 37-48

........, 'The ancestry of Fénius Farsaid,' *Celtica* 21 (1990) 104-12

........, A new introduction to the 1993 reprint of Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (see above)

Carney, J., 'The dating of archaic Irish verse', in *Early Irish Literature — Media and Communication / Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit in der frühen irischen Literatur*, edd. S.N. Tranter and H.L.C. Tristram (Tübingen 1989), pp. 39-55

Kelleher, J.V., 'Early Irish history and pseudo-history', *Studia Hibernica* 3 (1963) 113-27

Mac Neill, Eoin, *Phases of Irish History* (Dublin 1919)

........, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin 1921)

McCone, Kim, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth 1990)

Ó Corráin, D., 'Irish origin legends and genealogy: recurrent aetiologies', in *History and Heroic Tale*, edd. Tore Nyberg et al. (Odense 1985), pp. 51-96

........, 'Historical need and literary narrative', in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies, Oxford 1983*, edd. D. Ellis Evans et al. (Oxford 1986), pp. 141-58

O'Rahilly, T.F., *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin 1946)

Scowcroft, R.M., 'Leabhar Gabhála — Part I: The growth of the text', *Ériu* 38 (1987) 81-140

........, 'Leabhar Gabhála — Part II: The growth of the tradition', *Ériu* 39 (1988) 1-66

Van Hamel, A.G., 'On *Lebor Gabála*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 10 (1914/15) 97-197

Other pseudohistorical texts

Pseudohistorical material is abundantly attested in all periods of mediaeval Irish literature; the texts listed below (alphabetically by editor and translator) are both important and representative.

Ahlqvist, Anders, *The Early Irish Linguist. An Edition of the Canonical Part of the Auraicept na nÉces* (Helsinki 1983)

Calder, George, *Auraicept na n-Éces: The Scholars' Primer* (Edinburgh 1917)

Dobbs, M.C., 'The Ban-shenchus', *Revue celtique* 47 (1930) 283-339; 48 (1931) 163-234; 49 (1932) 437-89

Gwynn, E.J., *The Metrical Dindshenchas* (5 vols, Dublin 1903-35)

Hennessy, W.M., and D.H. Kelly, *The Book of Fenagh* (Dublin 1875; rev. imp., 1939); R.A.S. Macalister, *Book of Fenagh. Supplementary Volume* (Dublin 1939)

Jackson, K., 'The poem *A eolcha Alban uile*', *Celtica* 3 (1956) 149-67 [text] and 'The Duan Albanach', *Scottish Historical Review* 36 (1957) 123-37 [translation]

Mac Airt, S., 'Middle-Irish poems on world-kingship', *Études celtiques* 6 (1953/4) 255-80; 7 (1955/6) 18-45; 8 (1958/9) 98-119, 284-97 [no more published]

MacCarthy, Bartholomew, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus 830* (Dublin 1892)

Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí, *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi* (Dublin 1983)

Stokes, Whitley, 'Gilla Coemáin's chronological poem (Book of Leinster 130b)', in *The Tripartite Life of Patrick with Other Documents relating to that Saint* (2 vols, London 1887), II.530-41

........, 'The Bodleian Dinnshenchas', *Folklore* 3 (1892) 467-516

........, 'The Edinburgh Dinnshenchas', *Folklore* 4 (1893) 471-97

........, 'The prose tales in the Rennes Dindsenchas', *Revue celtique* 15 (1894) 272-336, 418-84; 16 (1895) 31-83, 135-67, 269-312