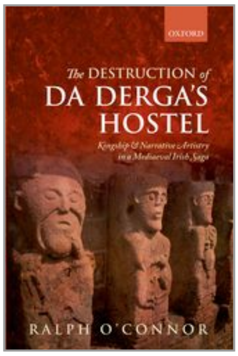
University Press Scholarship Online
Oxford Scholarship Online



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

Print publication date: 2013
Print ISBN-13: 9780199666133
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: May 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199666133.001.0001

The Message of the Togail

Tract or Tragedy?

Ralph O'Connor

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199666133.003.0011

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter critically examines the extent to which the saga can be seen as an *exemplum* or strong-rule tract by considering its differences from didactic texts about kingship such as the *tecosca*. The author argues that these texts reveal considerable tensions within the European ideology of kingship built on 1 Samuel, exacerbated by tensions already present within that biblical text. These ideological tensions are exploited in various Middle Irish sagas about flawed kings killed in fatal hostels, such as *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill* and *Bruiden Meic Da Réo*. Examining the *Togail* in this context, the chapter explores how its author used a legendary past to reflect on the troubled politics of his own time, when the idea of kingship over all Ireland was becoming a potential reality. Rather than seeing the *Togail* as a piece of political

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

scripture or religious triumphalism, it is considered as a dramatization of political problems.

Keywords: exemplum, typology, pentarchy, propaganda, tecosca, hostel, tragedy, didacticism, Samuel, kingship

What did the *Togail* mean for its contemporary audiences? The meaning of any saga operates on several levels, from the cognitive patterns encoded within the myths and tropes on which the story is built to the upper layers of local (often political) significance attaching themselves to the saga in its extant Middle Irish recension, and various layers in between. It is impossible to do justice to them all in a single account. As the previous chapter has indicated, my approach is that of a literary historian rather than a structural anthropologist, focusing primarily on the upper strata of meaning. In this chapter I shall attempt to refine the generally agreed proposition that the *Togail* is a cautionary tale about kingship ideology and arrive at a more precise sense of how it relates to the political concerns and the biblical analogue outlined in the previous chapter.

Political Scripture and the Saga as *Exemplum*

In recent decades, Irish sagas have frequently been interpreted as texts propounding specific moral and/or political ‘messages’. This approach goes beyond the mere anchoring of tales within their dynastic contexts. Historians have politicized our understanding of the Irish ‘learned classes’ responsible for creating the sagas. Donnchadh Ó Corráin, for instance, has emphasized the extent to which authorship was the preserve of a socially privileged ecclesiastical elite whose members served, were allied to, or already belonged to ambitious dynasties, and who produced texts to meet the ideological needs of their patrons. Sagas are thus seen, not as an independent realm of purely ‘imaginative’ literature, but as part of a wider system of textual production and signification whose other products included genealogies, chronicles, didactic texts, and devotional texts in both Latin and Irish. From this perspective, narrative texts have been seen primarily as propaganda or ‘political scripture’: their authors forged useful pasts from the oral and textual materials

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

at their disposal, designing tales which taught their audiences clear take-home messages. This approach has been successfully applied to hagiography, raising (p.288) their perceived value for other historians; it is now regularly applied to vernacular narratives, including sagas.[1]

The widespread adoption of this approach by literary scholars as well as historians has usefully underlined the fact that sagas were purposeful texts and has foregrounded their connections with other genres, especially genealogy. Like any approach, however, this has its limitations. One of these concerns our ability to pinpoint a text's message within a precise political context. Some scholars identify a relevant sequence of events in 'the historical record' to narrow down a text's likely date of composition. But it is always worth remembering how patchy our record of Irish history during the Middle Irish period is: the surviving texts enable us to reconstruct only a skeleton of events in royal and ecclesiastical centres, and glimpses of wider occurrences such as plague, famine, Viking invasions, and the like. The difficulty of dating Middle Irish texts linguistically adds to this problem:[2] it is difficult to locate the composition of the extant *Togail* beyond the first half of the Middle Irish period, probably the late tenth or early to mid-eleventh century. This opens up numerous possible historical contexts. The combination of ambiguous dating evidence and a patchy, often unreliable historical record makes it, in my view, unwise to tie down the primary meaning of a saga definitively to any single localized set of 'known' events. As Máire Herbert has recently emphasized, 'the contemporary import of a work is not elicited by arbitrarily correlating known historical data with textual content'.[3]

The mythological tale *Cath Maige Tuired* demonstrates some of the risks involved. It has been analysed by John Carey as a political parable about Viking–Irish interactions in ninth-century Ireland and, equally convincingly, by Michael Chesnutt as a parable about the battle of Clontarf (1014).[4] Of course, it is entirely possible that a lost earlier version was composed as a political allegory about Viking-Age Ireland, and that this version was later reworked to reflect the events of

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Clontarf. The saga itself would hardly have been transmitted had it been of merely ‘antiquarian’ interest to each subsequent audience: taken together, Carey's and Chesnutt's studies undoubtedly advance our understanding of how different audiences could have extracted meaning from *Cath Maige Tuired*.[5] But the ease with which the same saga fits both contexts cautions us against restricting ourselves to a narrowly local view of a saga's purposes (let alone using such an interpretation as a dating tool). A broader approach seems in order.

(p.289) Broadening the sagas’ possible historical contexts still leaves open the possibility of treating them as dynastic propaganda, as I will discuss below. It also invites an interpretation of sagas as *exempla*, parable-like narratives designed to teach moral, religious, or ideological precepts. Exemplary functions were not inconsistent with the sagas’ status as historiography, as (supposedly) true stories about the past: the past in the Middle Ages was viewed as a source of real-life examples for imitation or avoidance, a view which enabled churchmen to justify the study of secular history.[6] Several sagas have been interpreted in this way, some anchoring the text's implied ‘moral’ to a specific historical scenario, others proposing a general ‘moral’. *Fingal Rónáin*, for example, has been analysed as a cautionary tale illustrating the evils of deception, and *Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* has been examined as an illustration of the dangers of allowing women to usurp men's social responsibilities.[7] Sagas about kings readily invite interpretation as *exempla* because the theme of judgement itself—moral, spiritual, or political—looms so large in these sagas: hence Philip O’Leary's observation that mediaeval Irish ‘tales about kings often grow into “moral tales” about kingship’.[8]

The possibility that Irish sagas could function as parables or even fully-fledged allegories is suggested by the Middle Irish tale *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise* (‘The Stratagem of Urard mac Coise’). This saga's protagonist, a tenth-century poet, informs the king of his own misfortunes under the guise of an allegorical tale which he composes to entertain the king. When the king is given the key to this *roman à clef* by a

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

visiting angel, his sympathies with the story's fictional protagonist have already been secured, and he decides to right the poet's wrongs. As Erich Poppe has suggested, this unique glimpse into the application of the allegorical method to secular storytelling suggests that Irish authors and audiences were accustomed to reading very specific ‘lessons’ within their sagas.[9]

As with the ‘political scripture’ approach, one temptation of such an interpretative method is to assume that each saga has a ‘key’ to its primary meaning which, once discovered, exempts the critic from seriously considering any further meanings which may be embedded within it, let alone those worked into it by subsequent scribes and audiences. To state that, for example, ‘*Acallam* [*na Senórach*] is a medieval instruction manual for canon marriage’ helpfully pinpoints an important aspect of that text's meaning but misleadingly implies that it is the *only* meaning.[10] This reductive formulation is especially unfortunate when applied to a text as long and complex as the *Acallam*, but even with shorter tales the temptation should be resisted. The best analyses of sagas as *exempla* do not attempt to limit sagas’ **(p.290)** meanings to a single ‘moral’ in this way, but the very term *exemplum* implies a one-dimensional ‘on-message’ quality which is hard to square with the complex artistry and interpretative challenges presented by many of the best-known sagas. Urard mac Coise's allegorical tale may have had a specific and (to its audience) obvious lesson, but to the audience within the story this lesson becomes obvious only when an angel tells the king what Urard's tale means. Such *ex cathedra* explanations are seldom offered in the extant sagas: real-life audiences were left on their own in matters of interpretation.[11] The sagas’ frequent, often studied ambivalence complicates any simple exemplary function: their purpose seems to have been as much exploratory as didactic, and their value as entertainment surely gained in the process.[12] Sophisticated and polyphonic, Middle Irish saga literature sometimes appears to call into question the very principles one would expect it to affirm. Accordingly, we need to remain alive to the significance of purposeful ambiguities within ‘“moral tales” about kingship’,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

and to layers of meaning held in tense opposition, as well as to the political or moral lessons they may foreground.

On the surface, the *Togail* lends itself well to interpretation as a political *exemplum*: as Carney suggested, ‘the central character is kingship itself’.[13] But Carney went on to suggest that the fact that ‘the tragedy is worked out in the person of Conaire is of secondary importance’. This too easily glosses over the fact that mediaeval Irish readers did find this saga important as a legendary-historical source about a specific king's reign. The saga's historiographic function was in no way lessened—indeed, for mediaeval users, was strengthened—by the possibility of its having a strongly exemplary function as well. The fact that Conaire's *fír flathemon* breaks down as a direct result of his failure to enforce justice encourages us to interpret the *Togail* as a cautionary tale, or a cautionary history, promoting strong, just rulership.

Many authors in the Old and Middle Irish period shared this concern to promote just such a view of kingship, combining vigorous action with moral rectitude and impartiality in the Isidorean manner. This need was strong in Ireland, whose complex network of petty kingdoms and shifting allegiances did not help over-kings to attain lasting or far-reaching authority. But the nature of kingship was changing. As Ó Corráin has put it in his seminal study, Irish society between the seventh and twelfth centuries was characterized by ‘rapid, one might even say convulsive, change’, so that ‘by the eleventh and twelfth centuries rule over the (p.291) entire island of Ireland had become, for good or for ill, the prize in the political game’.[14]

Authors, according to Ó Corráin, played an important part in encouraging such a view. Faced with hostile incursions not only by Vikings but also by other Irishmen, scholars in religious institutions had much to gain from a political order in which kings had the power and the inclination to ensure stability, stamp out lawlessness, and uphold the Church's rights. Many of them (in his view) wanted the complex network of kingdoms to be replaced by a firmer structure whereby power would be concentrated in the hands of fewer kings wielding proportionally greater control. The idea of an

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

ancient kingship over all Ireland, the over-kingship of Tara, became a familiar theme which they encouraged their royal patrons to realize. In sagas, saints' lives, genealogies, and didactic texts they anchored their patrons' dynastic claims in the distant past, evoking legendary kings and judges over all Ireland, equal in stature to the prophets and kings of Israel. The king was exhorted to uphold justice with a strong arm and to increase his authority and territory.

Ó Corráin gives several examples of authors appearing to promote such an ideology in the Middle Irish period, 'ruthlessly reshap[ing] the past to justify the present', and the *Togail* fits naturally into this context as a cautionary tale.[15] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has interpreted its 'moral' in these terms: 'the king could have restored public order had he brought his fosterbrothers to book for their thieving'.[16] In this way the 'single sin of the sovereign', the mythological pattern which Ó Cathasaigh elsewhere identifies within the deep structure of the *Togail* and its sources, is applied to a contemporary political concern also seen in *tecosca* and canon laws.[17] May we therefore say of the *Togail* what Ó Cathasaigh himself has said of the early tales about Cormac mac Airt—namely, that it 'expresses in narrative form the ideology of kingship set forth in the legal and gnomic literature'?[18]

At one level, the answer is clearly 'yes'. The *Togail*, the vernacular *tecosca*, and the canon laws all express a common concern with strong rule, justice, and the ruler's duties and responsibilities, a concern shared by poetic eulogies of specific kings.[19] But the saga's meaning cannot be reduced to a more elaborate version of the message found in legal and gnomic texts, and the saga's engagement with the (p.292) politics of its authors' own time was not necessarily limited to justifying current practice: as Thomas Owen Clancy puts it, 'this is literature, not propaganda'.[20] Identifying ideologies and cultural assumptions shared with other texts is only the first step in any reconstruction of a text's meaning. To understand the use to which those ideologies and assumptions have been put requires attention to the text's literary form, as Ó Cathasaigh himself has emphasized.[21] Sagas may share much with more obviously utilitarian genres such as genealogies,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

but the differences between these genres are as significant as their similarities. For the *Togail*, this means attending to those features which make for a compelling story: to its artistry. This should not be dismissed as merely ‘incidental’ surface decoration, to be ignored in the search for a saga's meaning in favour of harder realities such as its genealogical framework: such a dichotomy would reflect an unworkable separation between form and content.[22] The meaning of a saga is not separate from its form, but emerges from it.

At the simplest level, the mere fact that the political meanings of the *Togail* are embedded within a story, rather than within a prescriptive or admonitory text like the *tecosca*, changes the nature of those meanings.[23] A *tecosc* displays its primary message on the text's surface and in an abstract, idealized form; a saga requires more interpretation to uncover its meanings, and removes abstract principles from the realm of the ideal by embodying them in a contingent series of events and in flesh-and-blood individuals.

Events and individuals were, of course, mentioned in prescriptive texts too; but they were put to very different uses. In his mirror for princes *De rectoribus christianis*, Sedulius Scottus invoked a range of biblical and historical characters, sometimes even telling stories about them; but his structure subordinates these stories to his larger argument about rulers’ duties.[24] They provide *exempla* in the strictest sense of the word, examples of specific qualities designed for imitation or avoidance. Sedulius's text is a masterpiece in its own way, with a narrative momentum which (like that of the *Togail*) is heightened by the juxtaposition of different metrical and prosodic forms; but its momentum is driven by the force of his rhetoric rather than by any narrative tension. Saints’ lives, too, often subordinate their narrative content to the primary purpose of elevating their central protagonist: the anecdotes brought together in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* are organized not in chronological order but insofar as they support a particular aspect of the saint's holiness.[25]

As a saga, by contrast, the *Togail* owes its momentum to the dramatic narration of a connected sequence of events whose

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

protagonists (Conaire and his (p.293) foster-brothers) are not simply personifications of abstract qualities like the good and bad kings invoked by Sedulius, to be admired or deplored. The audience is encouraged to judge their behaviour, but at the same time to view the events narrated through their eyes: to this extent the audience is invited to identify with these characters, regardless of whether their actions are deemed good or bad. This difference has important cognitive consequences and affects the meaning of the text. It is partly because Conaire and his foster-brothers fear and lament the events of the *togail* that present-day readers see it as tragic.

These basic generic differences help explain why the *Togail* uses the story of Saul in such a different way to Sedulius and Adomnán. In *De rectoribus christianis*, Saul is a set of two-dimensional images (impious king, enraged tyrant, slain enemy) cut out from the larger narrative context of 1 Samuel and applied as cautionary *exempla* to teach specific lessons about what kings ought not to do.[26] In the *Togail*, by contrast (if my argument in chapter 9 is accepted), the larger biblical narrative of Saul has been used as a story in its own right. It presents Conaire as a latter-day Saul whose behaviour is likewise to be deplored, but whose situation has elements of pathos which compel a certain sympathy from the audience. Indeed, the *Togail* contains an even greater concentration of pathos-heightening devices than does the biblical text. The result is that it becomes difficult to view Conaire as *rex iniquus* pure and simple.

This sympathetic treatment of a ‘bad king’ may be connected with the fact that the *Togail* is not only a saga about kingship, but also a saga about an entire social order. Its target audience, too, is likely to have included the upper echelons of society, not just kings.[27] Bart Jaski has made a similar point about the *tecosca*: while they pose as instructions for kings alone, their contents reveal that the ideology of *fír flathemon* was applied much more widely across society, and that disaster could result from injustice and inappropriate behaviour by lords and commoners as much as by kings.[28] In interpretations of the *Togail*, scholars concerned with

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

attaching blame for the disaster have unanimously pointed the finger at Conaire, but his foster-brothers are also to blame for thieving and plundering in the first place. By foregrounding the parallel trajectories of Conaire and his foster-brothers and their convergence upon the Hostel, the saga underlines the fact that they *combine* to produce the cataclysm which takes place there. The pathos with which both they and the king are represented chimes with the story's refusal to pin the blame entirely onto one or the other party. The saga thus dramatizes the cost of royal misjudgement (as king, after all, Conaire has the greater responsibility),[29] but also (p.294) dramatizes the evils which result when other members of society challenge the king's authority and mistreat their social inferiors.

The anti-plundering polemic which Máire West has identified within the *Togail* therefore fits into a wider ideological framework in which both king and subjects were expected to act according to their stations.[30] This perspective makes sense of the emphasis on the breakdown of social hierarchies and images of bodily dismemberment which accompany the catastrophe.[31] It also helps explain the great length of the description-sequence not only as a dramatic device, but also as a narrative embodiment of the many-layered social system over which Conaire presides. The enumeration of social functions represented by his personnel recalls the lists of social groups and their roles in prescriptive texts such the Middle Irish *Diambad messe bad rí réil* (‘If I were an illustrious king’), whose section beginning *Roscāiled do chāch a ord* (‘For each his task has been appointed’) advises that everyone should follow their father's trade:

> Mac in timpānaig na tét: issé a bés gabáil grēs nglan
> mac in murigi icon muir: mac ind airim icond ar.[32]
>
> The son of the player on a stringed instrument,
> it is his custom to sing clear compositions;
> [let] the mariner's son [take] to the sea,
> the ploughman's son to the soil.

But the connections between *tecosca* and saga, and between the saga's apparent message and its overall meaning, are

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

more problematic than this. As we have seen, the social hierarchy over which Conaire presides incorporates elements of its own downfall within itself, with monsters, plunderers, and weapons of mass destruction in tow.[33] The *tecosc* just cited hints at trouble towards the end of the list of appropriate occupations: *Mac ind ḟoglada icond ulc: o phurt do phurt tiar is tair* (‘[Let] the plunderer's son [take] to evil-doing from harbour to harbour, west and east’).[34] As chapter 3 has shown, this is exactly what Conaire's foster-brothers do when they follow their ancestral prerogatives. By translating such a precept into narrative and dramatizing the outcome, the *Togail* complicates and questions that precept. In this way the saga's exemplary function—recommending appropriate royal and noble behaviour—is put into perspective by its exploration of the difficulty of putting such ideology into practice.

Such possibilities were open to narrative texts, in a way that was not open to prescriptive texts, because of basic differences between the genres and their functions. Nevertheless, the case of the plunderers in *Diambad messe bad rí réil* suggests (p.295) that when texts like the *Togail* questioned the prevailing ideology of kingship and governance, their authors were able to take their cue from tensions already existing within that ideology. As we shall now see, these tensions are evident even in texts with clear didactic, prescriptive, and propagandistic purposes.

Ideal Kingship: a Contradiction in Terms?

Not all scholars subscribe to Ó Corráin's view that mediaeval Irish authors belonged to a single ‘mandarin caste’.[35] Whether or not they did, it still seems likely that a desire for strong, just rulership would have been shared by most if not all of them. But exactly how such rulership was to be achieved was an open question. Even if we restrict ourselves to some of the Middle Irish didactic and propagandistic texts cited by Ó Corráin, considerable discrepancies emerge.

The variety of ecclesiastical images of the ideal king in the Middle Irish period may be illustrated by three texts. The mirror-for-princes genre is represented by the Uí Néill poem

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Cert cech ríg co réil ('The Rights of Every Lawful King'), traditionally connected with the ninth-century northern king Áed Oirdnide but probably written for one of his eleventh-century descendants;[36] while Munster propagandists provided two different ways of idealizing a past king in narrative form. One is the elaborate chronicle-cum-saga *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* ('The Irish-Viking Conflict'), which glorifies the reign of the Munster king Brian Boru and his defeat of a Norse–Irish alliance at the Battle of Clontarf, near Dublin; it was probably commissioned by his great-grandson Muirchertach early in the twelfth century.[37] The other is the early twelfth-century life of the patron saint of the Uí Briain, *Vita Sancti Flannani* ('Life of St. Flannán'), which opens with an idealizing portrait of the saint's father, King Theodricus.[38]

There is much common ground in these three ecclesiastically authored texts, especially on the home front: all three agree that the ideal king should be exceptionally generous and lenient towards churchmen, endowing churches and promoting learning.[39] They agree that the ideal king should promote peace and social order, and that his justice will be reflected in material abundance. Brian's alleged achievement of *sithcháin […] in Erinn uile* ('peace in all Ireland') is marked by a verse commemorating a remarkable event which occurred during his reign: a lone woman walked the length of Ireland, dangling a gold ring in front of her, and nobody robbed or raped her.[40] Theodricus's reign in the *Vita Flannani* is characterized by *pax fraterna, omnium copia per omnes Hybernie fines* ('brotherly peace and every abundance to the very extremities of Ireland');[41] while *Cert cech ríg* urges the king to maintain *síd* ('peace') and represents Áed's projected success in terms of natural abundance familiar from earlier *tecosca*.[42]

Discrepancies begin to emerge when these texts go into more detail on how this idyllic peace is or was achieved. The *Vita Flannani* presents Theodricus as a Christlike figure whose moral and spiritual perfection inspires his people to act likewise: *fama bonorum operum suorum paganos ac fidei inimicos ad fidem revocabat* ('by the fame of his good works he

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

recalled to the faith heathen and enemies of the faith').[43] Christlike, too, is his attitude towards enemies: *inimicis supplicantibus debita relaxabat* ('he relieved suppliant enemies from their debts').[44] This recalls the more pragmatic recommendations for royal clemency in earlier texts such as the older recension of *Audacht Morainn*:

> Ocbath trócairi cotn-océba.[45]
> Coicleth a thúatha, cot-céillfetar.
> Fairtheth a thúatha, fa-rresat.
> Tálgeth a thúatha, tan-áilgebat.
>
> Let him exalt mercy, it will exalt him.
> Let him care for his peoples, they will care for him.
> Let him help his peoples, they will help him.
> Let him soothe his peoples, they will soothe him.

These sentiments are taken further in the same text's declaration that *ní fírḟlaith nad níamat bí bendachtnaib* ('he whom the living do not glorify with blessings is not a true ruler').[46]

(p.297) The author of *Cert cech ríg*, by contrast, favoured a tougher approach. Áed is encouraged to lose no opportunity of gathering income (except from the Church) and to be severe to friend and foe alike:

> do thūatha fadéin · tuc dot réir ar tús […]
> corbat coimsid coisc · cech toisc immatēig […]
> Cid inmain in tūath · bīd imguin ri scáth
> corrabat a ṅgéill · it lāim fēin sech cāch.
> Tabair gemeal crūaid · for cimbid do chéin
> ar is ferr a lecht · andā a thecht cen réir […]
> Do chīs is do cháin · do thabach co crúaid […][47]
>
> First of all, bring your own people under your power […]
> and be capable of correcting, on every business about which you go […]
> Though the people be beloved, let there be battle against [even] a shadow
> until their hostages be in your own hands.
> Put harsh fetters on a prisoner from afar,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

> for his death is better than his escaping against
> [your] will […]
> Levy strictly your rent and tribute.

In other words, a king cannot afford to be particularly Christlike until he has put his people in their place—including his own sons and brothers, since nobody can be trusted.[48] Isidore's notion of the king as 'corrector' seems to underlie this attitude: the king's vigilant and constant *cosc* ('correcting/ chastising') ensures his success.[49] It is hard to imagine such a king being 'glorified by blessings' from his people.

The *Vita Flannani* and *Cert cech ríg* appear to inhabit different worlds, particularly when royal mercy is involved. One could hardly draw up a coherent code of royal conduct from them. But an objection may be raised: do not these differences reflect (once again) the different genres to which the two texts belong? Ought we not to expect such discrepancies between a saint's life and a collection of hard-nosed political advice? This point is in fact supported by the strange case of *Cogadh Gáedhel*, a hybrid text combining the conventions of hagiography, chronicle, and heroic saga. This hybridity is encapsulated in the character of King Brian himself, presented as a heroic Christian leader who drove the Vikings out of Ireland once and for all.[50] On the one hand Brian is Christlike, gentle and peace-loving, dissociated from violence;[51] on the other hand, he is as fierce a warrior as Cú Chulainn, and his treatment of the Scandinavian populations recalls the Old (p.298) Testament rather than the New (indeed, he is explicitly compared with David and Solomon at one point):

> Ro croch, ocus ro mharbh, ocus ro mudhaidh meirleacha, ocus bithbenacha, ocus foghladha Erenn. Ro scrios, ro scaoil, ro dhealaigh, ro ling, ro lomair, ro ledoir, ro mill, ocus ro mudhaidh Gullu gacha tire […] Ro daer, ocus ro moghranaigh a maeir, ocus a reachtairedha, […] a macaemha maerda morglana, ocus a ninghena mine macdhachta […][52]

> He hanged and killed and destroyed the robbers and thieves and plunderers of Ireland. He exterminated,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

> scattered, banished, made flee, stripped, maimed, ruined and destroyed the foreigners in every territory […] He enslaved and reduced to bondage their stewards and their collectors, […] their handsome, very bright youths, and their smooth nubile girls.

The opposing generic pulls of hagiography and heroic saga give Brian a split personality.

Brian's treatment of the Scandinavians may possibly reflect the latest currents in European political theology which justified warfare against the heathen, a theology played out in the Crusades from the late eleventh century onwards. In the *Cogadh*, overt comparisons of Brian with David, Solomon, and Moses help to justify and even glorify the harsh treatment of infidels ascribed to Brian.[53] Yet the contrast with Theodricus's peaceable victory over heathenism is stark. Furthermore, the presence of different generic expectations cannot explain away the ideological differences between *Cert cech ríg* and the *Vita Flannani*. The conceptual chasm still gapes open, with different literary genres ranged on each side and the *Cogadh* straddling the gap.

The place of clemency in the practice of the ideal king also gave rise to tensions within individual mirrors for princes. The author of a later recension of *Audacht Morainn* (Thurneysen's A-recension, which he dated to the ninth century but which may be later) removed the four lines on clemency quoted above, retaining only the two preceding lines recommending that the ruler exalt the potentially sterner quality of *fírinne* (‘justice’). The section which denies the status of *fírḟlaith* (‘true ruler’) to a king whose people do not glorify him with blessings is altered so that it defines the *fírḟlaith* solely in terms of the ruler's own power and strength. *Audacht Morainn* was changing with the times—yet the newer, tougher version still expects the king to secure *síd subaige sāme soad […] sádaile* (‘peace, joy, tranquillity, comfort and ease’) in his realm, just as in the original version.[54] The resulting tensions are even more overt in the Middle Irish *tecosca*. *Cert cech ríg* instructs the king to be *crúaid* (‘harsh’) on (non-offending) foreign hostages and his own people alike in stanzas 8, 9, and

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

12, using the same word on all three occasions, but then specifically instructs the king in stanza 67 not to be *crúaid*. Similarly, the Middle (p.299) Irish mirror for princes *Diambad messe bad rí réil* names *trócaire* ('mercy, leniency') as one of the three best qualities of a king's reign, but in almost the same breath recommends a zero-tolerance policy towards dissent: *conach fagbad fōisam lat: cid do mac nothaesad fritt* ('that though it were your own son who opposed you, he should not be spared by you').[55]

Doubtless these contradictions could be resolved by those who used these texts in practice. They certainly reappear without evident irony in later mediaeval and early modern Irish bardic poetry, in which kings are repeatedly exhorted to achieve peace by taking a very harsh line indeed.[56] Yet the twelfth-century and earlier texts discussed here suggest that the ideal of strong, just rule was far from simple. Contributing to these difficulties during this period was a lack of unanimity on the limits and legitimacy of physical violence. In this period before the development of fully-fledged theologies of just war (except, from the eleventh century, against the heathen), there were no well-trodden rhetorical strategies for reconciling a king's pragmatic use of violence with the ideal Christian life. On the contrary, an increasingly dominant strand in tenth- and eleventh-century theology held that violence between Christians was always wrong.[57] Furthermore, the most important discussion of just war before the 'Peace of God' movement gathered momentum—namely Sedulius Scottus's *De rectoribus christianis*—reveals its author's evident discomfort with this notion even as he attempted to justify the participation of clergy as well as rulers in warfare.

De rectoribus christianis is unusual among both Irish and Frankish mirrors for princes in squaring up to this problem.[58] Nevertheless, violence and warfare are not discussed until more than halfway through the text, underlining the prior importance of other royal virtues such as wisdom, piety and humility. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 concentrate specifically on peace, characterizing the reign of the *rex iustus et pacificus* ('just and peaceable king') by lyrical descriptions of natural fertility in the Irish manner.[59] Chapter 12 foregrounds martial

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

concerns in its main section, an *exemplum* about the Emperor Theodosius and Bishop Ambrose. This section's ostensible function is to highlight the glory of Theodosius's submission to Ambrose's advice, but far more narrative weight is placed upon the gravity of Theodosius's sin—namely, his *iniustam multorum milium necem* (‘ruthless slaughter of many thousands of people’) in battle.[60] Chapter 13 goes on to condemn military ferocity, with Theodosius and Saul providing negative *exempla*, (p.300) and commends David's (occasional) practice of sparing his enemies.[61] In chapters 14 and 15 Sedulius reluctantly grants that warfare may sometimes be necessary, but recommends prayer as a better expedient; if combat is unavoidable, the king should trust in God rather than his own might.[62] Having issued all these warnings, Sedulius can now mention some of the positive aspects of warfare in chapter 16: *bellum* […] *saepe superna disponente gratia dulcissimos fructus maioris pacis et concordiae progenerat* (‘war […] often begets the sweetest fruits of greater peace and concord, by the disposition of divine grace’). But immediately he reverts to his previous theme, insisting that spiritual armour is more valuable still.[63] Chapter 17 forcefully insists that gloating over vanquished enemies is an act of unforgivable impiety, and again gives the example of David lamenting the death of Saul.[64] Finally, chapter 18 restates the need for the king to credit God, not himself, with any victories; and the text ends with another paean to temperance and wisdom.[65]

Sedulius was writing during a period of intense Viking activity both in Ireland and on the Continent: his episcopal patrons were active in mobilizing the clergy alongside laymen to fight the new enemy. As Luned Davies observes, ‘Sedulius could not afford to be of the camp that disapproved of bishops being involved in war.’[66] Yet his image of the king at war is so hedged about by prohibitions and dominated by negative *exempla* that warfare and tyranny become hard to distinguish. This paradox recalls *Cert cech ríg*: its intention was to provide practical advice for maintaining social order, but in effectively encouraging the king to oppress and subdue his own people it

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

seems to advocate a form of tyranny. Peace throughout Ireland is to be achieved by one king conquering all:

> Eiri uile duit · a duine nach lac
> timairc hí dot rēir · duit féin is dot mac.[67]
>
> [Take] all Ireland for yourself, O man who art not weak;
> bend her to your will, for yourself and for your son.

The author obviously thought the means justified the (hoped-for) ends, but the oppressed and overtaxed society evoked by *Cert cech ríg* has little in common with that described in the earlier and more utopian *tecosca* such as *Audacht Morainn*, every man sitting contentedly in *ina chainorbu* ('in his fair inheritance').[68] It is more reminiscent of Samuel's warning in 1 Samuel 8:10–18 of the material and economic oppression which would come upon the Israelites if they took a king.

The image of kingship projected by Irish churchmen in the Middle Irish period thus turns out, on closer inspection, to be a precarious construction, and not as (p.301) monolithic as the phase 'strong, just rule' implies. A flaw was discernible in Isidore's definition of kingship as *recte agendo*, potentially setting the two words against each other: the decisive, pragmatic 'actions' required by these troubled times were not necessarily 'right' in every sense.

The difficulty of reconciling the demands of this world with those of the kingdom of Heaven had been discussed by Augustine of Hippo long before, using the same typology of Samuel, Saul, and David which the architects of the new kingship ideology used to promote their image of the strong, active ruler. In *The City of God*, Augustine warned explicitly that not all good kings were fortunate in this world; he wished to discourage kings from converting to Christianity in the hope of merely worldly gain, and to demonstrate the insubstantial nature of worldly glory by comparison with the true City of God.[69] He also emphasized the fact that God had not originally intended the Israelites to be ruled by kings, but had intended them for direct rule by himself: in chapters 8 and 12 of 1

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Samuel, the prophet rebukes the people for wanting a king like the heathen nations around them and thus rejecting God. They will soon be sorry, he thunders in chapter 8, when their new king begins to oppress them.

Human kingship, for Augustine, was epitomized by the inadequate and ambivalent figure of the first Israelite king, Saul. On the one hand, the office of kingship—the inviolable *christus Domini* whose sacredness stayed David's hand—is hived off from the man's actual achievement, becoming an allegory of Heaven, *futuri regni* […] *umbra in aeternitate mansuri* ('a shadow of the later kingdom that was to remain to eternity').[70] On the other hand, Saul appears in *The City of God* most often as the failed and rejected king, who at one point is interpreted as a symbol of Israel herself—not in terms of God's chosen people, but as the people who would stubbornly persist in error even after the coming of Christ, and who were thus predestined to damnation.[71] Augustine's probing analysis of the shady origins of earthly kingship led him to emphasize its limitations as an institution.

Augustine's reservations about mortal kingship did not go unnoticed in the kingship reforms of the ninth century. Hincmar of Rheims gained political capital from the typological tension between Saul's defining role as both *rex impius* and *christus Domini*:[72] the separation of the office of kingship from the man holding that office was crucial to the late Carolingian ideology of kingship, while the liturgies of royal consecration included prayers requesting that God provide *regem ac principem secundum cor suum* ('a king and ruler according to His heart') and imploring God to preserve, through grace, the king's continued fitness for kingship.[73] Hincmar and his church were drawing on an Augustinian pessimism about the inadequacy of mortal kingship in order to present the king as a mere human who needed the Church's (p.302) guidance to rule properly.[74] Walter Ullmann saw this strategy as the germ of future monarchies under the total sway of ecclesiastics, and it fuelled fierce debates in subsequent centuries over the Church's right to depose tyrants.[75] The figure of Saul, potent and ambivalent, provided typological ammunition for both sides in the 'Investiture

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Controversy' of the eleventh century, in which the proper relationship between sacred and secular authority was fiercely debated.[76] The typological fault-line within Christian kingship thus exacerbated a struggle which many historians view as a defining moment in Western political theory.

But the strategy of Hincmar, like that of countless ecclesiastical writers, was still predicated on the idea that good kingship was possible. In this way it suppressed the darker side of Augustine's portrayal of kingship. As Janet Nelson has observed, 'few medieval writers cared to recall that the Lord had not originally planned for Israel to be ruled by kings'—partly because these writers 'had put their eggs in the basket of good kingship'. This included earlier exegetes like Bede and Hrabanus Maurus, whose commentaries on 1 Samuel drew directly on Augustine's *City of God*. Seizing on Augustine's identification of Saul with the Jews and divine rejection, both exegetes cordoned off Saul's bad kingship from the good, Christlike figure whom they preferred to associate with the role of king.[77] The writers of didactic and prescriptive texts on kingship pursued a secular emphasis on the king's responsibility and his ability to produce justice in *this* world; so while they drew on one side of Augustine's theology (the desirability of ideal kingship)[78] they averted their eyes from the other (that such kingship would only be attained in Heaven).

The resulting tensions were exacerbated by the increasing demands for strong rule by early mediaeval Irish churchmen. Royal behaviour condemned by Samuel as tyrannical, and associated with the figure of *rex iniquus* in early mediaeval exegesis, was now in part encouraged by these ecclesiastical authors as a means of ensuring law and order; yet at the same time many of these authors attempted to maintain Augustine's vision of the ideal king as a type of Christ. Their texts were successful in encouraging the consolidation of royal power, but less so in presenting coherent images of kingship.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Bruiden Meic Da Réo, the *Togail*, and the Tragic Paradox of Kingship

These submerged tensions between utopia and *Realpolitik* were exploited in Irish narrative literature from the ninth century onwards. Here the ideology set forth in (p.303) didactic and propagandistic genres spawned a range of more questioning explorations of kingship.[79] In some cases, the very exercise of narrating and reflecting on the legendary-historical circumstances surrounding a specific *tecosc* could end up producing a trenchant critique of the *tecosc* itself, rather than merely 'illustrating' it as sagas are often assumed to do. An excellent example of this process at work is provided by the counterpoint between *Audacht Morainn* and the eleventh- or twelfth-century Middle Irish narrative known as *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* ('Mac Da Réo's Hostel'),[80] which turns out to illuminate the *Togail*, not only in terms of its ideological stance, but also aspects of its construction and its use of sources.

Both recensions of *Audacht Morainn* begin with a short prose introduction which explains that Morann's *tecosc* was intended for Feradach Finn Fechtnach ('the fair, the fortunate'), who had just returned to Ireland to claim the kingship of Tara after growing up in exile in Britain, his father having been murdered by the vassal peoples (*aithechthúatha*) of Ireland.[81] Other Middle Irish texts add further details: the vassals' revolt was led by Morann's father, Cairpre Cenn Cait ('Cat-head'), who organized a feast at Mac Da Réo's Hostel in Connaught at which all the Irish kings and noble families (*sáerchlanna*) were massacred, except three queens and their unborn sons who escaped to Britain.[82] As Thomas Charles-Edwards has remarked, this back-story strikes a dissonant note against the utopian and peaceable sentiments of the older recension of *Audacht Morainn*.[83] In *Bruiden Meic Da Réo*, these dissonances are dramatized: this saga fuses these various stories into a connected narrative about the vassals' revolt which provides a setting for *Audacht Morainn* by making Morann himself responsible for the restoration of the rightful king.[84]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

The saga operates on two levels, whose difference is reflected in the contrast between the central body of the story (much of which also existed in earlier versions of the saga) and its outer sections (most of which seems to have been newly composed, or newly sourced, for this version).[85] The central body of the story (p.304) covers the events from the massacre to the restoration: it presents the vassals as the villains of the piece and the nobles as innocent victims. It relates the massacre itself as a bloodthirsty affair, with vivid similes in the late Middle Irish florid style about tragic deaths, pig-litters, and streams of blood. Cairpre and the vassals are murderous usurpers: the horror and sacrilege of their deed is underlined by its being termed a *mórḟingal* (‘great kin-slaying’, §11), and the illegitimacy of Cairpre's reign is visible in the resulting crop failure, poor fishing, and climate change, as readers of *Audacht Morainn* would expect.

Cairpre's eventual death brings about the pivotal moment in the story: the kingship is offered to his son, the wise and virtuous Morann, who refuses because it is not *toich* (‘fitting’). In the saga's first and last instance of direct speech, the people ask Morann's advice and he recommends restoring the kingship to the rightful line and recalling the exiled princes from Britain, with Feradach as over-king. The vassals swear allegiance to the returning kings, Morann is made chief judge of Ireland, and the natural world endorses the new régime: *ba maith dano ind Ēiriu īar sin, ar ro·tóg a dūdhche forræ d’ēis na n-aithech* (‘Ireland was prosperous after that, because he restored her natural due to her after the [rule of the] vassals’, §14).[86] The story is then lent additional authority and significance by the inclusion of a corroborative historical poem, which repeats the story from the massacre to the restoration and ends by tracing *cach sōerchland* (‘every noble family’) to the princes brought back from Britain. This poem may represent the source of the extant versions of the ‘vassals’ revolt’ saga, and its sympathies are very clear: regicide is wrong, and the realm's well-being depends on maintaining the rightful hierarchy, with the nobles ruling the vassals.[87]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

The adequacy of this moral is placed in sharp relief by the new material added in the outer sections of the saga, which briefly indicate why the vassals revolted in the first place, and what happened after the restoration of ‘rightful’ kingship. The problem, it seems, was strong rule of the kind recommended by *Cert cech ríg* and the later version of *Audacht Morainn*:

> Bai fodord mōr ic athechthūathaib Ērenn i n-aimsir tri rīg n-Ērenn […][88]
>
> […] Ba hadbal trā 7 ba dírím truma in chísa 7 mēt na cāna 7 fortamlaighe in ḟlaithiusa laisna tri ríghaibh sin for aitheachaib Ērend. Ba holc immurro lasna haithechaib a menma ar mēt na daīre boī forro 7 ar truma a foghnoma, air ro·batar na særchlanna ac laigi forsna ferannaibh i·rabatar sum.[89]
>
> There was a great murmuring of discontent among the vassal-peoples of Ireland in the time of three kings of Ireland […]
>
> (p.305) […] Now, vast and beyond measure was the weight of tribute, the amount of tax and the overpowering strength of rule [imposed] on the vassals of Ireland by those three kings. The vassals were dejected because of the extent of the servitude [imposed] on them and the weight of their bondage, for the nobles were oppressing the lands in which they lived.

The vassals’ solution to this problem may be a grave crime, as the subsequent narrative suggests, but responsibility clearly lies in part with the nobles themselves, whose legitimacy as rulers is somewhat undermined by this framing of events.

Worse still, at the end of the saga, after the florid endorsement of the nobles’ legitimate rule and Morann's role as peacemaker, we are told that the new king, Feradach—the recipient of *Audacht Morainn*—went on to repeat his father's mistakes: *Boí īarom Feradach oc dīlgend na n-aithech 7 aca cur hi cís 7 a foghnam dermar 7 ac tarrochtain forro in gnīma do·righensat* (‘Later on, Feradach was exterminating the vassals, imposing massive tribute and servitude on them, and avenging on them the deed they had done’, §16). As a result, a

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

second uprising takes place, and Feradach is slain *a comairle na n-aithech* (‘at the instigation of the vassals’, §16). His son Túathal Techtmar escapes across the sea, and the saga ends with Túathal biding his time. This repetition of events suggests an ongoing cycle of violence beyond the end of the saga; indeed, as the author of *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* (and possibly his audience) well knew, Túathal himself would go on to suppress provincial and/or vassal resistance with uncompromising brutality.[90]

The outer framework of *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* thus poses the question: what happens if the true king becomes a tyrant? The earlier version of *Audacht Morainn* had emphasized that true kingship meant being glorified with blessings by one's people, not assailed by murmurings of discontent; that text had also suggested that if the king helps and soothes his peoples, they will help and soothe him. As we have seen, these sentiments were all omitted from the later version; but *Bruiden Meic Da Réo*, like a number of other Middle Irish sagas, illustrates the corresponding dictum that if the king oppresses his peoples, they will oppress him.[91]

The dissonance between the inner and outer sections of this story is related to the saga's reliance on disparate sources. The replication of the original revolt at the end of the story, and the hint at its future replication under Túathal, may (as Thomas O’Rahilly suggested) derive from a single original legend of the vassals’ revolt having become fragmented and attached to several different kings in later annals and chronicles, a common enough pattern.[92] But this fragmentation has been turned to narrative advantage in the saga, showing how and why history repeats itself and using this pattern to raise awkward and bitterly ironic questions about the **(p.306)** practice of kingship and the proper solution to failures of royal justice. The irony is enhanced by grim touches of humour which balance the superficially sympathetic treatment of the nobles during the massacre. The streams of blood gushing from the Hostel were so deep, we are told, that young men could have swum in them *diambadh dīr fuil do snām* (‘if it were proper to swim in blood’, §5) The excessive strength of their rule (*flaith*) is punningly rewarded

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

with strong beer (*flaith*)—a drink of sovereignty?—so that they can be slaughtered more easily. As the narrator puts it, *Bo treisi flaith firu* (‘the beer was stronger than the men’, §5), a formulation surely intended to recall the terms *fírḟlaith* (‘true ruler’) and *fír flathemon* woven through *Audacht Morainn*.[93]

The irony cuts all the way down to the position of the ecclesiastics responsible for writing these texts, for whom Morann—jurist, poet, counsellor, precocious monotheist—often functioned as a legendary *alter ego*. One obvious political message encoded within Morann's pivotal role in the inner part of the saga would be that the maintenance of law and the prestige of jurists are essential to the proper functioning of society. This message is implicit in *Audacht Morainn* and other texts, and it is easy to see why ecclesiastical jurists of the Middle Irish period should have wished to promote it. But in the saga as it stands, Morann's influence over the king is seen to peter out remarkably quickly: he is ultimately powerless to prevent his own people from being massacred and oppressed by his royal protégé Feradach.

Bruiden Meic Da Réo, then, constitutes a critique of the prevailing ideology of strong, just rule, but it is not a simple critique: it does not offer solutions to the problems it identifies. The extreme violence of its plot raises the stakes of the questions involved, and the saga's emphasis on truth and justice encourages the audience to judge the story themselves; but they are left to form their own judgements. It is one of several sagas from this period which fuse contrasting (even contradictory) narrative traditions about the epoch-making death of a legendary king in order to explore difficult questions about the nature of kingship.

One other example worth briefly mentioning in this context is the late Middle Irish *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill* (‘The Death of Diarmait mac Cerbaill’), a complex tale of the rise and (especially) the fall of the last heathen and first Christian king of Tara. Diarmait functions as a test-case for explorations of the efficacy of strong Christian rulership in several Middle Irish and Hiberno-Latin texts of which *Aided Diarmata* is the

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

most sophisticated.[94] At one level, as Daniel Wiley has shown, this saga advocates cooperation between Church and kingdom (p.307) and promotes a model of kingship clearly based on 1 Samuel in which the king not only cooperates with the Church but submits to its authority, with Diarmait's patron St Ciarán as the Samuel-figure.[95] Diarmait slips up almost as soon as he has assumed the kingship: he violates the church's sanctuary rights, so Ciarán curses him with a threefold death, which (much later) concludes the saga. The reason for his death is made very clear, and a prophetic dream modelled on that of the doomed biblical king Nebuchadnezzar rams the message home, both for Diarmait and for the saga's audience.[96]

However, what prevents this saga from being ordinary hagiographic propaganda about the just punishment of a sinful king is what happens between the curse and Diarmait's death. First of all, we are told that Diarmait was famed as a paragon of royal justice. The king is then seen to face a series of dilemmas in which his secular and sacred obligations are at loggerheads, and his responses (honouring his secular obligations and exacting secular justice) lead to escalating conflict with other saints, especially Ruadán.[97] At one point, in a passage drawing on older stories about how St Ruadán cursed Tara, the Devil himself is said to prompt the king's herald to arrogant behaviour (resembling the ‘evil spirit’ who drove Saul mad), and the ultimate upshot is Ruadán's cursing of Tara itself, the centre of Irish kingship. By this action the Church has cut away a vital support for its own authority, and Diarmait prophesies that the church in future will suffer the consequences. In the saga's version of the ‘cursing of Tara’ story, unlike earlier versions in saints’ lives, Diarmait's curses are seen taking effect on the saint as he utters them, no less than the saint's curses on the king. Here the saint is no hero: Church and state are seen to engage in a futile and mutually crippling power-play.[98]

The basic moral—that true justice depends on cooperation between ecclesiastical and secular authorities—remains clear, partly because the errors of both king and saint are emphasized in biblical-style dreams and prophecies which explain the significance of the characters’ actions and link

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

them explicitly to present-day political concerns. This procedure differs sharply from that of *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* and that of the *Togail*.[99] Nevertheless, the distribution of blame lends pathos (p.308) and tragic dignity to Diarmait's downfall and eventual threefold death, encouraging balanced reflection on the relationship between strong kingship and the Church militant.[100] The ambivalent portrayal of Diarmait and the Church draws strength from the fact that the saga-author sewed together contrasting traditions and hence viewpoints about the conflict, rather like the *Togail* itself.[101] Indeed, it is possible that the resulting structure was partly influenced by the *Togail*, perhaps prompted by the convergence between the narrative traditions surrounding Diarmait and Conaire (both of which focus on an epochal rupture in the kingship of Tara using the theme of a riddling or threefold death).

The *Togail* performs a similar feat on a grander scale and with a greater level of artistic self-consciousness. In this case, the searchlight is shone into the heart of the institution of kingship not by the blunt ironies of *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* or the clearer present-directed messages of *Aided Diarmata*, but by subtler tensions woven into a sympathetic and fateful dramatization of how a good king may unwittingly bring ruin on his realm. These tensions present the office of kingship as something of a paradox in its own right. As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, the king's obligations to different parties—kin and foster-kin, human and divine—are set against each other, resulting in dilemmas which admit of no clear solution. His failure to keep firmly to his ancestral obligations is set off against his foster-brothers’ reluctant adherence to theirs, and his social responsibilities in some respects collide against his contract with the Otherworld. As was seen in chapter 7, these narrative tensions find echoes in the portrait of Conaire as a vigorous warlord and pathetic youth, blending gentleness with horrifying martial ferocity, wisdom with foolishness. They also find echoes in the portraits of his company and other personages whose identities and appearances reveal both the reach of Conaire's power and the dangers lurking within it.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Kingship, like martial heroism, is seen in Conaire to be glorious but fatally flawed: he was ‘the best king who ever came into the world’, and yet by making one single mistake he failed catastrophically. Philip O’Leary's words come to mind: ‘the tension on a king cannot be borne, the balancing act cannot be performed, perfect kingship is beyond human scope’.[102] Such a viewpoint may reflect an Augustinian scepticism which found its voice during the very period when the idea of kingship over all Ireland was becoming a political reality, but I would hesitate to see it as the saga's sole ‘message’. Rather, these contradictions, tensions, and tragic aspects are deployed in counterpoint to the saga's more obvious ‘cautionary’ elements and its **(p.309)** paeans to ideal kingship, nudging both ecclesiastical and lay audiences to reflect critically on the ordering of government and society, and on humans’ relationship to the divine.

As in *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* and *Aided Diarmata*, so too in the *Togail*, the juxtaposition of extracts (if the textual critics are right) from diverse and partly contradictory sources here becomes an artistic strength rather than an incidental weakness, enabling all these tensions and ironies to be dramatized. As I have shown in chapter 7, the narrative power of such procedures is encapsulated in the central tableau of Conaire, which sets sharply differing kinds of text (possibly drawn from diverse sources) in counterpoint with each other to produce a composite portrait pitting dark against light, good against evil, strength against weakness, glory against despair, world against Otherworld. In the saga as a whole, similar devices of contrast and repetition give rise to ironic juxtapositions, the complex layering of central words and images, the portrayal of the same character or theme from varying perspectives, and purposeful parallels between characters and story-patterns. Such techniques add considerably to the saga's questioning approach to the ideology around which it circles.

In this respect 1 Samuel offered an excellent model, since its author made use of similar techniques to achieve a similar effect. The problems which ecclesiastics had in building its typology into a coherent ideology of kingship were perhaps

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

exacerbated by the fact that 1 Samuel—when read as a whole rather than a source of individual *exempla*—offers a seemingly contradictory portrait of kingship. As several generations of biblical scholars have recognized, it brings together sharply contrasting viewpoints on the fundamental question of whether Israel should be ruled by kings, judges, or directly by God; moreover, within the so-called 'pro-monarchic' strand, further opposed strains of 'Saulide' and 'Davidic' propaganda have been identified. Scholars differ on whether or not the end product is coherent, but most agree that these differing strands originate in disparate source-material and layers of editorial reworking ('redaction').[103] The extant text is generally agreed to have been the work of one or more priestly redactors—the so-called Deuteronomist(s)—whose connected history of Israel has come down to us as the biblical books from Deuteronomy to Kings, thought to have been written in their final form during or shortly after the Israelites' exile in Babylon. Its priestly origins seem clear in its promotion of the idea of a centralized priesthood and the importance of purity-laws; but its position on kingship is less clear, especially in the book of 1 Samuel where opposing viewpoints are given voice by the retention of earlier textual strata.

As a result, like the *Togail*, 1 Samuel contains plenty of episodic and thematic repetition and several apparent (and some real) narrative contradictions. Nevertheless, since the rise of literary approaches in biblical studies since the 1970s, this text is regularly acknowledged to be a purposeful, complex, and polyphonic narrative which asks searching questions about the institution of kingship. It and its surrounding books of Judges and 2 Samuel have been described by the biblical scholar David Jobling as an 'open "debate" between judgeship and monarchy', a questioning backward look at the kingship of an earlier era, seen from the perspective of the kingless post-exilic period when Israel's political future may have been an open question. Jobling adds that the Deuteronomist's treatment of kingship 'is a classic example of talking around a contradiction. This does not mean that the editors say nothing intelligible about monarchy, but rather that what they say is very complex.'[104]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

In this respect 1 Samuel is comparable to the Book of Job's literally dialogic treatment of the problem of evil and divine justice.[105] But whereas Job achieves its complexity and power by setting different speakers against each other, 1 Samuel sets different ideologies (and perhaps sources) against each other by using the contrapuntal strategies just outlined in relation to the *Togail*.[106] The portrayal of Saul is a case in point. 1 Samuel's artful blend of opposing viewpoints on kingship in general (and Saul in particular), and its structuring of Saul's story as discussed in the previous chapter, give the king's portrayal a combination of pathos and culpability which has led many biblical scholars (echoing their rabbinical predecessors) to see his story as ‘tragic’ and psychologically probing. This view has been shared even by those who see 1 Samuel as a collocation of disparate texts: Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg remarked half a century ago that the juxtaposition of pro- and anti-Saul sources was ‘one of the most attractive features of these texts’, frequently resulting in ‘tragic’ narrative which is ‘not only remarkably vivid, but also extremely gripping’.[107] Such a text is much better at asking questions than offering solutions. Bede remarked in his commentary on Samuel that ‘this passage does not explain how the just emperor should behave’, while later mediaeval commentators used 1 Samuel to pose, and then deal with, fundamental questions about divine justice.[108]

It is possible that the author of the *Togail* responded imaginatively to this aspect of 1 Samuel and used it as a model for his own procedure.[109] This is of course impossible to prove, and in any case the combination of compilation and artistry (p.311) can be found in many literate cultures past and present without such an explanation being necessary. Direct influence aside, the very fact that the Deuteronomist could employ such compilatory techniques to comment on and explore the troubled politics of kingship in quasi-tragic vein does make it more plausible that the same techniques (with or without biblical influence) were deliberately used to explore the no less troubled politics of early mediaeval Ireland by casting a ‘backward look’ at a doomed legendary king.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

If, as I am suggesting, the *Togail* does reflect the influence of 1 Samuel at some level, it is nevertheless clear that the Irish saga does not follow the biblical text and its procedures slavishly. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many features of its organization differ radically from that of 1 Samuel. In some respects, its questioning exploration of the standard tropes of Irish kingship ideology are given an added layer of meaning by engaging in dialogue with the biblical text's own treatment of similar tropes.

For example, McCone has pointed out that Irish sagas and the Old Testament share a common emphasis on the physical perfection of the ideal king.[110] 1 Samuel and the *Togail* appear to support this convergence, even employing the same stock formula: of Saul it is said that *non erat vir de filiis Israhel melior illo* (‘there was not a man of the sons of Israel who was better[-looking] than that man’, 1 Sam 9:2), and Samuel tells the Israelites that *non sit similis ei in omni populo* (‘there is none like him in all the people’, 1 Sam 10:24), while Ingcél says of Conaire (echoing the description of Étaín) that *Do neoch at-connarc di delbaib betha isí delb is áilldem díb* (‘of [all] the forms in the world that I have seen, that is the form which is the most attractive of them’, lines 1002–3). In Irish as in many Near Eastern kingship ideologies, the king's physical perfection is supposed to reflect his inner flawlessness and the perfection of his rule.[111]

But 1 Samuel treats this equation of physical and moral perfection with manifest irony. First, Saul turns out not to be the ideal king everyone had hoped for. Furthermore, when it is time for God to choose his successor through Samuel, the prophet's own selection (the tall, handsome Eliab) turns out to be mistaken. God rebukes the prophet:

> ne respicias vultum eius neque altitudinem staturae eius, quoniam abieci eum; nec iuxta intuitum hominis iudico. Homo enim videt ea quae parent; Dominus autem intuetur cor […][112]
>
> ‘Do not look to his appearance nor to the loftiness of his height, for I have cast him aside. And I do not discern

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

> with the gazing of a man. For man sees those things which are apparent, but the Lord gazes into the heart.’

Eliab's brother David is chosen instead. Admittedly David is rather good-looking as well, but the point has been made.[113] When, in 2 Samuel 14:25, David's son (p.312) Absalom is described as the most beautiful man in Israel, the reader is not surprised that he turns out badly. Judging people *intuitum hominis*, ‘with the gazing of a man’, is tantamount to false judgement.

The *Togail* presents a similarly sceptical view of the equation between physical and moral perfection, in line with other Middle Irish texts which call such doctrines into question.[114] The perfect king is a disaster: Conaire's physical perfection is celebrated by the very people whose presence is a sign of his failure as king, and their praise is juxtaposed with vivid images of the breakdown of his rule. However, Conaire is not simply another Bres, the deceptively handsome tyrant in *Cath Maige Tuired*. Conaire is seen to be a great king as well as a flawed one, and Ingcél's praise-poem has a poetic force which undercuts any simple application of irony here. Throughout, the saga's audience is positively encouraged to draw moral judgements from physical appearance, from the perfection of Étaín to the ugliness of Cailb. Furthermore, a large proportion of the *Togail*, including almost all its descriptions of individuals, is focalized through human viewpoints. This clearly sets it apart from 1 Samuel, which is built on third-person narrative peppered with short bursts of dialogue and the occasional longer speech. The ‘watchman device’ exemplifies these tendencies in the saga, presenting repeated acts of visual judgement to which the saga's audience is invited to assent. It may be that a further layer of irony is intended by this arrangement, especially since it is the plunderers whose eyes ‘we’ borrow; but if so, the ironies have become too diffuse for their target to be clear, and many of these visual judgements are shown by later events to be valid (such as Fer Rogain's predictions). The result is a radical ambivalence rather than the clear message preached by God in 1 Samuel: in this respect the *Togail* outdoes 1 Samuel in problematizing the ideologies it explores. Its representation of

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

events through the eyes of actors in the story embodies, at the surface of the narrative, its construction of meaning through the exploration and juxtaposition of different viewpoints on the same ideological subject, for audiences to interpret as they see fit.

Like *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* and several other Middle Irish sagas about kings, then, the *Togail* questions—without overtly condemning or endorsing—aspects of Irish kingship ideology which had particular resonances in the Middle Irish period. I am not suggesting that the saga's tenth- or eleventh-century audiences were encouraged to doubt that the ideal king should rule firmly and justly: on the contrary, one could argue that encouraging the audience to identify emotionally with the protagonists would convey the force of such a 'lesson' all the more powerfully. What I am suggesting is that the saga situates such ideals and lessons within a more complex landscape of constraints and contingencies, a move which some listeners or readers could have taken as an invitation to reflect critically on the principles at stake and their application in reality.[115] This is part of what it means to speak of the *Togail* as (p.313) a tragedy, over and above the sense of pathos and dramatic immediacy conveyed by the saga. In Irish sagas, as in Greek tragedy, deep mythological structures reinforcing social norms are set in counterpoint with the more specific literary structures which bring such myths to life, resulting in complex and compelling works of literature.

Politicizing Pathos: the *Togail* as Dynastic Propaganda?

Yet even if we grant that the *Togail* depicts a world riven by tragic dilemmas, uncertainties, and ideological conundrums, there remains one final possible means of viewing such a moral landscape as part of a clear political and/or ecclesiastical 'message'. Rather than questioning the politics of its own time, could the *Togail* not have been intended to depict a glorious but fatally flawed society which has since yielded to newer and better times, and whose shortcomings thus help to justify the *status quo*? This is the approach which Joan Radner applied thirty years ago to the Old and Middle

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Irish Ulster sagas, and it still represents one of the most suggestive applications of the historical method to the interpretation of Irish sagas, with parallels in a number of other heroic traditions, not to mention Arthurian romance.[116] Its possible application to the *Togail* is worth considering more closely, first in terms of justifying the political *status quo*, then in terms of Christianity more generally.

Radner has emphasized the tragic and ironic aspects of the extant Ulster tales, which depict the breakdown of relationships of kin and foster-kin and between humans and the *síd*, impossible conflicts between sacred bonds of one kind or another, the self-destructive potential and absurdity of martial heroism, and the failure of royal control through false judgments, treachery, injustice, and weakness. In her words, 'Behind the immense vitality, humor and imagination of the Ulster stories is a picture of society moving to dysfunction and self-destruction.'[117] This portrayal, in her view, was constructed by authors serving the powerful Uí Néill dynasty. Reflecting and justifying Uí Néill expansion into Ulster territory, their scholars rewrote the old Ulster legends in order to 'teach the Uí Néill lesson: the Ulaid were heroic but doomed, and the Uí Néill have legitimately inherited their power'.[118] Hence the blend of culpability and pathos with which protagonists of these sagas are portrayed. The Uí Néill's heyday spanned the Old Irish period, and they remained a force to be reckoned with (albeit increasingly fragmented) well into (p.314) the twelfth century, so this interpretation has the advantage of not needing to be tied down to specific dates of a given saga's composition.

At first sight, the *Togail* appears to fit such a scheme admirably. It has clear links with the Ulster sagas: it is set in the same period, and Conaire's retinue includes some of the primary Ulster heroes (Conall Cernach, Cormac Cond Loinges, Sencha mac Ailella, and Dubthach Dael Ulad), perhaps reflecting the traditional connection between Conaire's royal dynasty and that of the Ulaid. More significantly, it depicts a doomed heroic world with a similar blend of pathos, irony, celebration, and disapproval, and most of the tragic themes which Radner has identified in the Ulster sagas are prominent

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

in the *Togail* too. For all these reasons, it is often treated by scholars as an honorary member of the ‘Ulster Cycle’.[119] The historiographic links are further reflected in references to Ulster heroes as well as Conaire in the chronologies and regnal lists built up in the central and later Middle Ages by chroniclers and synthetic historians (a body of texts held by some scholars to reflect Uí Néill interests).[120] The placing of the Pentarchy in these texts clearly caused some confusion for chroniclers and varies in the extant chronicles, but the dominant arrangement places the Pentarchy just after Conaire's death in Da Derga's Hostel.[121] In this scheme, as already mentioned, Conaire's death ushered in a troubled period during which the kingship of Tara was vacant and Ireland was ruled by five regional kings including Conchobor of Ulster and Ailill of Connaught. The Pentarchy came to an end when Lugaid Riab nDerg, a key ancestor of the Dál Cuinn (the progenitors of the Uí Néill), was installed at Tara: his accession began half a millennium in which the Tara high-kingship was dominated by the Uí Néill and their progenitors, including the glorious reign of Cormac mac Airt and ending with the destruction of Tara in the days of Diarmait mac Cerbaill.[122]

These links are reinforced in some of the Ulster sagas, and indeed the synthetic historians drew on sagas themselves when producing their synchronizations. The Middle Irish *Serglige Con Culainn* (‘The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn’) underlines the advent of Uí Néill hegemony by presenting Lugaid as an ally and foster-son of Cú Chulainn, who even issues him with a *tecosc* once he is named as **(p.315)** over-king of Ireland.[123] Ulster's prime hero is seen to hand over power and legitimacy to the dynasty of the future. Other Middle Irish texts develop the spiritual and ecclesiastical dimension of this regime change, presenting the heathen Cú Chulainn prophesying the coming of a better faith in the person of St Patrick (the patron saint of Armagh in the Uí Néill heartlands);[124] in *Siaburcharpat Con Culainn* the hero even participates in Patrick's conversion of the Uí Néill over-king Lóegaire mac Néill.[125] The new political order and the new religious order go hand in hand, perhaps reflecting the mutual

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

dependence of Uí Néill and Armagh hegemonies in the Old Irish period.

The *Togail* does not specifically mention the Pentarchy, but as Conaire's prophetic allusion to *Temair fás* (‘Tara desolate’, line 1055) suggests, its tale of defective sovereignty could have been intended and/or understood to explain how that chaotic period without a king of Tara came about in the first place. For the genealogists and synthetic historians, Conaire mac Eterscéle belonged to an Érainn royal sept (Clanna Dedad) whose claims to the kingship of Tara were dealt a severe blow by his death. The saga's portrayal of his tragic demise could therefore be seen to ‘teach the Uí Néill lesson’ by pointing implicitly towards an Uí Néill dynasty which would redeem the desolation of Tara, a redemption prefigured in the accession of the Uí Néill ancestor Lugaid. This certainly seems to be how the author of *Serglige Con Culainn* read the story of Conaire. Lugaid's inauguration is represented as a more auspicious version of Conaire's, including the recital of a *tecosc* (by Cú Chulainn), and the means by which he is elected is a prophetic bull-feast or *tarbḟeis* modelled on that of the *Togail* or one of its sources.[126]

The typology of Saul and David may once again be at work here, with Lugaid/David as the good king whose descendants would rule at Tara/Jerusalem down the generations, while the descendants of Conaire/Saul would not. Could the depiction of Conaire as a Saul-like king in the *Togail* have been designed to point implicitly towards the reign of more legitimate (Davidic) kings in the future? With or without its biblical gloss, the contrast between doomed Érainn ruler and fortunate Uí Néill ancestor is made even stronger in the legends about Cormac mac Airt, whose importance in Uí Néill legendary history far outweighed that of Lugaid. In a number of Middle Irish texts Cormac is represented as legitimately supplanting an Érainn king of Tara, Lugaid Mac Con, who is often represented as Cormac's foster-father (recalling the relationship between Lugaid Riab nDerg and Cú Chulainn). Mac Con's fate mirrors that of Conaire: his *fír flathemon* and reign are seen to be at an end when he issues a false judgement. Cormac is standing by and issues (p.316) the true judgement; as Mac Con admits,

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

this display of wisdom shows that he is the true king of Tara.[127]

If Conaire's depiction in the *Togail* embodies deliberate parallels and contrasts with a range of separate contemporary depictions of Cormac, this would strengthen the case for interpreting the *Togail* as a tacit pointer towards Uí Néill hegemony. The two men's conceptions and early careers begin in similarly ‘heroic’ vein, and both men persuade the people at Tara that they are the rightful king by uttering words of wisdom. Both kings preside at first over a kind of earthly paradise, described in Otherworldly terms. Both kings’ reigns are subsequently interrupted by warfare. But Cormac retains his status as the wise and rightful ruler: he may be physically driven into exile on more than one occasion, but each time he returns victorious over his rivals, and when he is eventually killed, his descendants rule at Tara. Conaire, by contrast, loses his status as the rightful king when he makes his false judgement; he is ‘exiled from the world’ by spectres and his descendants do not rule at Tara. Indeed, he is succeeded (after a chaotic gap) by the royal line which would eventually produce Cormac himself.

Conaire's symbolic identity as the ‘dark twin’ of Cormac in mediaeval Irish tradition has been suggested by several scholars, albeit at the level of myth rather than dynastic propaganda. Thomas O’Rahilly saw the two kings as essentially the same figure in opposite guises, reflecting the mythological opposition between the bad king Bres and the Túatha Dé Danann hero Lug (as seen in *Cath Maige Tuired*); Ó Cathasaigh has adjusted this equation by suggesting that while Cormac is a replication of Lug, Conaire is a more ambivalent figure, uniting aspects of Lug and Bres.[128] Seen in the context of the typology discussed in the previous chapter, the biblical parallels reflect the same contrast on another level. The prospective king Lug's defeat of the Fomorian champion Balor with a slingshot itself recalls the prospective king David's defeat of the Philistine champion Goliath, and Cormac is depicted both implicitly and explicitly in several Middle Irish texts as an Irish Solomon, building temples, issuing proverbs, and inspiring wonder at his wisdom.[129] Conaire initially appears to promise a similarly Davidic reign:

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

he appears at Tara as a beardless boy with a stone in his sling[130] and recalls Solomon by declaring that he will seek wisdom from the wise. But, as we have seen, he turns out more like Saul in the end: his wisdom comes too late to save him or his people. As McCone has pointed out, Solomon himself had warned against installing a boy as king in Ecclesiastes 10:16, a sentiment echoed not only by the *Hibernensis* but also by the people at Tara in the *Togail* (lines 160–1); Conaire's subsequent career (p.317) bears out the truth of Solomon's remark and shows how far Conaire himself had travelled from his auspicious beginnings.[131]

This evidence does leave room for the possibility that Conaire was depicted as an anti-Cormac in the *Togail*, but it is not strong or extensive enough to compel such a view. After all, Cormac did not have a monopoly on images of ideal kingship. His identification with Solomon is unusual, as is Conaire's possible identification with Saul; but these texts' contrasting typological strategies are not necessarily directly connected. The authors of the various texts about Cormac and Conaire may have drawn independently on biblical sources, or on a common fund of native and biblical images of kingship. The fact that biblical models loom so large in the portrayal of these two kings rather than others may simply reflect their pre-eminence in Irish legendary history: only the very greatest kings could be depicted as Old Testament kings.[132] Comparison with the texts about Cormac therefore suggests ways in which the *Togail* might have been *understood* by contemporary audiences (perhaps, indeed, by the authors of the late Middle Irish texts which develop Cormac's connection with Solomon most explicitly), but it does not necessarily indicate a deliberate contrast with Cormac in the original *Togail*, let alone one intended to support Uí Néill hegemony.

Leaving Cormac aside, the application of Radner's interpretative framework to the *Togail* also runs up against fundamental problems of lineage. If the *Togail* is supposed to fit into an Uí Néill scheme by which Conaire's death marks the end of Érainn/Clanna Dedad legitimacy at Tara, implicitly legitimating subsequent Uí Néill hegemony, why did the author of the extant *Togail* take such pains to emphasize the

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

fact that Conaire's Érainn paternity is adoptive only? As was discussed in chapter 2, this emphasis does not necessarily invalidate Conaire's claim to the kingship of Tara, but it makes it difficult to see the Conaire of the *Togail* as a clear symbol of Érainn royal ambitions. Still more problematically, the Conaire of the *Togail* is directly descended from Uí Néill stock on his mother's side: his great-grandfather is Eochaid Feidlech, who is also the paternal grandfather of the Uí Néill dynast Lugaid Ríab nDerg. This absorption of Conaire within the Uí Néill stock (also reflected in the sagas of the Étaín cycle) represents a radical difference from what is presented in the regnal lists and chronicles:[133] it makes it difficult to see the *Togail* as validating a handover of power from one dynasty to another. Further complications arise from the sole reference to Uí Néill in the saga itself, when Conaire returns from Thomond after violating a *geis* there: *rop nem thened tír Húa Néill immi* ('the land of Uí Néill was a sky of fire around them', lines 240–1). At first sight this passage might appear to imply that the inhabitants of the Uí Néill heartlands are presented as hostile to Conaire;[134] but rebels do not usually burn their own territories. In view of the recently violated *geis* against plundering, (p.318) the portent seems more likely to imply raids (real or, as in Recension Ib, spectral) directed against those peoples *and* Conaire, their king, as well as the apocalyptic connotations of fiery skies discussed by Mark Williams.[135]

All these factors complicate any straightforward 'Uí Néill lesson' which may be inscribed within the *Togail*. Could Uí Néill scholars, then, have been trying to appropriate Conaire as a collateral member of their own genealogies? Carney seems to have thought so, seeing the saga as 'Bregian' overall (i.e. concerning the line of Cobthach Coel Breg, another Uí Néill ancestor). Yet if Conaire was one of 'theirs', why the emphasis on his defective kingship? Radner has aptly characterized the attitude of Irish authors towards the world of legendary Ulster as an 'oscillation between admiration and rejection, kin-feeling and separation', but she has seen this ambivalence as serving a very specific propagandistic goal.[136] In the case of the *Togail*, the portrayal of Conaire's reign as both glorious and tragically flawed may appear to contribute

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

to the same political project, but its ability to do so is fatally undermined by the saga's representation of Conaire's ancestry so as to combine both Uí Néill and Érainn elements, blurring the boundary between kin-feeling and separation in a confusingly literal manner if seen from an Uí Néill perspective.

Conversely, it would be difficult to see the *Togail* as a critique of Uí Néill hegemony, since Conaire's connection with Uí Néill is indirect: he hardly seems a natural focal figure for such a critique. The remaining propagandistic possibility is that the *Togail* was written to promote Leinster interests. Traditions of a prehistoric conflict between the Leinstermen and the Érainn undoubtedly lie somewhere in the background of the surviving texts about Conaire's death, and the view of this conflict presented in Leinster genealogies was that the Érainn were illegitimate usurpers of the kingship of Tara. Much of the action of the extant *Togail* takes place in Leinster: his reign is initiated and brought to an end there, and he is killed by an alliance of individuals whose Leinster connections are suggested by other sources.[137] However, the saga's function as Leinster propaganda is weakened by the fact that it omits to mention the Leinster over-king Núadu Necht, whose reign at Tara in between the Érainn kings Eterscéle and Conaire is mentioned in several chronicles and regnal lists.[138] As Thomas Charles-Edwards has suggested, then, the extant *Togail* bears traces of ‘a tradition influenced by a Leinster standpoint’, and its portrayal of Conaire's responsibility for his own downfall may mesh with such a **(p.319)** perspective;[139] but Conaire's Leinster-oriented killers are hardly presented as heroes or legitimate successors. As it stands, the *Togail* is much too sympathetic towards Conaire and too ambivalent towards the claims of Leinstermen to make sense as political scripture along these lines.

The King without God: Heathen Present and Christian Future?

If these dynastic considerations make it unlikely that a central purpose of the *Togail* was to ‘teach the Uí Néill lesson’ (or that of any other dynasty), there remains the possibility that the *Togail* taught the Church's lesson in its depiction of an

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

admirable but radically flawed heathen past. In Radner's view, the social and political breakdown depicted in the Ulster sagas (interpreted as a situation waiting to be set right by the advent of better rulers) is accompanied by a similar breakdown between humans and the supernatural, world and Otherworld. She interprets this as a problem to be fixed by the advent of a better religion, Christianity—hence Cú Chulainn's prophecies, Conchobor's baptism by blood, and the synchronisms drawn by mediaeval writers between the Pentarchy and the beginning of the Christian era in world history.[140] Leaving aside the specific claims of Armagh, which do not seem relevant to the *Togail*, there may be a broader ecclesiastical ideology at work here. Could the tragic breakdown of human–supernatural relationships in the *Togail*, and that saga's often sinister portrayal of the Otherworld, have been intended to bolster the legitimacy of the Church by showing the inevitable failure of human endeavour without Christ, and perhaps also the demonic nature of heathenism itself?

Such a ‘lesson’ would certainly make sense of the saga's relentless sense of doom and pathos. It would also make sense of the saga's combination of a solidly pre-Christian setting with scattered pointers towards Christian interpretations of that setting. The saga's heathen *mise-en-scène* is underlined by a proliferation of personages, practices, and phenomena commonly associated with the heathen past. As in *Audacht Morainn*, there are no overtly Christian anachronisms such as clerics or churches. At the same time, however, a handful of Christian reference-points—including some which deliberately *approach* anachronism—suggest that audiences were expected to view the story through Christian eyes, and indeed to condemn certain aspects of its narrative world. The most prominent of these reference-points is the saga's occasional drift towards ecclesiastical rhetoric in its demonization of *díberg*, as was shown in chapter 3. In particular, the presence of enemy druids (p.320) in the plunderers' retinue underlines the plunderers' embodiment of the evils of heathenism,[141] especially since druids have been carefully expunged from Conaire's own entourage (including replacing the druid Ninión of Recension I with the more enigmatic personage Nemglan).

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

This appropriation of ecclesiastical anti-heathen sentiment to paint the plunderers in a bad light leads to two near-anachronisms, discussed earlier in this book. One of these is only found in the D-text, where the narrator's implicitly Christian characterization of the plunderers as *in t-aes uilc* (‘the men of evil’, line 618) is enlarged to *in t-aes demna 7 uilc* (‘the men of demons and of evil’). The other example is the comparison of Conaire's evening fire in the Hostel to a burning church (*daig ṅdairthaigi*, ‘the blaze of an oratory’, line 586). This reference is framed within a simile and is in the narrator's own voice, so, like D's reference to demons, it is not a full anachronism. Nevertheless, it is focalized through the plunderers’ viewpoint: it is framed within an episode in which the plunderers gaze at the distant fire and Ingcél questions the sons of Donn Désa about its identity. Consequently, the reference to the church has the effect of aligning these plunderers with those in Christian Ireland (whether Irish or Scandinavian) and prompts the audience to compare the impending attack on Da Derga's Hostel with present-day attacks on churches.[142]

This ecclesiastically skewed portrayal of the plunderers may also account for the fact that Fer Rogain and his companions repeatedly express their fears for Conaire in monotheistic terms: *Ní tuca Día and in fer sin innocht* (‘May God not bring that man here tonight’, line 491). Although the word *día* may be used of heathen or Christian deities, the setting of this oath—uttered by a now-reluctant plunderer—perhaps deliberately recalls the hagiographic motifs of the plunderer whose evil plans are foiled by divine intervention and/or the repentant plunderer returning to the true faith.[143] The oath rings hollow in this case, because we know that Conaire is already in the Hostel awaiting his doom.

These various allusions invite us to view the plunderers through Christian eyes in terms of the evils of heathenism. Echoing Alcuin, we might well ask: ‘What has Ingcél to do with Christ?’[144] It is tempting to extend this anti-heathen sentiment to the portrayal of the Otherworld as a whole in this saga, following Radner's characterization of the Otherworld in several Ulster tales as capricious, ‘vicious’, and ‘malignant’.[145]

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

It certainly has its diabolical side in the *Togail*, too, spawning malevolent apparitions which hound Conaire pitilessly to his death, compelling him to violate one *geis* after another. As we have seen, the plunderers themselves (p.321) become increasingly identified with Otherworldly foreknowledge, magical power, and monstrosity.[146] Demonization of the *síd* was not unknown to saga-authors, especially some of those who took a special interest in it. The eleventh-century recension of *Serglige Con Culainn*, which vies with the *Togail* in its profusion of Otherworldly phenomena, concludes by attributing them all to demons: *Conid taibsiu aidmillti do Choin Chulaind la háes sídi sin. Ar ba mór in chumachta demnach ria cretim* ('And that was a ruinous apparition shown to Cú Chulainn by the people of the *síd*. For the diabolical power was great before the Faith [came]').[147]

Yet no such indication is given in the *Togail*. On the contrary, the saga makes it clear that these demonic manifestations of the Otherworld are the direct result of Conaire breaking the cosmic law in the first place, rather than signs of an inherently malignant Otherworld. The 'angelic' and 'demonic' sides of the Otherworld emerge not in a capricious or random manner, but in a clear progression reflecting the state of his *fír flathemon*. It was the Otherworld, after all, that had issued the original prohibition against plundering. The fact that the hag Cailb is a diabolical parody of the woman of sovereignty Étaín does not reflect anything inherently sinister or ambivalent about Étaín herself; rather, each figure reflects each king's fitness to rule at that point in the story.

In this respect the *Togail* differs from more radical critiques of the heathen imagery of sovereignty such as scholars have found in the late Middle Irish saga *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* ('The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca'). Like the *Togail*, this tale opens with a scene in which a beautiful 'woman of sovereignty' seduces the king, but unlike Étaín she turns out to be a vengeful sorceress masquerading as a heathen goddess who lures the king away from the true faith, prevents him from ruling effectively and brings about his death.[148] Her beauty is deceptive and masks her deadly nature, but Étaín's

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

beauty is an image of cosmic perfection which turns ugly only when defaced by the deeds of men.

Far from representing the work of the Devil in heathen Ireland, the representation of the Otherworld in the *Togail* offers parallels with the workings of Providence in Old Testament Israel. Here the parallels with 1 Samuel offer clues to the theology behind the *Togail* and any ecclesiastical ‘lesson’ its portrayal of the Otherworld may convey. When Saul breaks his sacred injunctions, God shows him his demonic side, sending an evil spirit to torment him into committing further bad deeds (such as attempting to kill David). In the theology of 1 Samuel this is a sign, not of an inherently evil God, but of God's wrath on those who disobey his commands.

(p.322) The similarity between the two stories opens up the possibility that Conaire's fate could be seen in similarly ‘providential’ terms. This possibility may be compared with other alignments between Ireland's heathen past and the Old Dispensation or Old Covenant in mediaeval Irish texts, including the *tecosca* discussed in the previous chapter. In the *Togail*, such an interpretation is certainly not compelled by the text, but, for audiences so disposed, this alignment was made easier in two ways. Druids—the heathen priesthood—were too closely associated with the evils of heathenism to be more than a stumbling-block here, so in the *Togail* they are either omitted (even from the *tarbḟeis* ritual) or briefly demonized by association with the plunderers.[149] This strategy recalls that of *Echtrae Chonnlai* in which an angelic Otherworld woman stands in direct and explicit opposition to the druid Corann;[150] in the *Togail* this opposition is fuzzier, but druids are certainly downplayed. Polytheism, too, is ironed out of the *Togail*: many Middle Irish sagas emphasize the heathen religion of their characters in oaths sworn by more than one god, but the *Togail* resolutely sticks to the more neutral singular form *Día*, ‘God’.[151]

Joseph Kelly has summarized the view of Old Testament history as portrayed in Hiberno-Latin theology as ‘a realm of law, not evil but definitely limited, waiting to be both fulfilled

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

and superseded by the work of Christ'.[152] This description in many ways answers to the world depicted in the *Togail*. Conaire, like Saul, is bound by law. The limitations of this law may be seen in the tragic dilemmas to which it gives rise in the careers of Saul and Conaire, and the sheer difficulty of following the divine command. The unknowability of the Otherworld is especially acute for Conaire: unlike Saul he does not have access to a prophet, and unlike Cormac, Morann, or Conchobor he is not granted even vestigial knowledge of the true God. The reason for the Otherworld's hostility gradually dawns on him (and is clear to us), but his response is dominated by bewilderment, and to some extent the saga's audience shares that bewilderment. Basic questions about the Otherworld, such as the identity of Conaire's father Nemglan (does his name mean 'pure radiance' or 'unclean'?) or the meaning of Cailb's names,[153] remain unanswered, both for him and for us. It is a commonplace of Otherworldly apparitions in sagas that people 'do not know where they come from or where they are going'—paradoxically, this phrase almost always identifies them as definitely Otherworldly in origin.[154] In the *Togail* this sense of inscrutable mystery is amplified to enable the audience to share in Conaire's confusion, heightening the pity and fear associated with his fate just as Saul's swerving between lucidity and madness, rage and remorse, heightens the pathos of his fall and the fearful severity of divine justice. For Conaire and Saul, even their lucid moments are a source of grief and terror. The far-from-innocent victims of an Old Dispensation, they walk in darkness to their deaths.

From the point of view of the Hiberno-Latin theology discussed by Kelly, the pathos of these portrayals could be seen as underlining all the more strongly the need for Christ's redemption. Augustine himself had balanced his negative portrayal of Saul with a more positive allegorical interpretation by which Saul's kingship *as an office* pointed ahead to the kingdom of heaven, of which it was an *umbra* ('shadow').[155] For the Christian reading the biblical story in the light of salvation history, the very darkness of Saul's reign hinted at light to come, a dynamic reinforced by the parallel

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

rise of Christ's ancestor, the more promising King David. May the same be said of the *Togail*?

The case for such a salvation dynamic encoded within Irish sagas about the heathen past has been forcefully made by several scholars, but it is not equally apparent everywhere, and we may not assume that all sagas were composed and received with this particular form of allegory in mind, or indeed any allegory. Some tales (such as *Echtrae Chonnlai* or the tales about Cú Chulainn's posthumous apparitions) actively encourage their audiences to see the heathen past (malevolent or benign) as part of a progressive typological schema moving triumphantly towards the Christian present;[156] but others do not, or do so in an extremely limited manner.

The *Togail* seems to me to belong to the latter group. Regardless of its possible alignment with an Old Dispensation, future redemption is not the first thing which comes to mind on reading this saga. Unlike 1 Samuel, it contains no David to balance the darkness of its Saul and act as a conduit for positive auguries about the future. The immediate future is glimpsed only in terms of chaos and ruin, with no mention of Lugaid Ríab nDerg or the restoration of Tara. The long-term future is hinted at, but (for the most part) not propitiously. Instead of prophecies announcing a new faith or a new political order, the only glimpse of Uí Néill is the apparition of their lands burning, and the only direct glimpse of the Irish Church is the image of the oratory burning, as if to suggest that social strife and failures of rule will persist into the present day.[157] The only other explicit and unambiguous pointers to the narrative present turn on the lasting memory of the destruction, both in the Irish landscape and in the words of poets and historians.

This sombre outlook contrasts even with that most elegiac of Old English legendary narratives, *Beowulf*. The narrator of this epic poem reminds us early on that his flawed yet admirable (and monotheistic) protagonists did not have access to the Christian revelation—a gesture which deepens the darkness hemming in the (p.324) achievements of Beowulf and Hrothgar and sets them firmly in a distant past, but which also

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

exhorts the audience to be thankful for their own good fortune in being born into a Christian world.[158] This passage, and the tragic tone of the whole poem, has encouraged some scholars to interpret *Beowulf* as, on one level, a sermon in heroic verse about the futility of heathenism and the blessings of Christianity.[159] No such consolation is offered to the audience of the *Togail*. It is hard to imagine them responding to this saga by thanking God for Uí Néill rule or the Christian church. Some later readers of the *Togail* have sought to fill this glaring absence, such as the great Anglo-Irish poet Samuel Ferguson. In his verse rendering *Conary* (1880), Ferguson represents Conall Cernach towards the end of the story as praying to the unknown God to send a better faith from on high:

> Great unknown Being who hast made them all,
> Take Ye compassion on the race of men;
> And, for this slavery of *gaysh* and *sidh*
> Send down some emanation of yourselves
> To rule and comfort us![160]

But this had to be added to the story by Ferguson: *Conary* looks forward explicitly to the more secure guidance of Christianity (and by extension, to the benevolent ‘rule and comfort’ of imperial Britain), whereas the *Togail* does so only in the most limited way. This is not to rule out the possibility of more optimistic, salvation-centred readings: as Jan Erik Rekdal has observed, the desire to save the soul of the heathen king or warrior runs through much Middle Irish heroic narrative, especially tales about fatal hostels.[161] Yet in the case of the *Togail*, this saga's relentless focus on problems rather than remedies suggests that, even if such a message was concealed within or read into the story, that need not have been its primary message.

Similar reservations may apply to the bulk of the Ulster tales as well. As Herbert and Clancy have emphasized, the *Táin* is particularly hard to square with a simple propagandistic ‘message’, and the shorter tales seem often to be much more than sermons, political or ecclesiastical.[162] To adapt Meir Sternberg's characterization of ancient Hebrew narrative, Irish sagas are typically ‘ideological but not didactic’.[163] **(p.325)**

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Like many early Christian works in an epic or heroic strain, the Ulster sagas and many king-tales are ‘complex and strategic gesture[s] of farewell’ to a lost world, as Radner has rightly noted;[164] but these strategies were not limited to local political manoeuvring. In Clancy's words, their literary artistry allowed ‘the exploration of the potential for conflict and dysfunction which would have been ever present in mediaeval Irish society—or indeed any society’.[165] Sagas were undoubtedly open to local political uses, re-readings, and re-workings, often with propagandistic aims in view; and they were surely understood in this way by some audiences and revisers. But this does not mean that such uses comprised the whole meaning of the saga in question, even for contemporary audiences. An important function of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Shakespeare's history plays was to glorify the current régime (Augustan Rome and Tudor England) at the expense of its predecessors; but these works’ artistic strategies go well beyond this local political purpose, even to the extent of inscribing into the texts what the classical scholar R. O. A. M. Lyne calls ‘further voices’ for those with ears to hear, which comment on and question the central political message.[166] In many Irish sagas, as in some Greek tragedies, that central message is still less clear, elevating the ‘further voices’ to a dominant position in the narrative.

Conclusion

In the *Togail*, the dialogue between past and present results in a powerfully imaginative recreation of the heathen past which does not demonize or belittle that past but depicts it in all its darkness and glory—‘with mingled feelings of kinship and regret’, as Fred Robinson has said of *Beowulf*.[167] Rather than contrasting the desperate plight of heathen kings with the good fortune of present-day audiences, the *Togail* suggests that the problems surrounding the practice of kingship which it lays bare are no less painful in the audience's own time. Its allusions to biblical kingship help to reinforce this contemporary significance, yet these allusions do not solve the problems they raise. They coalesce around the most problematic king in Old Testament history, and their literary

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

realization repeats and reinforces the tragic ambivalence of 1 Samuel itself.

Likewise, the saga's allusions to the concerns of the *tecosca* encourage the audience to judge the characters in the story, but its dramatic artistry undercuts any simple judgements we might make. The obvious 'lessons' to be learned—rule strongly, be just and impartial, obey divine law—are seen to be difficult if not impossible to put into practice, and sometimes even clash with each other. Is this because Conaire lived in the benighted period before the coming of the Faith, or is it a problem which present-day kings struggle with too? The saga offers no answers **(p.326)** to such questions. The acid of its tragic irony cuts deep, etching into the very fabric of society: kingship, military heroism, fosterage, the relationship between this world and the divine. For the more thoughtful members of this saga's audiences (ecclesiastical or secular), stories like this perhaps prompted serious reflection, rather than immediate action of the kind sparked off by the allegorical in-tale of *Airec Menman Uraird maic Coise*.

In conclusion, one hint as to how the saga-author expected his audience to judge the characters in the *Togail* and draw lessons from it may be gleaned by revisiting a passage from the epilogue, where Conall Cernach, having escaped from the battle, meets his hard-bitten father Amairgen. Amairgen is the last in a series of internal audiences who make moral judgements about the events of the saga. This exchange forms part of the epilogue's act of reflecting on the final battle and destruction: indeed, this scene brings the whole saga to a close, suggesting that it may have a special significance in indicating an appropriate response to the moral problems explored by the *Togail* as a whole.

> 'Lúatha coin dod-repnadar, a maccáin,' for a athir.
>
> 'Is hed ro boí do chomracc fria hócca ón, a senlaích,' for Conall Cernach.
>
> 'Scéla lat na Bruigne Da Derge? An beéó do thigerna?'
>
> 'Nochon beó imorro,' for Conall.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

‘Tonga do dia tongthi mo thúath, is midlachdo dond fir do-deachaid a mbeathaid as íar fácbáil a thigernai lia a námtiu i mbás.’

‘Nídat bána mo chréchda ém, a senlaích,’ for Conall. Tadbaid a láim scéith. Trí .l. créchta imorro is ed ad-comaicc furri. In scíath imorro imarro-dídnestair ind lám sin is ed rus-anacht. Ind lám des imorro imo-roprad for suidiu co rrice a dí chutramai. Ro cirrad imorro 7 ro hathchumad 7 ro créchdnaiged 7 ro chríathrad acht congaibset na féthe frisin corp cen a etarscarad innát raba in scíath oca himdedail.

‘Ro fích ind lám sin indnocht for cách, a maccáin, 7 ro fiched furri,’ ol Amairgin.

‘Fír són, a senlaích,’ ol Conall Cernach. ‘Is sochuide día tarad deoga tondaig anocht ar dorus mBruidni.’[168]

‘Swift are [the] dogs that have hunted you, little son,’ said his father.

‘This is what comes of a fight with young men, old warrior,’ said Conall Cernach.

‘Do you have news of Da Derga's Hostel? Is your lord alive?’

‘No, he is not alive,’ said Conall.

‘I swear by the god my people swear by, it is cowardly of the man who came away alive having left his lord dead among his foes.’

‘My wounds are not white, truly, old warrior,’ said Conall. He shows his shield-arm. Indeed, a hundred and fifty wounds had been inflicted on it, and what had saved it was the shield which protected that arm. As for the right hand, however, that one [had] been worked over twice as much—indeed, it had been maimed and cut and wounded and pierced through, except that the sinews kept [it] joined to the body without its falling off—for the shield had not been guarding it.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

> ‘That arm beat everybody down tonight, little son, and it was beaten down,’ said Amairgen.
>
> (p.327) ‘That is true, old warrior,’ said Conall Cernach. ‘Many are those to whom it gave drinks of death tonight at the door of the Hostel.’

The dynamics of this conversation repay close attention. Having established that Conall has left the king behind, dead, Amairgen declares in pointedly proverbial terms that such behaviour is unacceptable. Conall does not respond directly or refute the implied charge of cowardice. Instead, he simply holds out his wounds, so that they can be seen and counted.[169] The pair are left silent while the narrator describes in detail the bloodstained mess at which Amairgen is now looking. Amairgen breaks this ‘silence’; but instead of telling Conall that he is not a coward, he simply acknowledges that Conall fought vigorously. Conall says that this statement is *fír* (‘true’), implying that the disagreement between father and son has been resolved by Amairgen's diagnosis of the wounded arm. But the original grounds for Amairgen's accusation of cowardice have not been addressed at all: Conall has indeed violated the principle laid down in Amairgen's oath.

The terms of the debate have thus shifted from heroic ethical principles, expressed as a general precept, to the heroic deeds and (most importantly) suffering of the individual man being accused: Conall becomes a true hero deserving of an audience's sympathy by virtue of his wounds. The point at which the terms shift is marked by the third-person narrator intruding with his elaborate description of Conall's arm, rhetorically diverting the reader's attention away from the initial judgement. This vividness of this sign of heroic behaviour counterbalances the general principle invoked to judge him and prompts a new judgement which both men accept as *fír* (‘true’).

Prompted by Conall's much-vaunted resemblance to Conaire, one could apply a similar interpretation to the latter's own behaviour as king. More clearly than Conall, Conaire violates several cardinal principles of kingship, which are laid out both explicitly and implicitly within the narrative; he himself

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

recognizes that he has been at fault. At the same time, on a much larger scale than with Conall, the narrative itself wins the audience's sympathy for Conaire by showing him subject to impossible pressures and hideous mental and physical torments, and by depicting him in luminous ekphrasis as the peerless sovereign whose reign is brutally cut short. His sufferings may reflect his failure to keep his *fír flathemon*, but he remains every inch a king even as his sovereignty shatters around him.

The spectacle of Conall's mangled sword-arm thus epitomizes the difference between a tragic narrative and an *exemplum*. In fact, complicating the ethical balance of the *Togail* still further, this gory sign of Conall's heroic identity could itself be seen as reducing heroism to the mere performance of death and carnage. Conall's grim parting shot seems to encapsulate the events of the *Togail*, bringing together in concentrated form the saga's keynotes of truth, death, drink, night, and Da Derga's Hostel. It offers a dramatically satisfying point of closure, yet as a **(p.328)** ‘punchline’ its ethical value remains painfully ambiguous. The *Togail*, then, is a moral tale about kingship, but it is much more than just a cautionary tale. Its literary strategies draw the audience into the world of the story, inviting us to respond directly and emotionally to the events related; but it offers few answers to the questions it raises. The meaning of the saga remains suspended like a question-mark over the cataclysm it commemorates, as sombre and enigmatic as the vestiges of the battle left scattered about the landscape of Leinster.

Notes:

(1) See, for example, Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry*. Applications to saga-literature include Ó Corráin, ‘Legend as Critic’; Herbert, ‘*Fled Dúin na nGéd*’; Ó Ríain, ‘The *Táin*’; Herbert, ‘The *Death of Muirchertach mac Erca*’. Comments on this trend are offered by Schlüter, *History or Fable?*, pp. 20–1, in a book which applies similar methods to the study of a whole manuscript.

(2) Mac Eoin, ‘The Dating’, pp. 113–14.

(3) Herbert, ‘Reading Recension 1’, p. 209.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(4) Carey, ‘Myth and Mythography’; Chesnutt, ‘*Cath Maige Tuired*’.

(5) Antiquarianism is the wrong word to use of Middle Irish attitudes towards the retrieval of the past. On the social and political imperatives behind tenth- and eleventh-century editorial, compilatory, and authorial activity see Herbert, ‘Crossing Historical and Literary Boundaries’, pp. 98–101: ‘a past which needed to be recovered, not for its own sake, but because of its necessity for present and future’ (p. 98).

(6) Morse, *Truth and Convention*, p. 106; Morse's observations are applied to Irish sagas by Poppe, ‘Reconstructing Medieval Irish Literary Theory’, p. 51.

(7) Poppe, ‘Deception and Self-deception’; Poppe, ‘*Scéla Muicce Meic Da Thó* Revisited’. For a critique of Poppe's view in the latter article and a different interpretation of the saga's message, see Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Historical Context and Literary Meaning: Another Reading of *Scéla muicce Meic Da Thó*’, *Journal of Celtic Studies*, 5 (2005), 1–16.

(8) O’Leary, ‘A Foreseeing Driver’, p. 12 n. 70.

(9) Poppe, ‘Reconstructing Medieval Irish Literary Theory’, pp. 46–7.

(10) Annie Donahue, ‘The *Acallam na Senórach*: A Medieval Instruction Manual’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 25 (2005), 206–15, p. 214.

(11) This point is made concerning *Fingal Rónáin* by Hollo, ‘*Fingal Rónáin*’. *Airec Menman* itself—the saga in which the allegorical in-tale is housed—of course encodes a range of other meanings, connected with such matters as the status of poets (Mac Cana, *Learned Tales*, pp. 37–8) and the display of narrative techniques.

(12) Other forms of mediaeval Irish textual culture besides sagas were used for purposes of delight and play as well as political manoeuvring: see Morgan Thomas Davies, ‘Protocols of Reading’, pp. 22–3. On the methodological limitations of the

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

lesson-centred approach to the sagas, see Harris, *Adaptations of Roman Epic*, pp. 18–26. On the 'utility' of recreation in the reception of mediaeval literature more generally, see Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), which includes much relevant Patristic and early mediaeval commentary.

(13) Carney, 'Language and Literature to 1169', p. 483.

(14) Ó Corráin, 'Nationality', p. 35. The standard work on tenth- and eleventh-century Irish history is still Ó Corráin's brief but incisive *Ireland Before the Normans*. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, is still useful, but should now be supplemented with Byrne's chapters in Ó Cróinín, *A New History of Ireland I*. See also Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, pp. 10–16 *et passim*.

(15) Ó Corráin, 'Nationality', p. 12.

(16) Ó Cathasaigh, '*Gat* and *Díberg*', p. 213. This interpretation is developed further in Máire West's forthcoming paper 'A Re-evaluation of the Concept of Ideal Kingship in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*', which I have not seen.

(17) For the 'single sin' myth see Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Concept of the Hero'; Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*.

(18) Ó Cathasaigh, *Heroic Biography*, p. 24.

(19) The presence of a similar ideology of kingship in eulogies and theoretical texts on kingship has been demonstrated by Edel Bhreathnach, 'Perceptions of Kingship'; see also McManus, '"The smallest man in Ireland"'.

(20) Clancy, 'Court, King and Justice', p. 167, referring to the Ulster Cycle.

(21) Ó Cathasaigh, 'Pagan Survivals', p. 292.

(22) Ó Corráin, 'Historical Need and Literary Narrative', p. 143.

(23) Different kinds of prescriptive text could also use the same biblical examples to produce different meanings and images of

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

kingship: see the comparison between liturgical and admonitory texts in Hen, ‘The Uses of the Bible’. For relevant observations on the cognitive function of narrative see Sjöblom, ‘Mind-Stories’, p. 72. Compare Schlüter, *History or Fable?*, p. 22, on ‘normative’ and ‘formative’ texts.

(24) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*.

(25) See Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, trans. Sharpe, pp. 56–65.

(26) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 29, 60, 77–9.

(27) The importance of the courtly milieu for our understanding of the Ulster Cycle has been emphasized by Clancy (‘Court, King and Justice’), and the *Togail* reflects similar concerns.

(28) Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, pp. 76–7; a similar point (concerning the lay nobility) is made by Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 139–40.

(29) See Pseudo-Cyprianus, *De XII abusivis*, p. 53: *sciat rex quod sicut in throno hominum primus constitutus est, sic et in poenis, si iustitiam non fecerit, primatum habiturus est* (‘let the king know that just as he has been set up on the throne as the first of mankind, so, if he shall fail to act justly, he shall have the first place in punishment’).

(30) West, ‘Aspects of *díberg*’.

(31) Sayers, ‘Charting Conceptual Space’; Eichhorn-Mulligan, ‘*Togail Bruidne Da Derga*’. See also the discussion in chapter 7 above.

(32) O’Donoghue, ‘Advice to a Prince’, p. 49 (translation my own). This passage is discussed by Edel Bhreathnach, ‘Perceptions of Kingship’, pp. 27–8.

(33) See pp. 207–9 above.

(34) O’Donoghue, ‘Advice to a Prince’, p. 49.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(35) See Sims-Williams, review of McCone, pp. 191–2; Jaski, ‘Early Medieval Irish Kingship’, p. 329 n. 1. The present discussion relates to Ó Corráin’s article, ‘Nationality’.

(36) Tadhg O’Donoghue, ed. and trans., ‘*Cert cech rīg co réil*’, in Osborn Bergin and Carl Marstrander, eds., *Miscellany Presented to Kuno Meyer* (Halle a. S.: Niemeyer, 1912), pp. 258–77. References to this text (and this edition) are given as stanza numbers, and my translations are based on O’Donoghue's. Áed Oirdnide's late eleventh-century namesake, Áed mac Néill maic Máel Ṡechlainn, has been suggested as the real-life recipient of this *tecosc* by F. J. Byrne, ‘Ireland and Her Neighbours, *c*.1014–*c*.1072’, in Ó Croínín, *A New History of Ireland I*, pp. 862–98, pp. 895–6. The text's chief concerns are analysed by Edel Bhreathnach, ‘Perceptions of Kingship’, pp. 28–31.

(37) James Henthorn Todd, ed. and trans., *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh: The War of the Gaedhel with the Gaill, or The Invasions of Ireland by the Danes and Other Norsemen* (London: Longmans, 1867). A new edition is in preparation by Máire Ní Mhaonaigh. On the text's date, see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘*Cogad Gáedel re Gallaib*: Some Dating Considerations’, *Peritia*, 9 (1995), 354–77.

(38) This text exists in two twelfth-century recensions. My quotations are taken from the longer recension in W. W. Heist, ed., *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae ex codice olim Salmanticensi nunc Bruxellensi* (Brussels: Société de Bollandistes, 1965), pp. 280–301, pp. 281–2, with references to the shorter recension (where it varies) taken from the text edited by Paul Grosjean in the appendix to his ‘Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum bibliothecarum Dubliniensium’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 46 (1928), 81–148, pp. 124–41, p. 124. For discussion, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, ‘Foreign Connections and Domestic Politics: Killaloe and the Uí Briain in Twelfth-Century Hagiography’, in Whitelock et al., *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe*, pp. 213–31.

(39) Ó Corráin, ‘Nationality’, pp. 17 and 31.

(40) Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 136, 138.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(41) This passage is not in the shorter recension.

(42) O’Donoghue, ‘Cert cech rīg’, stanzas 15–16 and 44.

(43) In the shorter recension the sentence ends *ad emendacionem vite provocabat* (‘prompted [them] to amend their lives’).

(44) The shorter recension has *inimicis propter Deum parcebat* (‘he spared enemies on account of God’).

(45) This sentence is missing from one of the manuscript-texts of this recension, and Kelly suggests (without further discussion) that it may not have been original (Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, p. 26); Ahlqvist omits it entirely (‘Le Testament’, pp. 154, 163).

(46) Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, sections 8–11 and 59 (translations adapted from Kelly's).

(47) O’Donoghue, ‘Cert cech rīg’, stanzas 4, 5, 7–8 and 12. See Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, pp. 24–5.

(48) O’Donoghue, ‘Cert cech rīg’, stanza 32.

(49) O’Donoghue, ‘Cert cech rīg’, stanzas 5 and 39. The same word appears several times in *Tecosca Cormaic*: see Meyer, *Instructions of King Cormac*, sections 2.12, 6.42, 16.40 and the additional passage printed on p. 56.

(50) On the literary strategies and conventions at play in the *Cogadh*, especially its account of the battle of Clontarf, see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru: Ireland's Greatest King?* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), pp. 66–79.

(51) Chapter 80 exemplifies this aspect (Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 138–40).

(52) Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 136–8.

(53) Todd, *Cogadh*, pp. 204–5. On the parallel with Crusading theology and the Old Testament references see Ní Mhaonaigh, *Brian Boru*, pp. 77–9.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(54) Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, pp. 59–60 and 69 (Appendix I, sections 7, 8, 47, and 13a respectively).

(55) O'Donoghue, 'Advice to a Prince', pp. 45–6.

(56) See McManus, '"The smallest man in Ireland"', pp. 70–8.

(57) For wider discussion, see Thomas F. Head and Richard Landes, eds., *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). See also John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 41–58, and the essays in Guy Halsall, ed., *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998).

(58) Sedulius's interest in war is also mentioned by Luned Davies ('Sedulius Scottus', pp. 36–8), who discusses his use of Vegetius's fifth-century *Epitoma de re militari*, the first explicitly Christian military manual.

(59) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 46–9.

(60) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 54–6.

(61) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 58–60.

(62) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 62–71. This last sentiment is typical of Frankish mirrors for princes: see Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos*, p. 89 n. 64.

(63) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, p. 75.

(64) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 77–9.

(65) Sedulius, *Liber de rectoribus christianis*, pp. 88–91.

(66) Davies, 'Sedulius Scottus', p. 37.

(67) O'Donoghue, 'Cert cech rīg', stanza 71.

(68) Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, p. 6.

(69) Augustine, *The City of God*, V.xxv.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(70) Augustine, *The City of God*, V, 264 [XVII.vi].

(71) Augustine, *The City of God*, XVII.vii.

(72) For this combination see Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos*, pp. 426–8 and 434; Flechner, *Hibernensís*, 24.1–3.

(73) Boretius and Krause, *Capitularia*, II, 338 (compare 1 Sam 13.14) and 457–8 (the prayer beginning *Det tibi Dominus*).

(74) Nelson, 'Carolingian Royal Ritual', 104–5; *eadem*, 'National Synods', pp. 54–5; *eadem*, 'Kingship, Law and Liturgy'.

(75) Ullmann, *Carolingian Renaissance*, pp. 93–4, 132, 167–90; Wilfrid Parsons, 'Mediaeval Theory', pp. 135–43.

(76) Funkenstein, 'Samuel und Saul', pp. 131–9; Wilfrid Parsons, 'Mediaeval Theory', pp. 140–2.

(77) Janet L. Nelson, 'Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World', in McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture*, pp. 52–87, p. 63; Nelson, 'Bad Kingship', p. 12.

(78) Perhaps it was for this reason that *De duodecim abusivis* (ed. Hellmann) was attributed to Augustine in so many mediaeval manuscripts, on which point see Anton, 'Pseudo-Cyprian', pp. 603–5, and Breen, '*De XII Abusiuis*', pp. 89–93.

(79) Clancy ('Court, King and Justice') has suggested reading the Ulster Cycle as a whole in this light.

(80) Quotations are taken from the text in Thurneysen, 'Morands Fürstenspiegel', pp. 56–73, with reference given to section numbers in Thurneysen's edition. For an English translation see Toirdhealbhach Ó Raithbheartaigh, ed. and trans., *Genealogical Tracts I* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1932), pp. 122–31. Translations here are my own. For more detailed discussion, see Ralph O'Connor, 'Searching for the Moral'.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(81) Fergus Kelly, *Audacht Morainn*, §1 and p. 58. This prose introduction is usually dated to the ninth century (ibid., p. 23), but it also contains scattered Middle Irish features, making a Middle Irish date possible. It thus represents an addition to the earlier recension made either slightly before or at the same time as the composition of the later recension itself. It presents a subtler means of gearing the text towards an emphasis on the need for ‘strong rule’ (the vassals’ revolt implicitly calling for such rule) without the wholesale editorial reworking carried out by the author of the later recension.

(82) On these various texts, see Thomas F. O’Rahilly, ‘Cairbre Cattchenn’, in J. Ryan, ed., *Féil-Sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill / Essays and Studies Presented to Professor Eoin MacNeill on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Dublin: The Sign of the Three Candles, 1940), pp. 101–10; Ralph O’Connor, ‘Searching for the Moral’, pp. 119–25.

(83) Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 139–40.

(84) Despite its function as a kind of *remscél* to *Audacht Morainn*, *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* does not appear to have been preserved alongside the *tecosc*, even in manuscripts of the later A-recension (as has been suggested by McCone, ‘*Aided Cheltchair*’, p. 2 n. 5).

(85) Comparison between *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* and earlier versions of the story are made possible by the existence of a separate Middle Irish recension of the tale, which I have entitled *Scél ar Chairbre Cind Cait* in my study. This recension either predates *Bruiden Meic Da Réo* or draws on a common source. See Ralph O’Connor, ‘Searching for the Moral’, pp. 120–1.

(86) The subject of *ro·tóg* (‘restored’) could be either Morann or Feradach.

(87) On the relationship of the poem to the saga, see Thurneysen, ‘Morands Fürstenspiegel’, pp. 56–60.

(88) This sentence was present in the common source of the two recensions of the story, but the rest of this passage was not.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(89) §§1–2.

(90) On the various Middle Irish sources narrating Túathal's struggles see Thomas O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, 154–61.

(91) Compare the oppressed Fir Rois in the late Middle Irish prose recension of *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* ('The Voyage of Snédgus and Mac Riagla'), whose killing of their king is almost condoned by the narrative. For discussion and references see Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Subversion at Sea: Structure, Style and Intent in the *Immrama*', in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, pp. 194–225, pp. 212–25; Ralph O'Connor, 'Searching for the Moral', p. 142.

(92) Thomas O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, pp. 159–61.

(93) Compare the similar pun in Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., *Cáin Adamnáin: An Old-Irish Treatise on the Law of Adamnan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 10. Besides the *Togail* (as discussed above, pp. 213–16, 222), complex allusions to the drink of sovereignty and/or 'drink of death' may be seen in late Middle Irish threefold-death stories: Diarmait mac Cerbaill drowning in a vat of beer, Muirchertach Mac Erca befuddled by enchanted wine and drowning in a wine-vat, and Suibhne Geilt speared while drinking milk from a hole in a cowpat. Reflections on this theme are offered by Máire Bhreathnach, 'The Sovereignty Goddess', p. 259, Sayers, 'Deficient Royal Rule', and Rekdal, 'From Wine in a Goblet', p. 262 n. 119.

(94) In the Book of Lismore, this linkage is made clear, grouping two Middle Irish *tecosca* (*Diambad messe bad rí réil* and *Cert cech ríg*) with extracts from Diarmait's death-tale and related stories about his dealings with saints, all in the same portion of the manuscript. See Whitley Stokes, ed., *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890), pp. xxvi–xxix; Wiley, 'An Edition', p. 40. On the association with the two *tecosca* see ibid., pp. 6–7.

(95) Wiley, 'An Edition', pp. 18–55. For text and translation see ibid., pp. 110–64; the extant saga is dated to the twelfth century at Wiley, 'An Edition', pp. 18–55. For text and

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

translation ibid., pp. 89–109. The only published edition is that of O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, I, 72–82 (translated in ibid., II, 76–88); the best published translation is in Rayner, *Legends of the Kings of Ireland*, pp. 12–31.

(96) On the dreams, see Wiley, 'An Edition', pp. 50–2.

(97) Radner, 'The Significance', p. 194.

(98) On the futility of church–king conflict in the death-tale, see Radner, 'The Significance', pp. 193–5, and Rekdal, 'From Wine in a Goblet'. The textual history of the different versions of the story of Ruadán's cursing of Tara, in both Latin and Irish texts, has been laid out by Wiley, 'An Edition', pp. 211–25. The dating of the archetype of the earliest of the source-texts (a life of St Ruadán) is still under debate, but it may go back to the Old Irish period (ibid., p. 216); if so, the ill effects mentioned in Diarmait's prophecy against the Church (present in all versions) can hardly have been restricted to the twelfth century.

(99) It also contrasts with the approach taken by *Aided Diarmata*'s (probably later) analogue *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* which, as Radner has noted ('The Significance', pp. 195–6), compels the audience to come up with its own interpretation of why the king deserved death. However, both Radner and Máire Herbert concur in seeing this saga as preaching a specific message: see ibid., pp. 197–8, and Herbert, 'The *Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca*'.

(100) Rekdal ('From Wine in a Goblet') reads *Aided Diarmata* and *Aided Muirchertaig* alongside *Buile Shuibhne* as cautionary lessons promoting greater cooperation between Church and kingdom, but notes their ambivalent and often sympathetic portrayal of the sinful king; he explains this treatment in terms of the purgative function of the threefold death.

(101) On the death-tale's composite nature and sources, see Wiley, 'An Edition', pp. 4–8, 89–102, and 211–25.

(102) O'Leary, 'A Foreseeing Driver', p. 16.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(103) Useful surveys are provided by Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1–12* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), pp. 11–42, and Diana Edelman, ‘The Deuteronomist's Story of King Saul: Narrative Art or Editorial Product?’, in C. Brekelmans and J. Lust, eds., *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989* (Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 207–20, pp. 214–17.

(104) David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), pp. 87 and 46. See also Rosenberg, ‘1 and 2 Samuel’, p. 143.

(105) Eslinger, *Kingship of God*, p. 428. See Moshe Greenberg, ‘Job’, in Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide*, pp. 283–304, pp. 300–1.

(106) See V. Philips Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence* (Atlanta, GA: V. Philips Long, 1989), pp. 21–42.

(107) Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, pp. 20, 156, and 220. Compare von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 325, and Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*.

(108) Bede, *In Samuelem* (Migne, *Patrologia latina*, XCI, 549–50), quoted and discussed in Nelson, ‘Bad Kingship’, p. 12. Chapter 63 of the thirteenth-century Norwegian mirror for princes *Konungs skuggsjá* (‘The King's Mirror’) contains one particularly tortuous and extended defence of theodicy in the story of Saul. See Ludvig Holm-Olsen, ed., *Konungs skuggsiá*, 2nd edn. (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1983), pp. 107–16, and Laurence Marcellus Larson, trans., *The King's Mirror (Speculum regale—Konungs skuggsjá)* (New York: American Scandinavian Foundation, 1917), pp. 321–39.

(109) Compare John Carey's analysis of the representation of kingship in the panegyrics to Labraid Loingsech which ‘found [their] inspiration in the tangled underpinnings of the Bible itself’—here, however, in terms of specific images of kingship

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

---

and divinity rather than literary forms (‘From David to Labraid’, p. 23).

(110) McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 144. See also ibid., pp. 121–4.

(111) For Near Eastern parallels, see Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom*, p. 454.

(112) 1 Sam 16:7.

(113) Alter, *The David Story*, p. 96.

(114) Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, p. 87. Such questioning may have been a reaction against tenth- and eleventh-century attempts to revive some aspects of the traditional paraphernalia of sovereignty (Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 23).

(115) Sjöblom's cognitive perspective on *gessi* (‘Mind-Stories’, p. 72) may be relevant here in a more general sense: ‘dogmas would not work here as effectively as narratives, because narratives can operate on the level of emotional relevance without resolving the ambiguity present in the representation. In short, narratives are the best tools for creating “relevant mysteries”.’

(116) Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’. This interpretation has been reaffirmed by Kimpton, *The Death of Cú Chulainn*, pp. 4–5.

(117) Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, p. 47. See also Carey, ‘Vernacular Irish Learning’, pp. 41–4.

(118) Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, p. 47. For a related interpretation, see N. B. Aitchison, ‘The Ulster Cycle: Heroic Image and Historical Reality’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 13.2 (1987), 87–116, pp. 108–11.

(119) See the essays in Mallory and Stockman, *Ulidia*; Ó hUiginn and Ó Catháin, *Ulidia 2*.

(120) Kelleher, ‘The *Táin* and the Annals’; see also *idem*, ‘Early Irish History’. Cautionary remarks about the dating and origins of the Ulster material in these texts have been offered

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

by David N. Dumville, ‘Ulster Heroes in the Early Irish Annals: A Caveat’, *Éigse*, 17 (1977–9), 47–54. A clear summary of scholarly debate on the origins and nature of Irish chronicles has been offered by Nicholas Evans in his own intervention, *The Present and the Past in Medieval Irish Chronicles* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), pp. 1–7. See also Mac Airt, *The Annals of Inisfallen*, pp. xiii–xxi, for brief discussion of the chronicle-sources relating to the pre-Patrician period.

([121]) Kelleher, ‘The *Táin* and the Annals’, pp. 108–11 and 114–15; West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 188–95. For examples, see O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum*, p. 120, lines 32–3; the ‘Cottonian Annals’ in Freeman, ‘The Annals’, p. 314 [1924]; Stokes, ‘The Annals of Tigernach: I’, p. 405; the text of *Do Ḟlathiusaib Hérend* printed in Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, I, lines 2891–92; a later version of the latter in Macalister, *Lebor Gabála*, V, 300 and 520; the ‘Annals of the Four Masters’, in O’Donovan, *Annals*, I, 90.

([122]) On Lugaid's significance for the Uí Néill, see Kelleher, ‘The *Táin* and the Annals’, pp. 120–1; Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, pp. 54–6.

([123]) Dillon, *Serglige Con Culainn*, lines 233–310. A critical edition of the *tecosc* with translation and detailed commentary is offered in Fomin, ‘*Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn*’. For further commentary, see John Carey, ‘The Uses of Tradition in *Serglige Con Culainn*’, in Stockman and Mallory, *Ulidia*, pp. 77–84.

([124]) Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, lines 14176–14215.

([125]) Best and Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre*, lines 9221–9548 (translated in Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, pp. 347–54); see Nagy, ‘Close Encounters’.

([126]) Dillon, *Serglige Con Culainn*, lines 244–53; Carey, ‘The Uses of Tradition’, p. 79. On the possibility of a common source see McCone, ‘Fírinne agus Torthúlacht’, pp. 156–7; for comparison between the two bull-feasts, see also Borsje, ‘Omens’, p. 226 n. 7.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(127) For the stories about Cormac and Mac Con, see Ó Cathasaigh, *Heroic Biography*.

(128) Thomas O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, p. 137; Ó Cathasaigh, ‘*Cath Maige Tuired*’, pp. 7, 10, and 14.

(129) On the Lug-David parallel, see McCone, ‘A Tale of Two Ditties’, pp. 138–9. For Cormac's Solomonic attributes, see O’Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, I, 89–92; Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindsenchas Part I*, pp. 36 and 70–4; Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 65; Ó Cathasaigh, *Heroic Biography*, pp. 85–6; Schlüter, *History or Fable?*, p. 118.

(130) McCone, ‘A Tale of Two Ditties’, p. 143 n. 99.

(131) McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 139–40. For the *Hibernensis* reference, see Flechner, *Hibernensis*, §24.5.

(132) Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, p. 62.

(133) On this divergence, see West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 53–4, 195–6 and 204.

(134) The historical significance of the connection between Conaire and the Uí Néill in the *Togail* and other texts are discussed by West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 188–216 (on this point see pp. 198–9 and 207).

(135) On the marauders’ identity with Conaire's Otherworldly kin, see Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, p. 50. On the apocalyptic connotations, see Mark Williams, *Fiery Shapes*, pp. 15–16.

(136) Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, p. 57.

(137) Thomas O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History*, pp. 119–26; West, ‘An Edition’, pp. 100–1 and 191–203; Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, pp. 42–3, referring in part to genealogical texts printed in O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum*, pp. 1 and 120.

(138) Noted by Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, p. 42. Chronicles, genealogies, and regnal lists which do mention Núadu's over-kingship between those of Eterscéle and Conaire, and Núadu's slaying by Conaire, include O’Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum*, p.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

120, lines 29–30 (see also p. 189, lines 4–5, on Núadu's death); the ‘Cottonian Annals’ in Freeman, ‘The Annals’, p. 314 [1924]; the text of *Do Ḟlathiusaib Hérend* printed in Best et al., *The Book of Leinster*, I, lines 2889–90; a later version of the latter in Macalister, *Lebor Gabála*, V, 300; the ‘Annals of the Four Masters’, in O’Donovan, *Annals*, I, 88; Murphy, *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, p. 48.

([139]) Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, p. 43. Such influence is seen more clearly in *De ṡíl Chonairi Móir*, as discussed in chapter 2.

([140]) For Conchobor's baptism, see Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1906), pp. 16–18. On the typological synchronization see Kelleher, ‘The *Táin* and the Annals’, pp. 121–2; Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, pp. 55–6; Nagy, *Conversing with Angels*, pp. 263–5. For cautionary remarks on this typology, see Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Mythology in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*’, pp. 126–8.

([141]) Sharpe, ‘Hiberno-Latin *laicus*’, pp. 85–6.

([142]) See above, pp. 84–5 and 125–6.

([143]) For some examples of these motifs see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, ‘Pagans and Holy Men: Literary Manifestations of Twelfth-Century Reform’, in Damian Bracken and Dagmar Ó Ríain-Raedel, eds., *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), pp. 143–61.

([144]) For Alcuin's question ‘What has Ingeld to do with Christ?’, see Ernst Dümmler, et al., eds., *Epistolae Karolini Ævi*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895–1939), II, 183; for discussion, see Donald A. Bullough, ‘What Has Ingeld to Do with Lindisfarne?’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 22 (1993), 93–125.

([145]) Radner, ‘“Fury Destroys the World”’, pp. 49 and 55.

([146]) See also Charles-Edwards, ‘*Geis*’, p. 51.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(147) Dillon, *Serglige Con Culainn*, lines 844–5, discussed in Carey, 'Uses of Tradition'. On the spectrum of mediaeval Irish attitudes towards Otherworld beings, see *idem*, *A Single Ray of the Sun*, pp. 1–38.

(148) Lil Nic Dhonnchadha, ed., *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1964), lines 1–20; for a translation see Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, pp. 518–32. For discussion, see Radner, 'The Significance'. The element of masquerade in Sín's performance is expertly brought out by Mark Williams, '"Lady Vengeance"', who refers to Sín as 'a kind of anti-Étaín' (p. 28). See the discussion below, pp. 331–2.

(149) Compare Charles-Edwards, '*Geis*', p. 43.

(150) For a critical edition, see McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, pp. 121–99; for a translation, see Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, pp. 488–90. On the demonization of druidry in *Echtrai Chonnlai*, see Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Sinless Otherworld of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu*, 27 (1976), 95–115, reprinted in Wooding, *Otherworld Voyage*, pp. 52–72, pp. 54–5; John Carey, 'The Rhetoric of *Echtrae Chonlai*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 30 (Winter 1995), 41–65, p. 57.

(151) On the variants of this oath-pattern see Ó hUiginn, 'Tongu Do Dia'.

(152) Joseph Kelly, 'Hiberno-Latin Theology', p. 566.

(153) Sjöblom, 'Advice from a Birdman', pp. 246–7; Sayers, 'Charting Conceptual Space', p. 51.

(154) See the examples discussed above in chapter 5, note 52.

(155) Augustine, *City of God*, V, 264.

(156) For differing versions of this interpretation of *Echtrae Chonnlai* see Carey, 'The Rhetoric of *Echtrae Chonlai*', pp. 64–5; McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, pp. 99–106; see also McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 109, 199–202. For this interpretation of Cú

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

Chulainn's death-tale, see Kimpton, *The Death of Cú Chulainn*, p. 4.

(157) This emphasis is maintained in U, which adds (lines 7885–7) that the events following Conaire's request for a drink led to a feud between Conall and Mac Cécht.

(158) Jack, *Beowulf*, lines 178–88. Hrothgar's 'sermon' to Beowulf also makes subtle use of tropes associated with David and Saul which contribute to the poem's complex portrayal of good and bad kingship.

(159) The interplay between Christianity and heathenism in the narrative world of *Beowulf* has been the subject of some controversy. For contrasting views, see Edward B. Irving, Jr., 'The Nature of Christianity in *Beowulf*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 13 (1984), 7–21; Charles R. Dahlberg, *The Literature of Unlikeness* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988); Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-manuscript*, 2nd edn. (University of Toronto Press, 2003). Helpful and balanced accounts are offered by Charles Donahue, '*Beowulf* and Christian Tradition' (with Irish comparanda), Fred C. Robinson, '*Beowulf*', in Godden and Lapidge, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 142–59, pp. 150–2, and Bibire, '*Beowulf*', pp. 34–5.

(160) Ferguson, *Poems*, p. 215.

(161) Rekdal, 'From Wine in a Goblet'.

(162) Herbert, 'Reading Recension 1', p. 209; Clancy, 'Court, King and Justice', pp. 165–7.

(163) Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 36–8; see also Alter, 'Introduction', p. 24.

(164) Radner, '"Fury Destroys the World"', p. 57.

(165) Clancy, 'Court, King and Justice', p. 178 n. 70.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017

(166) R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

(167) Robinson, ‘*Beowulf*’, p. 159.

(168) Lines 1515–39. For D's and U's variants, and for explanations of some of the more doubtful words, see the same passage as quoted in chapter 7, pp. 221–3.

(169) This gesture of holding out his wounded hands, thus validating his role and identity to a doubting interlocutor who believes that he should by rights be dead, is oddly reminiscent of Christ's gesture at the end of Luke's and John's gospels.

PRINTED FROM OXFORD SCHOLARSHIP ONLINE (www.oxfordscholarship.com). (c) Copyright Oxford University Press, 2017. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a monograph in OSO for personal use (for details see http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/page/privacy-policy). Subscriber: University of British Columbia; date: 16 January 2017