ANGLO-SAXON/IRISH RELATIONS BEFORE THE VIKINGS

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Of Saxons, a Viking and Normans:
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MÁIRE NÍ MHAONAIGH

SOMETIME DURING THE LAST YEARS of the eighth century or the early years of the ninth, as the impact of the first Viking raids was being felt in Britain and Ireland, Alcuin of York, and later counsellor to Charlemagne and abbot of Tours, wrote to kinsmen, peregrini of the monastery of Mayo, placing especial emphasis on their great learning and urging them to educate the most barbarous people amongst whom they served.1 As Charles Plummer remarked, this represents a marked contrast to the cultural climate depicted by Bede more than fifty years earlier, in which learned Irishmen imparted knowledge to their English counterparts at home and in Northumbria in particular.2 Indeed, according to Aidan’s alleged predecessor as bishop of Lindisfarne, an Irishman austerioris animi (‘of a more austere disposition’), it was in fact the English who were homines indomabiles et durae ac barbarae mentis (‘an ungovernable people, of obstinate and barbarous temperament’).3 And while neither Alcuin nor Bede was a disinterested observer, and their accounts can scarcely be taken at face value, they provide evidence nonetheless for lively and varied intercourse in both directions across the Irish Sea.

Not least because of Bede’s relatively detailed description of the part played by Irish clerics in the Christianisation of England, the possibility of hibernicising influences on Anglo-Saxon intellectual endeavours has received

3 HE 3.5.
considerable scholarly attention. Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in isolating what Charles Wright has termed the Irish strand in the English cultural weave, plausible connections between the two traditions have been identified in certain cases. Kathleen Hughes has demonstrated the extent to which early English private prayers are indebted to their Irish counterparts, while Wright himself has highlighted ways in which Old English homiletic literature drew on Irish sources. In the same way, J. E. Cross and Pádraig Ó Rian have shown how the martyrologies of the two countries were intertwined. Latin texts were undoubtedly the means by which such traditions were disseminated; establishing direct links between the vernacular literatures is a far more difficult task. Howard Meroney identified specific Irish words and phrases in Old English charms, presumably transferred to the Anglo-Saxons in a learned, Latinate milieu. The same scholarly environment may well underlie what has been perceived to be an Irish tone in some Old English elegies, the Seafarer in particular. Yet other correspondences are best explained with reference to universal poetic features. Similarly, occasional parallels between particular passages in Beowulf and a variety of Irish narratives notwithstanding, the author of the poem is scarcely likely to have been immersed in Irish literary tradition.

Nevertheless, opportunities for becoming familiar with the imaginative endeavours of the neighbouring island were manifold, as the testimony of Bede and of his contemporary, Aldhelm, suggests. These were afforded to those not merely in Irish-dominated Northumbria but in such far-flung places as Canterbury, East Anglia and Sussex as well, in each of which Irish ecclesiastics served. In addition, many Englishmen went to Ireland to study, including Willibrord, Tuda, Wibert and the two Hwals, according to Bede. The Irish undoubtedly learned from their English contemporaries, yet Anglo-Saxon influence on Irish literary material appears far from dominant. Such traces as there are, however, indicate that the twin centres of Iona and Lindisfarne frequently played a key part in the process of transmission. Also significant in this regard were English ecclesiastical centres in Ireland, as Ó Rian’s elucidation of the possible role of Ecgberht of Ruthemsi in the transfer of the breviary edition of the Hieronymian Martyrology to Ireland indicates.

The Monastery of Mayo

Ruthemsi, which has been identified by Kenneth Nicholls as Cluain Melsige (Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow), is one of two English communities in Ireland mentioned by Bede. Important primarily for the close connections between its inmates and the English mission in Frisia, its chief member was the aforementioned Ecgberht who was prevented from going to preach abroad himself and who sent first the ineffectual Wibert and then the more successful Willibrord in his stead. It has been speculated that Bishop

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5 Wright, The Irish tradition, 3; for Wright’s analysis of the difficulties, see pp. 3–5, 10–11, 15–20, 20–1, 34–5 in particular.
Ecgberht may also have had an association with Mayo, the other English foundation in Ireland known to Bede.20 Founded by Colmán, bishop of Lindisfarne, if Bede’s testimony is to be believed it was still occupied by English monks in his own time: iam duludum ... egregium examen continet monachorum, qui de provincia anglorum ibidem collecti ... vivant (‘it now contains a remarkable body of monks so that they, gathered from English provinces, should live there’).21 Alcuin’s letter ad patres Mugensis ecclesiae (‘to the monks of Mayo’), mentioned above, as well as his earlier correspondence ad Leutfredum episcopum coenobii Mugensis in Hibernia (‘with Leodfrith, bishop of the monastery of Mayo in Ireland’),22 bears witness to continued Anglo-Saxon involvement there as Viking raiding on Ireland began.

Bede evidently judged Mayo to be of some significance—grande de modico effectum (‘from small beginnings it has now become very large’)23—since he provided a relatively detailed account of its foundation. As what may be the earliest attested relative pertaining to the monastery, his narrative will be considered briefly here. After the synod of Whitby in 664, when the Roman way of calculating the date of Easter was adopted, Colmán, a proponent of the Irish method of observance, went to Ireland, via Iona: tuli secum omnes quos in Lindisfarne nium insula congreguerat Scottos, sed et de genti Anglorum uiorum cicerum, qui utrique monachiae conversationis evasit studii imbuti (‘he took with him all the Irish he had brought together at the island of Lindisfarne, together with about thirty English, both groups having been instructed in the duties of monastic life’).24 Having established an island monastery at Inis Bó Finne (Inishbofin), off the coast of Mayo, he set up a separate community specifically for the English at Mayo, since relations between them and their fellow Irish clerics had broken down.25 The land for the new foundation was acquired from a comes who, specifying that the monks who settled there pro tps etiam ... pieces afferrent (‘should also offer prayers for him’), assisted in the building of the monastery, along with his neighbours.26 The nobleman in question is unnamed but a gloss in the St Petersburg—formerly Leningrad—manuscript (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Q. v. I. 18) claims that he was Óendáe (where the Latin term ‘Endeaus’ might be expected), descendant of another Óendae: i.e. Óendae de progenie prioris Óendae.27 Who this Óendae was is unclear. One might speculate on the significance of the fact that an earlier Óendae, son of Amolnāgaid who gave his name to Tír naAmolnāgad, the area west of the River Moy in Mayo, is hailed in Tírcheann’s late seventh-century Collectanea for bestowing filium meus et partem hereditatis meae ... Deo Patricii et Patriocio (‘my son and part of my inheritance ... to the God of Patrick and to Patrick’).28 Might a later writer familiar with the Patrician text have wished to suggest a link with this earlier act of generosity by claiming that it was an otherwise unknown descendant of Óendae mac Amolnāgad who donated land for the Mayo church? Another Óendae, son of Niall Noigiallach, while not named, features in an ambiguous tale elsewhere in the Collectanea.29 Associated with the territory of Crich Óendae Chonnacht to the north-east of Mayo, he is afforded a fuller role in the elaboration of the story in Patrick’s vernacular Life, the Vita Tripertita based perhaps on an eighth-century Latin Life, offering to the northern saint his newborn son, as well as the child’s inheritance.30 As a result, it was with Patrick’s Armagh that specific churches of the territory associated with Óendae’s name were affiliated conda forslac Núada, ab Aird Macha (‘until Núada, abbot of Armagh, released them’).31 As Thomas Charles-Edwards has noted, the context of this story may be a visit that Núada made to Connacht in 811.32 It may be, therefore, that the region’s rulers had already begun to forge new links with establishments closer to home and that it is in this context that the specific reference to a donor named Óendae, descendant of an earlier Óendae, might be tentatively read. Writing sometime in the second half of the eighth century probably at Wearmouth-Jarrow, as Michael Lapidge has shown,33 the scribe of the St Petersburg

20 HE 4.4.
21 I owe this information to the generosity of Professor Michael Lapidge to whom I am grateful for much discussion on the topic.
23 Bieler, The Patrician texts, §16(4); Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 28.
24 Kathleen McHugh (ed.), Beithi Phátraic: the Tripertite Life of Patrick (Dublin 1939) 50–1, ll. 867–92; see Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 20–1
25 McHugh, Beithi Phátraic, 51, l. 888.
26 Charles-Edwards, Early Christian Ireland, 30, n 81.
27 He considers the St Petersburg manuscript (L) and Tiberius A. xiv (B) to be independent copies of a lost hyparchetype which cannot be earlier than 748 (pers. comm.). See also André
character of that ecclesiastical community is confirmed by the names of a number of its eighth-century bishops, one of whom, Leodfrith, with whom Alcuin corresponded, we have already encountered. He succeeded to the episcopacy in 773, according to an annalistic text attributed to Symeon of Durham. His predecessor, Hadwinus (Eadwine), ordained in 768 according to the same source, and Leodfrith’s probable successor, Ealdwulf, who is mentioned under 786, are also likely to have been Saxons by birth. That they remained in contact with their homeland is indicated by Alcuin’s letters which form part of the close interaction between Mayo and York. Ealdwulf was actually consecrated bishop by Eanbal, archbishop of York, in Corbridge. Furthermore, in the same year, 786, he was present at a synod pertaining to York organised by the papal legate, subscribing to its decrees, along with the Northumbrian bishops. An association with Iona, however, has also been demonstrated with reference to sculptural parallels in the two areas. Notwithstanding this, it is with the Saxons that it is primarily associated, as a description of it as *Mag nÉo na Sascan* (‘Mayo of the Saxons’), on its burning in 783, indicates. Moreover, in the Annals of the Four Masters, the longer form of the name is occasionally used down to the tenth century, and the seventeenth-century annalist, Conell McGeoghegan, refers to ‘the town of Mayo in Conaught wch to this day is called Mayo of the English’.

The first usage of the extended place-name occurs in an entry in the Annals of Ulster for the year 732, recording the death of ‘Garaat’, *pontifex*

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46 *AUL*.

47 *AUL* 1169, 1176, 1209 and 1478.

48 Denis Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnoise being Annals of Ireland from the earliest period to AD 1408 translated into English AD 1627* by Conell Mageoghegan (Dublin 1896) (henceforth ACIon), 9.
Maighe Heu Saxorum (‘bishop of Mayo of the Saxons’).49 Gerald of Mayo similarly figures in a number of Irish martyrlogies of which the Martyrology of Tallaght is the earliest.50 He is also attested in a litany of Irish saints which Kathleen Hughes has suggested may be ninth-century in date.51 In the words of this source, ecc. ar trib milib im Garald n-episcop ocus im l. nöeb Luigni Connacht congabat Mag Eo na Saxan (‘3,300 including Bishop Gerald and fifty saints of Luigne in Connacht; they occupied Mayo of the Saxons’).52 In addition, Garald monachus forms part of a list of correspondences between Irish and foreign saints preserved in the collection of saints’ genealogies.53

The existence of an eighth-century obit for Gerald in a number of annalistic compilations indicates that the entry may well be genuine and that his association with Mayo does in fact go back to this period. The entry in the Martyrology of Tallaght is supportive of this view, although this work underwent considerable revision as part of its incorporation into the late twelfth-century manuscript, the Book of Leinster,54 and hence ‘Garald’ could conceivably have been inserted at this point. Despite its Norman appearance, however, the name is attested earlier in the mid-ninth-century core of the Durham Liber Vitae as ‘Garuald’ and ‘Geruald’, of which ‘Garald’ would be a suitable Irish rendering.55 That its hibernisation had occurred by the third decade of the eighth century is surprising, but not impossible, and it is certainly what the annalistic obit appears to suggest. Be that as it may, it was in the Norman period that Gerald became popular, the production of his late

49 Au. See also Atig. 236, and AFM 726 (CS is lacunous at this point). Pontifex is elsewhere used as the equivalent of episcopus: see Orschel, ‘Mag nEó’, 91, n 64.


53 O Riain, Corpus, 712.32, where he is linked with Pauconnius monachus.

54 Hennig, ‘Britain’s place’, 23.

55 ‘Garuald’ and ‘Geruald’ are attested in sections dated to c800 × c840: ‘Garuald’ 18v1, 38v1, ‘Geruald’ 22v1, 27r1, 28v1, 29v1, 34v1, 38v1, 39v1: see www.div.org.uk; I am grateful to my colleague, Dr Paul Russell, for providing me with an electronic version of some of the names of the Duathlon Liber Vitae. For earlier discussion, see Hughes, ‘Evidence’, 51, and Orschel, ‘Mag nEó’, 90.

56 Latin vita bearing eloquent testimony to this fact.56 Preserved in the Oxford collection of saints’ Lives in a pair of interlinked fourteenth-century manuscripts, one of which at least has a connection with Saints’ Island on Lough Ree, vita sancti Geraldii abbatis de Magh Eo presents a comprehensive, though in Richard Sharpe’s words ‘extremely fabulous’, version of Gerald’s Life.58

57 Life of St Gerald

Summary

Both Colmán and Gerald in fact feature in his Life since the Lindisfarne bishop is depicted as instructor to Gerald and his three brothers. On Colmán’s expulsion in the wake of the Easter controversy, out of love for their father and in recognition of the probity of his moral stance, Gerald and his siblings cum tribus milibus bone voluntatis uiorum (‘with 3,000 men of good will’) journeyed with him to Ireland.59 Two contributory factors in their decision to go into exile are also given—avoidance of their criminal father, Cusperius, as well as a desire to fulfil the mandate of the Lord in the most perfect way by resorting to the conventional step of abandoning one’s country.60 Colmán’s role is therefore modified and he plays no further part in the Life.

Entrusting themselves entirely to God while at sea, as was hagiographical custom, ad hostiam flumini Muaid in terra Conactie applicuerunt (‘they came to the mouth of the River Moy in Connacht’), where crudelis regulus (‘a cruel ruler’) named Aillil was king.61 Having captured Gerald and his men, Aillil attempted to trick the saint into resurrecting a son in place of his dead daughter. Seeing through him, Gerald responded: licet sit natus uel nata, Deus qui est condonator uite, et cui omnia possibilia sunt, masculum tibi resuscitare


59 Sharpe, Medieval Irish saints’ Lives, 247–73.

60 Here expressed as a dictum: exi de terra tua, et de cognitione tua, et de dono patris tua (‘leave your own land and all that is familiar to you and the home of your father’): ibid. 108 ff. For this so-called ‘white martyrdom’, see Clare Stancliffe, ‘Red, white and blue martyrdom’, in Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (eds.), Ireland in early medieval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge 1982) 21–46.

dignetur (‘whether son or daughter, God who is the giver of life and for whom everything is possible, may deem it worthy to bring back a male’). A young man was indeed resurrected who was baptised and given the name Cathal.AMPLIFYING THE LAND GRANT MADE BY HIS FATHER, HE IT WAS WHO BESTOWED UPON GERALD locum monasterii (‘a place for a monastery’), which came to be known as Elietheria. This is associated at a later point in the Life with the saint’s sister, Sigresie, who, along with a hundred saints and fifty of Gerald’s disciples, dies of the plague.44

It was at least one miracle later that the monastery of Mayo was established on land donated by rex famosus Conactensium, Ragallis nomine (a famous king of Conacht whose name was Ragall[ach]).65 The name of the foundation, Maguncia, may have prompted the telling of Gerald’s first miracle in the place involving a druid (magus) whose attempts to extinguish the saint’s fire have much in common with a broadly similar episode in Muirchú’s Life of Patrick.66 After countless such miracles (post innumeram miracula), Gerald is said to have died in Mayo on 3 March.67 His miraculous power is deemed to have endured, however, and he is portrayed as assisting both a man and a poor widow when a Viking, Torgetius Norvagiensis, tyrannus ualde crudelis (‘Tuirgéis of Norway, a terrible tyrant’) destroyed the church of Mayo in the Viking period.68

Commentary

There is much in Gerald’s Life that is standard hagiographical fare; nonetheless the less conventional passages shed some light on the circumstances of its composition and on some of the sources upon which its author drew. Of the saint’s postulated father, Cusperius, nothing is known. His mother’s name, Benicia, on the other hand, as Nora Chadwick has claimed, may deliberately seek to echo ‘Bernicia’ from which kingdom Gerald, together with his master, Colmán, set forth.69 His brothers also bear Saxon names, Balanus, Berikertus and Hucbritannus.70 Moreover, two of them have been linked to other

English ecclesiastical sites. Ballon is associated with Tech Saxan (Templegall, Co. Galway) in the twelfth-century Martyrology of Gorman,71 while Berchert is frequently found in conjunction with Tulach Léis na Saxan (Tullylease, Co. Cork).72

His sister, Segretia/Sigresie, is not attested elsewhere. However, the plague of which she dies is termed vetricia (‘jaundice’), in Hibernico dictur Buci Conayll (‘in Irish it is called “Buid Conaille”’).73 Also recorded in annalistic sources, (Conall’s yellow plague’) is dated to the time of the co-rulers of two kings of Tara, Blathmac and Diarmait mac Cerbaill, both of whom died thereof.74 The account of the event in Gerald’s Life is more detailed than any found elsewhere; it bears closest resemblance to the description of the event found in the preface to the hymn Sén Dé (‘God’s blessing’), in Liber Hymnorum. Ascribed to Colmán moccu Cluasaig, a scholar at Cork, the work portrays Colmán fleeing with his followers to an island monastery, since the plague cannot go beyond nine waves.75 It is tempting to suggest that the text was originally associated with another Colmán, bishop of Lindisfarne, creator of the insular community of Inis Bó Fhinn, as we have seen. If this is so, in grooming Gerald as founder of Mayo in place of Colmán in the Life, the author may well have adapted material which once formed part of the tradition of the better-known saint.

This material may also account for anachronistic references to Adomnán in Gerald’s Life. Shortly before the Englishman’s death, the Iona saint visited him in Mayo ut fraternal cum eo contraheret societatem (‘so that he might establish a brotherhood with him’). Comminging his church to Adomnán, Gerald elicited from the Columban saint a promise that the latter would defend Mayo on his demise.76 This Adomnán is claimed to have duly done: post eius uero obtitum sanctus Adampnus Maienensem ecclesiæ per septem annos indefesse rexit (‘after his death holy Adomnán ruled the church of Mayo indefatigably for seven years’), linking it with Iona (ad Ionensem per rexit abbatiam) before his own death⁷7—if annalistic sources can be believed almost thirty years before that of Gerald.78 The Columban connections of

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62 Plummer, Vitæ Sanctorum Hibernicæ II, 109–10 §v.
63 Ibid. 110 §§vi.
64 Ibid. 114–14 §xiv.
65 Ibid. 111 §viii.
68 Ibid. 115 §xvi.
70 He has been identified with ‘Uildbrit’ and ‘Hultbrit’ of the martyrologies: MartT 36 and MartG 82. See William Reeves, ‘St Berchert of Tullylease’, Ulster J Archaeol 6 (1838), 267–85: 268; and Orschel, ‘Mag nEó’, 91–2 and n 69.
the Mayo saint’s putative alter ego, Colmán, were strong. His sojourn at Iona on his return to Ireland is noted by Bede, as we know. Moreover, his first foundation of Inis Bó Finne may be that referred to in the margin of Columba’s elegy, Anuia Colum Chille, as the westernmost point over which the influence of the first abbot of Iona extended.79

Traditions originally associated with Colmán’s monastery of Inis Bó Finne (‘the island of the white cow’) may also underlie the incident in the Life explaining the etymology of Gerald’s earliest establishment, Eltheria. Deriving the name from elit (‘deer’), recalling a deer which spent its days in the monastery, the author’s main focus is actually a cow donated along with its calf for the use of the monks. Milk production dried up, however, when the calf was killed by a wolf which was then ordered by Gerald to behave like the young animal it had killed. Unable to fool the cow in this way, the wolf stole a faun and placed it under her udder. It was from the young deer’s mother who came to the monastery seeking its offspring that the ecclesiastical establishment got its name.80 Eltheria was identified by John Colgan as Roslee, six miles south-east of Castlebar, Co. Mayo, the original name of which he posited to be Ros Olithrigh.81 According to Vera Orcisel, Nollaig Ó Muraile has derived Roslee more plausibly from ros lao (‘wooded height of [the] caff’),82 and it may be that the story in Gerald’s Life explains this name. Also attested as a place-name is Ceil An Aithlithe (‘the pilgrim’s church’), on the island of Garumna in western Connacht,83 for which Eltheria might be an attempted latinisation and which would certainly be a suitable appellation for a monastery set up by one from overseas. While the onomastic history is elusive, therefore, various strands appear to be encapsulated in the tale, the cow of which may conceivably be the etymon of ‘white cow island’, Inis Bó Finne.

The story also serves to provide a solid Irish etymology for Eltheria (cerus enim in Hibernico sonat idem quad elit), ‘because “deer” in Irish sounds like elit’),84 the first community established by the Englishman Gerald. The saint’s external origin is in fact exalted in the text, not least through his portrayal as one who has abandoned his homeland for love of God,85 as well as in the name of his first foundation, if it contains an echo of ailitir (‘pilgrim’). The tyrant, Ailill, may react adversely on hearing de adventuante multitudinis alienigenarum ad provinciam (‘about the coming of such a foreigner into his territory’).86 However, Gerald’s power and that of his companions was quickly revealed by a prudent emissary of God: uidi quoque quosdam ex uobis specula in eos mittentes: set in nullo pertingunt, immo potius in litore maris cadunt, Deo eodem protegentes (‘I have also seen some of you throwing arrows at them but they did not touch anyone but rather fell on the shore of the sea because God was protecting them’).87 Moreover, the holy man is portrayed as maintaining contact with his homeland, sending one of his three units of his brethren to England to obtain provisions.88 Yet it is as defender of the Irish in the face of foreign attackers that he is depicted in his sole posthumous miracle, using his power to outfit the Viking tyrant, Tuirgéis.89

Composed as Anglo-Normans were settling in Connacht, the Life’s emphasis on an Englishman’s adventures in Mayo is likely to have resonated with a contemporary audience. As the positive references to Gerald’s foreign nature indicate, the author appears to display some sympathy with the settlers. Corann (Co. Sligo), one of the few places specifically mentioned in the Life, remained dominated by Irish for much of the thirteenth century. Portrayed in the text as disease-ridden, the territory’s ruler, ‘Etr anus’, a Latin rendering perhaps of an otherwise unidentified Odrán, was also struck down by plague. newly arrived in the region, Gerald is believed to have power over illness and this is vividly displayed. Ordering all to shelter under his miraculous hood, the saint cured all who obeyed. In thanksgiving for having been saved, those healed offered their descendants to the pastor pius (‘pious shepherd’).90

Gerald de Prendergast, from whom the FitzGeralds were descended, held Corann for a period in the mid-thirteenth century and it may be that this state of affairs is being gently applauded by the hagiographer. A pair of castles was built by the de Burghs in the region in the 1260s and in 1300, shortly after which the de Cogans appear to have taken control.91 A member of this

79 Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), ‘The Bodleian Anna Chloimh Chille’, Revue Celtique 20 (1899), 30–54, 132–83, 248–89, 400–37: Cotellass Oirlis i. contra anna rupa leis. Nó ro lais Oirlis occidens annal rogh Inis Bó Finne forshad faite (‘Together Oirlis blazed, i.e. equally was it his. Or Oirlis blazed and also Occidens, as Inis Bó Finne is in the sea’): 170–1. Stokes, however, takes it as Inisbofin off the coast of Donegal (ibid. 171, n 1), as opposed to Chadwick who prefers the Connacht location: ‘Bede’, 193. See also Orcisel, ‘Mag nEó’, 86–7.
80 Plummer, Vita Sanctorum Hiberniae II, 110 vii.
81 John Colgan (ed.), Acta sanctorum vereri et majoris Scotiae seu Hiberniae (Louvain 1645; repr. Dublin 1948) 603; see Orcisel, ‘Mag nEó’, 103, n 146.
82 Orcisel, ‘Mag nEó’, 104.
83 MartT 112. I am grateful to Dr Kevin Murray for this information.
84 Plummer, Vita Sanctorum Hiberniae II, 110 vii.
85 Ibid. 108 vii.
86 Ibid. 108 viii. Ailill is also made to emphasise the monks’ foreignness in the incident concerning his dead child, asking his counselors and friends not to tell his extraneus sanctis (‘these foreign saints’) that it was his daughter who had died: ibid. 109 viii.
87 Ibid. 109 viii.
88 Ibid. 112 viii.
89 Ibid. 115 vii.
90 Ibid. 114 viii.
91 ACIon 244, 279.
family. John de Cogan, had been granted Cinéal Fechin, a territory in southern Connacht, by Richard de Burgh some years previously\textsuperscript{92} where, close to Duniry, he founded Ireland's only Charterhouse sometime between the years 1250 and 1256. Significantly, the Carthusians were granted fishing rights in the otherwise unidentified Lough Cullenan and in part of Lough Derg.\textsuperscript{93} It may be that a reference to this event is preserved in the text and that the church of Mayo is attempting to assert control. In this connection we may note that Gerald is shown to be wiser than Fechin in their pronouncements concerning the plague of which the latter died. With regard to the Mayo saint, an angel is made to proclaim: quia uero sanctur Geraldus abbas quad rectum est in oculis Domini iudicavit, divina pietas ei parcit ('since the holy abbot, Gerald, judged what in the eyes of God is right, he will be spared').\textsuperscript{94} In addition, the holy man succeeded in breaking a large rock which had been obstructing fishermen trying to fish in the River Moy. As a result decimacionem piscaturae illius regionis sancto Geraldio ac suis successoribus usque in spectum optulerunt ('the tithe of fishery was given to Gerald and his successors forever').\textsuperscript{95}

This of course remains speculative, as does the significance of Gerald's dealings in the Life with a variety of Irish rulers. The first king the saint encounters, Aileilus (Ailil), is hostile to him, as we have seen. His son, Catholus (Cathal), however, whom Gerald, as agent of God, brings into being, was baptised by the saint and blessed with strong rulers as descendants: ex illo enim propter beneficium eirii Dei multi ulantes procures ac potentes in terra illa processerunt ('from him, because of the benediction of the man of God, many strong chiefs and men came forth in that land').\textsuperscript{96} A common family name among Uí Chonchobhair, the pre-eminent ruling dynasty in Connacht in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and beyond, ‘Cathal’ is likely to have brought that particular group to mind. Curiously, it is attested as the name of the son of the second Irish ruler mentioned in the text, Ragallus (Ragallach/Rogellach), if the man in question can be identified with Ragallach mac Uatach who was slain as king of Connacht in 649.\textsuperscript{97} His early death means that he cannot in fact have donated the land for the monastery of Mayo, as the text claims. Nonetheless, he is contemporary with Blathmac and Diarmait, sons of Aed Sláine, who also feature in the Life, as we have seen.\textsuperscript{99} As a direct ancestor of Uí Chonchobhair,\textsuperscript{99} his positive portrayal echoes that of the miraculous Cathal, underlining the fact that the author wished to imply that Mayo was supported by powerful Irish protectors from the start.

An association with Mayo would also have benefited the ruling Uí Chonchobhair. Subsumed under the diocese of Tuam in 1202, Mayo was claimed by Armathw about the year 1215 before reverting to the Connacht see a short time later.\textsuperscript{100} Its close connection with Tuam is underlined by the appointment as bishop of Mayo of Céile Ua Dubthaigh (d.1210),\textsuperscript{101} a member of the influential ecclesiastical family of Ua Dubthaigh whose kinsman, Muiredach, had sixty years earlier been archbishop of Connacht and Tuam.\textsuperscript{102} Well known as promoters of the rule of the Canons Regular,\textsuperscript{103} Uí Dubthaigh and Céile in particular may have been active in this regard in Mayo also. Yet the church did not become an Augustinian abbey of regular canons until the second half of the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{104} As an important Connacht church, however, Uí Chonchobhair would have been well aware of its significance. It was in Mayo that opposing kinsmen, sons of Muircheartach Muimhneach Ua Conchobhair and of Cathal Mac Uðrain Ua Conchobhair, submitted to Aodh, son of Cathal Crobdhearg Ua Conchobhair in 1225.\textsuperscript{105} In the latter instance, peace was secured by the Munster ruler, Donnchadh Cairbreach Ua Briain and naithi Gall Erenn ('the foreign nobles of Ireland'). One such noble, Mac Uilliam Burke, plundered the church eleven years later in retaliation for a revolt by one particular group of Uí Chonchobhair.

\textsuperscript{98} Diarmait's victory in the battle of Carn Cnoic is celebrated in the annalistic entry following that recording Ragallach's death: AU\textsuperscript{2} 649.
\textsuperscript{101} AU\textsuperscript{2}.
\textsuperscript{104} Aubrey Gwynn and R. Neville Haldock, Medieval religious houses: Ireland (London 1970) 93–4, 186.
\textsuperscript{105} A. Martin Freeman (ed. and tr.), Annala Connacht: the Annals of Connacht, AD 1224–1544 (Dublin 1944) 1225.15 and 1225.26.
Abstracts

PATRICK P. O’NEILL
The Irish Role in the Origins of the Old English Alphabet: a Re-assessment
This study re-appraises previous theories about the origins of the Old English alphabet and, on the evidence of the earliest surviving forms of that alphabet, argues for a formative contribution from the vernacular alphabet of Old Irish.

ROY FLECHNER
An Insular Tradition of Ecclesiastical Law: Fifth to Eighth Century
This chapter discusses some of the earliest specimens of Insular canonical learning, highlights direct influences between canonical texts written in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England, and examines the appropriation of Anglo-Saxon canonical authorities by the Irish and vice versa. Among the texts under discussion are works attributed to Patrick, Cummian’s Penitential, the Libellus Responsionum, the Canons of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, and the Hibernensis. In conclusion, an Insular canonical tradition is adduced.

DIARMUID SCULLY
Bede’s Chronica Maiora: Early Insular History in a Universal Context
Bede’s Chronica Maiora (725) outlines key events in universal providential history from creation to the early eighth century. It represents the first extensive Insular attempt to integrate the history of Britain and Ireland with world-history. Bede makes use of classical, late antique and Insular sources, but his work differs in fact and interpretation from earlier accounts of the Atlantic archipelago and, on occasion, from his own later account in the Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum (c.731). An examination of the Chronica Maiora therefore offers significant insights into Bede’s objectives and techniques as a historian. This chapter focuses on his treatment of two critical developments in the history of the Atlantic archipelago, viewed in the context of universal history: the Roman conquest of Britain, which Bede connects with vital developments in Jewish and gentile salvation history, and

106 A. Martin Freeman (ed. and tr.), Annula Connacht: the Annals of Connacht, AD 1224–1544 (Dublin 1944) 1236.11.
107 Seán Ó hÍonáin (ed. and tr.), Miscellaneous Irish Annals (AD 1114-1437) (Dublin 1947).